

**Fort Couch
Middle School**



**2023- 2024
Student/Family Handbook**

FORT COUCH MIDDLE SCHOOL

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<https://www.uscsd.k12.pa.us/Domain/220>

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Mr. Gordon Mathews, Assistant Principal
Mr. Jace Palmer, School Counselor (Grade 7)
Ms. Jessica Robinson, School Counselor (Grade 8)
Mrs. Sharon Lacey, Head Secretary
Ms. Jill Polfus, Attendance Secretary
Ms. Annette Hansen, School Nurse
Officer Tom White, School Police
Mr. Anthony Krause, Head Custodian

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Dr. Louis Angelo, Director of Operations and Facilities
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Minutes from the School Board of Directors monthly meetings can be found on the District's website: <https://www.uscsd.k12.pa.us/Page/129>

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PRINCIPAL'S WELCOME LETTER

August 2023

Dear Fort Couch Students and Families,

Welcome to the 2023-2024 school year at Fort Couch Middle School! We are looking forward to embarking on this new school year with you.

The purpose of this handbook is to provide you with an overview of information about the school, curriculum, activities, policies, and procedures. We hope that this handbook will be valuable to you during your time at Fort Couch. 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.

The educational program at Fort Couch has been developed with a clear understanding of the students' academic, physical, emotional and social characteristics and needs. Additionally, the curriculum and activities allow students to explore and begin to develop their creativity, strengths, and passions. The Fort Couch staff works hard to build connections with students and families to ensure quality relationships and partnerships.

Ultimately, the mission of the school is to provide the best educational experience for all students. The programs of the school aim to be responsive to the needs of all students through various options while striving to achieve and surpass district, state, and national learning standards.

If you have any questions regarding the handbook, or any other school related issues, please call us at 412-833-1600 ext. 3000 for assistance.

We look forward to working with you this school year. The future for students, parents, and staff is full of exciting and challenging opportunities. Enjoy your time at Fort Couch Middle School!

Best wishes,

Erin S. Peterson, Principal

Gordon Mathews, Assistant Principal

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.

STUDENT BILL OF RIGHTS

You, as a student of the Upper St. Clair Middle School Program, have the right to . . .

- **Grow intellectually** by exposing yourself to ideas and concepts that challenge your ability to think, reason and make decisions;
- **Mature emotionally** while interacting in an environment that nurtures awareness and an understanding of yourself;
- **Become a whole person** by learning from people who have made a commitment to your education and special needs;
- **Develop socially** by modeling accepted social attitudes and social skills;
- **Grow physically** by being an active participant in curricular and extracurricular activities that develop your body and sense of fair play;
- **Express yourself creatively** by sharing your talents and abilities in the Arts;
- **Allow yourself to be helped** through a challenging period in your growth by people with a sincere understanding of your feelings;
- **Understand your fears** knowing that your concerns are natural and shared by everyone;
- **Seek help when you need it** in order to gain a better understanding of your schoolwork;
- **Be yourself** because you are a **special person**.

STUDENT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

No student shall be deprived of equal treatment and equal access to the educational program, due process, a presumption of innocence, and free expression and association, in accordance with Board policy and school rules.

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.

A comprehensive list of student rights and responsibilities can be found in Board Policy 235 - Student Rights and Responsibilities and Chapter 12 of Title 22 of the Pennsylvania Code.

COURSE OFFERINGS

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

At Fort Couch, we believe the ability to communicate is one of the most important tools students need to live effectively in our society. Language is the means by which we communicate both to express and to receive thoughts. To receive a message, you must perceive the words and comprehend the idea. In our curriculum, emphasis is put on vocabulary expansion through the use of context clues, dictionaries and word analysis. Appreciation and comprehension of written language evolves from the study of various types and styles of written work. Students analyze short stories and informational articles for main ideas, deeper meaning, and author's craft. The author's use of specific details or the manner in which she/he has organized the work, help a student to predict the outcome of a story. The primary objectives are to instruct students in the skills and processes of language which will make them efficient readers, listeners, speakers, and writers, and to make students aware of language as a vehicle through which interests, attitudes and understanding can be developed.

The English Language Arts curriculum is language rich and integrates language arts in the total educational program of our students. The language program includes instruction in reading skills, process writing, literature, language structure, and oral communications.

Reading instruction provides students with extensive work in fiction and nonfiction pieces. Four to eight complete works of fiction are read at each level. Works of fiction are read for vocabulary development, reading comprehension and to develop higher-order, critical thinking skills. Students also use a published vocabulary series. Further, to better meet students' needs, teachers will utilize multiple novels when providing reading instruction. The program is multi-text and exposes the student to a variety of real literature. Teachers may choose from a list of resources, literature texts and activities established by the department to teach the objectives for each level.

English Language Arts is divided into four parts: reading, listening, speaking and writing. Teachers use activities involving each element of language to teach the lesson's objective. Students may dramatize a scene in the story as a way of feeling the intensity of conflict the author creates, or play the role of a character in a novel to better understand the author's use of character traits. What better way to learn the art of persuasion than to write your own newspaper editorials and advertisements? Structure and effectiveness are clarified when a student rewrites a familiar story from a different point of view. Radio and television shows may be used to distinguish fact from fiction.

Students learn different techniques required to preview a work, read for leisure or for detailed study. Students read, write and listen to different types of poetry. Narrative, lyrical and descriptive poetry are also compared. To further their ability to express thought, students are

taught sentence patterns, some grammar usage, and how to organize longer works. Grammar is taught as a means to produce effective writing. Emphasis is placed on function rather than terminology.

A process approach to writing is used to develop students' writing skills. This approach includes composing, rewriting, conferencing, revising, editing, and publishing. Students work to develop their analytical writing skills and to deepen their understanding of prose and poetry that reflect narrative, expository and argumentative modes. All English Language Arts classes at each grade have one instructional level. Teachers will place an emphasis on differentiating their instruction, as multiple texts will be utilized for reading instruction. Students will be assigned text based on their ability level and learning style.

MATH

The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) standards for middle level learners recognizes the need for all students to have broad expertise in mathematics. The NCTM standards advocate improving a student's math performance by devoting more attention to conceptual development, by encouraging independent thinking and by demonstrating math's usefulness through the use of real-life problems and hands-on support materials. The Upper St. Clair Math Program places a vast majority of students on the same pathway with the possibility of taking calculus by their senior year in high school.

We have found that our curriculum meets the needs of most of our students. However, we know that students all learn at different rates. To accommodate these various learning rates, we have a program to help identify students who might need enrichment in math or who may need additional support. Pre-testing occurs at the beginning of each unit to determine enrichment needs. This enrichment may occur for an entire unit or it may occur for individual lessons within that unit. Teachers utilize Panther Time and Period 8 to provide remediation help for students who may need concepts retaught or who may need other second chance learning interventions. Teachers also employ MAP testing to determine the needs of each student and to plan instruction, interventions, and enrichment.

7th GRADE MATH

Students in 7th grade Pre-Algebra study the following three major topics: applied arithmetic, pre-algebra and pre-geometry. The transition to algebra is done by examining three uses of variables: pattern generalization, abbreviations in formulas, and unknowns in real-life contexts. Variables on the number line and coordinate plane are represented. Lessons in geometry focus on measurement, relationships involving lines, angles and polygons and the connection between arithmetic, algebra and measurement. Large and small numbers, addition, subtraction, multiplication, zero and negative numbers, powers, decimals, percents, scientific notation are

revisited. Problem solving strategies, graphs, combining operations, the Distributive Property, and basic algebra skills complete the transition to Algebra.

An integrated approach lets students focus on one strand while reiterating and introducing others. The curriculum implements the NCTM standards by emphasizing applications, reading and writing, problem solving and technology throughout. Students learn how and when to use math skills, the properties and relationship of numbers, the use of mathematical ideas and how to physically picture mathematical concepts. Emphasis on the application of math skills to real life problems motivates students and provides a context for learning concepts and skills. Students learn to speak the language of math, and skill reinforcement is an integral part of problem-solving practice and review.

8th GRADE MATH

Algebra I is a first year course in algebra that employs geometry, statistics and probability to illustrate the algebra of linear equations and inequalities. Models for arithmetic operations are extended to equations involving variables. Students learn to solve linear sentences and define functions. Probability concepts are studied along with algebraic fractions while heavy manipulative techniques are postponed to later courses.

Contemporary applications in science and personal finance explore curvilinear functions depicting compound interest, parabolas, and quadratic equations. Graphing, the properties of lines and slopes are important to visualizing and organizing data. Reading and problem solving continue to be emphasized throughout the curriculum. Problem-solving strategies are embedded in application settings.

At both grade levels, students who do not demonstrate mastery will be designated to receive a second math lesson during the school day. Teachers will identify these students and will provide these interventions on a daily basis. Conversely, students excelling in math are provided enrichment activities per their pretest results and rate of acquisition. As an integral part of the program, USC incorporates technology including the use of the scientific calculator, computers, Chromebooks, and function graphers. Beginning in the first chapter, scientific calculators are required of all students. Calculators allow students to study a variety of problems in greater depth. Students with computational deficiencies are able to further their mastery of math concepts while building their computational skills. Accelerated and remedial courses are offered at both grade levels depending on student needs.

SCIENCE

At Fort Couch, students not only learn science but experience it through hands-on activities. The program strives to stimulate and foster student interest and excitement for a subject that has become part of daily living in an expanding technological society. Through the use of hands-on

activities, labs, science tools and equipment, the students learn science concepts along with skills and processes needed for scientific thought and inquiry. Each year the students are exposed to at least four different topics.

As part of the regular curriculum, students explore the impact science has on the world. STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math) is a focus of the curriculum for learning in the integrated curriculum. Science objectives and activities are regularly integrated with other content areas. Students are asked to make reports, oral presentations, explore global issues and use mathematical reasoning.

