

Family & Student Handbook

Our Mission

Independence Charter School (ICS) is a community-based K-8 public charter school of academic excellence, centrally located in Philadelphia and serving a diverse community of learners. ICS provides an intellectually-stimulating curriculum with a global focus designed to develop independent, thoughtful global citizens. We emphasize second language acquisition and integrate arts, ideas, and histories from around the world.

Our Vision

Independence Charter School will foster equity and excellence in learning by embracing global citizenship, bilingual education, rigorous academics and creative expression through the arts.

Our Values

Community. We honor and celebrate the fullness of our individual and collective humanity.

Courage. We accept the challenge and joy of standing for who we are and for everyone's right to be themselves.

Growth. We take risks and do difficult things every day because learning strengthens our relationships to ourselves, each other, and the world. Learning is worth the effort.

Equity. We create a just learning environment that provides all learners with what they need to feel and be healthy, safe, and affirmed. All learners deserve academic opportunities that meet their needs.

Global Citizenship

I am a global citizen when...

Soy un ciudadano del mundo cuando...

I respect multiple points of view.

Respeto diferentes puntos de vista.

I challenge stereotypes and misinformation.

Desafío los estereotipos y la desinformación.

I make responsible decisions.

Tomo decisiones responsables.

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Nondiscrimination in Services

Admissions, the provisions of services, and referrals of students shall be made without regard to race, color, religious creed, disability, ancestry, national origin (including limited English proficiency), age, or sex.

School services shall be made accessible to eligible persons with disabilities through the most practical and economically feasible methods available. These methods include, but are not limited to: Equipment redesign, the provision of aides, and the use of alternative service delivery locations. Structural modifications shall be considered only as a last resort among available methods.

Any student (and/or their guardian) who believes they have been discriminated against may file a complaint of discrimination with:

	Independence Charter School 1600 Lombard Street Philadelphia, PA 19146
Department of Public Welfare Bureau of Equal Opportunity Room 223, Health and Welfare Building P.O. Box 2675 Harrisburg, PA 17105	PA Human Relations Commission Philadelphia Regional Office Room 711, Philadelphia SOB 1400 Spring Garden Street Philadelphia, PA 19130
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office for Civil Rights Suite 372, Public Ledger Building 150 South Independence Mall West Philadelphia, PA 19106-9111	Bureau of Equal Opportunity Southeastern Regional Office Room 1105-B, Philadelphia. SOB 1400 Spring Garden Street Philadelphia, PA 19130-4088

Child Abuse and Neglect

It is policy that Independence Charter School complies with the Child Protective Services Law of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. This law makes it mandatory for ICS employees to report suspected cases of physical abuse, neglect, mental injury, sexual abuse or sexual exploitation to the Department of Human Services. Compliance with the laws of Pennsylvania and the policies of ICS serves to protect all parties involved.

Title I Notification

As a public charter school, ICS receives local, state and federal funding. As a school-wide Title I funded site, ICS must remind you that you have the right, as a parent or guardian, to request and receive timely information regarding the professional qualifications of your children's classroom/subject teachers. If you would like to know this information, please notify ICS by emailing tishc@icscharter.com or delivering a written request to the front office.

Title I School-Parent Compact 2019-2020

The Independence Charter School staff, students, and parents agree that this compact outlines how the parents, the entire school staff, and the students will share the responsibility for improved student academic achievement and the means by which the school and parents will build and develop a partnership that will help children achieve the state's high standards.

School Responsibilities

Independence Charter School will:

1. Provide high-quality curriculum and instruction in a supportive and effective learning environment that enables the participating children to meet the state's achievement standards and ICS's vision & values by implementing:
 - A just and equitable learning environment.
 - Daily community-building routines rooted in the principles of Responsive Classroom that celebrate and acknowledge the whole child.
 - A rigorous academic curriculum aligned with PA Core Standards.
 - An exploration of the principles global citizenship.
 - Bilingual education.
 - Trauma-informed approaches to classroom management.
 - Creative expression through the arts.
2. Provide parents with frequent reports on their children's progress through:
 - Interim reports and report cards.
 - Report card conferences 2x per year to discuss individual child achievement, growth, and opportunities/strategies for parents to support students at home.
 - Regular newsletters and/or emails.
 - The Alma parent portal.
 - Contacting parents directly as needed.
3. Partner with parents by asking for and listening to the family's goals for their children's learning and success at school.
4. Provide parents with reasonable access to teachers, administrators, and the Board of Trustees.
5. Provide parents with opportunities to volunteer and participate in the school, including but not limited to:
 - Volunteering in the classroom and as a field trip chaperon.
 - PTA events.
 - Attending Title I and other school planning meetings.
6. Communicate institutional progress, priorities, and planning with parents consistently and transparently through:
 - An annual climate & culture meeting for families
 - Clear and regular communication of policies and procedures
 - Timely communication and engagement with stakeholders about events that might impact students, parents, the staff, or the community at large.

Parent Responsibilities

In order to support our children's learning, we, as parents, will:

1. Establish routines to support our children's success in school, including:
 - Ensuring that our children attend school on time every day, for the full school day.
 - Maintaining an appropriate bedtime.
 - Setting and enforcing appropriate limits on screen time.
 - Creating habits and routines that support our children in reading at home and completing homework daily.
 - Ensuring that our children adhere to the school dress code.
2. Model a positive attitude about school, teachers, peers, the learning process, and the principles of global citizenship.
3. Be familiar with and adhere to classroom and school policies, and follow the school's Code of Civility.
4. Stay informed about our children's education by promptly reading all notices sent by teachers or administrators.
5. Contact teachers or administrators promptly about any concerns.
6. Monitor and ensure children's safe and responsible use of social media.
7. Schedule student doctor appointments and family travel outside of school hours whenever possible.
8. Serve on school advisory groups and/or contribute feedback on school surveys.

Student Responsibilities

We, as students, will take responsibility for our own learning and growth by:

1. Following school rules: Be safe. Be Responsible. Be respectful.
2. Completing classwork and homework, and seeking/accepting help when needed.
3. Giving my parents all notices and information from school.
4. Following a routine at home that includes at least 20 minutes of reading every day.
5. Striving to be a global citizen: Respect multiple points of view. Challenge stereotypes and misinformation. Make responsible decisions.

Community Code of Civility Adapted from the University of Maryland University College Code of Civility

- **Respect:** Treat all students, staff, families, and community members with respect and in a professional and courteous manner at all times, whether in person or in written communication (including email and texts).
- **Kindness:** Refrain from using profanities, insults, or other disparaging remarks.
- **Truth:** Tell only the truth and do not knowingly misrepresent, mischaracterize, or misquote information received from others.
- **Responsibility:** Take responsibility for your own actions. Do not blame others.
- **Cooperation:** Work together with other students, community members, and staff in a spirit of cooperation toward our shared goal of providing a quality education and creating global citizens.
- **Privacy:** Strive to uphold the right to privacy and do not talk about others.
- **Nondiscrimination:** Respect differences in people and their ideas and reject injustice and intolerance.

Frequently Requested Resources

Board of Trustees

The Independence Charter School Board of Trustees is the school's governing body and has the authority to make decisions regarding the operation of ICS, including budgeting, curriculum planning, facilities management, and employment, all in the service of fulfilling the ICS mission.

The Board includes two parent representative seats. Parents or guardians from the school community may run for a parent seat. These seats have staggered two-year terms.

For information on current board members, meeting schedule, and board minutes archives, visit our website.

Parent-Teacher Association (PTA)

The **Independence Charter School PTA** hosts monthly meetings for the ICS community. The PTA raises funds to support fine arts education at ICS and offers family events and resources to support school partnerships and student learning. For information on current PTA officers, meeting and event schedule, and how to get involved, visit our website or the ICS PTA Facebook page: facebook.com/icspta

Records Requests

Please contact our Student Records department for any student records requests. Allow up to 1 week for a records request to be fulfilled and up to 2 weeks when requesting letters of recommendation from teachers.

School Calendar

The annual school calendar is approved by the ICS Board of Trustees. It can be found on our website under **Calendar** or by logging into your **Alma** parent portal account at ics.getalma.com.

Staff Directory

A searchable staff directory can be found on our website under **Contact: Staff Directory**. You can access a second searchable staff directory via your **Alma** parent portal account at ics.getalma.com.

Volunteer

ICS welcomes and encourages family, community, and alumni volunteers. Volunteers who work directly with children must obtain background checks before beginning volunteer work. Please visit our website's volunteer page under **PTA: Volunteer** for complete information on background check requirements and guidelines.

Dress Code

Bottoms Loose-fitting navy trousers, navy slacks, or navy capris – worn at the waist
K-8th Navy jumper, navy polo dress, navy skorts, navy skirts, or navy shorts – no shorter than 3 inches above the knee
No jeans
No ripped or intentionally distressed pants

Tops Red polo shirt with ICS logo embroidered by ICS-approved vendor (long- or short-sleeve)
5th-8th Vendors: Triple Play Sports, Lands' End
Solid-colored shirt may be worn underneath polo shirt for warmth

Tops Red or navy polo shirt (long- or short-sleeve) - ICS logo is **not** required for lower school students
K-4th Solid-colored shirt may be worn underneath polo shirt for warmth

No Logos No non-ICS logos permitted on any clothing

Outerwear Solid navy sweater, navy pullover, or navy vest may be worn inside the building
K-8th No hoods or hoodies (including Griffin hoodies) are permitted on clothing worn inside the building

Socks Socks, tights or leggings *underneath skirts or shorts* may be worn – any color or design
K-8th

Shoes Closed-toe shoes, sneakers, or boots – toes and heels must be covered and shoe securely attached to foot
K-8th No sandals and no high heels of any kind

**Dance/
Fitness
Movement** Solid navy sweatpants are encouraged on fitness/dance days – polo shirts still required
Shorts must be worn under skirt/jumper
Athletic shoes only

Spirit Day On Fridays students are permitted to wear Griffin gear and other ICS-issued shirts (excluding Griffin hoodies)
Dress code bottoms or Griffin gear pants must be worn
Clothing must not be altered in any way

Field Trips Dress code required for all trips unless otherwise instructed by teacher

Accessories Stud earrings only – not extending below or wrapping around ear lobe
Hair accessories may not be hazardous or distracting
No hats or bandanas
No neckties or bowties
Accessories may not be distracting or dangerous

Recess Students go outside in all temperatures between wind chill 20° and heat index 95°
In light rain – rain coats and ponchos required (no umbrellas)
Under 40° or light snow – winter coat, hat, gloves, and neck warmer required

**Dress
Down
Days*** No hoods or hoodies (including Griffin hoodies)
All tops and dresses must have a sleeve and fully cover the midriff – no strapless, halter, or tube tops
No see-through shirts
All bottoms must be no shorter than 3 inches above the knee
No tights worn as pants
No hoop or dangling earrings
No inappropriate or derogatory language, images, or messages on any item of clothing

**If school administrators determine clothing is inappropriate or does not conform to these expectations, the student will call home to request a change of clothing and could lose future dress down privileges.*

Family-Staff Communication Guidelines

The teachers and staff at Independence Charter School strive to maintain open and positive lines of communication with families. We expect all members of the community to be courteous and respectful of each other at all times and to assume best intentions. Often, it is helpful to wait an hour or a day before hitting “send” on an email.

Informal communication is suitable for everyday situations such as:

- ✓ Your child forgets his/her lunch or bookbag.
- ✓ Confirming the date of an upcoming classroom event.
- ✓ Confirming that a teacher received materials you sent in with your child.

Appropriate forms of informal communication include:

- Email message
 - Written note
 - Phone message
 - *Brief* conversation in passing
-

Formal communication is necessary when a parent or teacher needs to communicate about a more serious issue or concern. Some examples include:

- ✓ Your child is struggling in a subject area.
- ✓ Your child is not feeling challenged in class.
- ✓ You have questions or concerns about your child’s curriculum.
- ✓ Your child does not feel safe at school.
- ✓ Your child needs extra emotional support due to changing circumstances at home.

Appropriate forms of formal communication include:

- Email message
 - Written letter
 - A *prearranged* phone conversation or meeting
-

Responding to inquiries: Our staff will make every effort to respond to you promptly. Due to time constraints, however, school staff are not able to read and respond to every message during the school day. Follow the guidelines below for communication expectations.

- Teachers cannot take phone calls during the school day because they are teaching. If you call the office you will be transferred to the appropriate voicemail. Email is the generally preferred form of communication.
- Teachers will check email and phone messages once daily and confirm receipt of your message within 2 school days.
- If you do not receive a confirmation of receipt, try one alternate form of communication in case there is a technical problem. Your email could have gone to spam or your phone message could have been directed to an incorrect mailbox.
- If you still do not receive a confirmation of receipt, contact the Principal. Due to the volume of emails the Principal receives, any time you contact the Principal by email it could take up to one week to receive a response. If you have an urgent matter, please contact the Principal by phone in addition to sending an email.

ICS Attendance & Truancy Policy

Absences

When your child is absent from school, you must submit a written note or email from the parent/guardian or doctor in order for the attendance to be marked as "excused". Notes can be enclosed in an envelope marked "Attendance" or emailed to the Attendance Coordinator at attendance@icscharter.com. Email is preferred.

Notes must be submitted (preferably by email) within 3 days of the absence. Absences will be listed as "unexcused" until an excuse note is received. If no excuse is received after 3 days, the "unexcused" status for that day becomes permanent.

After 8 excused absences in the same school year, a doctor's note may be required to excuse future absences.

All notes must contain:

- Your child's full name
- Your child's teacher/room #
- Date(s) of the absence(s)
- Reason for the absence(s)
- Doctor's or parent/guardian's signature

Acceptable reasons for excused absences:

- Illness – A doctor's note is required upon return for illnesses resulting in 3 or more days absent from school
- Religious holiday
- Pre-approved travel – Send request to attendance@icscharter.com in advance of the trip
- Death in the family
- Family emergency or other rare and unavoidable circumstances
- Professional health care or therapy services rendered by a licensed practitioner
- Out-of-school suspension

It is your responsibility to look at your child's report card each trimester to ensure that the attendance record is correct. We also recommend that you track your child's attendance record regularly in the Alma parent portal.

Truancy

Independence Charter School recognizes that good attendance is an essential factor in academic and personal success, and supports a comprehensive approach to identify and address attendance concerns. Families are vital in ensuring their child(ren) maintains good attendance.

Attendance is required of all students during the days and hours that school is in session. Authorized ICS staff may excuse a student for temporary absences upon receipt of satisfactory evidence of reasons that may judiciously cause the student's absence. ICS will honor any exceptions to school attendance permitted by law under the Pennsylvania School Code.