7th GRADE SCIENCE UNITS

- **Scientific Method** The scientific method will be a focus along with other experimental techniques. Students will be able to set up their own experiments and control variables.
- **Light** This unit is a standards-based, inquiry-centered unit that was developed by the Smithsonian and the National Academies. This unit allows students to explore the properties of light. Students will understand the origin of light, how it travels, and what happens when it is blocked. An exploration of different types of mirrors and how light acts when it strikes a mirror completes the unit.
- **Cells:** This unit will introduce students to homeostasis of the cell. Students will be taught the correct process in using a microscope to explore cells in animals and plants. Content includes the parts of a cell and cell functions. This experience and information on the cell will be a building block for the next nine weeks: genetics.
- **Genetics and Evolution:** Theories concerning the origin of plants and animals along with the production of mutations, the inheritance of traits and the prediction of a pattern of inheritance and natural selection are explored. Students have the opportunity to discover how their own physical characteristics have been passed down through generations.
- **Earth's Changing Surface & Man's Impact:** Man's impact on the earth's changing surface is explored in this unit. Students examine earthquakes, volcanoes, and other earth processes. Types of faults and the causes of earth movements are deduced. The students will explore the impact of agriculture and pollution on the earth.

8th GRADE SCIENCE UNITS

- **Scientific Method** The scientific method will be a focus along with other experimental techniques. Students will be able to set up their own experiments and control variables.
- **Intro to Physics:** This unit will focus on our physical world along with the scientific laws that govern it. The students will explore through scientific inquiry the topics of kinetic and potential energy, speed, motion, acceleration, forces, work, power, and gravity. Engineering is a focus of this unit with the students designing, building, evaluating and revising engineering challenges using the design cycle.

- ***Intro to Chemistry:*** A focus of this unit will be understanding the properties of matter. Students will identify types of matter based on the physical and chemical characteristics. Using physical properties like density, melting point/freezing point, chemical properties like chemical reactivity the students will identify matter. The periodic table will be used as a tool to understand the sub-atomic structure of the atom. The students will be able to identify characteristics of the elements by the placement on the periodic table.
- ***Astronomy:*** This student will explore the Earth, the moon, the stars, galaxies and the universe. The laws and theories used to govern the physical universe are applied. Students will be researching, observing, calculating, and modeling planetary movements and characteristics. The Hertzsprung-Russell diagram will be used to identify the brightness and magnitude of stars of the galaxies. Models will be used to understand seasons, earth movements, and the effect of different objects in space. The students will explore the challenges of space exploration and colonization today.

SOCIAL STUDIES

A unique feature of the Social Studies Curriculum is the integration of four key Social Studies disciplines (geography, economics, civics, and history). The curriculum is organized into knowledge and skill objectives that engage the student through problem solving, analytical reasoning and writing. Many Social Studies activities are integrated with other curriculum areas.

7th GRADE SOCIAL STUDIES

- ***European Foundations of America:*** Students will learn about the major groups and individuals which led to the European exploration and colonization of North America.
- ***Creation of the United States:*** Students will study the establishment of the Thirteen Colonies and their growing tension with Britain. The course will explore the Revolutionary War and the establishment of an independent United States, focusing in particular on the structure and function of the United States Constitution.
- ***Expansion of a Nation:*** Students will understand the growth of the United States, including the causes and effects of territorial expansion across the continent in the early 1800s. The debate over slavery in newly acquired land will be a key point of focus.
- ***Civil War and Reconstruction:*** Students will investigate the war which tore apart the United States, including major events, individuals, and costs of the Civil War. The course will then address the period of Reconstruction, in which various attempts were made to rebuild the nation.

8th GRADE SOCIAL STUDIES

- ***Industrialization and Immigration:*** This unit will center on industrialization in the late 1800s and its transformative effects on America and the world. Students will also learn about various factors which led to increased emigration to the United States.

- ***Emerging Power and World War I:*** Students will study the ways in which various nations developed world empires. In addition, students will investigate the steps which led to the outbreak of the Great War and the effects of the conflict itself.
- ***The Roaring Twenties and the Great Depression:*** This unit will explore changes which took place in the decade after the Great War before turning to the Great Depression, in which students will learn the causes of and responses to the economic disaster of the 1930s.
- ***Prewar Years and World War II:*** In the last unit of the year, students will focus their attention on World War II, starting with events and individuals which led to its beginning. The unit will also discuss major events from the war across the globe and its impact on the world.

WORLD LANGUAGE

The middle school World Language program begins with an exploratory program in 5th Grades. Students continue with the language of their choice (French, German, or Spanish) in 6th, 7th, and 8th grades to complete the equivalent of two semesters of high school work. The classes actively involve the students in listening exercises, vocabulary building, reading, writing, grammar, and the development of oral proficiency through specific topics of conversation.

The program is also designed to give students cultural insight into the beliefs and behaviors of the people and cultures represented by each language. Art, history, music, dance, cuisine and the customs of each society are examined through videos, games, cultural event projects, and activities.

Each year the advancements in technology help to bring the students even closer to the people of the world they are studying. The resource programs provide facts and figures instantly to supplement their knowledge of history and geography. The internet offers opportunities to tap information on any number of topics in English and in the world language.

The middle school program hopes to inspire each student to pursue the study of world language throughout their life with education, travel and a continued awareness of the world and its people.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The broad objective of the Physical Education curriculum is to further develop each student physically, mentally and socially to the extent his or her potential ability and interest will allow. Skills and attitudes previously learned are extended. New skills are introduced, preparing the student to effectively participate in the appropriate physical activities in the regular school program, extra-curriculum program, and activities of special interest in the community and school. Adaptive physical education activities are provided for students needing additional assistance in developing muscular growth, coordination and rehabilitation.

Instruction focuses on three areas: basic team sports, lifetime sports, physical fitness. The physical fitness program is an integral part of the curriculum. Students are encouraged to compete against themselves in developing and maintaining good physical fitness. Additional activities are offered before school, during the activity period and as part of the after-school extracurricular activities.

EXPRESSIVE ARTS

The Expressive Arts curriculum affords Fort Couch students the opportunity to learn skills needed to meet the challenges of living in today's global society. The Expressive Arts curriculum incorporates practical, fine and performing arts into one program blending the subject content in each area with required levels of student activity in the form of product and personal performance, fostering art awareness and self-esteem. Each area retains its identity as a unique discipline, but by unifying the program opportunities are provided for social interaction while integrating the skills and objectives of a more traditional program.

7th GRADE EXPRESSIVE ARTS

- **Art:** The focus of art at Fort Couch lies more in process than product. Students will have an opportunity to experience a variety of media and artistic processes, allowing for a more encompassing idea of what it means to create art. Working individually and collaboratively, students will investigate creative projects involving painting, drawing, printmaking, ceramics and various forms of digital art.
- **Music:** Vocal training is used as a basis to cultivate concepts of beat, rhythm, articulation, melody, harmony, tone color, dynamics, form and to develop an appreciation for a variety of styles of music. Students compose a melody. They study the four families of instruments and sound production through the use of oscilloscopes and balloon experiments. Students are encouraged to extend this musical training by joining such extracurricular activities as Band, Chorus or Orchestra.
- **STEAM Design:** STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, Math) Design is a way to teach how all things relate to each other, in school and in life. Using the design process, students will follow a series of steps to come up with a solution to a problem. Incorporated in this process are creativity and innovation. Students will be given the opportunity to make and create in the Innovation Hub and the Maker Space. The Innovation Hub is a room designed to promote collaboration, communication, problem solving and creativity. The Maker Space allows students to create, make, test, and improve upon their designs.
- **CAPS: Consuming and Producing Successfully:** In CAPS (Consuming and Producing Successfully), students become entrepreneurs by evaluating the world around them, identifying a problem to solve, then creating and building a product-based solution. Students then sell their product or service, evaluating the performance of their business idea, and iterating to incorporate learning. Students capture their learning in a portfolio of artifacts and reflections that document their journey from problem and solution ideation through evaluation of sales data. With

involvement of local mentors and other volunteers, students experience authentic learning. Students leave CAPS having defined, built, and launched a product in the market. Evidence of learning includes a business model canvas, a budget and pricing model for the business, a product name and brand, a pitch deck, communications and marketing material, sales goals, reflections, and student portfolio.

- **Communication Arts:** Students will complete a unit in Communication Arts each respective year. Course content may include studying, analyzing, and practicing different types of communication, including written forms, classroom discussions, the media, and speeches. Students will also develop skills such as fluency, interviewing, outlining, recitation, and presentation. Rhetorical techniques such as literary devices and persuasion techniques will be included.

8th GRADE EXPRESSIVE ARTS

8th Grade Students will participate in each of the five rotations through either a set course or electives. All students will complete a six week course in Communication Arts and a six week course in CAPS: Consuming and Producing Successfully. For the areas of Art, Music, STEAM Design, and Band, students will select elective courses of either three or six week rotations.

ADVISOR TIME

The advisor will assume a helping role as an advocate for assigned students by coordinating activities that will promote a sense of belonging, improve interpersonal relationships, and enhance the self-concept of every student.

GUIDANCE

Students participate in a guidance class on a regular basis. During 7th grade, sample guidance class topics include study skills, computer safety, diversity and tolerance, drug and alcohol education, and peer pressure refusal skills. During 8th grade, sample guidance class topics include drug and alcohol education, diversity and tolerance, career exploration, human growth and development, and transitioning to high school.

OVERVIEW OF SCHOOL ORGANIZATION

Because of our belief in nurturance, students are heterogeneously grouped into academic teams. This enables teachers and students to develop a strong sense of bonding. Interdisciplinary teaching is strongly encouraged and the team often engages in whole group activities, which helps develop a sense of identity and belonging. Because the skills and achievement levels of our learners are distributed across a broad continuum, varied methods of instruction and strategies for grouping are used to adequately meet the students' academic needs.

CONTINUOUS EDUCATION

Fort Couch continues the district's philosophy of continuous education. Each level builds on and reinforces the previous level while preparing students for future academic success. Students enter the middle school program at Boyce with a three-teacher team model. Here at Fort Couch, a four-teacher team and an increased course offering prepares students for the transition to high school. Students receive instruction in a variety of curriculum areas. Students have an opportunity to discover areas of interest and abilities that have not yet emerged.

INTERDISCIPLINARY TEACHING AND COOPERATIVE LEARNING

These are key words used to describe our curriculum. *Interdisciplinary teaching* first introduced in the elementary schools continues at Fort Couch. Units designed specifically to integrate the various curriculum areas reinforce the importance to construct links between what the student already knows and values and the information that they are expected to learn. Skills learned in English language arts are applied in social studies and science presentations. Mathematical theory is exercised in science, industrial arts and home economics. The Fort Couch *interdisciplinary* curriculum is implemented using a multi-text approach. In addition to traditional instruction and classroom activities, students are provided enrichment or remedial activities as necessary. Teachers from different core academic and resource areas work together to define projects that will further engage the students in the learning process requiring the student to apply the knowledge being learned. Working together as a team, the teachers have the flexibility in their schedule to move and regroup students as needed. Research which has shown that the more meaningful, the more deeply or elaborately processed, the more situated in context and the more rooted in cultural, background, cognitive and personal knowledge the curriculum is, the more readily the child will understand, learn, and remember.

The curriculum allows teachers to educate by repeating, reinforcing and extending similar objectives at each grade level. In science, specific areas of Earth, Life and Physical Sciences are revisited each year beginning in 5th grade with an emphasis on skills, processes, critical thinking and problem solving.

Teachers spark the imagination of an unusually large number of talented and motivated Fort Couch students through specialized grouping and student choice. Each student is looked at individually and provided for as needed.

INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE - MIDDLE YEARS PROGRAM

This international program has several unique characteristics that may interest some students. While insisting upon thorough study of the various disciplines, the International Baccalaureate MYP accentuates the interrelatedness of them and so advances a holistic view of knowledge. International Baccalaureate has all units of instruction designed via one of the five areas of the interaction: human ingenuity, environments, community and service, approaches to learning, and health and social education. Further, students are encouraged to develop intercultural and international awareness along with a genuine understanding of their own history and traditions. The International Baccalaureate Program places great emphasis on mastery of one's own language as well as another language. Students are required to perform community service as a component of their participation in the program. The MYP spans from grades five through ten. For more detailed information, please visit [International Baccalaureate/ Middle Years Program](#) on our District website.

SCHOOL DAY

The school day at Fort Couch is from 8:55 A.M. until 3:40 P.M., Monday through Friday. Students should not be in the building before 8:40 A.M. or after 4:00 P.M. unless requested by a teacher, participating in a supervised activity, arriving on an early bus, or waiting for a late bus. Any student who is dropped off prior to 8:40 A.M. needs to report to the cafeteria until 8:40 A.M.

- **Library** - The Library is open from 8:50 A.M. to 3:40 P.M. if the librarian is available. A note will be posted on the library door should the hours change.
- **Nutrition Center** - The Nutrition Center is open for students beginning at 8:30 A.M. Breakfast can be purchased. All students should remain in the nutrition center until 8:40 A.M.

TEAMING

Teaming is the foundation of Fort Couch Middle School. All students are assigned to one of the six teams. All teams are composed of a science, math, social studies, and English language arts teacher. In addition to these classes, students will have a World Language, Expressive Arts, Guidance, and Physical Education class. Students will also take part in the advisory program.

SUPPORTING ALL STUDENTS

ATHLETIC PROGRAM

Fall Sports (September – October): 7th Grade Football, 8th Grade Football, 7th and 8th Grade Boys & Girls Swimming, 7th and 8th Grade Boys & Girls Cross Country, 7th and 8th Grade Girls Volleyball, 7th and 8th Grade Girls Field Hockey (Club)

Winter 1: 7th and 8th Grade Boys Basketball (November - December), 7th and 8th Grade Wrestling (December – January)

Winter 2: 7th and 8th Grade Girls Basketball (January - February)

Spring (April - May): 7th and 8th Grade Boys & Girls Track and Field, 7th and 8th Grade Girls Fast Pitch Softball, 7th and 8th Grade Boys Volleyball, 7th and 8th Grade Boys Lacrosse (Club)

At Fort Couch the Athletic Program's major emphasis is to provide broad-based intramural and extramural activities that are an outgrowth of the physical education program. Intramural activities provide exploratory experiences for all students including flag football, soccer, cross country, basketball, gymnastics, volleyball, track and softball.

Any student can participate in the after-school extramural activities. The purpose of the program is to provide wholesome physical activity with emphasis on the physical and emotional welfare of the participants. All practices, scrimmages and contests are considered teaching situations. Students have an opportunity to develop skills, sportsmanship, and self-discipline. There is a "no-cut" policy. All students who wish to participate will be assigned to a team. While an attempt is made to give all team members playing time, it is not always possible to give all players equal playing time. The coaches are responsible for using their own discretion. Students who wish to participate in these activities must be in good academic standing and must adhere to team rules. Medical examinations are required for participation. Physical forms and schedules on the Fort Couch website. **Participation in all sports requires a participation fee. Please see the costs and registration forms on the District website.**

Please refer to the policies below for additional District athletic information.

Interscholastic Athletics (Policy 123)

123.1 - Concussion Management (Policy 123.1)

123.2 - Sudden Cardiac Arrest (Policy 123.2)

CLUBS

Students at Fort Couch Middle School have the opportunity to participate in a variety of clubs offered during Panther Time. These experiences are not graded and emphasis is placed on good sportsmanship, fair play, creative inquiry, and social and emotional development.

COUNSELING SERVICES

Counseling services are designed to help all students discover their own assets, needs, and interests. The curriculum addresses developmental issues faced by adolescents. The course is non-graded. Guidance class, which meets twice in a six-day rotation, gives the counselors an opportunity to meet individual students. Moreover, the counseling program has an open-door policy to satisfy individual and small group needs.

The role of the counselor is to advocate for students and to serve as the liaison between students, teachers, parents and administration. The counselor may perform duties such as attending team meetings, teaching classes, intervening in a crisis, coordinating test administration, attending parent conferences, scheduling students, and coordinating S3.

FORT FAMILY / USC TIME / OLWEUS BULLYING PREVENTION PROGRAM

Olweus is the most research based and best-known bullying prevention program available to schools. Olweus is a whole-school program that has been proven to reduce and prevent bullying throughout a school setting. Olweus has three main goals to its program: reduce existing bullying problems among students; prevent the development of new bullying problems; and to achieve better peer relations at school. Fort Family / USC Time is Fort Couch's integration of Olweus into Fort Couch programming.

HOMEBOUND

Parents or Legal Instruction guardians may ask for their student to be instructed in the home if the student will be absent from school for a period of two weeks or more due to illness. The request should be presented by the parent/legal guardian to the building principal and accompanied by a physician's certification for the need. The Director of Student Support Services must certify each request.

ORCHESTRA, BAND, AND CHORUS

Fort Couch Middle School offers Orchestra, Band, and Chorus. Although many of our students began studying their instruments in 3rd and 4th Grade, no previous experience is necessary. Small group lessons are provided for students playing a string or band instrument throughout the school year. In addition, ensembles meet during Period 8 on designated days.

Fort Couch also offers an extensive Choral Program that provides for students of all abilities and interest levels. Students have the opportunity to study and perform a variety of choral music and participate in smaller vocal groups.

SOCIALS

The PTSO sponsors school socials throughout the year. Check the website for the dates. Socials are from 7:00 PM to 9:00 P.M. Students must stay at the social until dismissal at 9:00 P.M. unless a parent, or responsible sibling, comes into the school to pick up the student. Socials usually include a D. J., refreshments, and open gymnasium for other activities.

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

The Upper St. Clair School District provides for students as mandated by and in compliance with state and federal regulations. The district provides for students qualifying for special education supports and services. Related services necessary to assist a student with special needs include transportation, speech, audiology services, physical and occupational therapy, psychological, counseling services, social work, school health services, and early identification and assessment. Additional laws that affect the education and services a child can receive are: Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (Public Law 92-603), the Americans with Disabilities Act (Public Law 101-596) and the Education of the Handicapped Act (Public Law 94-142).

Language Instruction Educational Program for English Learners (Policy 138)

The District has developed a formal English as a Second Language (ESL) Program policy to ensure quality educational services to all students. To accomplish this goal, the District's objectives are to provide appropriately planned instructional services for identified students whose primary language is not English. The ESL teacher works closely with the administrative staff and classroom teachers to assist students in developing English proficiency. All students are integrated with their peers except when it is necessary to pull them out of class to provide specific services. The policy adheres to all requirements and guidelines to meet the needs of English Learners.

Questions about ESL Education should be directed to the Director of Pupil Services at extension 2113.

Special Education (Policy 113)

The District will develop educational programs for each student with a disability that appropriately meets the needs for education, instructional, transitional, and related services. Programs and services will be in accordance with the student's individualized education program (IEP). The IEP will provide access to the District's general education curriculum, participation in state and local assessments, and supplementary aids and services that permit the student to be

educated to the maximum extent appropriate with his/her peers. A continuum of services and placement options to best meet the needs of students with disabilities will be provided.

For more information contact the Director of Special Education at 412-833-1600, ext. 2064 or on the Upper St. Clair School District Special Education site.

Gifted Education (Policy 114)

Specially designed instruction is provided for students who are identified as intellectually gifted in accordance with Chapter 16 of Title 22 of the Pennsylvania Code. These individuals have demonstrated cognitive and academic performance, which has been determined to be significantly beyond age/grade level norms. After a thorough review of each identified gifted learner's educational needs, a team of qualified professionals and the parents develop a Gifted Individualized Educational Plan (GIEP).

Questions about Gifted Education should be directed to the Director of Pupil Services at extension 2113.

The Student Support Services Team (S3) works with students in need of a more creative, intensive and systematic approach in overcoming obstacles to their learning. This team is composed of the principals, two counselors, nurse, teachers, and a mental health worker. Through our Student Support Services team, "at-risk" students are monitored and guided by a plan determined to meet the students' needs.

RTI – RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION

Various layers of intervention are provided to students based on academic and behavioral needs. If a student is struggling academically, the classroom teacher will monitor the student to determine appropriate classroom interventions. If data supports the need, a student may receive additional support from the reading specialist or a math resource teacher. Student performance on the PSSA's and classroom performance are just two pieces of data used to determine intervention and instructional decisions. In the event a student needs additional behavioral support, school counselors will work with the classroom teachers to determine appropriate behavioral interventions.

STUDENT COUNCIL

All students have an opportunity to participate in Fort Couch Middle School's Student Council. At the beginning of the year students submit an application for approval to be a member of the Student Council. Under the leadership of Student Council sponsors, representatives participate in school and community service projects throughout the year. Student Council members must be responsible and enthusiastic students who serve as role models for their peers.

HOMEWORK

The Upper St. Clair School District homework policy is based on educational research. Homework is a necessary supplement that supports and enriches the instructional program. It is most meaningful when it is corrected, discussed, and returned to the students, and when it relates to the concepts and objectives that have already been thoroughly explained and understood by the students.