Overview

A student is "**truant**" if he/she has three (3) or more school days of unexcused absence during the current school year. An unexcused absence is any absence from school without an acceptable excuse (as articulated in the ICS Family Handbook), or without any reason at all.

For the third unexcused absence, ICS will send the parent/guardian notice by mail within 10 school days of the child's third unexcused absence that the child has been truant. This notice:

- Shall include a description of the consequences that will follow if the child becomes habitually truant in the future;

- Be in the mode and language of communication preferred by the person in parental relation; and
- May require families to attend a School Attendance Improvement Conference with the school guidance counselor.

When a student demonstrates truant behavior, ICS will schedule a school/family Attendance Improvement Conference to discuss the cause of the student's truancy and develop a mutually agreed upon Attendance Improvement Plan to resolve truant behavior. The plan can include a myriad of options for the elimination of truancy that are mutually agreed upon by the participants. **ICS is permitted to proceed with the Attendance Improvement Conference and Attendance Improvement Plan without the student's parent/guardian present at the Conference.**

A student is "**habitually truant**" if he/she has six (6) or more school days of unexcused absences during the current school year. For the sixth (6th) unexcused absence, ICS will refer the student to either:

- The District Attorney's *Project Go* program to enforce truancy, or
- The county children and youth agency (DHS) for services or possible disposition as a dependent child under the Juvenile Act.
 - Students who are habitually truant from school will not be referred to the county children and youth agency for assessment as possibly needing services until after ICS has made a formal effort to involve the family and child in resolving the cause of the truant behavior.

In all cases, where ICS refers a habitually truant child to The District Attorney's *Project Go* program to enforce truancy or DHS, ICS will provide verification that it convened and held an Attendance Improvement Conference. ICS **will not** impose discipline for truant behavior that excludes the child from the classroom, including in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, transfer or expulsion.

If the aforementioned steps are not successful in improving attendance, ICS may file a citation against the parent/guardian of a **habitually truant** child in court.

For students that have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or Section 504/Chapter 15 Plan—and are truant or habitually truant, ICS will bring together the IEP Team to discuss the truancy and how it impacts the student's educational program. The team will modify the student's IEP or Section 504 Plan to offer appropriate services and supports.

Students that are absent from school for ten (10) or more consecutive days without appropriate documentation will be removed from ICS's active membership rolls.

To the extent that anything in this policy could be construed to conflict with ICS's charter or applicable state and/or federal laws, the applicable state and/or federal law and/or charter control.

Late Arrivals

To be considered on time, ICS students must arrive to the school no later than 8:25am. There are no "excused" late arrivals to school. If a child arrives on time, he/she is marked "present". If a child walks into the building after 8:25, the child is marked "late".

If a child has a doctor's appointment and is brought to school after 8:25am, the child will be marked "present" as long as a doctor's note is submitted.

If a child arrives to school late due to school bus delays, the child will not be marked late.

A child must be present in the school building for a minimum of 2 hours to be marked present for the day.

After every 5 late arrivals, students in grades 5-8 will serve an after school detention. In grades K-4 will serve an after school detention and/or be referred to a school-based attendance improvement program.

Excessive late arrivals (more than 10) may result in a meeting with the School Attendance Improvement Conference with the guidance counselor.

Early Dismissals

Early dismissals are extremely disruptive to your child's learning and to the learning of the entire classroom. Please limit early dismissals to unavoidable appointments or circumstances not to exceed more than 1-2 times per year. Excessive requests for early dismissal may result in a meeting with an ICS Administrator.

Early dismissals are allowed for the following reasons:

- Documentable visit to a doctor's office
- Religious lessons - Submit a letter from your place of worship indicating times/dates of sessions.
- Family emergency or other rare and unavoidable circumstances

If you must schedule an early dismissal, please email the Attendance Coordinator at attendance@icscharter.com or call x2222 by 12:00 noon on the day you are requesting the dismissal. We will call your child to the office to be dismissed when you arrive at ICS.

A child must be in the school building for a minimum of 2 hours to be marked present for the day.

Transferring

If you are transferring out of ICS, you can request your child's records by contacting our Student Records department. We will also ask you to complete a transfer form stating that you understand that by transferring you are relinquishing your child's space at ICS.

Food Services

ICS offers breakfast and lunch through the National School Lunch Program. Lintons Managed Services is our meal vendor.

Breakfast - served between 7:45-8:15am

- Daily breakfast: \$1.50
- Reduced price breakfast: 30¢

Lunch

- Daily lunch: \$2.50
- Reduced price lunch: 40¢
- Milk a la carte: 50¢
- A la carte snacks: 75¢ - cash only

Lunch Menu

- **Hot lunch** - Changes daily and is listed in each day's lunch menu box
- **Sandwich or wrap** - Options rotate based on the day of the week
- **Salad** - Options rotate based on the day of the week
- **Vegetarian lunch** - Available based on advanced order only. Students may sign up for a vegetarian lunch by making a request in the cafeteria by 9am on the morning they would like to order a vegetarian meal, or parents may call the Food Services Coordinator by 9am that day.

Payment

All students purchase meals using a prepaid meal account that is accessed through finger scan technology. For your convenience, we strongly recommend that you make your meal account payments online through the [LunchTime Portal](#).

If you would prefer to send payments to school, payments must be made in cash or money order. Checks are *not* accepted. Payments must be in a sealed envelope labeled "Meal Money". You must include the child's first and last name, teacher's name, date and the amount enclosed. Please do not send more than \$20 at a time. **ICS is not responsible for lost payments.**

Payments will be credited to your child's account within 24 hours, *not* on the morning you send the payment.

If you do not want your child to purchase school meals at any time, please contact our Food Services Coordinator immediately to place a restriction on the child's meal account.

Students with negative meal account balances approaching \$5 will not be able to purchase school meals until payment is made on the account. Families are responsible to stay informed about their children's meal account balances. **Please sign up for low balance email reminders through the LunchTime Portal.**

For your convenience, the LunchTime portal offers an automated reminder email and/or an automated replenishment option that can be activated in your LunchTime account settings. Even if you do not make payments online, you can still use the LunchTime Portal's reminders to monitor your balance.

Free or Reduced-Priced Meal Benefits

If the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare has deemed that your child is eligible for free or reduced-price school meals for the current school year through the direct certification process, you will receive a letter from ICS to notify you of that. If you want to find out whether or not your child is eligible for free or reduced-priced school meals, you can complete the application online at www.COMPASS.state.pa.us. If you complete it online, please email our Food Services Coordinator so that ICS can confirm receipt. If you plan to apply for benefits and your family is not directly certified online through the Department of Public Welfare for free school meals, then you will need to complete a meal program application on paper.

Dietary Restrictions

If your child is participating in our meal program, it is important that you provide information regarding any special dietary needs, allergies, or restrictions per the Pennsylvania school nutrition regulations.

You must submit an updated note each year to our Nurse's office from your pediatrician indicating the specific allergy or intolerance. Please let our Food Services Coordinator know that you are submitting this information.

Lunch Food Policy

- Candy, seeds, and gum will not be allowed at any time during school hours—including in the cafeteria.
 - Drinks other than water, milk, and juice are not permitted during lunch.
 - Soda is not permitted at school at any time, including both the cafeteria and yard.
 - Glass bottles and containers are not permitted at school at any time, including both the cafeteria and yard.
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Snack Food Policy

In order to maximize learning potential we recommend that parents support students bringing a healthy snack. Attention and concentration will wane on an empty stomach.

Nutritious snacks such as fresh fruit, granola bars, yogurt, dried fruit, multigrain crackers, and water provide extended hours of energy for learning, whereas sugary snacks provide only short-term energy with a "crash".

- Candy, seeds, and gum will not be allowed at any time during school hours.
 - Students are permitted to bring a water bottle to drink and refill throughout the day. Drinks other than water will not be permitted in the classroom, even during snack.
 - Soda is not permitted at school at any time, including both the cafeteria and yard.
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Birthday Celebrations

Check with your child's teacher each year to find out how they celebrate birthdays in your child's classroom. Many teachers have special birthday routines in place that are not food-centered. **Never send food without communicating directly with and receiving permission and clear instructions from your child's teacher. In general, birthday celebrations with food are not feasible in grades 4-8.** If you make a plan with a teacher to send in food, consider sending more nutritious alternatives to cake/cupcakes, and remember that each student only needs one small, pre-portioned serving.

Wellness Policy on Physical Activity and Nutrition

The Board of Trustees of the Independence Charter School, in combination with students, parents, administrators, faculty, and staff, is committed to providing a school environment that promotes and protects children's health, well-being, and ability to learn by supporting healthy eating habits and physical activity. As a means to fostering such a school environment, the Board of Trustees of Independence Charter School sets forth the following goals and adopts the following Wellness Policy on Physical Activity and Nutrition.

The CEO (or designee from the Educational Services Provider) will have the responsibility for ensuring compliance with the policy.

The Wellness Policy will be assessed at least once every three years. The Charter School will use the results of this triennial assessment to update this policy, as needed. The assessment will be made available to the public and include the following components. An example (although not mandated) tool would be the Center of Disease Control's School Health Index:

1. Compliance with the policy
 2. Comparison of the policy to a model school Wellness Policy; and
 3. Progress made in attaining the goals of the policy
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School Health Council

- The Charter School shall create a School Health Council consisting of individuals representing the community, including, but not limited to, parents, students, administrators, members of the Board of Trustees, representatives of the school food authority, teachers of physical education, school health professionals, and other members of the public. The School Health Council will be charged with assisting in the development, implementation, monitoring, and reviewing of nutrition and physical activity goals for the school community.
 - The School Health Council will send newsletters to students, parents, staff, and the public on a periodic basis via email and the school website. Information on how to access the wellness policy, the content of the wellness policy and any updates to the school wellness policy will be highlighted in the newsletters. Newsletters will be created at least one time per year.
 - The School Health Council will assist in evaluating the implementation of the Wellness Policy on Physical Activity and Nutrition as measured and informed by data collection and analysis. This evaluation will be conducted, at minimum, biennially.
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School Meals

- To the extent practicable, all meals served to Charter School students through the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs will meet or exceed the minimum nutrition requirements established by local, state, and federal law, as well as Dietary Guidelines published by the federal government or an appropriate governmental agency.
- The Charter School will make efforts to eliminate the social stigma attached to, and to prevent the identification of, students who are eligible for free and/or reduced-price school meals.

- The Charter School will schedule meal periods at reasonably appropriate times, and will provide students with a minimum of twenty (20) minutes to enjoy their meals. In addition, the Charter School will discourage the scheduling of meetings or activities during meal times, including, but not limited to, tutoring, club meetings and/or organization meetings, unless the students will be permitted to eat during those meetings or activities.
- The Charter School will provide facilities for appropriate hygiene, such as hand-washing and brushing of teeth.
- Students will be discouraged from sharing foods and/or beverages with others.
- There are no food fundraisers during the school day.
- Food is not used as a reward. However, parents/guardians can occasionally bring in food for parties, birthdays, fairs, celebrations, and/or curriculum theme related projects.
- All foods and beverages sold to students during the school day shall comply with the federal smart snacks in school nutrition standards
- Salads are available as a meal or side dish. No snack items such as chips, donuts, and the like are sold in the cafeteria. Water, milk (1% or less), and fruit juice are sold in the cafeteria. Soda is not available.
- Beverages such as water and juice may be sold to everyone.
- Fresh fruits and vegetables such as salads, carrot sticks, and the like are available daily.
- The majority of milk and yogurt are low fat (1% or less). The majority of cheese is reduced fat or low fat.
- Due to food allergies, Independence Charter School takes safety precautions in the cafeteria to ensure everyone's wellbeing and follows a strict policy limiting access to potentially dangerous foods to anyone with such allergies.
- Whole grains are available daily.
- Food served a la carte will be single serving size; no larger than the school lunch portion. Most beverages other than water will not exceed 12 ounces.
- Healthy foods and beverages such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low fat dairy, and plain water will be promoted through marketing, nutrition education, and pricing. Healthier choices will be marketed by increasing selections of these items, displaying them attractively, making them easily available, and pricing them lower than less healthy choices. Foods and beverages that do not meet Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards will not be promoted or advertised.
- Parents and teachers will be provided a list of healthy ideas for parties and celebrations. If possible, food service will offer to provide these items for a nominal fee. Attention will be given to food safety and allergy concerns.

Nutrition Education and Nutrition Promotion

- Nutrition education will be integrated into other areas of the curriculum, such as math, science, language arts, and social studies at all grade levels.
 - Nutrition education will be developmentally appropriate, interactive, and will teach skills needed to adopt healthy eating behaviors.
 - Nutrition education materials will be reviewed by a qualified and credentialed nutrition professional, including, but not limited to, a School Food Nutrition Specialist or Registered Dietitian.
 - Faculty and staff that teach nutrition education will have appropriate training.
 - Informational materials will be provided to students and families to encourage sharing of health and nutrition information and to encourage healthy eating in the home.
 - Any marketing of foods and/or beverages undertaken by the Charter School will be consistent with federal Smart Snacks in School Nutrition Standards.
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Physical Activity

- Physical activity will be integrated across curricula with activities that are safe, enjoyable, and developmentally appropriate for all students in all grades.
- All students will be given opportunities before, after, and throughout the school day for physical activity through physical education, recess periods, and integration of physical activity into the curriculum. All students may be given periodic “movement breaks” to prevent prolonged sedentary periods.
- Faculty and staff will be appropriately trained in integrating physical activity into the various curricular areas.
- Students will be encouraged to participate in physical activity outside of the school environment, in both competitive and non-competitive environments.
- Organized physical activity will be offered and encouraged at school-sponsored or school-related events.
- To the extent practicable, Charter School facilities will be made available to students, faculty, staff, and the community for the purpose of offering physical activity and/or nutrition programs.
- Physical activity will not be used or withheld as punishment.

Health Services Policy

Independence Charter School (ICS) has a registered professional nurse who is responsible for handling a variety of student health concerns, promoting student health, reviewing student immunization records, and for maintaining all medical records on each student. The nurse coordinates and conducts all mandated screenings and health programs, and works directly with students to provide care and to give guidance and educational support to students in health-related matters.

Parents/guardians and students are asked to contact the school nurse regarding any special health problems. To contact the school nurse's office, call 215-238-8000 or send an email to nurse@icscharter.com. Do not leave voicemail messages or send emails regarding an urgent situation; instead, if you do not get an answer the first time you call, call the Main Office again.

If a student becomes ill during the school day, he or she should ask the teacher for a pass to go to the nurse's office. The nurse will determine what care procedure will be followed. The school nurse will:

1. Provide first aid in emergencies. The nurse will notify parents/guardians when a student has been hurt or suddenly becomes seriously ill and needs immediate care from a doctor and/or hospital.
2. Notify parents/guardians when a student can no longer remain in class and needs to be taken home because of injury, illness or a communicable condition.

If a student has any chronic health problems, parents/guardians are strongly encouraged to update his/her health status yearly or as appropriate. There may be instances when it would be essential for the school nurse to be able to immediately contact a student's parent or guardian. It is very important that the nurse have current telephone numbers in order to contact a parent, guardian or designated person in case of an emergency.

Immunization Requirements

Unless exempted due to documented medical or religious grounds, all students must be immunized in accordance with Pennsylvania law prior to admission to school¹. A student need not be immunized if a physician or the physician's designee provides a written statement that immunization may be detrimental to the health of the child.

In addition, a student need not be immunized if a parent/guardian objects in writing to the immunization on religious grounds or on the basis of a strong moral or ethical conviction similar to a religious belief.

A student whose parent/guardian fails to provide complete and accurate immunization records to the school nurse risks exclusion from school until state immunization or exemption requirements are met.

Physical and Dental Examinations

In accordance with Pennsylvania law, ICS provides the following mandated school health services (listed in the chart on the next page) to its students.

In lieu of the medical or dental examinations listed below, any student's parent/guardian may furnish the school nurse with a medical or dental report of examination made at the family's own expense by the student's family physician or family dentist on the official form designated by the Pennsylvania Secretary of Health.

ICS recommends that you submit a copy of updated health and dental assessments every year after your child sees his or her physician and/or dentist, so that the school nurse will have current information.

¹ A list of all required immunizations is available at: <http://www.health.pa.gov/My%20Health/Immunizations/Documents/SIR8.pdf>

SERVICE	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Notes
School Nurse Services	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Maintenance of Health Record	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Immunization Assessment	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Medical Examination	*	*					X			*Required on original entry - K or 1st grade
Dental Examination	*	*		X				X		*Required on original entry - K or 1st grade
Growth Screen	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Hearing Screen	X	X	X	X				X		
Scoliosis Screen							X	X		6th grade physical may be used in lieu of 6th grade screen
Tuberculin Test	*	*								*Required on original entry - K or 1st grade. (Unless approved to discontinue.)
Vision Screen - Far Visual Acuity Test	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Vision Screen - Near Visual Acuity Test	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Vision Screen - Convex Lens Test (Plus Lens)		X								1st grade students meeting criteria & new students (any grade) not previously screened
Vision Screen - Color Vision Test		*	*							*1st or 2nd grade & new students (any grade) not previously screened
Vision Screen - Stereo/Depth Perception Test		*	*							*1st or 2nd grade & new students (any grade) not previously screened

Medication Administration/Allergies

If your child needs to have medication administered during school hours, you must complete the In-School Medication Administration form that is included annually in our summer mailing. The form can also be found on our website. No medication will be administered without a completed form on file.

If your child has allergies or dietary restrictions, you must submit an updated note from your pediatrician each year.

Asthma and Allergy Medication

In accordance with Pennsylvania law, ICS permits students with a documented medical need to carry and self-administer their own medication via an asthma inhaler or epinephrine auto-injector (EpiPen) under the following conditions:

1. A student's parent/guardian shall provide the nurse with a written statement from a physician, certified registered nurse practitioner or physician assistant that provides the name of the drug, the dose, the times when the medication is to be taken and the diagnosis or reason the medicine is needed (unless the reason should remain confidential). The medical provider shall indicate the potential of any serious reaction that may occur to the medication, as well as any necessary emergency response.
2. The medical provider must state in writing that the child is qualified and able to self-administer the medication.
3. ICS reserves reserve the right to require a statement from the medical provider for the continued use of any medication beyond a specified time period
4. ICS assumes no responsibility for the benefits or consequences of the prescribed medication, and bears no responsibility for ensuring that the medication is taken.
5. As part of responsible behavior, the student must notify a staff member as soon as his or her symptoms of asthma or allergy arise and must notify the nurse each time medication is used in the school setting.
6. The student is prohibited from making medication or any medical equipment available to other students. Any student who does so will be subject to appropriate discipline. Violation of school policy and procedures also may result in restriction of the student's privilege to self-administer medication or equipment.

Self-Monitoring and/or Management of Diabetes

In accordance with Pennsylvania law, ICS permits students with diabetes to possess and self-administer diabetes medication and operate monitoring equipment under the following conditions:

1. A student's parent/guardian shall provide the nurse with a written statement from the student's health care practitioner that provides the name of the drug, the dose, the times when the medication is to be taken or the monitoring equipment to be used, the specified time period for which the medication or monitoring equipment is authorized to be used and the diagnosis or reason the medicine or monitoring equipment is needed. The medical provider shall indicate the potential of any serious reaction to the medication that may occur, as well as any necessary emergency response. The student's medical provider shall additionally state whether the student is competent to self-administer the medication or monitoring equipment and whether the student is able to practice proper safety precautions for the handling and disposal of the medication and monitoring equipment.
2. The student's parent/guardian shall submit a written request that ICS comply with the instructions of the student's health care practitioner.
3. The nurse shall document that the student has demonstrated that he or she is capable of self-administration of the medication and use of the monitoring equipment
4. The student shall submit written acknowledgment that he or she has received instruction from his or her health care practitioner on proper safety precautions for the handling and disposal of the medications and monitoring equipment. The written acknowledgment shall also contain a provision stating that the student will not allow other students to have access to the medication and monitoring equipment and that the student understands appropriate safeguards.

- ICS may revoke or restrict a student's privileges to possess and self-administer diabetes medication and operate monitoring equipment due to noncompliance with school rules and provisions of a student's service agreement, IEP or due to demonstrated unwillingness or inability of the student to safeguard the medication and monitoring equipment from access by other students. In the event that ICS prohibits a student from possessing and self-administering diabetes medication and operating monitoring equipment, the nurse shall ensure that the diabetes medication or monitoring equipment is appropriately stored in a readily accessible place in the school building.
-

Illness or Infectious Condition

Pursuant to Pennsylvania law, a student may not attend school if any of the following symptoms are present or suspected by a physician or the school nurse:

- Fever: Students should remain home or be sent home if they have above-normal temperature.
- Conjunctivitis ("pink eye"): A student may return only after discharge discontinues and 24 hours of treatment is completed.
- Rashes: Unidentified rashes must be diagnosed by a health care provider.
- Impetigo: Your student must be seen by a health care provider.
- Diarrhea: The student experiences diarrhea two days in a row or three times in one day.
- Vomiting: The student experiences repeated forceful evacuation with other symptoms or the student's inability to eat.
- Lice: A student with lice should be treated with a lice shampoo, and the school nurse must be notified of appropriate treatment.
- Ringworm: A student with ringworm of the body must be treated with an anti-fungal ointment and covered. Ringworm of the scalp requires treatment prescribed by a physician, and must be covered while at school. The school nurse must be notified of appropriate treatment.
- Any other contagious condition: measles, chickenpox, mumps, whooping cough, or streptococcal infections that are still contagious.

In addition, a student shall not attend school if he or she is experiencing any unusual discomfort.

Head Lice Policy

Due to time constraints, the Nurse will not check students for lice*/nits** unless it is indicated. It is imperative that families routinely check their children's heads for possible lice/nit infestation and alert the school immediately if lice/nits are found. If the Nurse becomes aware of a possible lice/nit infestation, the Nurse will check that student's head and any siblings' heads for lice/nits on that same school day. If lice/nits are found, the nurse will notify the family. If active lice are found, the family will need to arrange to have the student(s) picked up from school as soon as possible to start treatment and to limit further transmission in school. In order for the student to return to school, the family must submit documentation indicating how the lice/nits were treated.

On the day that lice/nits are found on the head of an ICS student, ICS will alert all families in that grade by email. An automated phone call and hard copy of the alert will be sent to the families in that particular classroom, asking them to check their child(ren) for possible lice/nits. The identity of any students found to have lice/nits will be kept confidential.

*Lice are a human parasite. **Nits are head lice eggs.

Arrival

The safety of 800 students is our priority. Families and students must help ensure community safety by following our arrival procedures. Please direct all questions regarding arrival or dismissal procedures to our Director of Operations.

Schedule

- Children should arrive to school between 7:45-8:25am and enter through the Lombard St. schoolyard gate.
 - **No children may arrive before 7:45am.**
 - After 8:25, students must enter through the Lombard St. entrance and sign in on the late arrival sheet. They will be marked “late”.
-

Arrival Guidelines for Families

- Only ICS students may enter the schoolyard during arrival. Family members must say goodbye at the gate.
 - If you have school business in the morning, please drop your child in the yard first and then use the Lombard St. main entrance blue doors to visit the office.
-

Arrival Procedures for Drivers

- Drivers will pull up to the school-side curb on Lombard St. to drop off children.
 - **Children will use the curbside door on Lombard St. to exit vehicles. Students may not exit vehicles on 16th St.**
 - **Drivers may *never* drive on Naudain St. or drop off students on Naudain. Please respect our neighbors.**
 - Do not leave your car unattended on Lombard St. Traffic must continue moving forward at all times.
-

Dismissal

The safety of 800+ students is our priority. Families and students must help ensure community safety by following our dismissal procedures. Please direct all questions regarding arrival or dismissal procedures to our Director of Operations.

Schedule

- Buses are called beginning at 3:10 (1:25 on Wednesdays)
 - Aftercare students (programs outside ICS) are dismissed to the cafeteria at 3:15 (1:30 on Wednesdays)
 - Kindergarteners arrive to the sidewalk by 3:15 (1:30 on Wednesdays)
 - 1st-5th graders arrive to the sidewalk by 3:30 (1:45 on Wednesdays)
 - 6th-8th graders are dismissed at 3:35 (1:40 on Wednesdays)
 - Dismissal is finished at 3:40 (1:50 on Wednesdays)
-

Dismissal Guidelines for Families

- To avoid congestion, families should exit the dismissal area immediately after picking up children.
- So that our staff can focus on the dismissal process, please *do not* visit the office to take care of business or to ask questions between 3:10-3:40pm (1:25-1:50pm on Wednesdays).

Dismissal Procedures for Drivers

To avoid traffic congestion, **we strongly recommend parking on a nearby block and walking to pick up your child** rather than driving to ICS at dismissal. If you decide to use the pickup lane, you must follow all of our procedures at all times.

- Drivers who have *only students in kindergarten* will receive green placards and may enter the pickup lane after 3pm (1:15pm on Wednesdays).
- Drivers who have *students in multiple grades between K-5* will receive yellow placards and may only enter the pickup lane after 3:25pm (1:40 pm on Wednesdays).
- Vehicles without placards are not permitted in the pickup lane.
- If you are picking up a 6th-8th grader by car, you will not receive a placard and you must choose a place on or near South St. to meet your child. (Note: *Not* on Naudain St.)
- **Children may only load into the car on the curbside on Lombard St. You are not permitted to use 16th St. to load students.**

- Enter the pickup lane only at the beginning and exit only at the end. Do not cut into the middle of pickup line.
- Traffic in the pickup lane must continue pulling forward at all times to allow new cars to enter.
- Drivers must never leave vehicles unattended in the pickup lane.
- If you cannot enter the pickup lane when your traffic light is green, you must continue driving and loop around for another try.
- You are never permitted to double park or stop your vehicle in the driving lanes of Lombard St.

- Do not drive on 16th St. before 3:25pm. We must keep 16th clear for our buses.
- After 3:25pm, vehicles are permitted to use 16th and to wait in line in the left-hand lane on 16th St.
- Do not stop in the driving lane on Lombard St. between 15th and 16th. You must drive forward on a green light and make a loop if there is no room to enter the pickup lane. Be considerate of through traffic.
- Never block the intersection at 16th and Lombard. This is unsafe for pedestrians.
- **Vehicles are never permitted on Naudain St. Please respect our neighbors.**

Changes to Your Child's Dismissal Plan

- Every child must have a current dismissal plan on file with our Transportation office. If you need to make a permanent dismissal change at any time, please email transportation@icscharter.com.
- If your child normally rides the school bus and you do not want your child to get on the bus, you must be waiting at the ramp at the corner of 16th & Lombard by 3:10pm in order to sign your child out of the bus line.
- If your child normally attends an aftercare or afterschool program and you want to pick up your child before they leave for their program, you must arrive by 3:15pm to sign in at the front office and then sign your child out in the cafeteria.
- We do not accept daily changes to your child's plan, except in the case of legitimate emergencies, which we hope and expect to be rare. One-time, emergency changes to dismissal must be made through the front office by calling 215-238-8000 x2221.

School Bus Service

Students in grades 1st-6th who live more than 1.5 miles from ICS are eligible to use the school bus service provided by the School District of Philadelphia.

The District contracts Durham School Services to provide transportation to all students who sign up for bus service. For real-time information on your child's bus's status or location, you must always contact Durham School Services.

Durham School Services: 215-537-5405, select the option for "Dispatch"

District Transportation Office: 215-400-4350

ICS Bus Routes

Ivory – 7600	Red – 7605
Green – 7601	Yellow – 7606
Orange – 7602	Brown – 7607
Purple – 7603	Silver – 7608
Blue – 7604	Gold – 7609
	Turquoise – 7610

Transportation Desk

You can contact the ICS Transportation Desk for non-urgent questions or changes regarding your child's bus route or to report problems with a bus route. Emails will be checked once daily and responded to by the end of the next school day.

transportation@icscharter.com

Urgent issues should be directed to the front office at x2221.

School Bus Behavior

School bus service from the School District is a privilege. In order to be allowed to ride the school bus, students must adhere to the following behavior policies or risk losing the privilege to ride the bus for the duration of the school year.

Expected School Bus Conduct

Each year, ICS will provide orientation, modeling, and practice of the following rules for school bus students:

- Abide by the ICS Code of Conduct.
- Respect bus property and the property of others.
- Sit quietly in your seat and use quiet voices to talk to your seat partner.
- Follow the bus driver's directions the first time they are given.

Discipline Sanctions

- **Minor Incidents:** Warning letter or phone call to family. *Examples include but are not limited to: Not sitting in seat, kneeling or bouncing in seat, eating on bus, teasing, vulgarity, being loud.*
- **Moderate Incidents:** 1-2 week minimum suspension from the school bus and assigned seat upon reinstatement. *Examples include but are not limited to: Not following driver instructions, throwing objects, harassment, standing on seat, out of seat or assigned spot, moving around on the bus or in bus line, play-fighting*
- **Severe Incidents:** Loss of school bus privilege entirely for the rest of the school year. *Examples include but are not limited to: Destruction of property, fighting, endangering self or others, making threats to cause physical injury.*
- 2 minor incidents equal 1 moderate incident.
- 2 moderate incidents equal 1 severe incident.
- These expectations and disciplinary sanctions will apply to children on the school bus, at or around the school bus stop, and at or around the school bus line during dismissal.
- Parents could be liable for property damage or injury caused by your child on the school bus.
- Students involved in an incident will have a meeting with the Assistant to the Principal to mediate and discuss solutions and strategies to avoid a reoccurrence.
- If your child has his/her bus privileges revoked, you have the right to appeal the decision to the Board of Trustees.
- Your child also has the right to be reinstated to the school bus the following school year.
- Families remain responsible for ensuring their child attends school every day and on time, whether or not their child has school bus privileges.