Students in 7th and 8th grades may spend approximately one and half hours a day on homework. In order to meet the needs of individual students and their ability to perform independent study, homework assignments are gradually increased from the elementary levels to the high school. If you find that your child's workload regularly exceeds this recommended amount, we encourage you to contact your student's teacher. Teachers may deem some assignments as long-term assignments. Such assignments will be due on the date requested by the teacher, unless approval is granted by the teacher prior to the date that the assignment is due.

Because it is important for students this age to have time to explore other outside activities, time is set up within the daily schedule for students to begin their homework. Teachers are available during this time for students who are having trouble with a concept.

HOMEWORK REQUESTS

Prior to contacting the school to request homework; please check Canvas for this information. Because all students are permitted time to make up missed work when they return to school, homework should only be requested if the student is expected to be absent two or more days. Homework for absences due to an educational trip is handled on an individual basis. Parents may access Canvas to view current assignments and projects for the week. Requests for homework can be made by calling the school office at 412-833-1600 extension 3000. Homework will be available for pickup at the end of the day only if the request is made before 9:00 a.m. Requests received after 9:00 a.m. will be available at the end of the following day. Homework may be picked up in the Office.

GRADING SYSTEM

REPORT CARDS AND STUDENT PROGRESS

Students receive report cards each nine weeks. All report cards are delivered to parents and students electronically. Parents must register for Focus accounts to receive this information. The Fort Couch report card provides parents with a wealth of information. The report card is divided into the following categories:

Daily Performance – student performance on class activities and homework (formative assessments)

Academic Knowledge – student achievement of curricular goals based on various types of summative assessments

Attributes of a Successful Learner – student demonstration of work and behavior habits

Overall Performance – An overall summary of the student performance

Student grades are updated at least every two weeks via Canvas. Report Cards and progress reports are available at specific dates throughout the school year via Focus.

Guidelines for Use of the O-G-S-N Grading System

The following characteristics must be kept in mind when utilizing the O-G-S-N Grading System.

This grading system values:

PERFORMANCE that reflects achievement based on the student's ability as opposed to achievement based on an external measurement.

SUBJECTIVE JUDGMENT of the student that is substantiated with objective measures as evidence, and sensitive to the student's growth.

PROGRESS that reflects a comparison with the student's past individual work.

GLOBAL IMPACT that presents the child not in an isolated instance, but a continuation of an ongoing developmental process.

This grading system does not value:

Evaluation on daily work that uses the O-G-S-N marks. These marks should only be used on report cards and major projects.

Direct or subtle connections between the O-G-S-N marks and scores received on tests.

Direct or subtle connections between the O-G-S-N marks and the traditional A-B-C-D marks, percentage points or point breakdowns.

Direct or subtle connections between the O-G-S-N marks and behavior modification needs.

It is acceptable to use total number correct out of total number; percentage points; computer grade book; and other methods of recording the objective data for the teacher's grade book.

These recording procedures should not be equated to the O-G-S-N marks, but should be accompanied by a written comment.

INCOMPLETE (I) GRADE

In unusual circumstances (extended illness, death in the family, etc.) teachers may issue a temporary “I” grade. Students are expected to contact the teacher and arrange for work to be completed. Students have ten school days after the end of the nine-week period to complete this work. Failure to complete required work may result in an “N” grade.

PLANNED PROGRAM OF STANDARDIZED TESTING

The planned program of standardized testing by the District is collected and maintained by representational consent and is shown below. The results of these tests, as well as the results of aptitude and achievement tests taken by the individual student on a voluntary basis and required for admission into post-secondary education institutions, are maintained and made a part of the record. Should you wish to examine the record, you may arrange to do so by making an appointment with your child’s principal or counselor. For specific information regarding matters pertaining to school records, parents or eligible students may contact the principal of the school in which the student is enrolled.

TESTING

Students at Fort Couch take PSSA Testing in the Spring. Both 7th and 8th grades take ELA and Mathematics. Students in 8th grade take the Science PSSA test. In addition, those students in Algebra I take the Algebra Keystone. Please visit the PDE website for the most current information regarding assessments in Pennsylvania public schools. Please avoid making doctor appointments, planning trips and student absences during the testing window. If it is unavoidable and your child must be absent from school, please contact the school counselor immediately.

PSSA TESTING WINDOW

The PSSA testing window for this school year is as follows:

- English Language Arts April 22 - 26, 2024
- Mathematics, Science and Make Ups April 29 -May 3, 2024
- Make Ups May 6 - 10, 2024

KEYSTONE TESTING WINDOW

The Keystone testing window for this school year is as follows:

- Keystones (Algebra I) May 13 - 24, 2024

COMMUNICATING WITH PARENTS

CANVAS

Canvas is the District-wide learning management system. This system is used to provide parents with a common website to find all student learning materials and homework assignments for their children. Information about creating parent accounts will be provided through the District website, and in the Back-to-School information that all families receive. Please visit Academics- Canvas on our District website for more information, including how-to instructions for setting up a parent account.

DISTRICT WEBSITE

Additional district information is available through the website www.uscsd.k12.pa.us. This includes, but is not limited to, school board meeting minutes, district-wide announcements and upcoming events.

EMAIL

Each teacher has an email account. Parents are encouraged to use this form of communication. Please refer to the Staff Directory on the District website or contact the office if you need a specific teacher's email address. The Fort Couch website is also used as a means to communicate with parents.

OPEN HOUSE

Fall and spring open houses are held during the school year. Parents are invited during the evening to view the school and meet the teachers. Brief programs are held in each classroom to outline the curriculum and programs.

OTHER MEANS OF COMMUNICATION

Upper St. Clair schools appreciate the role of the parent in a student's education and extend great effort to keep parents and residents informed. All USC Board of School Directors general meetings and committee meetings are open to the public with time for public comment. A meeting notice and agenda for each meeting, and the approved minutes are posted on the District's website. In addition, a video recording for each meeting can be accessed online.

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 magazine - which is mailed to all homes and businesses in the township.

Many public forums exist for parents to voice their opinions and concerns to administration and faculty in a relaxed atmosphere. Monthly PTSO meetings are attended by the principals and a teacher representative.

PARENT CONFERENCES

Parent conferences are scheduled with teachers on an as-needed basis. Conferences can be initiated by the teacher or parent. Teachers will generally initiate contact with a parent once they develop a concern relative to student academic performance or student behavior. Parents are encouraged to monitor Canvas upon receiving a message that a new report is available. Time is available at the beginning of most school days for parent conferences. Parents are welcome and encouraged to call the school at (412) 833-1600 ext. 3000 and arrange a parent-teacher conference at any time to discuss a student's needs or a topic of mutual interest. The school secretary will schedule the meetings at a time that is mutually convenient to both the parents and teachers.

School counselors, all faculty members, and the principals are available to meet with parents. Parents are asked to refrain from impromptu conferences at such times as PTSO meetings, class trips, and open houses. Experience has shown that a conference in a scheduled setting is more productive.

PARENT / COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS

Parents are active participants involved in the daily functioning of Fort Couch Middle School. All volunteers must have updated clearances on file at Central Office to be approved as a volunteer in any building throughout the school district. Parents are encouraged to contact the PTSO if interested in providing assistance or volunteering in the school. More detailed information regarding the process for obtaining and/or updating clearance can be found at [Volunteers & Required Clearances](#) on the District website.

PARENT TEACHER STUDENT ORGANIZATION (PTSO)

The Fort Couch Middle School PTSO has a long tradition of supporting various education, extra-curricular and social aspects of being a middle school student in Upper St. Clair. The majority of PTSO energies are directed towards the students. Recognizing the need for students of this age to socialize, PTSO tries to give them every opportunity to interact and have fun. PTSO sponsors student government, Team & Academic Enhancement funds, and charity activities such as *Caught Ya Being Good*, as well school clubs and the traditional evening Socials. PTSO advisors work with students on projects such as Reach Out and the Fort Couch YearBook. In the Spring the PTSO offers parents opportunities to learn more about the 8th grade transition to the High School. Via support of and cooperation with USC PTC, they sponsor seminars with the Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) Committee and the Partners in Education (PIE) Committee as well as Open Mics with the superintendent. The PTSO is also present for the Fall and Spring Open Houses, provides funding to the Fort Couch musical education programs Band, Chorus, and Orchestra, and supports staff appreciation events throughout the year.

There are *no traditional fund-raisers* at Fort Couch, so your student will not be asked to sell anything to raise money for the PTSO. The annual Activity Fee is \$40.00 per student. The fee provides students free admission to all PTSO evening socials and many school and classroom activities, as well as annual family membership to the PTSO. Monthly PTSO meetings are open to everyone interested in their common objectives, and are attended by the building principals and a teacher representative. Meetings are held the third Tuesday of each month at 11:00 a.m. Check the school website for specific details.

REPORT CARDS

Report cards are posted on FOCUS and they are distributed via email at the end of each nine weeks. If you are unable to access your child's Report Card, please contact the Fort Couch Middle School Main Office at 412-833-1600 x3000 for assistance.

USC PTC

USC Parent Teacher Council meets the first Wednesday of each month at various locations in the USC School District. PTC is composed of representatives from each USC school, PTA and PTSO unit Presidents, the Superintendent of Schools and School Board members, for the purpose of sharing news, ideas and concerns.

Acting as the core of PTA and PTSO activities in the school district, PTC coordinates common projects such as the Partners In Education Committee, the T.I.P. or Together In Parenting Committee and the Reflections Program.

VISITING

School district policy requires that all visitors report to the main office before going to any part of the building. This policy has been created to avoid unnecessary interruption of classes and to protect the students in the building from strangers.

VOICE MAIL

Each teacher has voicemail. Parents can leave a message with the teacher. A directory is provided at the beginning of each year as well as on the Fort Couch webpage. In order to not interrupt teachers during class, please call the secretary to be connected directly to the individual teacher's voicemail.

DISTRICT PROCEDURES AND PRACTICES

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Students have the responsibility to respect the intellectual and academic property and activities of themselves and others. Cheating, plagiarism, vandalism, theft, or computer tampering will not be tolerated.

ADDRESS CHANGE

Any student having a temporary or permanent address change during the school year should notify the Fort Couch attendance office.