Suggestions for a Positive School Bus Experience

- Discuss the rules with your children frequently and help them problem-solve where they or their peers are having trouble following the rules.
- Send your child with a supply of good books to read. Please write your child's name in the cover.
- Remind your child that any snack or breakfast packed from home must be eaten at school, not on the bus.
- Electronic music devices and personal electronic devices may be used with headphones when traveling on the school bus in order to help your child avoid distraction. ICS is not responsible for lost items.
- Stay in contact with transportation@icscharter.com to address concerns early.

Transpasses

7th and 8th grade students who live more than 1.5 miles from ICS are eligible to receive free weekly student Transpasses from Septa. If your child is eligible and is not already receiving a Transpass, contact transportation@icscharter.com to sign up for the service.

Younger siblings in 1st-6th grade who have a 7th or 8th grade sibling who qualify for a Transpass may also request a Transpass for traveling with their older sibling in lieu of school bus service.

Students Experiencing Homelessness (McKinney Vento)

The Board of Trustees of the Independence Charter School, in combination with administrators, faculty, and staff, is dedicated to ensuring that youth who may be experiencing homelessness are provided the same educational opportunities as those students with permanent residency.

Independence Charter School recognizes the need to promptly identify students experiencing homelessness, aid in their continued enrollment, and shall reasonably ensure that existing barriers to attendance and education are removed in compliance with the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act and other applicable federal and state laws and regulations.

Children experiencing homelessness are defined as individuals who lack a fixed, regular and adequate night time residence. This includes children whose families share housing because of economic hardship, and children living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, and camping grounds because they lack adequate accommodations. Children living in emergency or transitional shelters or who are abandoned in hospitals or are awaiting foster care placement are also considered homeless.

Independence Charter School shall ensure that students experiencing homelessness have equal access to the same educational programs and services provided to students not experiencing homelessness. The Independence Charter School Board of Trustees authorizes the CEO, upon consultation, to waive ICS policies and administrative procedures that create barriers to the identification, enrollment, attendance, transportation, school stability and success in school of students experiencing homelessness. It is the policy of the Board that no student shall be discriminated against, segregated or stigmatized based on his/her homeless status. The CEO or their designee will have the responsibility for ensuring compliance with the policy.

Delegation of Responsibility

The CEO shall designate a liaison for students experiencing homelessness, who shall have the duties and responsibilities imposed by law and Board policy. ICS's Middle School Counselor shall work with the School District of Philadelphia's Regional Coordinator to ensure outreach and coordination with:

1. Local social service agencies and other entities that provide services to students experiencing homelessness and their families.
2. Other LEAs on issues of prompt identification, transfer of records, transportation and other applicable activities.
3. ICS staff responsible for the provision of services under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.
4. State and local housing agencies responsible for comprehensive housing affordability strategies.
5. Law enforcement agencies, juvenile and family courts, and providers of services and programs funded under the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act.

ICS's Middle School Counselor shall ensure that public notice of the educational rights of students experiencing homelessness is disseminated in locations frequented by parents/guardians of students experiencing homelessness, and unaccompanied youths, including schools, shelters, public libraries, and food pantries. Such notice shall be provided in a manner and form understandable to the parents/guardians of students experiencing homelessness.

Education Records

Information about a student experiencing homelessness' living situation shall be treated as a student education record subject to the protections of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), and shall not be deemed to be directory information.

Uniforms

Independence Charter School shall not create uniform and dress requirements that create financial hardships for students and their families experiencing homelessness. Nor shall any student in a homeless situation receive disciplinary actions for

not having a uniform due to financial hardship. Every effort must be made to protect the privacy of students in this situation.

Transportation

Independence Charter School will work to ensure an uneventful transition if alternate transportation (i.e. an alternative school bus route) is warranted. Every child must have a current arrival and dismissal plan on file with our Transportation Coordinator, all changes should be communicated as early as possible and can be emailed to transportation@icscharter.com.

Special Education Services

Learning Support Mission Statement

The mission of the ICS Learning Support Program is to motivate and educate all students. As educators, we are dedicated to satisfying the social, emotional, and academic needs of all of our students. We will provide students with the tools needed to help them develop into productive global citizens.

Special Education

A team of special education teachers works closely with grade-level teachers and specialists to provide identified students with specialized instruction in the classroom (push-in) or in a resource room setting (pull-out). ICS practices full inclusion and provides support within that model to benefit the individual student. Independence Charter special education students participate in all classes and competitions.

Gifted Education

ICS does not run or offer a separate, pull-out program for students identified as gifted. Students may be referred for gifted testing in the 4th and 5th grades. The administrative team at ICS will determine if testing is warranted for the student and continue if necessary. ICS does not test for gifted prior to 4th grade and will not test after 5th grade. If a student is identified as gifted, the identification remains with the student even after leaving ICS for high school.

The ICS curriculum is already an enriched one, providing arts education and second language acquisition for all students. We recommend that students seeking enrichment outside of the classroom join clubs such as Odyssey of the Mind, Model UN, LEGO Robotics, or other activities that encourage critical thinking and problem solving.

The most current research in education supports differentiation of instruction to meet all students' individual needs, a skill which we are constantly developing in all of our teachers. While there is no specific program or teacher dedicated exclusively to students who are identified as gifted, all teachers will receive regular professional development on meeting the enrichment needs, as well as other individual learning needs, of each student.

Parents will be asked to seek outside resources at their own expense to have gifted testing conducted for a student prior to 4th grade and after 5th, or if school-based assessments and recommendations do not warrant testing.

Annual Notice of Special Education Services

Child Find Independence Charter School

Each school district and public education agency in the state of Pennsylvania must establish and implement procedures for identifying, locating, and evaluating children suspected of having a disability. The purpose of this notice is to: 1) describe the types of disabilities that might qualify a child for programs and services under IDEA, 2) describe the special education programs and related services that are available, and 3) describe the process by which ICS may screen or evaluate students to determine eligibility. According to state and federal special education regulations, annual public notice to parents of children who reside within a school district is required regarding child find responsibilities. School Districts (SDs), Intermediate Units (IUs) and Charter Schools (CSs) are required to conduct child find activities for children who may be eligible for services via Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. For additional information related to Section 504/Chapter 15 services, the parent may refer to Section 504, Chapter 15, and the Basic Education Circular entitled Implementation of Chapter 15.

Children Served in Special Education Programs

Special education services are available to children who have one or more of the following physical or mental disabilities:

- autism
- deaf/blindness
- emotional disturbance
- hearing impairment including deafness
- intellectual disability
- multiple disabilities
- orthopedic impairment
- other health impairment
- specific learning disability
- speech or language impairment
- traumatic brain injury
- visual impairment, including blindness

Description of Special Education Programs

Independence Charter School provides appropriate special education programs and related services that are:

- provided at no cost to the parents;
- provided under the authority of a school entity, directly; by referral or by contract;
- individualized to meet the educational needs of the child;
- reasonably calculated to yield meaningful educational benefit and progress and designed to conform to an Individual Education Program.

Related services available to students include transportation, speech pathology, physical and occupational therapy, school health services, hearing services, and vision and orientation and mobility services.

Referral of Children for Screening and Evaluation

Independence Charter School has procedures to identify children needing special education. Those procedures are “screening” and “evaluation”. If a student is demonstrating a need for additional supports, the teachers, other school staff, or parents may refer a child for SST (Student Success Team).

Through the process of SST, a variety of interventions may be tried, including but not limited to a screening if deemed warranted. Attempted interventions and remediation may require time to determine progress or responsiveness. This process may take 30, 60 or 90 days depending on the level of remediation and other known factors. Parents who suspect that a child may have a disability and need special education can request a screening or evaluation at any time by contacting the school Principal.

ICS screening procedure includes, but is not limited to: reviewing immediately available data sources such as health records, parent interview and history, functional visual and hearing, student's response to attempted remediation and interventions as part of SST process, diagnostic academic assessments, and/or speech, OT, or PT screenings as needed. If the screening indicates any suspected disability, an evaluation will be recommended and the parent must consent in writing in order for the evaluation to be conducted. No evaluations may be conducted without written parental permission. Consult the school Principal or Special Education Coordinator for more information.

Confidentiality

If a child is referred for SST and/or a screening is conducted, a written record, directly related to the child, is maintained by ICS. These records are personally identifiable to your child. Identifiable information includes the child's name, parents or other family members, the address, a list of characteristics, attendance records, and a record of the presented concerns. ICS protects the confidentiality of a child's identifiable information and are responsible for ensuring the confidentiality of these records.

ICS may gather information regarding the child's physical, mental, emotional, and health functioning through testing and assessment, observation of the child, as well as through a review of records made available to ICS through healthcare providers or service agencies. ICS may request a release of records from the parent for additional information regarding the health, physical, and emotional health of a child in order to proceed with screening or evaluation. ICS may require a physician to provide a consent for a child to be evaluated by ICS or its contracted agents if a physical, mental, or other health requirement is so severe that ICS deems it warranted to acquire such consent from a medical professional before conducting screening or evaluation.

Parents of the child have rights regarding the confidentiality of these records. The right to inspect and review the educational records related to his/her child that are collected, maintained, or used by ICS. ICS will comply with a request to review the records. Parental consent must be obtained before ICS is able to disclose these records to anyone outside of ICS, unless the records are requested via a court mandate. ICS may disclose records without consent to another school district or school in which the child is seeking intent to enroll.

In accordance with 34 CFR § 300.624, please be advised of the following retention/destruction schedule for the Pennsylvania Alternate System of Assessment (PASA), Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA), and Keystone Exam related materials:

- PSSA, Keystone Exam, and PASA test booklets will be destroyed one year after student reports are delivered for the administration associated with the test booklets.
- PSSA and Keystone Exam answer booklets and PASA media recordings will be destroyed three years after completion of the assessment.

The records and documents that are part of the evaluation and screening process are confidential and protected under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). School districts, intermediate units, and charter schools maintain records concerning all children enrolled in the school, including students with disabilities. All records are maintained in the strictest confidentiality. Your consent, or consent of an eligible child who has reached the age of majority under State law, must be obtained before personally identifiable information is released, except as permitted under FERPA. The age of majority in Pennsylvania is 21. Each participating agency must protect the confidentiality of personally identifiable information at collection, storage, disclosure, and destruction stages. One official at each participating agency must assume responsibility for ensuring the confidentiality of any personally identifiable information. Each participating agency must maintain, for public inspection, a current listing of the names and positions of those employees who have access to personally identifiable

information. For additional information related to student records, the parent can refer to FERPA. This notice is only a summary of the Special Education services, evaluation and screening activities, and rights and protections pertaining to children with disabilities, children thought to be disabled, and their parents.

More Information

For more information regarding a child's disability, screening or evaluation procedure, related services, educational records, or general questions, please contact the Principal or Special Education Coordinator at 215-238-8000.

English Learner Services

English Learner (EL) Services are provided to students who both speak a second language at home and require additional language support to be academically and socially successful in school. Services are determined based on specifically designed state testing, teacher input and ongoing assessments. Students who qualify for services receive pull-out (small group) or push-in (in-class) support based on grade level and individual needs. Independence Charter School works to ensure that parents have access to all school information, regardless of English language ability. Interpreters are provided for report card conferences and translations of important documents are sent to parents in a timely manner.

Parents who are concerned about their child's English language development or who would like to request that an interpreter be present at a teacher meeting or other school function should contact the EL Coordinator at 215-238-8000.

Guidance Counseling Services

Children's mental health affects success in school. ICS recognizes that when children are content and at ease, they are best able to concentrate and be active, effective learners. If children are feeling anxious, angry, or upset, their ability to focus on academics is compromised.

Here are some of the ways the counselors at ICS can support and serve your child and family:

- Respond to requests from ICS staff and parents for consultation regarding students' emotional well-being as it relates to school success
- Intervene in situations of student conflict, potential bullying, etc.
- Identify community services and supports for students and families as situations arise
- Coordinate the ICS Big Brothers/Big Sisters program
- Design and execute individual and small group intervention sessions in areas of need such as bullying, divorce, death and grief, trauma, etc.
- Design and execute in-classroom sessions on various topics such as bullying, health, crisis response, etc.
- Coordinate the Middle School sexual health curriculum

We encourage you to contact the Lower School or Middle School counselor if you have any questions, needs, or concerns about your child at Independence Charter School. Your concerns might include changes in your family, stress in your home, a sudden shift in your child's behavior, your child's peer relationships, or parenting support.

Student Success Team

ICS implements school wide interventions for academics and behavior using high quality differentiated classroom instruction and management across all students. If an individual student is still struggling to meet their grade level expectations, more targeted support might be required. In order to create additional interventions to assist a particular student, the school will hold a Student Success Team (SST) meeting.

The SST members work collaboratively with classroom teachers to identify and remove barriers that might be interfering with a child's success in school. SST members include the child's teacher(s), family, school counselor, nurse, and other support specialists and administrators. The team meets to review data about the student, then develops and implements a support plan that will better assist the student. Progress monitoring often reveals that students make adequate improvement over time and eventually reach their grade level expectations.

Title I Parent & Family Engagement Policy

Independence Charter School is committed to providing a quality education for every student. Academic success increases significantly when Parents/Guardians are engaged and form strong partnerships with their student's school. Independence Charter School therefore will implement programs, activities, and procedures for the involvement of Parents/Guardians in accordance with Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA). This federal statute defines "parental involvement" as the participation of Parents/Guardians in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities, including ensuring:

- that Parents/Guardians play an integral role in assisting their student's learning;
- that Parents/Guardians are encouraged to be actively involved in their student's education at school;
- that Parents/Guardians are full partners in their student's education and are included, as appropriate, in decision-making and on advisory committees to assist in the education of their student; and
- the carrying out of other activities, such as those described in Section in 1118 of the ESEA.

Independence Charter School adopts this Title I Parent and Family Engagement Policy, which will be distributed to Parents/Guardians at the Annual Title I Parent Meeting, and is intended to be revised and/or refined with input from Parents/Guardians. This policy will be posted on Independence Charter School website for accessibility to Parents/Guardians and members of the community, and will be placed in the Student-Parent/Guardian Handbook.