DRESS CODE FOR STUDENTS

The students, faculty and administration believe that student dress is primarily the responsibility of the family and that the school district must support the efforts of our parents in this enterprise. We have confidence that our students and parents will make appropriate decisions on both school attire and appearance. Students must wear styles and clothing which do not constitute a health or safety hazard, and do not cause a substantial disruption of the school program or interfere with the rights of others and does not cause damage to school property or school buses. However, it remains the final decision of the school in cases of dress code abuses. Cultural exceptions are typically granted. Students may be required to wear prescribed clothing in specific classes such as gym, art, science laboratory, etc. Students are not permitted to wear hats while in the building during school hours.

HAND WASHING/ HYGIENE

Students are encouraged to wash their hands whenever possible during the school day as a practice in good hygiene. When hand washing is not possible, hand wipes or sanitizer are good substitutes.

LOCKERS

Each student is assigned a locker. Students should not tell other students their locker combinations. If valuables are taken from a student's locker, the student should report it to the office. It is the student's responsibility to keep his/her locker clean. Students should not force the doors closed. **Lockers are for the use of a single occupant. Students are not permitted to share their lockers.**

While students are allowed the private use of a locker at Fort Couch, the **lockers remain the property of the school**. Lockers may be opened by authorized personnel as necessary for the safety and well-being of the school community. **Students are strongly encouraged to bring locks for their lockers.**

NUTRITION CENTER

An A la Carte breakfast is available for the students Monday through Friday from @ 8:20 AM – 8:50 AM. To encourage good nutrition, a well-balanced lunch is offered at a reasonable price. Nutrition Center menus for breakfast and lunch are published monthly for students to view on the website. A hot entree and sandwich are offered daily as well as soup and salads, bagels, cold cuts, yogurt and milk. A la Carte items can also be purchased from the snack line. Students may also bring their own lunches.

The Nutrition Center operates on a debit system. Parents may add money directly to their student's account via schoolcafe.com. Parents can establish spending and food limits by notifying the nutrition center manager.

Nutrition Center rules have been set up so that students may eat in a clean, orderly, and relaxed climate.

Rules for the Nutrition Center:

1. Do not cut in line.
2. Do not pressure other students for money or food.
3. Dispose of all lunch litter in wastebaskets.
4. Behave courteously. Talk in a normal tone and refrain from disruptive behavior.
5. Clean your table for the next group before leaving the nutrition center.
6. Remain on the bottom floor during the lunch period.

If the above rules are not followed, appropriate disciplinary measures will be taken.

OPENING EXERCISES / PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

District schools shall provide opening exercises that include a salute to the flag and/or recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance or the National Anthem. Students may decline to recite the Pledge of Allegiance or National Anthem and to salute the flag on the basis of personal belief or religious conviction. Students who choose to refrain from such participation shall respect the rights and interests of classmates who do participate.

PERSONAL PROPERTY

Students are cautioned not to bring cell phones, cameras, iPads, large amounts of money, or any other valuable items to school. Students, not the school, are responsible for their personal property. **Any electronic device, such as a cell phone, brought to school by a student should remain off and in the student locker during school hours.**

PHOTO REFUSAL

Photos and videotape footage of Upper St. Clair students involved in various school activities are often used as part of the district's community relations program. Photographs/videotape may be

used in district publications, video productions, newspapers, television and the district and individual classroom websites. On websites, if the student is identified at all, just the first name will be used. If for any reason you do not want photographs or videotape of your child used in publications, video production or web sites, please indicate in the FOCUS Portal forms and notify the school office.

PICTURES

A professional photographer takes pictures of Fort Couch students during the fall each year. Parents will receive instructions about the procedure to purchase these pictures if there is an interest. There is a make-up session for students absent the day pictures are originally taken.

STUDENT EXPECTATIONS

At Fort Couch Middle School, we strive to teach all students to work and grow together in a mutually respectful school environment. Students are expected to **Be responsible, Be respectful, Be prepared, Be productive, and Be safe** in their daily interactions with adults, peers, and each other.

STUDENT RECORDS

Student Cumulative Records include report cards and progress reports as well as copies of standardized assessment scores, other test scores, a picture of the student, and other pertinent educational information.

A student's Permanent File includes only the student's standardized assessment scores, final grades for each level, attendance records including records of tardiness and record of graduation. Parents have the right to view or copy these records.

Health records are kept as part of the cumulative records and passed on to other schools in the district.

Parents are responsible to provide the school with all pertinent legal information including child custody.

TRANSPORTATION

The School District provides regular daily transportation to and from school for all students participating in the regular curriculum during the school year. However, parents must provide transportation for their children when they participate in other activities. After regular school hours, including extramural and intramural sports and summer school.

Bus assignments and bus stops based on the student's home address are sent home in August. Requests for consideration of unique transportation needs such as students wishing to walk, and

handicapped students must be made in writing to the building principal. Forms are available in the school office.

Students should ride assigned buses, boarding and departing only at their designated bus stop. It is important that students be at their assigned stop at least five minutes before pick-up time. School buses may be delayed at times due to heavy traffic, severe icing conditions or other unexpected problems. Students should generally remain at the bus stop until the bus arrives.

School buses will complete their scheduled run no matter how late it may become. If weather conditions are severe, students may return to their homes after waiting 20 minutes. Parents are urged to arrange transportation to school in these emergency situations for their children if possible. Students absent because of lack of transportation will be excused under the urgent reason clause of the Pennsylvania School Code.

Concerns regarding bus policies should be forwarded to the Transportation Department at the Bus Garage. When writing to the Transportation Department, please include your name, school, date, bus number and bus stop. The telephone number for the bus garage is 412-833-1600 ext. 3450.

WALKER AND CAR RIDERS

Parents who choose to drive their children to or from school during regular school hours, should drop off/pick up their student in the front of the school. Parents choosing to have their student walk home from school should follow the same procedure as those choosing to drive their students.

SCHOOL BUS DISCIPLINE

All students shall be subject to disciplinary action for all acts of disobedience or misconduct, as outlined in School District Policy, while riding school buses to and from school and at the bus stop. The bus driver shall be responsible for maintaining order in the school bus. In the event of misconduct by any student, the driver shall immediately report such misconduct to the Director of Transportation or the School Principal where the student is in attendance. If disciplinary action is recommended, a written report of misconduct shall be filed. The School Principal will follow established School District policy when dealing with bus misconduct.

Bus Rider Rules: All school rules apply while on school district buses.

1. Students should be on time at their designated school bus stops and should wait until the bus comes to a complete stop before attempting to enter.
2. Students should keep their hands and heads inside the bus at all times while on the bus.
3. Students should talk in a quiet and polite manner refraining from loud talking and laughing that might distract the driver's attention and cause a hazardous driving situation.

4. Students should never tamper with the bus and related equipment.
5. Students should remain seated in their seats at all times.
6. Students should not throw anything in or out of the bus windows.
7. Students are expected to act in a courteous and respectful manner to other riders including their fellow students and to the bus driver.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES AND SCHOOL SAFETY

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 banner. Chief of School Police Sean Bryson can be reached at 412-833-1600 ext. 2560.

SCHOOL SAFETY - VISITORS

The safety of students and staff is a priority. The school maintains a comprehensive security plan. Entrance to the building should be made through the front doors (located on the field side). The building has been equipped with entrance cameras and entrance buttons. Visitors must identify themselves and the purpose of their visit before being admitted. Visitors will be registered through the Raptor system to obtain a visitor pass. **Students will only be released to parents or guardians. All visitors will be required to show identification.**

FIRE DRILLS

A fire evacuation plan is posted in each room. Students should study the plan and become familiar with it. When the fire alarm sounds, students will immediately stand and form two lines as they leave the room. No one is to pass another person or break the line. Running is not permitted. The first students to reach an outside door are to hold it open until everyone has left the building.

Students are not permitted to talk during a fire drill and are to remain at least 50 feet away from the building until the signal is given to re-enter. No one is to return to the building until a principal authorizes such. Students must stay with their assigned teacher in an assigned area during the drill.

EMERGENCY DRILLS

The school has an emergency response plan. Various emergency situations including severe weather, evacuations, and lock-downs are included in this plan. Students will be informed and instructed by their teachers as to the appropriate response and action to take during these drills. Emergency codes will be communicated to the entire building to inform them of the emergency situation.

EMERGENCY SCHOOL CLOSING

The USCSD Parent Alert System and Emergency School Closings – The USCSD Parent Alert System will be used to communicate weather-related as well as non-weather-related delays and/or cancellations via email and automated phone calls.

Emergency phone numbers for the Parent Alert System are requested when “Back to School Online” information is completed in mid-August. If you have additions or changes to your emergency numbers, please contact your child’s school office.

The School District will also communicate delays and cancellations through various media resources:

- USCSD website: www.uscsd.k12.pa.us
- USCSD social media accounts (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter): @uscschools
- Local television stations: KDKA, WTAE, WPXI
- Local media websites

ATTENDANCE

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 a bona fide religious group, upon prior written parental request. (as noted in Policy 204). 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 dates of absence will be labeled as **unexcused absences**.

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 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:

- o 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; or
- 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

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

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 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 appointments for their children before or after the regular school day. If it is essential that such appointments be scheduled during the school day, the parents must submit a note or email the Attendance Office requesting an early dismissal. In the morning, students will find a table in the front foyer as they enter school where they are able to hand in their early dismissal slip.

The following should be included:

- Student's name
- Date and time of early dismissal
- Reason for early dismissal
- Signature of parent/guardian

The attendance office will email the student's teachers alerting them of the early dismissal.

It is the responsibility of the student to remind the teacher when it is time for the early dismissal. Parents/Caregivers **MUST** come into the school to sign out the student.

ATTENDANCE TIMES

Students will be credited with full day attendance if they arrive before 10:25 AM and do not leave until after 2:10 PM. Students will be credited with a half-day absence if they arrive or leave between 10:25 AM and 2:10 PM. Students will be considered absent for the entire day if they leave before 10:25 AM or arrive after 2:10 PM.

PRE-APPROVED ABSENCES

The Administration recognizes that middle school-age children will occasionally be absent from school attending an educational trip/ tour with family or other organizations. If parents/guardians know that their child will be absent from school, it is required to complete an **Educational Trip Form**. This form may be obtained from the Fort Couch Middle School Main Office staff or by visiting our website: Educational Trip Form. The excused absence form is to be completed and submitted for approval to the Main Office **at least one week prior** to the intended date of absence. The Attendance Secretary will contact the parent/guardian only if the request is denied.

RELIGIOUS HOLIDAY / RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION

Provisions are to be made in each school to excuse pupils from school for observance of bona fide religious holidays. A pupil's absence from school for bona fide religious holidays shall be recorded as a "Religious" absence.

MISCELLANEOUS

DAMAGED ITEMS

Students are responsible for all items assigned to or used by them. They will be required to reimburse the School District for anything lost, damaged, or defaced. This includes texts, library books, school materials, facilities, computers, Chromebooks, and school property.

WATER BOTTLES

All students and staff have access to water fountain filling stations throughout the school building. Our water fountains are cleaned regularly, properly maintained, and accessible to everyone. We recognize that students may need additional hydration throughout the school day. Students are permitted to have refillable water bottles in class. At the discretion of the classroom teacher, students may lose this privilege if the water bottle becomes a distraction to the learning environment.

General Guidelines for Water Bottle Usage at Fort Couch:

- Students are permitted to carry water bottles at Fort Couch Middle School
- Students are only permitted to have WATER in the water bottle
- Reusable/ refillable bottles are preferred
- If the water bottle is interfering with the learning of the student/ other students the teacher will ask the student to remove the water bottle from the classroom (i.e. put the bottle in their locker)
- Water bottles should be kept under the students' desks and away from any technology and / or device

SCHOOL TRANSFERS

Advance written notification from a parent/guardian must be provided if a student intends to transfer to another school. Contact the Attendance Secretary for additional information.

TELEPHONE CALLS

Telephone calls to the school requesting that messages from parents be delivered to students should be restricted to emergency situations only. We encourage students to refrain from calling home during the school day. However, if a student needs to call home, he or she must come to the office. Students are not permitted to use cell phones during the school day unless allowed by staff. Cell phones must remain in the students' backpacks in their lockers. Disciplinary action may be taken if a student is using a phone in school when not permitted.

HEALTH & WELLNESS INFORMATION

Health Services Information - Link for Additional Information

Diabetes Management (Policy 209.2)

The Upper St. Clair School District recognizes the need for immediate safety of students with diabetes as well as their long term health. Diabetic school orders are required for each school year. The school nurses collaborate as a team with each family individually and their diabetic provider to create a plan for their student to ensure they are ready to learn and participate fully in school activities while minimizing the possibility of diabetes-related emergencies. Students who plan to self-administer and monitor their diabetes will need to have a written statement pertaining to this in their diabetes school orders or have the Carry and Self-Administration of Emergency Medications Form completed by their diabetic provider.

Food Allergy Management (Policy 209.1)

Parents or guardians who request accommodations for their child(ren) who have severe food allergies must provide written documentation to the school nurse from a physician indicating the nature and severity of the food allergy, as well as emergency procedures to be followed in the event of a severe allergic reaction. Coordination of information on accommodations with the Nutrition Center Food Service Director, the school nurse, and all other pertinent parties will occur in accordance with this policy. Specific guidelines regarding accommodating non-disabling and disabling allergies can be found in Policy 209.1

Health Examinations-Screenings (Policy 209)

State law requires that physical and dental examinations be provided by the school's doctor or dentist or by the student's family physician. These examinations can be provided by the district, but parents usually choose to have these examinations done by their personal physician. Pennsylvania School Law requires that each child entering school, grade 6, and grade 11 have a physical exam and each child entering school, grade 3, and grade 7 have a dental exam. All kindergarten students must have a lead test completed per county guidance. The Medical/Dental forms for a private physical and/or dental exam are located on the Health Services webpage. The district will send the appropriate forms to your home when required. The district encourages parents/guardians to timely obtain the exams and promptly return the applicable forms to the school nurse prior to the start of the following school year.

The school nurse may also complete other screenings during the school day to include hearing, vision, scoliosis, height and weight, and other tests deemed advisable, at intervals established by the district.

Immunizations and Communicable Diseases (Policy 203 and Administrative Regulations)

All students shall be immunized against specific diseases in accordance with state law and regulations, unless specifically exempt for religious or medical reasons. Students in public schools must be immunized for tetanus, diphtheria, acellular pertussis, polio, measles, mumps, rubella, hepatitis B and varicella (chickenpox). Children attending grade 7 are required to have an updated tetanus, diphtheria, acellular pertussis (Tdap) and a meningococcal conjugate vaccine (MCV). Children entering grade 12 will also need 1 dose of meningococcal conjugate vaccine (MCV). Without these required immunizations the student will not be permitted to attend school. In the event of an incidence of a reportable communicable disease within the student community for which another student is unimmunized, the unimmunized student may be excluded from school, as permitted by law, to lessen the risk of transmission of the disease and safeguard the well-being of the educational community. The school nurse should be contacted with any questions or concerns in this area.

Where applicable, those individuals who are identified as symptomatic or asymptomatic carriers of communicable diseases, infected with acute diseases, and/or chronic infectious diseases will be restricted from the school environment until such a time that it is ascertained their presence within the educational setting will not present a risk to themselves or others. Individually afflicted students shall be afforded their due process rights in respect to continued attendance or when appropriate be provided with education in the least restrictive environment.

Medications (Policy 210)

A violation of the medication policy may result in student discipline under the Code of Student Conduct.

To ensure proper administration of medication, any student needing “prescribed medication” (prescriptions or over-the-counter medication which has been prescribed by a doctor in writing) during school hours, per the physician’s instructions, must follow these procedures:

1. Obtain and process a medication form, which should outline specific procedures for administering medication.
2. All medications must be brought to the nurse's office by the parent/guardian or student in grades 9-12 immediately upon entry to school. Medications will be stored in a locked area of the building health office. The medication must be in a proper pharmaceutical container, bearing the student’s name, physician’s name and treatment instructions, including times the medication is to be administered.

All medications must be administered by the Certified School Nurse, or in the absence of the Certified School Nurse by other licensed school health staff (RN, LPN), except as otherwise noted

In some cases, a parent may determine the need for his/her child to take “over-the-counter” medication (such as aspirin, cough medicine, etc.). This medication must also be registered at the school nurse’s office, following the procedures previously listed. The district cannot, however, assume responsibility for maintaining a schedule to administer “over-the-counter” medication, unless a physician prescribes it.

SCHOOL NURSE

The school nurse is on duty every day. Please feel free to phone the school office if you would like to speak with the nurse. A student who becomes ill or injured during the school day should report to the school health office. Students with a health-related problem will be dismissed from school only to persons identified in the student’s emergency form. If your student is absent for more than three days, the nurse will contact you regarding his or her health status.

CODE OF STUDENT CONDUCT

Student Discipline (Policy 218)

The District believes that student conduct is closely related to learning. An effective educational program requires a safe and comfortable school environment.

Student discipline and the enforcing of school rules will be done respectfully, promptly, consistently, confidentially, and equitably regardless of the personal characteristics of the individual student. Discipline is motivated by the intent to correct and promote positive behavior and growth, as well as to maintain order.

The Board shall adopt a Code of Student Conduct to govern student discipline, and students shall not be subject to disciplinary action because of race, sex, color, religion, sexual orientation, national origin or handicap/disability. Each student must adhere to Board policies and the Code of Student Conduct governing student discipline

Any student disciplined by a District employee shall have the right to notice of the infraction.

Off-Campus Activities

This policy shall also apply to student conduct that occurs off school property and would otherwise violate the Code of Student Conduct if any of the following circumstances exist:

1. The conduct occurs during the time the student is traveling to and from school or traveling to and from school-sponsored activities, whether or not via school district furnished transportation.
2. The student is a member of an extracurricular activity and has been notified that particular off-campus conduct could result in exclusion from such activities.
3. Student expression or conduct materially and substantially disrupts the operations of the school, or the administration reasonably anticipates that the expression or conduct is likely to materially and substantially disrupt the operations of the school.
4. The conduct has a direct nexus to attendance at school or a school-sponsored activity, for example, a transaction conducted outside of school pursuant to an agreement made in school, that would violate the Code of Student Conduct if conducted in school
5. The conduct involves the theft of vandalism of school property.
6. There is a relationship between the proximity of learning or timing of the conduct in relation to a student's attendance at school or school-sponsored activities.
7. The conduct constitutes bullying or harassment or cyberbullying as defined by Board Policy.

As it would be impossible to identify and list all types of student infractions or administrative actions, disciplinary consequences will be administered based on an individual basis for violations not specifically outlined in this handbook at the discretion of the building administrators.

MINOR VIOLATIONS	<u>POSSIBLE</u> Administrative Actions
Excessive Noise	Warning, Detention, and/or disciplinary referral
Unjustified tardiness to assigned places	Warning, Detention, and/ or disciplinary referral
Disorder/ disruption in class or hall	Warning, Detention, and/ or disciplinary referral
Damaging books or other materials	Payment, possible suspension, limitations or restrictions on material access
Loitering in the halls or lavatory	Warning, Detention, and/ or disciplinary referral
Poor conduct in the Nutrition Center	Corrective action such as clean up, alternative eating area assigned, Warning, Detention, and/ or disciplinary referral
Failure to pay library or other financial obligations, return school materials (including iPad) such as books, equipment, supplies.	Payment, possible detention, suspension, limitations or restrictions on material access, and/ or referral to law enforcement
Class cut	Warning, Detention, and/ or disciplinary referral
Any behavior which is a distraction to the educational process, but does not endanger the safety of people or property.	Warning, Detention, and/ or disciplinary referral
Cheating	Possible failure for that piece of work, Detention, and/ or disciplinary referral
Violation of activity rules	Warning, Detention, and/ or disciplinary referral, suspension from activity
MAJOR VIOLATIONS	<u>POSSIBLE</u> Administrative Action (Disciplinary referral will be issued for major infractions)
Use of any unauthorized electronic device during the school day, including school bus and field trips	Detention, suspension, device may be taken and held in the Main Office and released only to a parent/ guardian. Possible student expulsion
Engaging in conduct that violates the Criminal Code,	Suspension, possible expulsion, and/ or possible