Communication with Parents/Guardians

Ongoing communication providing information about Independence Charter School curriculum, state and local assessments, measurement of individual progress, intervention program and how students are selected for intervention services will be conveyed to Parents/Guardians through:

- Back to School Night
 - Meetings at various times throughout the school year and at different times of the day
 - Parent/Guardian - Teacher Conferences, and availability of additional conferences
 - with the Principal and teachers as needed in order to facilitate open communication
 - Regular communication by the classroom teacher
 - Other contact by email, phone or letter
 - Report cards
 - Website postings
-

Parent/Guardian Involvement

Independence Charter School will take the following actions to involve Parent/Guardians in Title I planning, review and improvement of school programs:

- By convening an annual Title I meeting to inform Parents/Guardians of the School's participation in the Title I program, program overview and requirements, and Parents/Guardians' involvement and rights.
- Including Parent/Guardian representatives to serve on a committee to plan, review and update the School's Title I program including development of all School plans such as the Parent Involvement Policy and the School-Parent Compact, which outlines how responsibility for learning will be shared. The Parent Involvement Policy and the School-Parent Compact will be reviewed annually and updated as needed.

- Holding Parent/Guardian Partnership meetings to provide recommendations, materials, and training to help Parents/Guardians work with their student to improve academic achievement, and to help Parents/Guardians better understand the State’s academic standards and results of State and Local assessments.
 - Providing opportunities throughout the school year in which Parents/Guardians will be encouraged to participate in school events and volunteer in activities.
 - Ensuring full opportunities for participation and involvement of all Parents/Guardians, regardless of whether they or their student have disabilities, migratory status, or limited English proficiency, by providing information about Independence Charter School Title I Program and other programs, school meetings and activities to all participating families in an understandable format and language that Parents/Guardians can understand.
 - When appropriate and necessary, allowing use of Title I funds to pay reasonable and necessary expenses associated with parental involvement activities including transportation, childcare, or home visits to enable Parents/Guardians to participate in school-related meetings and training sessions.
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School-Parent Compact

Incorporated as a component of the Title I Parental Involvement Policy, Independence Charter School distributes to Parents/Guardians of participating students the School-Parent Compact, which will be signed by all parties responsible for academic achievement. Jointly developed with parental input, the School-Parent Compact outlines how Parents/Guardians, the entire school staff, and students will share the responsibility for improved student academic achievement, and describes specific ways that Independence Charter School and families will partner to help students achieve the State's and the School's high academic standards. It addresses not only items suggested by Parents/Guardians of Title I students, but also the following legally required items:

- Independence Charter School responsibility to provide a high-quality curriculum and instruction in a supportive and effective learning environment that enables students to meet State academic standards;
 - The ways that Parents/Guardians will be responsible for supporting their student's learning; and
 - The importance of ongoing communication between Parents/Guardians and teachers through, at a minimum, annual parent-teacher conferences; frequent reports on student progress; access to staff for additional conferencing in person, by telephone or email; and opportunities for Parents/Guardians to volunteer and participate in the Student's School.
-

Parent/Guardian Input

Independence Charter School Title I program welcomes input from Parents/Guardians, and will take the following actions:

- Administer family satisfaction questionnaires every Spring, not only to evaluate the effectiveness of the Title I program, but also to assess levels of parental involvement and barriers, which will serve as a basis for planning and the improvement of the program
- Administer a family needs/interest survey during the school year
- Offer a variety of parental meetings and workshops
- Obtain feedback from Parents/Guardians of workshop content and delivery, with opportunity for Parents/Guardians to suggest workshop topics

Building Capacity Through Parent/Guardian Training & Support

In order to build the capacity of Independence Charter School and Parents/Guardians for strong parental involvement, to support a partnership among the School, Parents/Guardians and the community to improve student academic achievement, Independence Charter School will provide, as appropriate, assistance, training and materials to Parents/Guardians in order to assist in their understanding of:

- Title I program overview, including an explanation of the program requirements and the rights of Parents/Guardians to be involved
- Independence Charter School curriculum
- The School's report card
- State and Local academic assessments used to measure student progress, and expected proficiency levels
- Common Core standards
- How to monitor student progress
- Strategies for helping students learn, especially in literacy and mathematics

In addition to the annual Title I meeting, Parents/Guardians will be invited to attend:

- Back to School Night
- Report card conferences at least twice a year
- Parent/Guardian Partnership meetings and workshops tailored to specific grade levels

Independence Charter School will provide, if requested by Parents/Guardians, additional meetings for the School to receive suggestions from Parents/Guardians, and will respond to these as soon as practically possible.

Independence Charter School will disseminate to Parents/Guardians data regarding their student's achievement, progress reports, and classroom and standardized assessment results, to enable Parents/Guardians of participating students to know of, and to take steps to improve, as needed, individual academic achievement levels and to remain actively engaged in their student's educational progress. Parents/Guardians also will be provided with materials and training to help them to improve their student's academic achievement through use of parental home activities and materials.

Building Capacity Through School Staff

To support a partnership with Parents/Guardians for improving student academic achievement, Independence Charter School will:

- Employ highly qualified teachers who will be provided with professional development, and will continually update resources and maintain an environment that facilitates learning; and
- Provide professional development training to school staff to strengthen parental involvement efforts relating to:
 - The value and utility of contributions of Parents/Guardians
 - How to reach out to, communicate and work with, Parents/Guardians as equal partners
 - Implementing and coordinating parental programs
 - Building ties between Parents/Guardians and Independence Charter School

Community Outreach/Collaboration

The staff and families at Independence Charter School will seek ideas and suggestions from, and will develop appropriate roles for, community-based organizations and/or businesses, and will coordinate parental involvement with such community outreach efforts.

Homework Guidelines

Our homework guidelines, created by the Curriculum Committee of the ICS Board of Trustees, are designed to:

- Clarify homework expectations for teachers, parents, and students
 - Promote continuity and consistency of homework practices throughout the school
 - Foster positive attitudes about and experiences with homework
-

Purpose of Homework

ICS teachers assign homework to promote strong study habits. The amount of homework given, as well as the responsibility placed on students to complete the homework, increases as students move up in grade level and begin preparing for high school.

Teachers are not obligated to assign this much homework every night; rather, they will strive to assign meaningful work for students to do at home as a complement to the learning taking place in the classroom. At times, more time may be needed to study for tests or prepare for special projects.

If a grade level in K-4 decides that teachers will only assign independent reading for homework, ICS administrators will support them. Homework should not be given for the sake of giving homework.

Duration of Homework

ICS recognizes that becoming a good reader is a key to success. Daily reading enrichment at home is a vital part of your child's long-term success in school. ICS expects that all students at all grade levels are reading at home independently or with a family member for at least 20 minutes every day. Immersion students are expected to read in Spanish a minimum of two times per week.

In general, families can expect that additional homework beyond these 20 minutes of reading will take about as long as the times below:

	4 th grade – 30 minutes maximum
Kindergarten – 10 minutes maximum	5 th grade – 40 minutes maximum
1 st grade – 10 minutes maximum	6 th grade – 40 minutes maximum
2 nd grade – 20 minutes maximum	7 th grade – 70 minutes maximum
3 rd grade – 20 minutes maximum	8 th grade – 80 minutes maximum

Problems with Homework

Homework should be designed to meet the individual needs of students. Homework is not intended to be a burden on families, nor is it intended to be unduly difficult or stressful for students. If your child is struggling to complete homework, please contact your child's teacher so that he or she can work with you to establish homework expectations that best meets your child's needs.

If a child is struggling both in school and out of school, teachers should not overemphasize homework completion and should instead focus on helping families support in-class performance of the student. Teachers at ICS recognize the uniqueness of each child and their needs and will take them into consideration when creating homework expectations for individual students.

Academic Integrity

As stated in our Code of Conduct, at ICS we respect the rights, person and property of others. This framework applies to academic integrity as well as social integrity.

What is Plagiarism?

Plagiarism is claiming someone else's words and/or ideas as one's own. Examples of plagiarism include (but are not limited to):

- copying another student's work (test answers, homework assignment, classwork, computer files, etc.) and submitting as your own
 - working on an assignment with another student and then submitting the assignment as if the student completed it individually
 - quoting, paraphrasing, or summarizing another person's words (from a book, article, speech, other source) and not crediting that source
 - copying words from an Internet source and not crediting that source
 - using another's wording or phrase, paraphrasing another's argument and submitting in, in part or in its entirety, as one's own
 - falsifying documentation of a source (Bibliography/Works Cited sources falsely listed)
-

Our Responsibility

ICS teachers are responsible for teaching the ethical foundation and skills necessary for appropriate documentation to maintain academic integrity. In turn, we are setting the expectation that all Middle School students, once taught this skill set, are responsible for appropriate documentation of the ideas and words of other people.

Consequences for Plagiarizing

5th Grade and Trimesters 1 & 2 of 6th Grade:

- Teacher contacts parent within one day of acknowledgement of plagiarism
- Teacher ensures student understanding of expected skills and behaviors and reteaches if necessary
- Student resubmits assignment with necessary changes within 5 calendar days of teacher acknowledgment of plagiarism for a grade not to exceed 70%. If student does not resubmit assignment within 5 calendar days, he or she receives a grade of "0" for the assignment
- Teacher notifies Assistant Principal

Trimester 3 of 6th Grade, and 7th and 8th Grades:

- Teacher contacts parent within one day of acknowledgement of plagiarism
- Teacher ensures student understanding of expected skills and behaviors
- Student resubmits assignment within 3 calendar days of teacher acknowledgment of plagiarism for a grade not to exceed 60%. If student does not resubmit assignment within 3 calendar days, he or she receives a grade of "0" for the assignment
- Teacher notifies Assistant Principal

If a student repeatedly plagiarizes, the student could be subject to more serious consequences as outlined in the ICS Code of Conduct.

Assessment

Philosophy

Assessment at ICS is intended to support learning. We assess in order to further educate, not simply to document strengths and weaknesses. Our approach to teaching and assessment must address learners' diversity while also promoting a high level of excellence. In practice, assessment must be continuous, diverse, and transparent. Our approach to assessment must be designed to support emotional as well as academic development. Assessments provide information about ability and current level of understanding, monitor progress toward learning goals, guide future teaching and learning and address diverse learning needs.

- **Assessment** is the gathering and reviewing of data. Teachers assess student learning on an ongoing basis.
- **Evaluation** is the judging of that data.
- **Reporting** is communication of the final evaluation.

Lower School: Grades K-4 Report Cards

The purpose of ICS K-4 report cards is to accurately describe to parents their child's academic and social learning performance. Students in grades K-4 receive a standards-based report card. Standards describe what a student should know and be able to do at each grade level. Standards-based report cards communicate to parents and guardians the progress their child is making towards mastering ICS standards.

Middle School: Grades 5-8 Evaluation and Reporting Guidelines

Students in grades 5-8 receive report cards which outline the letter grades assigned in every content area in which they have a class. The following guidelines explain the way these grades are determined. *Note: There could be extenuating circumstances which might require exceptions to the guidelines listed below. Those situations will be reviewed and decided on a case-by-case basis.*

Each middle school content area has its own uniform policy for the composition of grades with the following guidelines:

- Homework will not comprise more than 15% of the final grade and will be entered into MMS within one week of assignment deadline.
- Tests will not comprise more than 30% of the final grade and will be entered into MMS within one week of assessment.
- Participation will comprise exactly 10% of the final grade and will be entered into MMS within one week of assessment (at least four times per trimester).
- Parent signatures may not contribute to any points either added or subtracted from an assessment grade.

Major Assignments:

- A rubric will be distributed to parents and students when a major project is introduced that clearly outlines the project expectations and due dates.
- All major projects will include at least two check-ins and parents will be notified when a student misses two check-ins or after the first check-in if there are only two for the project.

- Project grading will use the following guidelines:
 - Timelines will account for 20% of the final grade. Late assignments can earn a maximum of 80%.
 - In grades 5 and 6, final assignments submitted more than 5 calendar days past the due date will receive a “0” for the final project grade. In grades 7 and 8, assignments submitted 2 calendar days past the due date will receive a “0” for the final project grade.
 - Check-ins will be accepted no more than one day late. Late check-in grades will be reduced by 20%.
 - Students with special needs (IEPs, 504 plans, ELL) might have a modified timeline. These modifications will be determined in advance of the deadline.
 - Students who are absent on the day a major assignment is due are expected to hand in the assignment the day they arrive back at school. They will not be penalized due to the absence.
 - Grade will be entered into MMS within **two weeks** of assignment deadline.
- Any students (excluding students who submitted a late project) who wish to improve their final grade will have a one week grace period during which they can work with the teacher to improve the grade. Teacher office hours will take place during the students’ lunch period. This grade will not exceed 80%. A good faith effort to complete the project to his/her best ability is expected from any student who makes use of the available supports during this grace period.

Homework Assignments:

- Homework assignments will be accepted no more than one day late. Late homework assignments will be reduced by 20%.
 - Students who are absent on the day a homework assignment is due are expected to hand in their work the day they arrive back at school. They will not be penalized due to the absence.
-

Report Card Conferences

The report card conference provides an opportunity for families and teachers to discuss the academic and social progress of students. It is, therefore, required that all parents attend parent-teacher conferences in order to fully participate as partners in their child’s academic and social success.

Middle School Signature Practices

Arrival Procedures

Entering the Room

- Students have three minutes to transition from one classroom to the next.
- Teachers greet each student individually and ensure that everyone is calm before entering the class.
- Teachers may use this time to take attendance, check for homework, or remind students about class procedures and expectations.

Homework Collection

- All teachers collect homework at the beginning of class.
- Students should take out work when they arrive to class and place it in the middle or front of the table.
- Teachers might check homework for completion and then return to students to use during the class period or teachers might collect the homework to grade and return later.

Warm-Up

- There will be a warm-up prompt displayed (in the same place every day).
- The prompt will be worded such that students can get started without explanation, directions or questions.
- Warm-ups can include (but are not limited to):
 - Independent Reading
 - Journaling / writing prompts
 - Writing about a topic about to be covered (accessing prior knowledge)
 - Writing about a topic recently covered (assessment)
 - Problem of the day
 - Collecting opinions from students
 - Addressing current events
 - Vocabulary work

Student Planners

Students receive planners each year and are taught how to enter items into their planners. This practice helps to build time-management and organization skills. Students will be provided time to write down any assignments, homework, or reminders in each class period. If there is no homework for a particular class, students should write “no HW” in the appropriate box in the planner.

Teachers will stamp, sign or initial each student’s planner after the student has copied the homework or written “no HW” in the appropriate box. This lets the parents know whether the student has appropriately copied the assigned work for that day. If there is no signature, then the student may not have properly listed the assignments. Parents should review the planner with their children and sign that they have seen the assignments, homework or reminders written in the planner. This system helps parents know if their children are completing all required work and informs teachers that parents are reviewing the work. Parents should encourage their children to use their planners regularly and review them frequently in order to stay organized and up-to-date.