the laws of Pennsylvania, Township of Upper St. Clair ordinances or its published- posted policies and regulations	criminal prosecution
Possession and/ or use of any weapon or use of any object to cause bodily harm	Suspension, possible expulsion, and/ or possible criminal prosecution
Possession and/ or use of any tobacco product, including but not limited to vapes, e-cigarettes, Juuls, chewing tobacco, etc.	Suspension, possible expulsion, and/ or possible criminal prosecution, Tobacco educational program
Possession, use, transportation, or being under the influence of drugs	Suspension, possible expulsion, and/ or possible criminal prosecution, D & A educational program
Possession, use, transportation, or being under the influence of alcohol	Suspension, possible expulsion, and/ or possible criminal prosecution, D & A educational program
Sale of drugs, alcohol, and/ or tobacco products	Suspension, possible expulsion, and/ or possible criminal prosecution, D & A educational program
Possession/ use of any look-alike chemicals or paraphernalia associated with the use of drugs, alcohol, or other controlled substance	Suspension, possible expulsion, and/ or possible criminal prosecution, D & A educational program
Throwing objects at vehicles, school, or people	Detention, suspension, possible criminal prosecution, removal of privileges
Leaving school grounds without permission	Detention, suspension, police notified, removal of privileges
Profanity/disrespectful speech or actions	Detention, suspension, possible criminal prosecution, possible expulsion
Fighting or rowdy/physical behavior that disturbs the learning environment and/or threatens the safety of others	Detention, suspension, possible criminal prosecution, possible expulsion
Theft	Restitution where possible, Detention, suspension, possible criminal prosecution, payment
Vandalism and defacing school property and/ or the property of others (including the school-issued technology device)	Payment, Detention, suspension, possible criminal prosecution
Tampering with safety equipment, such as fire alarms, smoke detectors, fire extinguishers, sprinklers, surveillance cameras	Detention, suspension, possible criminal prosecution, Fire Marshall notified, payment, possible expulsion

Possession and/or ignition of any fireworks, smoke bombs, matches, lighters, incendiary devices, etc.	Confiscation, Detention, suspension, possible criminal prosecution, possible expulsion
Misuse/abuse/forgery of early dismissals, hall passes, excuses, and/or other school communications	Detention, suspension, possible criminal prosecution, possible expulsion
Repeated minor infractions	Detention, suspension, possible criminal prosecution, possible expulsion
Bullying	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, and /or other Counseling/Therapy.
Harassment, sexual harassment, other harassment, discrimination, or related retaliation	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, and /or other Counseling/Therapy.
Hazing	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, and /or other Counseling/Therapy.
Any behavior resulting in unsafe conditions or that interferes with the rights of others or that violates the policies of Upper St. Clair School District: Including but not limited to Harassment, Cyberbullying/ Bullying, Terroristic Threats, Other Threats, Weapons, Repeated infractions, etc.	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, and /or other Counseling/Therapy.
Violation of school district policies or regulations	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, and /or other

ADDITIONAL STUDENT CONDUCT POLICIES

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.

Controlled Substances-Paraphernalia (Policy 227)

The District expects that students report for class or extracurricular, co-curricular, school sponsored/sanctioned activities in a condition that will allow them to perform their various activities in a safe and efficient manner. The District recognizes that in-school as well as out-of-school use of controlled substances has a negative impact on the institution as a whole and is detrimental to the safety of our student body as well as our goal of a drug-free learning environment. Rules, guidelines and procedures have been developed to provide students information in advance of a problem and to promote the safety of all students, faculty and the public. Violations will not be tolerated and may result in disciplinary action up to and including expulsion and referral for prosecution.

Students are prohibited from using, possessing, distributing, and being under the influence of any controlled substances during school hours, at any time while on school property, at any school-sponsored activity, and during the time spent traveling to and from school and to and from school-sponsored activities.

Controlled substances include: (1) controlled substances prohibited by federal and state laws; (2) look-alike drugs; (3) alcoholic beverages; (4) anabolic steroids; (5) drug paraphernalia; (6) any volatile solvents or inhalants; (7) substances that when ingested cause a physiological effect that is similar to the effect of a controlled substance as defined by state and federal laws; and (8) prescription or non-prescription (over-the-counter) medications, except those for which permission for use in school has been granted pursuant to Board policy.

Students can be excluded from participating in any extra-curricular activity/sport for off-campus use of controlled substances even if the use has no nexus to the District's curricular or extracurricular programs. (See Policy 122).

Discipline of Students with Disabilities (Policy 113.1)

Students with disabilities who violate the Code of Student Conduct, or engage in inappropriate behavior, disruptive or prohibited activities and/or actions injurious to themselves or others, which would typically result in corrective action or discipline of students without disabilities, shall be disciplined in accordance with state and federal laws and regulations and Board policy and, if applicable, their Individualized Education Program(IEP), Service Agreement, and/or Positive Behavior Support Plan.

Electronic Devices (Policy 237)

The Board prohibits use of electronic devices by students during the school day in district buildings except as may be specifically permitted by the exceptions in this policy; on district property; on district buses and vehicles; during the times students are under the supervision of the district; and in locker rooms, bathrooms, health suites and other changing areas at anytime. Exceptions may be granted for health and safety emergencies, educational purposes, or when permitted by the building principal or the high school's bring your own device policy.

Hazing (Policy 247)

Hazing includes intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly, for the purpose of initiating, admitting, or affiliating a student with an organization or for the purpose of continuing or enhancing membership or status in an organization causes, coerces, or forces a student to engage in certain activities or actions set forth in the policy, including any activity that creates a reasonable risk of physical or emotional harm.

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.

Suspension and Expulsion (Policy 233)

A student may be given an in-school suspension after being notified of the reason for the in-school suspension and given the opportunity to respond. The student's parent/guardian shall be notified of the in-school suspension, and an in-school suspension lasting more than ten (10) consecutive school days shall require an informal hearing with the principal.

The principal or person in charge of the school may suspend any student out of school for disobedience or misconduct for a period of one (1) to ten (10) consecutive school days and shall immediately notify the parent/guardian in writing when the student is suspended. Prior to being suspended, the student shall be notified of the reason for the suspension and given the opportunity to respond. An informal hearing shall be held for any out of school suspension lasting more than three (3) consecutive school days.

Expulsion is exclusion from school by the Board for a period exceeding ten (10) consecutive school days. The Board may permanently expel from the district rolls any student whose misconduct or disobedience warrants this sanction. No student shall be expelled without an opportunity for a formal hearing before the Board, a duly authorized committee of the Board, or a qualified hearing examiner appointed by the Board, and upon action taken by the Board after the hearing.

Terroristic Threats (Policy 218.2)

Terroristic threat shall mean a threat communicated either directly or indirectly to commit any crime of violence with the intent to terrorize another; to cause evacuation of a building, place of assembly or facility of public transportation; or to otherwise cause serious public inconvenience, or cause terror or serious public inconvenience with reckless disregard of the risk of causing such terror or inconvenience. Other threats that do not constitute terroristic threats under this policy may be subject to discipline under the Code of Student Conduct.

Tobacco and Vaping Products (Policy 222)

The District prohibits student possession, use, purchase and sale of tobacco and vaping products, including Juuls and other electronic cigarettes.

Weapons (Policy 218.1)

Possession or use of weapons in the school setting (school grounds, school sponsored activities, in any student vehicle on students grounds, or traveling to or from school) is a threat to the safety of students and staff and is prohibited by the law.

The term “weapons” includes but is not limited to any knife, cutting instrument, cutting tool, nunchaku, firearm, shotgun, rifle, replica of a weapon, any other tool, instrument or implement capable of inflicting serious bodily injury and replica of weapon.

The Board shall expel for a period of not less than one (1) year any student who violates this policy. Expulsion will be given following formal due process proceedings required by law and Board Policy. The Superintendent may recommend modifications of the expulsion requirements on a case-by-case basis. If the Superintendent is recommending discipline for a weapon policy violation that does not constitute an expulsion, the discipline in lieu of expulsion may be imposed by the Superintendent and does not require Board approval.

SCHOOL DISTRICT POLICIES

Overview of School District Policies

Listed below are a number of recently adopted USC School Board policies. ***The list is not all inclusive.*** All policies and regulations are on file as the "School Board Policy Manual" and can be viewed at the Administrative Offices. You may also visit the District's website. Topics most relevant to students and their families are covered under these policies:

Series 200 - Pupils

200 - Enrollment of New Students

201 - Admission of Students

203 - Immunizations and Communicable Diseases

204 - Attendance

207 - Confidential Communications with Students

208 - Withdrawal from School

209 - Health Examinations-Screenings

209.1 - Food Allergy Management

209.2 - Diabetes Management

210 - Medications

210 - Attachment - Medication Administration Consent And Licensed Prescriber Order

210.1 - Possession-Administration of Asthma Inhalers-Epinephrine Auto-Injectors

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

218.3 - Discipline of Student Convicted-Adjudicated of Sexual Assault

219 - Student Complaint Process

220 - Student Expression/Distribution and Posting of Materials

220 - Attachment

221 - Dress and Grooming

222 - Tobacco and Vaping Products

222-AR-0 - Tobacco and Vaping Products

222-AR-1 - Tobacco and Vaping Product Violation Parental Notification

224 - Care of School Property

226 - Searches

227 - Controlled Substances-Paraphernalia

229 - Student Fundraising

231 - Student Events and Class Trips

233 - Suspension and Expulsion

235 - Student Rights and Responsibilities

235.1 - Surveys

236 - Student Assistance Program

236.1 - Threat Assessment

237 - Electronic Devices

239 - Foreign Exchange Students

246 - School Wellness

247 - Hazing

247 - Hazing Attachment 1 - Report Form

247 AR-1 - Hazing

247 AR-2 - Hazing - Notice to Complainant and-or Parents-Guardians of Complainant

249 - Bullying-Cyberbullying

249 Bullying-Cyberbullying -Attachment 1 Report Form

249 - AR-1 - Bullying-Cyberbullying

249 -AR-2 - Notice to Complainant of Complaint

250 - Student Recruitment

251 - Homeless Students

252 - Dating Violence

252 - Attachment - Report Form for Complaints of Dating Violence

255 - Educational Stability for Children in Foster Care

Series 800 - Operations

800 - Records Management

800.1 - Electronic Signatures and Records

801 - Public Records

805 - Emergency Preparedness and Response

805.1 - Relations With Law Enforcement Agencies

805.2 - School Security Personnel

806 - Child Abuse

807 - Opening Exercises Flag Displays

808 - Food Services

810 - Transportation

810.1 - School Bus Drivers and School Commercial Motor Vehicle Drivers

810.2 - Transportation - Video Audio Recording

810.3 - School Vehicle Drivers

814 - Copyright Material

815 - Acceptable Use of Internet, Computers and Network Resources

815 AR1 - Virtual Instruction Guidelines

819 - Suicide Awareness Prevention and Response

822 - Automated External Defibrillator (AED) Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR)

823 - Naloxone

824 - Maintaining Professional Adult Student Boundaries

827 - Conflict of Interest

828 - Fraud

830 - Breach of Computerized Personal Information

TECHNOLOGY @ USCSD: 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.