Daily Agenda

The plan for each lesson or teaching period is posted in a consistent location. This practice allows students, visitors, support staff, and teachers to keep track of what has already happened and what is coming up next in a class period.

Study Skills

Prior to all major assessments, teachers will schedule review sessions. During these review sessions teachers will:

- Inform students about the content that will be covered on the assessment and the format of the assessment.
 - Lead students through creating a study guide. Example: Use a “cover and quiz” strategy. Answers can be covered by the students (using flash cards or folder paper) so that they can quiz themselves or each other.
 - Provide time *in class* for students to quiz themselves independently, in partners, or in groups.
 - Teach a variety of study methods and encourage students to use them at home in order to continue preparing for the assessment.
 - Have students write a study reminder in their planners. Students will have already written the test reminder on the appropriate date in their planner well ahead of time.
-

Book Lending

Reading is one of the most important aspects of a child’s education. It is a skill that is constantly reinforced in school and one that requires limitless practice at home as well. To that end, teachers are sending students home with books that belong to the school. Students should be reading these books as per their assignments both to foster their reading skills and to keep up with classwork.

In order to continue allowing children to take these books home, it is imperative that students return their borrowed books to school. We can only maintain the lending system as long as we have books to lend. Therefore, if a student loses or damages a book, he or she will be responsible to pay the school the face value of the book so that we may replace it in our lending library. When your child brings a book home, please help him or her keep track of it so that it can be returned to the school when it is due. Thank you for your attention to this matter and for helping us to foster a love of reading in all our students.

Code of Conduct

Core Beliefs and Framework

We know that a child's educational experiences help to lay a foundation for future successes. We also understand that an effective instructional program requires an orderly environment in which students and faculty know and abide by reasonable standards of socially acceptable behavior while respecting the rights, person and property of others. This framework also helps parents and guardians support their child's success. Therefore, Independence Charter School will focus on building communities within each classroom, each grade level and schoolwide through the use of both Responsive Classroom and Developmental Designs.

Responsive Classroom, used in grades K-4, is an educational approach that emphasizes social, emotional, and academic growth in a strong and safe school community. It consists of practical strategies and daily routines for helping children build academic and social-emotional competencies. Similarly, Developmental Designs, used in grades 5-8, supports high academic achievement for middle-level students through the integration of social and academic learning and an emphasis on good relationships, social skills, and engagement with learning. Independence Charter School believes that students learn best in a positive social environment.

Community Guidelines

Students begin each year by brainstorming and creating their hopes & dreams (HDs, grades K-4) or goals & declarations (GDs, grades 5-8) for the year. Students then share their HDs/GDs with classmates and teachers. Students discuss the connection between these HDs/GDs and classroom guidelines. As a group, each class then creates classroom guidelines that help them achieve the HDs/GDs they have shared. Classes connect how their classroom guidelines align with ICS's global citizenship statements and school rules.

Once every classroom has developed a list of 3-5 guidelines for a classroom social contract, all students are responsible for upholding these guidelines. If a student does not comply with guidelines he/she will be expected to discuss and solve the situation with the help of a supervising adult. Depending on the severity of the infraction, the student may also serve a logical consequence. Please see *Minor & Major Infractions* section of *Code of Conduct*.

Positive Recognition, Redirection, and Reinforcement

Independence Charter School believes that students learn best in a positive and supportive environment. ICS staff will use language that is clear, simple and direct in recognition, redirection and reinforcement. The language will be genuine and respectful to all members of the ICS community, showing faith in an individual's abilities and potential. At ICS, students celebrate their academic and social achievements throughout the year. Celebrations occur frequently and in various settings. These celebrations may be as a school, grade, class, or individuals, or with a bus cohort. All students will have the privilege of participating in these celebrations by upholding their responsibilities as outlined in the ICS Community Guidelines.

Acceptable Use of Technology for Students, Faculty, Staff and Subcontractors

The use of technology by students, employees, or subcontractors of Independence Charter School is a privilege, not a right. Technology users are expected and required to avoid actions that are dishonest, unkind (such as personal attacks and invasion of privacy), invasive, illegal (such as libel, slander, vandalism, sexual harassment, theft, unauthorized access) or in other ways inappropriate. The guidelines and prohibited actions described in this policy apply to any use of the Independence Charter network to interact with any other websites, including all social networking platforms. In addition, use of technology in negative or derogatory ways may be in violation of other school policies and rules of conduct including but not limited to harassment, off-campus behavior, and/or alcohol and other drug policies.

School Technology Accounts

All students are issued G Suite for Education accounts at the beginning of the school year. A G Suite account consists of Gmail, Calendar, Drive and Docs, and Classroom. Not all G Suite components are turned on for all students. Below summarizes the capabilities of G Suite accounts per grade:

- **Kindergarten – 3rd Grade:** These G Suite accounts consist of Drive and Docs and Classroom. There is no email capability.
- **4th Grade:** These G Suite accounts consist of Gmail, Calendar, Drive and Docs, and Classroom. Email capability is very limited. Students can send and receive email from their 4th grade teachers. Students cannot send or receive email from their fellow students. Students are not allowed to send or receive any email external to the school.
- **5th – 8th Grade:** These G Suite accounts consist of Gmail, Calendar, Drive and Docs, and Classroom. Students can send and receive email from other students and school staff. Students are not allowed to send or receive any email external to the school.

If a parent/guardian does NOT wish for their child to have an email account, please sign in the designated area on the Parent and Student Handbook Signature Page.

Rules for Technology Use

- The use of the school's technology resources is for academic and school-related purposes only. Personal electronic devices may not be used while on school grounds. Students maintain the responsibility for properly securing their property. Electronic devices, including earbuds/earphones, which are used on school property will be confiscated. For the first offense, the student may retrieve items from the Dean or other school administrator at the end of the day. For the subsequent offenses, a parent or guardian must pick it up.
- Students may not create or share videos or images of other students or staff unless given permission by a supervising adult.
- Every message sent represents the individual and the school, and thus must follow our code of civility. Personal issues or interpersonal conflicts may not be handled via email. Assume that email is not confidential, since email you send can be sent to others. School staff has access to all student email accounts.
- Students must receive permission from a staff member or administrator before sending unsolicited email to a group of more than 20 people.
- No student may reveal over the Internet, in any form, the personal information or picture/image of a current or former student, administrator, faculty or staff member, or parent.
- Network and email passwords may not be shared with classmates in school, nor outside of school in any form.

Consequences for Improper Technology Use

Minor technology offenses include:

- Visiting a website or using an application not related to the work assigned
- Carrying or moving computer equipment improperly or unsafely

Consequences for minor technology offenses include:

- First offense - Loss of computer equipment for remainder of class, possible impact on participation grade
- Subsequent offenses - Loss of computer equipment for that class, family contacted, and discussion with Assistant Principal about additional consequences

Major technology offenses include:

- Attempting to damage or intentionally damaging computer equipment
- Visiting an inappropriate website
- Inappropriate comments made electronically in the classroom
- Cyberbullying

Consequences for major offenses include:

- Loss of computer equipment for that class, possible impact on participation grade, family contacted
- Student and Assistant Principal plan a presentation for class regarding proper use of electronic equipment
- Other consequences as outlined in **Major Incidents and Consequences** may apply.

K-5th Grade Cell Phone Policy

Cell phones may not be used while on school grounds. Therefore, student cell phones may not be seen or heard in the building at any time. This includes texting and posting in any form at any time. Students maintain the responsibility for properly securing their property. Cell phones, including earbuds/headphones, which are used on school property will be confiscated. For the first offense, the student may retrieve items from the Dean or another administrator at the end of the day. For the second offense, a parent or guardian must pick up the phone or phone accessory. If the problem continues or if the student refuses to hand in the phone or accessory, the situation will be handled by the Dean.

6th-8th Grade Cell Phone Policy

Students will not be allowed to use cell phones, in the building, during school hours (7:45am to 3:35pm). Cell phones must be turned off and turned in to Advisory Teachers (6th-8th grades) every morning. The phones will be secured in a locked box within the classroom or secured within a container which will then be locked inside a closet, file cabinet, locker, etc. If a student is found to have a cell phone in their possession, the phone will be confiscated, placed in a labeled envelope, and delivered to the Dean.

1st Offense:

- Cell phone held in Dean's office until the end of the day.
- Student will sign for the cell phone at the end of the day in the Dean's office.

2nd Offense:

- Cell phone held in Dean's office until the end of the next day.
- A parent or guardian will need to sign for the cell phone at the end of the next day in the Dean's office.

3rd Offense:

- Cell phone held in Dean's office for three (3) school days.
- A parent or guardian will sign for the cell phone after a meeting with the student and the Dean. The student will be assigned 5 hours of in-school community service, to be supervised by the Dean.

Additional offenses will be considered a violation of the Code of Conduct and may result in additional consequences (*repeated minor violations = major incident*). Also, a student that refuses to comply with a request to surrender their cell phone by any staff member and/or administrator will be in violation of the Code of Conduct and subject to additional consequences. Rules governing Disciplinary Guidelines and Consequences will apply as outlined in the Family & Student Handbook.

Disciplinary Guidelines and Consequences

Independence Charter School has developed the following guidelines to guide the conduct of students, school employees/volunteers, and families. These guidelines expand upon the ICS School Rules and will apply at all times that school is in session, during any school program or function, either in the building or at any other location, as well as during arrival and dismissal, and traveling to and from school. This includes travel on school district vehicles, private transportation and public transit systems.

Schoolwide Discipline Policy

Independence Charter School may discipline students for:

- Conduct during school
- Conduct going to and from school
- Conduct outside of school that disrupts school programs

Minor Incidents and Consequences

The table below outlines the possible consequences for various student behaviors. Examples of minor inappropriate behavior include, but are not limited to, those listed in the left-hand column. The right-hand column lists the possible consequences, all of which may apply to any of the listed behaviors.

Behavior*	Possible Consequences* (More than one consequence may be assigned)
Refusing to Follow Directions Talking Back Disruption of Class Possession/Use of Cell Phone (6-8) Profanity/Offensive Language Dress Code Violation Destruction of Property (minor) Selling Goods on School Grounds Without Authorization Play-fighting/Roughhousing Student Arguments Taunting/Instigating Misuse of Technology Stealing (minor) Tantrums (K-1) Inappropriate Display of Affection Chewing Gum Late to Class Plagiarism/Cheating	<p>The following may apply to all behaviors listed in the column to the left:</p> <p>Student may <i>Take a Break</i>.</p> <p>Student may go to <i>Buddy Room</i> or <i>Take A Break Out and Back (TAB out and back)</i> and complete a <i>Fix-it Plan</i>.</p> <p>Student will practice expected behavior with teacher and/or peers.</p> <p>Mediation may occur between all participants. This will include a chance to “fix” relationships or objects.</p> <p>Teacher may contact parent by phone (parent may be asked to speak with the student), note in take home folder or by email.</p> <p>Student may lose a privilege (such as loss of dress down day/free time, recess detention, etc.)</p> <p>Student may be given a behavior assignment to be completed at home.</p> <p>Parent meeting may be requested.</p> <p>Student may be given in-school community service to “fix” relationships or objects.</p> <p>Student may be assigned an After-School Detention or Delayed Dismissal.</p> <p>Repeated violations may result in a Discipline Referral.</p>

*5th-8th grade students must arrive to class on time. After 3 late arrivals, a parent will be notified and a detention will be assigned. For every 3rd late arrival after that, a Wednesday School will be assigned. If late arrivals continue, a parent meeting will be scheduled.

If a minor behavior continues, it will be considered a **Major Incident** (see below) and one or more of the following may happen:

- A parent conference may be requested by the classroom teacher and the Assistant Principal may be present.
- A behavior chart/plan may be put into place. This is a temporary plan and will include frequent guardian meetings and daily teacher/guardian contact.
- Parent conference may be requested, and other ICS team members (teachers, counselors, administration) may be present.

Major Incidents and Consequences

The table below outlines the possible consequences for various major student behaviors. Examples of major inappropriate behavior include, but are not limited to, those listed in the left-hand column. The right-hand column lists the possible consequences, all of which may apply to any of the listed behaviors.

Behavior
Repeated Minor Violations
Severe/Intentional Disruption of Class
Possession/Use of Cell Phone (6-8) (repeated offenses)
Leaving Classroom/School Grounds without Permission
Bullying/Harassment/Intimidation
Racial Harassment
Sexual Harassment
Serious Threats
Endangering Self or Others
Destruction or Theft of Property (major)
Selling Goods on School Grounds Without Authorization (repeated offenses)
Stealing (major)
Indecent Exposure/Inappropriate Touching
Profanity Directed at Adult
Assault on Student
Assault on Staff
Fighting
Possession of a Weapon
Possession of Illegal Substance

Possible Consequences (More than one consequence may be assigned)
<p>The following may apply to all behaviors listed in the column to the left:</p> <p>The student may be immediately removed from the classroom and sent to the Assistant Principal’s office.</p> <p>Student may discuss and practice expected behavior with the Assistant Principal and/or teacher.</p> <p>Mediation may be held for all participants. This will include a chance to “fix” relationships or objects.</p> <p>Parent may be called by the Assistant Principal. Parent may be asked to speak with the student at the time of the call to discuss the behavior and expectations.</p> <p>A letter, documenting the incident, may be given to the parent. Parent is expected to sign and return the letter on the next school day.</p> <p>Student may lose a privilege.</p> <p>Student may be given an assignment to be done at home.</p> <p>Student may be given after-school community service.</p> <p>Student may be assigned an After-School Detention.</p> <p>Student may be assigned a Wednesday School.</p> <p>Student may be assigned an In-School Suspension.</p> <p>Student may be sent home. Parent will be asked to come to school and take the student home within one and-a-half hours.</p> <p>Student may be suspended out of school between 1 and 5 days, not including the day of the incident.</p> <p>Students may be suspended out of school between 5 and 10 days, not including the day of the incident.</p> <p>Parent meeting may be required.</p> <p>Student may be placed on Behavioral Probation.</p>

Incidents Qualifying for Expulsion

Behavior
Any criminal conduct as defined by Pennsylvania Law.
Assaulting any person, as an individual or as a group
Attempting to engage or engaging in any conduct that threatens the health, welfare or safety of any member of the school community
Student is under the influence of drugs or alcohol
Possession of tobacco or alcohol product
Possession of over the counter medication, look alike drugs and/or drug paraphernalia
Possession of any weapon, but not limited to, any knife, pocket knife, Swiss army knife, cutting instrument, cutting tool, nunchaku, firearm, shotgun, rifle and any other tool, instrument or implement capable of inflicting serious bodily injury (as specified by Act 26 on p. 43)
Any item brought or used with the intent to cause harm (as specified by Act 26 on p. 43)

Consequences
Student will be escorted to the Assistant Principal's office.
Parent/Guardian will be notified immediately.
Parent/Guardian will be asked to pick their child up immediately.
Student will be suspended from Independence Charter School until a full evidentiary hearing on the expulsion of the student can be held before the Board of Trustees.
Independence Charter School may call the Department of Human Services.

Informal & Formal Hearing Procedures

Informal Hearings

The purpose of the informal hearing is to enable the student to meet with the appropriate school official to explain the circumstances surrounding the event for which the student is being suspended or to show why the student should not be suspended. The informal hearing is held to bring forth all relevant information regarding the event for which the student may be suspended and for students, their parents or guardians and school officials to discuss ways by which future offenses might be avoided.

The following due process requirements shall be observed in regard to the informal hearing:

1. Notification of the reasons for the suspension shall be given in writing to the parents or guardians and to the student.
2. Sufficient notice of the time and place of the informal hearing shall be given.
3. A student has the right to question any witnesses present at the hearing.
4. The school entity shall offer to hold the informal hearing within the first 5 days of the suspension.

Formal Hearings

A formal hearing is required in all expulsion actions. This hearing may be held before the governing board or an authorized committee of the board, or a qualified hearing examiner appointed by the board.

When a committee of the board or a hearing examiner conducts the hearing, a majority vote of the entire governing board is required to expel a student. The following due process requirements shall be observed with regard to the formal hearing:

1. Notification of the charges shall be sent to the student's parents or guardians by certified mail.
2. At least 3 days' notice of the time and place of the hearing shall be given. A copy of the expulsion policy, notice that legal counsel may represent the student and hearing procedures shall be included with the hearing notice. A student may request the rescheduling of the hearing when the student demonstrates good cause for an extension.
3. The hearing shall be held in private unless the student or parent requests a public hearing.
4. The student may be represented by counsel, at the expense of the parents or guardians, and may have a parent or guardian attend the hearing.
5. The student has the right to be presented evidence from witnesses and copies of statements and affidavits of those witnesses.
6. The student has the right to request that the witnesses appear in person and answer questions or be cross-examined.
7. The student has the right to testify and present witnesses on their own behalf.
8. A written or audio record shall be kept of the hearing. The student is entitled, at the student's expense, to a copy. *A copy shall be provided at no cost to a student who is indigent.*
9. The proceeding shall be held within 15 school days of the notification of charges, unless mutually agreed to by both parties. A hearing may be delayed for any of the following reasons, in which case the hearing shall be held as soon as reasonably possible:
 - a. Laboratory reports are needed from law enforcement agencies.
 - b. Evaluations or other court or administrative proceedings are pending due to a student invoking their rights under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C.A. § § 1400—1482).
 - c. In cases in juvenile or criminal court involving sexual assault or serious bodily injury, delay is necessary due to the condition or best interests of the victim.
10. Notice of a right to appeal the results of the hearing shall be provided to the student with the expulsion decision.

Restraints

The use of restraints are used as a last resort by professionally trained staff only and when all other protocol and interventions have been maximized.

Discipline of Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who are protected under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and students who are eligible for special education supports and services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) who violate ISC's student Code of Conduct are afforded additional protections as follows:

According to 22 Pa. Code §§ 14.143, a disciplinary exclusion of a student with a disability education is a change in educational placement in any of these three situations:

1. The disciplinary exclusion is for more than 10 consecutive school days;
2. The disciplinary exclusion, when cumulated with other disciplinary exclusions in a single school year, exceeds 15 school days; or
3. The disciplinary exclusion (for any length of time) involves a student with an intellectual disability.

ICS may not change the placement of a student with a disability without following the procedures set forth below. No later than the day on which the decision to take disciplinary action is made, ICS shall notify the parents/guardians of the decision to change the student's placement and of all procedural safeguards under the IDEA.

When discipline is to be imposed upon a student with a disability, school personnel have the authority to

- (1) remove the child from his/her current placement to an appropriate interim alternative educational setting or suspension for a period of not more than the 10/15 day limits to the extent such discipline would be applied to students without disabilities;
- (2) assign the student to an alternative educational setting for the same period as such discipline would be imposed upon children without disabilities if there has been a determination that the conduct at issue was *not* a manifestation of the child's disability or
- (3) assign the student to an interim alternative educational setting for not more than forty-five (45) school days without regard to whether the conduct at issue was a manifestation of the child's disability if the *special circumstances* for emergency placement. When a student with a disability has committed an act that would result in a suspension from school, all regular disciplinary procedures must be followed.

MANIFESTATION DETERMINATION

Within ten (10) school days after the decision is made to change the placement of a student with a disability, the relevant members of the IEP team, as determined by the parents/guardians and the Administration, must consider whether the student's behavior is attributable to the student's disability. In making this determination, the IEP team must review all relevant information in the student's file, including the IEP, any teacher observations, and any relevant information provided by the parents/guardians to determine:

- (a) whether the conduct in question was caused by or had a direct and substantial relationship to the student's disability and
- (b) whether the conduct in question was the direct result of the school's failure to implement the IEP.

If the team determines that the answer to either of these questions is "yes," then the conduct shall be deemed a manifestation of the student's disability.

Conduct Deemed a Manifestation

If the conduct is deemed a manifestation, then the IEP team must (a) conduct a functional behavioral assessment of the student unless such an assessment was previously conducted and develop and implement a behavior intervention plan, unless such a plan has already been developed; or (b) if a behavior intervention plan was previously developed, then the IEP team must review the plan and modify it as necessary to address the behavior. The behavioral intervention plan will provide the foundation in the determination of what constitutes a change in

educational placement for each student's program. If the IEP team has included certain school responses to student behavior in the behavior intervention plan, the application of the agreed upon procedures will not constitute a change in educational placement.

Additionally, if the conduct is deemed a manifestation of the student's disability, then the student must be returned to placement from which the student was removed unless (a) the parents/guardians and ICS agree to a change in placement as part of a behavioral intervention plan or (b) the *special circumstances* for emergency placements set forth in this handbook apply.

Conduct Not a Manifestation

If the conduct is not deemed a manifestation of the student's disability, then ICS may proceed with the disciplinary measures applicable to students without disabilities in the same manner and for the same duration as they would apply to students without disabilities. ICS is still required to provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to the student through implementation of the student's IEP, but it may provide the education in an alternative setting.

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

A student with a disability may be removed to a 45-school-day interim alternative educational setting regardless of whether the conduct was a manifestation of the student's disability if the student:

- 1) carries a weapon or possesses a weapon at school, on school premises, or to or at a school function;
- 2) knowingly possesses or uses illegal drugs, or sells or solicits the sale of a controlled substance, while at school, on school premises, or at a school function; or
- 3) inflicts serious bodily injury upon another person while at school, on school premises, or at a school function. 34 C.F.R. §300.530(g).

Weapons

A student with a disability who carries or possesses a dangerous weapon to or at school, on school premises or to or at a school function may be placed in an interim alternative educational setting for a maximum of forty-five (45) school days.

Controlled Substances

A student with a disability who knowingly possesses or uses illegal drugs or sells or solicits the sale of a controlled substance while at school, on school premises, or at a school function may be placed in an interim alternative educational setting for a maximum of forty-five (45) school days. The term "illegal drug" means a controlled substance but does not include a substance that is being administered in school under the supervision of a licensed healthcare professional. A "controlled substance" is a substance as defined in the Controlled Substances Act (21 U.S.C. §812(c)).

Serious Bodily Injury

A student with a disability who has inflicted serious bodily injury upon another person while at school, on school premises, or at a school function may be placed in an interim alternative educational setting for a maximum of forty-five (45) school days. Serious bodily injury is defined as "bodily injury which involves a substantial risk of death; extreme physical pain' protracted and obvious disfigurement; or protracted loss or impairment of the function of a bodily member, organ, or mental faculty."

In all three circumstances, procedures described above related to the manifestation determination and development of a functional behavioral assessment and implementation or modification of a positive behavior support plan still apply. For any of these special circumstances for emergency placements, if a student's conduct is deemed not to be a manifestation of the student's disability, then ICS may impose discipline beyond the forty-five (45) school days to the extent and for the duration

that it would impose such discipline on students without disabilities. If ICS proposes such a placement beyond the forty-five (45) school day alternative placement, then the ICS must offer a School Board hearing as it would for students without disabilities.

PROTECTIONS FOR STUDENTS WHO ARE NOT YET ELIGIBLE FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION

The IDEA provides that a student who has not been determined to be eligible for special education may assert the protections set forth above if ICS had “knowledge” that the student was an eligible student before the occurrence of the behavior that precipitated a disciplinary action. ICS is considered to have knowledge if:

- 1) the parent of the student expressed a concern in writing (unless the parent is illiterate or has a disability that prevents compliance with the requirements contained in this clause) to ICS that the student is in need of special education and related services;
- 2) the parent of the student has requested an evaluation of the student; or
- 3) the teacher of the student or other personnel of ICS expressed a specific concern about the behavior or performance of the student to the Coordinator of Special Education or to other supervisory personnel of the school.

ICS would not be deemed to have knowledge if the parent/guardian: 1) has not allowed an evaluation of the student, or 2) has refused the provision of special education services for the student.

Act 26 – Pennsylvania Law

24 P.S. § 13-1317.2. Possession of weapons prohibited (a.k.a. “Act 26”)

(a) Except as otherwise provided in this section, a school district or area vocational-technical school shall expel, for a period of not less than one year, any student who is determined to have brought onto or is in possession of a weapon on any school property, any school-sponsored activity or any public conveyance providing transportation to a school or school-sponsored activity.

(b) Every school district and area vocational-technical school shall develop a written policy regarding expulsions for possession of a weapon as required under this section. Expulsions shall be conducted pursuant to all applicable regulations.

(c) The superintendent of a school district or an administrative director of an area vocational-technical school may recommend modifications of such expulsion requirements for a student on a case-by-case basis. The superintendent or other chief administrative officer of a school entity shall, in the case of an exceptional student, take all steps necessary to comply with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (Public Law 91-230, 20 U.S.C. § 1400 et seq.).

(d) The provisions of this section shall not apply to the following:

- (1) a weapon being used as part of a program approved by a school by an individual who is participating in the program; or
- (2) a weapon that is unloaded and is possessed by an individual while traversing school property for the purpose of obtaining access to public or private lands used for lawful hunting, if the entry on school premises is authorized by school authorities.

(e) Nothing in this section shall be construed as limiting the authority or duty of a school or area vocational-technical school to make an alternative assignment or provide alternative educational services during the period of expulsion.

- (e.1) A school district receiving a student who transfers from a public or private school during a period of expulsion for an act or offense involving a weapon may assign that student to an alternative assignment or provide alternative education services, provided that the assignment may not exceed the period of expulsion.

(f) All school districts and area vocational-technical schools shall report all incidents involving possession of a weapon prohibited by this section as follows:

- (1) The school superintendent or chief administrator shall report the discovery of any weapon prohibited by this section to local law enforcement officials.
- (2) The school superintendent or chief administrator shall report to the Department of Education all incidents relating to expulsions for possession of a weapon on school grounds, school-sponsored activities or public conveyances providing transportation to a school or school-sponsored activity. Reports shall include all information as required under section 1303-A. [FN1]

(g) As used in this section, the term “weapon” shall include, but not be limited to, any knife, cutting instrument, cutting tool, nunchaku, firearm, shotgun, rifle and any other tool, instrument or implement capable of inflicting serious bodily injury.

CREDIT(S) 1949, March 10, P.L. 30, No. 14, art. XIII, § 1317.2, added 1995, June 30, P.L. 220, No. 26, § 4, effective in 90 days. Amended 1997, June 25, P.L. 297, No. 30, § 6, effective July 1, 1997.

[FN1] 24 P.S. § 13-1303-A.

Bullying and Cyberbullying

The Independence Charter School Board of Trustees (the Board) is committed to providing a safe, positive learning environment for students. The Board 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 Board prohibits bullying in any form by students.

Bullying means an intentional electronic, written, verbal or physical act or series of acts directed at another student or member of the school community, which occurs in a school setting and/or outside the school that is severe, persistent or pervasive and has the effect of disrupting the educational process or creating a reasonable apprehension or such disruption by:

1. Interfering with a student's education by creating an intimidating or hostile environment;
2. Physically, emotionally or mentally harming a student;
3. Damaging, extorting or taking a student's personal property;
4. Placing a student in reasonable fear of physical, emotional or mental harm;
5. Substantial disruption of the orderly operation of the school.

Bullying, as defined in this policy, includes cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying includes, but is not limited to, the following misuses of technology: harassing, teasing, intimidating, threatening, or terrorizing another student, teacher, employee, or other member of the Independence Charter School community by sending or posting inappropriate or derogatory email messages, instant messages, text messages, digital pictures or images, or web site posting (including blogs and other forms of social media).

Any reprisals or retaliations associated with a report of bullying or cyberbullying will be defined as bullying.

The terms "bullying" and "cyberbullying" shall not be interpreted to infringe upon a student's rights to engage in legally protected speech or conduct.

School setting means in the school, or school grounds, in school vehicles, at a designated bus stop or at any activity sponsored, supervised or sanctioned by the school.

The Board prohibits all forms of bullying by school students.

The Board encourages students who have been bullied to promptly report such incidents to a school employee.

The Board directs that the complaints of bullying shall be investigated promptly, and corrective action shall be taken when allegations are verified. Confidentiality of all parties shall be maintained, to the extent possible and consistent with the district's legal and investigative obligations. No reprisals or retaliation shall occur as a result of good faith reports of bullying.

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or Principal or designee shall develop administrative regulations to implement this policy.

Each staff member shall be responsible to maintain an educational environment free of bullying and cyberbullying.

Each student shall be responsible to respect the rights of other students and to ensure an atmosphere free from all forms of bullying.

Students shall be encouraged to report bullying or cyber bullying complaints to Independence Charter School employees.

The CEO or Principal or designee shall ensure that this policy and administrative regulations are reviewed annually with students.

The CEO or Principal or designee, in cooperation with other appropriate administrators, shall review this policy every three (3) years and recommend necessary revisions to the Board.

The CEO shall annually provide the following information with the Safe School Report:

1. Board's Bullying Policy,
2. Report of bullying incidents.
3. Information on the development and implementation of any bullying prevention, intervention or education programs.

The content of the Bullying and Cyberbullying Policy should be outlined in the Parent-Student Handbook, which shall be disseminated annually to students and parents/guardians.