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.

Policy 815 Use of the District's Internet and Computer Networks

Please visit the district website for more information regarding technology staff, supports, and services: [Technology @ USCSD](#).

District technology policies apply to all students, employees, ECA positions, visitors and volunteers using the School District's internet service or computer network, or any School District owned device, software, application, digital technology or system whether on the school district premises or in any location away from the school district premises, including at home. In addition, this policy applies to any non school district owned device using the District's network, systems or Internet connection.

The Board supports the use of the Internet and other computer networks in the District's instructional and operational programs in order to facilitate learning, teaching and daily operations through interpersonal communications and access to information, research and collaboration.

For instructional purposes, the use of network facilities shall be consistent with the curriculum adopted by the School District as well as the varied instructional needs, learning styles, abilities, and developmental levels of students.

The electronic information available to students and staff does not imply endorsement by the District of the content, nor does the District guarantee the accuracy of information received. The District shall not be responsible for any information that may be lost, damaged or unavailable when using the network or for any information that is retrieved via the Internet.

The District shall not be responsible for any unauthorized charges or fees resulting from access to the Internet.

The District reserves the right to log network use and to monitor fileserver space utilization by District users in order to address School District concerns. A log on banner in the form attached as Appendix A, as may be amended from time to time by the Administration, will put users on notice of the District's access right.

The Board establishes that network use is a privilege, not a right; inappropriate, unauthorized and illegal use may result in suspension and/or cancellation of those privileges and appropriate disciplinary action. The frequency and severity of violations, among other things, will determine the level of suitable discipline.

The District shall make every effort to ensure that this resource is used responsibly by students and staff, and that it complies with the Federal Communications Commission's Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA).

This Policy 815 (Information Systems Policy) applies to all students, employees, ECA positions, visitors and volunteers using the School District's internet service or computer network, or any School District owned device, software, application, digital technology or system whether on the school district premises or in any location away from the school district premises, including at home. In addition, this policy applies to any non school district owned device using the District's network, systems or Internet connection.

Administrators, teachers and staff have a professional responsibility to work together to help students develop the intellectual skills necessary to discriminate among information sources, to identify information appropriate to their age and developmental levels, and to evaluate and use the information to meet their educational goals.

Students and staff have the responsibility to respect and protect the rights of every other user in the District and on the Internet.

The administrators shall have the authority, in the first instance, to determine whether activity violates this policy. The determination is subject to review by the Superintendent.

Prohibitions

Students and staff are expected to act in a responsible, ethical and legal manner in accordance with District policy, accepted rules of network etiquette, and federal and state law.

Personal use of the District's internet and email system by staff must be strictly limited. To the extent possible, staff should not use the District's network or computers to transmit personal communications.

Specifically, the following uses are prohibited:

1. Facilitating illegal activity.
2. Commercial or for-profit purposes.
3. Nonwork or nonschool related usage.
4. Product advertisement or political lobbying.
5. Bullying/Cyberbullying.
6. Hate mail, discriminatory remarks, or offensive or inflammatory communication.
7. Communication by staff to students which do not entirely concern necessary and appropriate School District matters.
8. Unauthorized or illegal installation, distribution, reproduction, or use of copyrighted materials.
9. Access to materials, images or photographs that are obscene, pornographic, lewd or otherwise illegal.
10. Access by students and minors to material that is determined by the District to be harmful to minors or is determined by the District inappropriate for minors in accordance with the CIPA and Board policy adopted pursuant thereto, or the student code of conduct.
11. Inappropriate language or profanity.
12. Transmission of material likely to be offensive or objectionable to recipients.
13. Intentionally obtaining or modifying of files, passwords, and data belonging to other users.
14. Impersonation of another user, anonymity, and pseudonyms.
15. Fraudulent copying, communications, or modification of materials in violation of copyright laws.
16. Loading or using of unauthorized games, programs, files, or other electronic media.
17. Disruption of the work of other users.
18. Destruction, modification, abuse or unauthorized access to network hardware, software and files.

Security

System security is protected through the use of passwords. Failure to adequately protect or update passwords could result in unauthorized access to District files. To protect the integrity of the system, the following guidelines shall be followed:

1. Employees and students shall not reveal their own password or the password of any other system user to any other individual.
2. Users are not to use a computer that has been logged in under another student's or employee's name.
3. Any user identified as a security risk or having a history of problems with other computer systems may be denied access to the network.

Consequences For Inappropriate Use

The network user shall be responsible for damages to the equipment, systems, and software resulting from deliberate or willful acts.

Illegal use of the network; intentional deletion or damage to files of data belonging to others; copyright violations; and theft of services will be reported to the appropriate legal authorities for possible prosecution.

General rules for behavior and communications addressed elsewhere in Board policy and the student code of conduct apply when using the Internet, in addition to the stipulations of this policy. Suspension or loss of access and other disciplinary actions shall be consequences for violations of this policy.

Vandalism will result in cancellation of access privileges and disciplinary action. Vandalism is defined as any intentional attempt to harm or destroy data of another user, Internet or other networks; this includes but is not limited to uploading or creating computer viruses.

Copyright

The illegal use of copyrighted software by students and staff is prohibited. Any data uploaded to or downloaded from the network must be authorized by fair use guidelines or consent.

Safety

To the greatest extent possible, users of the network will be protected from harassment and unwanted or unsolicited communication. Any network user who receives threatening or unwelcome communications shall report such immediately to a teacher or administrator.

Any District computer/server utilized by students and staff shall be equipped with Internet blocking/filtering software.

Developmentally appropriate internet safety measures shall be implemented that include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Safety and security of minors when using electronic mail, chat rooms, and other forms of direct electronic communications.
2. Prevention of unauthorized online access by minors, including "hacking" and other unlawful activities.
3. Unauthorized disclosure, use, and dissemination of personal information regarding minors.
4. Restriction of minors' access to materials determined by the District to be harmful to them pursuant to the CIPA and Board policy.

LOG ON BANNER

The Upper St. Clair School District ("District") reserves the right to view or scan any file or software on its computers or passing through its network at any time for any purpose in order to address School District concerns. All electronic messages contain no right of privacy or confidentiality except where Pennsylvania or Federal law provides for it. The District may inspect the usage of any electronic communications made by any person at any time utilizing District hardware or passing through the District's network as deemed necessary to address School District concerns to the full extent not expressly prohibited by applicable law.

The School District's Policy 815, Use of the District's Internet and Computer Networks, is available in this handbook or by [clicking here](#).

Fort Couch Middle School

STUDENT/FAMILY CHROMEBOOK AGREEMENT 2023-2024

I understand that the Chromebook is an educational tool for learning:

- I will only use my Chromebook for educational purposes.
- I will use my Chromebook in ways that are appropriate and meet the Upper St. Clair School District expectations and policies.
- I will only use my Chromebook in ways that demonstrate academic integrity (i.e. not copying answers, homework, or cheating).
- I will follow the policies outlined in the school handbook and the Acceptable Use Policy anytime I am using my district-issued Chromebook.
- I understand that my Chromebook is subject to inspection at any time without notice because it is the property of the Upper St. Clair School District.

I understand that I am responsible for the general care of the Chromebook:

- I will know where my Chromebook is at all times.
- I understand that the Chromebook is registered to me and is not to be loaned out to others.
- I will ensure that my Chromebook is placed in a secured location when not being used.
- I will handle my Chromebook carefully (i.e. avoid throwing or dropping device, not placing heavy objects on top, etc.).
- I will keep food and beverages away from my Chromebook.
- I will charge my Chromebook's battery daily to be prepared for school.

I understand that there are some specific restrictions regarding Chromebook usage:

- I understand that my Chromebook is not to be taken into a restroom or locker room.
- I understand that pictures, video, apps and other media that are not educational do not belong on my Chromebook
- I understand that I am not permitted to take pictures or videos of others without their clear permission because doing so is a violation of their privacy and school rules.

I understand the procedures for handling repairs and/ or damages:

- I will not modify or change settings/configurations of the Chromebook.

- I understand that the USCSD Technology Department is responsible for repairing my Chromebook, and I will not attempt to repair or disassemble my device for any reason.
- I will be responsible for all damage or loss caused intentionally, or for damage caused by neglect or abuse.
- I will file a report in the Principal's Office in the case of theft, vandalism, or damage.

I agree to use my Chromebook respectfully and responsibility by following the rules and expectations of my school and school district. I will be prepared by having my Chromebook charged and ready for learning every day. I will use my Chromebook productively for educational purposes only and I will handle it safely with care. I agree to return the Chromebook, cover, and charger in good working condition at the end of this school year. If a student withdraws from the District, the Chromebook will be returned at that time.

COMPLIANCE NOTIFICATIONS

Annual Compliance Notifications include the following and additional notifications that can be found at <https://www.uscsd.k12.pa.us/Domain/5>. Upper St. Clair School District complies with all federal and state regulations.

CHILD FIND NOTICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES AND 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 (Mrs. Cassandra Doggrell, 412-833-1600 ext. 2064) and request an explanation [Compliance Notifications / Child Find - Special Education Services](#)

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 Dr. Lauren Madia, Director of Pupil Services at x2113 for any questions.

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 this 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 sex in admission to or employment in its education programs or activities.

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:

Employee Concerns

Mr. Ray Carson, Sr. Director of Operations & Administrative Services
rcarson@uscsd.k12.pa.us | 412-833-1600 ext. 2063

Student/Family Concerns, Gr. K-12

Dr. Lauren Madia, Director of Pupil Services
lmadia@uscsd.k12.pa.us | 412-833-1600 ext. 2113

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

The information in this Student-Family 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 Student-Family Handbook, please contact school administration for assistance.