Complaint Procedures

1. A student shall report a complaint of bullying or cyberbullying, orally or in writing, to any School employee.
2. The School employee will investigate the alleged conduct that occurred. If the behavior is found to meet the definition of bullying or cyberbullying, written documentation must be submitted to the CEO.
3. The School employee may ask assistance from other School District employees in the investigation process.
4. After the investigation, the CEO shall be notified in writing of the complaint and the results of the investigation and shall take corrective action to ensure that the conduct ceases.
5. The CEO or designee will inform parents of the victim and person accused of the results of the investigation.

Education

The School may develop and implement bullying prevention and intervention programs. Such programs shall provide district staff and students with appropriate training for effectively responding to, intervening in and reporting incidents of bullying.

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

Hate Speech

At ICS, we refer to hate speech as any derogatory word having to do with another student's race, religion, origin, disability, gender, or sexual orientation at school. As a school that prides itself on developing our students to become global citizens, ICS takes this matter very seriously.

Hate speech makes others feel unsafe and it not permitted at ICS. If a child uses hate speech at school, we will notify parents and ask that you please follow up at home to ensure that this type of language does not continue. It is very important that all students at ICS feel safe and accepted. Any additional instance of hate speech will result in the assignment of a Wednesday School.

Recording and Reporting of Behaviors

Independence Charter School records behavioral incidents and the resulting outcomes. These records are then kept in a locked filing cabinet. At any time, a parent or guardian may request their child's behavioral record. The request must be written and may be addressed to the Assistant Principal. The request will take between 24 and 48 hours to process. The parent or guardian must then come to the school to pick-up the records, as records will not be mailed or delivered via student backpacks.

The parent/guardian does have the right to appeal any information in the student behavioral record. To appeal the factual information (this is different from disagreeing with the decision), please write a letter addressed to: The Disciplinary Committee of the Board of Trustees. Mail or deliver the letter to the Assistant Principal. This letter will then be forwarded to the ICS disciplinary committee. Parents will be contacted by the committee within 48 hours regarding their appeal.

All records will be altered to protect the privacy of other students involved.

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

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

1. **The right to inspect and review the student's education records within 45 days after the day ICS receives a request for access.**

Parents or eligible students who wish to inspect their child's or their education records should submit to the school principal a written request that identifies the records they wish to inspect. The school official will make arrangements for access and notify the parent or eligible student of the time and place where the records may be inspected.

2. **The right to request the amendment of the student's education records that the parent or eligible student believes are inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the student's privacy rights under FERPA.**

Parents or eligible students who wish to ask the ICS to amend their child's or their education record should write the school principal [or appropriate school official], clearly identify the part of the record they want changed, and specify why it should be changed. If the school decides not to amend the record as requested by the parent or eligible student, the school will notify the parent or eligible student of the decision and of their right to a hearing regarding the request for amendment. Additional information regarding the hearing procedures will be provided to the parent or eligible student when notified of the right to a hearing.

3. **The right to provide written consent before the school discloses personally identifiable information (PII) from the student's education records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent.**

One exception, which permits disclosure without consent, is disclosure to school officials with legitimate educational interests. The criteria for determining who constitutes a school official and what constitutes a legitimate educational interest must be set forth in the school's or school district's annual notification for FERPA rights. A school official typically includes a person employed by the school or school district as an administrator, supervisor, instructor, or support staff member (including health or medical staff and law enforcement unit personnel) or a person serving on the school board. A school official also may include a volunteer, contractor, or consultant who, while not employed by the school, performs an institutional service or function for which the school would otherwise use its own employees and who is under the direct control of the school with respect to the use and maintenance of PII from education records, such as an attorney, auditor, medical consultant, or therapist; a parent or student volunteering to serve on an official committee, such as a disciplinary or grievance committee; or a parent, student, or other volunteer assisting another school official in performing his or her tasks. A school official typically has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record in order to fulfill his or her professional responsibility.

4. **The right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by the [School] to comply with the requirements of FERPA. The name and address of the Office that administers FERPA are:**

Family Policy Compliance Office
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202

Definitions of Code of Conduct Terms

Term	Definition
Act 26	Pennsylvania State Code referring to a weapons violation. Please see a copy of Act 26 on the previous page and Act 30 (Safe Schools Act) in our <i>ICS Policies and Procedures Supplement</i> .
Assault	(Simple) An unlawful attempt or threat to do physical harm to another. Assault is one sided. The victim does not or is not able to defend themselves with enough force to prevent harm. (Aggravated) Assault with a weapon.
Behavioral Probation	<p>When a student is placed on behavioral probation the following will take place immediately: The student will be placed on a behavior plan/contract which will require weekly check-in meetings with parents and student daily check ins with the Assistant Principal. The behavioral plan will be revisited monthly during the time a student is on Behavioral Probation. It is expected that student behavior will improve significantly and with consistency. If there are additional behavioral incidents during this period, the student may be brought to the Board of Trustees for expulsion.</p> <p><i>During this time, students will not be able to attend class field trips without their parents or guardians present.</i></p> <p>Student behavior will be tracked and monitored on a daily basis. Each student will be required to have a behavioral form completed and signed by each of his/her teachers daily.</p>
Buddy Room (K-4) or Take-A-Break Out and Back (5-8)	If a student continues to be disruptive or is agitated in a classroom <i>Take a Break</i> they will go to the <i>Buddy Room (K-4) or Take A Break Out and Back (TAB-Out and Back, 5-8)</i> . This is a classroom where the student will <i>Take a Break</i> without the distraction of their classroom peers. This will be a silent <i>Take a Break</i> . The student will be expected to quietly sit in the <i>Take a Break</i> spot without disrupting the class. If the student continues to be disruptive, they will immediately come to the Assistant Principal's office and may be sent home depending on the severity of the infraction.
Bullying	To hurt or intimidate other people in a <u>repeating and patterned manner</u> . Bullying includes: physical or verbal aggression toward a person and/or their belongings causing social alienation and intimidation. Bullying usually includes an imbalance of power. This includes taking or playing "keep away" with another person's belongings.
Cheating	To violate rules dishonestly. The consequence may include one or more of the following: loss of grade for the academic activity, loss of grade for the semester (grades 5 th - 8 th), mandatory summer school, or suspension.
Detention	Consequence that may be assigned by the Assistant Principal or a teacher for repeated minor incidents and/or a major incident. The Assistant Principal will contact parents 24 hours in advance to inform them about the detention. Parents must arrange transportation for the student.
Discipline Referral Form	Form used by staff to record major or repeated minor behavioral incidents (see major incidents table). When a student is sent to the Assistant Principal's office, they will be accompanied by a Discipline Referral Form. Parent or guardian will be contacted within 48 hours of the incident. A copy of the discipline referral form is available from the Assistant Principal.
Dress Code Violation	Any student in grades 3-8 who does not arrive to school in the approved ICS Dress Code, and/or does not comply with the ICS Dress Code throughout the length of the school day will receive a logical consequence, such as losing future dress down day privileges. If the student continues to dress out of code, a parent meeting will be required and the student may be sent home. <i>Please note that this consequence will not apply to students whose parents/guardians contact the school about special circumstances regarding the reason for the dress code violation.</i>

	Certain clothing items worn in school in violation of the dress code will be confiscated. This item will be returned at a later time. These items include, but are not limited to: hoop earrings, hats, and jeans (worn under skirts). Sandals will also be confiscated (assuming alternate dress code compliant shoes are available).
Expulsion	<p>Student is dismissed from the school permanently, unless otherwise stated, due to severe or repeated behaviors. <i>The student and parent have the right to be informed of the reasons for the movement toward expulsion and to respond to these reasons prior to the suspension taking effect.</i></p> <p>Parents and guardians of children who have been recommended for expulsion shall have the right to a full evidentiary hearing before the Board of Trustees of the Independence Charter School, at which time they may present their argument and evidence for not expelling the student. The expulsion hearing shall take place at the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Board of Trustees (BOT). If the next meeting of the BOT is more than three weeks from the date of the incident, the CEO or Principal shall call a special meeting of the BOT. The BOT shall take a roll call vote immediately at the close of the hearing. The decision of the BOT shall be final. The parent/guardian shall be notified of the hearing date in writing no less than ten (10) days before the date of the hearing.</p> <p>Please Note: The LEA* shall decide expulsion for special education students as stated in IDEA laws and regulations, on a case-by-case basis.</p> <p>*LEA=Local Education Agency. In Pennsylvania, charter schools are their own LEA.</p>
Extortion	To obtain something by using threat or intimidation.
Fight	Taking part in a physical struggle. Both parties involved will receive consequences. Independence Charter does not allow “hitting back”. All students are taught that walking away and “telling a teacher” is the appropriate response to being hit.
Inappropriate Public Displays of Affection	An inappropriate public display of affection is defined as romantic physical contact such as, but not limited to hand holding, hugging, and kissing. Because inappropriate public displays of affection distract from the learning environment, students who engage in them may be subject to disciplinary measures. This policy will apply to students in grades 3-8. Age and circumstances will be taken into consideration when applying discipline measures for inappropriate public displays of affection.
In-School Suspension	<p>Student will remain in the Assistant Principal’s office for the duration of their suspension. During this time the student will complete all classroom work, work on additional behavioral assignments given by the Assistant Principal and receive all homework.</p> <p>Please Note: The LEA shall decide suspension for Special Education students as stated in IDEA laws and regulations, on a case-by-case basis.</p>
Logical Consequence	Defined (by Ruth Charney, <i>Teaching Children to Care</i>) as: reasonable and respectful, neither punishment nor permission. The consequence will help students assume responsibility through structured learning opportunities and the opportunity to try again.
Out of Bounds	To be away from the school, teacher or classroom without direct permission. All students must have a pass at all times to travel through the hallways during non-transitional periods. Consequences will be assigned on an individual basis and will depend on the reason for a student being out of bounds.
Out-of-School Suspension	<p>Student will remain in the Assistant Principal’s office on the day of the incident until the parent or guardian is able to pick them up. ICS expects that the parent or guardian will arrive to the school within one and a half hours of the original phone call. The day of pick up does NOT count as a day of suspension. The student is responsible for completing all in class and all homework for the day(s) missed due to suspension. The student may also be responsible for completing any assignments given by the Assistant Principal.</p> <p><i>ALL PARENTS OR GUARDIANS ARE REQUIRED TO ATTEND A REINSTATEMENT MEETING AS SCHEDULED, WITHOUT WHICH THE STUDENT WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO REENTER THE</i></p>

	<p><i>CLASSROOM.</i> The student must arrive to school with the parent or guardian and will not be allowed into the classroom until the reinstatement meeting is finished.</p> <p>The student and parent have the right to be informed of the reasons for the suspension and to respond to them prior to the suspension taking effect. The parent has the right to immediate written notice of the suspension and when it exceeds three (3) school days, the school must offer to hold an informal hearing within the first five school days.</p> <p>Please note: The LEA shall decide suspension for Special Education students as stated in IDEA laws and regulations, on a case by case basis.</p>
<i>Play Fighting / Rough-housing</i>	<p>Taking part in aggressive physical play that simulates a fight. Play fighting is considered to be dangerous as students often become injured or the play fighting turns to a real fight. It is important to understand that for the safety of all students play fighting is not allowed under any circumstances.</p> <p>This would also include “Birthday Punches” and “Two-for-Flinching” type games.</p>
<i>Reinstatement</i>	<p>A meeting held to restore the student to active standing. If the reinstatement meeting is not held, the student may not return to school. Any student who returns to school without their parent or guardian will be sent to the Assistant Principal’s office and the parent or guardian will be contacted.</p>
<i>Self Defense</i>	<p>Self Defense applies only to those situations where a student could not walk away and/or get help from a teacher.</p> <p><i>Self Defense is NOT reacting to being hit or kicked. ICS does NOT condone “hitting back.”</i></p> <p><i>Students are taught to walk away and get help from a teacher.</i></p>
<i>Take a Break</i>	<p>Every classroom has a designated <i>Take a Break</i> spot. All students are made aware of this spot at the beginning of the school year. Students know that they may ask to go to this spot in order to calm down or think about a situation. In some cases a teacher may instruct the student to go to the <i>Take a Break</i> spot. The student is expected to comply.</p>
<i>Teasing</i>	<p>To upset or annoy by taunting or making fun of another student. Teasing is a “one time” occurrence. Teasing that occurs on more than one occasion and/or becomes a patterned behavior is considered <i>bullying</i>.</p>
<i>Under the Influence</i>	<p>Having any detectible amount of alcohol or a controlled substance in your system and/or showing physical manifestations of being under the influence.</p>

Administration and Confidentiality of Student Records Policy

The Student Records Policy adopted by Independence Charter School addresses the collection, maintenance, destruction, and disclosure of student educational records. A summary of the policy is below. You can view the complete policy on our website under [About: Policies](#).

Policy Summary

- The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) mandates that unless the School has received a signed, written consent form, the School may not disclose personally identifiable information from a student's education records unless a FERPA exception applies. A few of the more frequent exceptions include:
 - Directory Information: If the School has given the proper public notice to parents and eligible students (i.e. students who has attained the age of 18) advising of the information designated as directory information and the parent/eligible student's right and timeline to opt out of such disclosure and the parent/eligible student has not opted out, the School may disclose directory information without prior written consent.
 - School Officials: Personally identifiable information contained in student educational records may be disclosed without parental consent to other school officials who the School has determined have legitimate educational interests in such information. This category can include teachers, as well as contractors, consultants and volunteers to whom the School has outsourced School services or functions to the extent and in accordance with the requirements listed in the Policy.
 - Other Schools: Personally identifiable information contained in student educational records may be disclosed without parental consent to another school or institution of postsecondary education where the student intends to enroll or where the student is already enrolled in accordance with the requirements listed in the Policy.
 - Pursuant to a subpoena, upon proper advanced notice to the parent/eligible student, if appropriate.
 - Health and Safety Emergency: Personally identifiable information contained in student educational records may be disclosed without parental consent if knowledge of the information sought is necessary to protect the health or safety of the student or other individuals
- Discipline records may only be disclosed in very narrow circumstances:
 - A student's disciplinary record shall be transmitted to a school to which a student has transferred, upon written request by such school.
 - In the event the School reports a crime committed by a child with a disability, the School must ensure that copies of the special education and disciplinary records of the child are transmitted for consideration by the appropriate authorities to whom the School reports the crime, but only to the extent permitted by FERPA.
 - All other requests for student discipline records require prior parent/eligible student consent.
- The School must issue an annual notification of rights which gives parents/eligible students notice of their right to inspect, review and seek amendment to their child's education records, consent to certain disclosures of personally identifiable information in their child's educational records, and file complaints with the Department of Education regarding alleged failures to comply with FERPA.
- **Parent Access Rights:** Parents are permitted, upon written request, to inspect, view or copy educational records relating to their child when the record is collected, maintained or used by the School. The School shall comply with the request within a reasonable period of time, but not more than forty-five (45) days after it has received the request.