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*PARENT/STUDENT HANDBOOK*

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**YOUNG SCHOLARS OF McKEESPORT A  
CHARTER SCHOOL**



Excellence in Education

The 2019 - 2020 School [www.ysmcs.org](http://www.ysmcs.org)

Dear Students,

Welcome to the 2019-2020 school year at Young Scholars of McKeesport Charter School (YSMCS). A new school year means new beginnings, opportunities and a big step toward building your bright future. The administrative team is excited about the upcoming school year, and the staff at YSMCS is caring, competent, dedicated and willing to assist you. We are working very hard to provide the best possible learning climate for you.

We believe that education is a shared responsibility and teamwork. Successful operation of a school depends on the cooperation of everyone involved: students, parents, and staff. The mission of YSMCS is to create a partnership among the members of this triad. Each party is responsible for doing his/her part to make the school a place where we all enjoy living together, helping one another to succeed and move toward the shared goals together in harmony.

YSMCS is a reflection of all of us. All of our policies are intended to provide a safe and orderly environment that will be conducive to learning. Our faculty and staff look forward to sharing their expertise in academics, special programs, and extracurricular activities. We encourage you to get to know your school, programs, activities, schedule and become an active participant in our events.

This handbook is an overview of our school's goals, services, policies and rules. It is an essential guide on what we expect from you and how we do things. Read it carefully, discuss it with your parents, and let it act as a guide for your effective involvement in the school. It has been written to provide you and your parents with the information that will make your year purposeful and rewarding in every aspect. Keep this handbook because you will use this information throughout the school year.

On behalf of the entire YSMCS staff and community, we wish you a great academic year!

Sincerely,

David Aiden, M.Ed.,  
CEO

## **Mission Statement**

Young Scholars of McKeesport Charter School (YSMCS) is a multicultural learning community emphasizing individual academic excellence and social development. We embrace native and non-native English speakers desiring a global perspective.

To fulfill this mission, YSMCS commits itself to the following goals:

- Foster proficiency in all academic areas.
- Develop a basic conversational foundation in at least two major world languages (in addition to English).
- Cultivate appreciation of the United States and other countries, their people, and their roles in influencing world history and present international issues.
- Encourage leadership, independent thinking, problem solving, conflict resolution, and positive peer interaction.
- Establish the foundations for using technology throughout life.

YSMCS believes that understanding and appreciating cultural diversity promotes mutual respect and other aspects of responsible, global citizenship. Furthermore, development in citizenship and character complements intellectual growth. We recognize individual academic abilities. Every individual has inherent worth and the right to safety, acceptance, learning, and success. In addition, we believe that education is a shared responsibility between the school, community, parents, and students.

Vital components of our program include:

- Instruction in core subjects according to all areas of the Pennsylvania Academic Standards.
- Weekly lessons in Technology, Music, and Physical Education and Art.
- Differentiated instruction to address individual needs.
- Formal testing to monitor student progress.
- Daily instruction of two world languages in all grade levels.
- Enrichment Activities in the Extended Day program.
- Cultural celebrations throughout the school year.
- Exposure to a variety of cultures in the core curriculum.
- Community relationship building.
- Competitions that instill positive attitudes toward achieving excellence.
- Character Education, Counseling, Special Education and English as a Second Language Services.

## **Vision Statement**

- Preparing students for college and life-long learning.
- Providing the extensive use of technology.
- Teaching at least two world languages.
- Developing advanced performance in mathematics and sciences.
- Promoting student projects and presentations.
- Preparing students for competitions, contests, science fairs or Science Olympiads.
- Encouraging strong family involvement.
- Giving an opportunity to share cultures and to benefit from each other.
- Supporting multicultural events in school.

## INTRODUCTION

To achieve our mission, every member of YSMCS must respect the rights of all members of the community. This means creating an environment that is physically, emotionally and intellectually safe, orderly, and conducive to learning. The information in this handbook provides the guidelines for the behaviors and attitudes that will create a positive environment in which each student, parent, and teacher can contribute and learn. Because this is a “Student/Parent” Handbook, it is written to you. Each section begins with a general description of the topic, and then provides additional detailed information.

## YSMCS SCHOOL CALENDAR

The academic school year generally parallels that of the McKeesport Area School District—August to June, with the exception of snow day makeup days. School holidays, inclement weather closings, in-service days, parent-teacher conferences, etc. generally match the school district schedule. A detailed calendar including scheduled YSMCS events will be available and updated on the YSMCS website, and a hard copy will be available as well.

## HOURS OF SCHOOL OPERATION

YSMCS has a traditional campus—a school building with classrooms, and a multipurpose room. The school day runs from 8:00 a.m. to 3:38 p.m. Students will not be permitted inside the building before 7:50 a.m. due to safety concerns with supervision. Regular instruction hours for students run from 8:00 a.m. to 3:35 p.m. The Extended Day Program will run from 3:35 p.m. to 5:10 p.m. A short “snack break” will take place before the extended day begins. While the Extended Day Program is optional, parents are strongly encouraged to allow children the benefit of additional instruction, enrichment and remediation available then. School bus transportation is available in the morning and at 3:38 pm, the end of regular hours. Children who are not staying for Extended Day must be picked up promptly between 3:40 pm. to 3:50pm from cafeteria if they are not using bus transportation. Parents are not permitted to park on Shaw Ave. during dismissal (due to bus lanes). If students are staying for the extended day program they must be picked up in the main lobby no later than 5:15 p.m. If students are not picked up by 5:15 p.m., a warning will be issued for the first incident and removal from the program for the second incident.

## ATTENDANCE POLICY

Every student should attend school regularly unless there is a lawful reason for not to do so. This is critical to your child’s academic success and emotional well-being. By the same token, there are reasons that a child can miss school. For example: a sick child cannot learn, exposes others to contagious illnesses, and recovers faster with bed rest at home. Each family will receive a parent note pad. This pad is to be returned and signed with the child for any excused absences, tardiness, or early dismissals.

## CATEGORIZING ABSENCES: WHAT IS UNLAWFUL ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL?

According to state regulations, YSMCS is responsible for monitoring and maintaining records of the attendance of students. All absences will be treated as unlawful until YSMCS receives a written excuse explaining the reason(s) for an absence. Parents/guardians and students should submit a written explanation within three calendar days of the absence and should be informed that if they fail to provide a written excuse within three days of the absence, the absence would be permanently counted as unlawful. The PDE recommends that schools immediately inform parents in writing upon each incident of unlawful absence. Pennsylvania law broadly defines absences as excused when a student is prevented from attendance for mental, physical, or other urgent reasons. Many school districts, including YSMCS, consider illness, family emergency, death of a family member, medical or dental appointments, authorized school activities, and school organized educational travel as the only lawful absences.

## ABSENCES ACCRUED DUE TO CHRONIC TARDINESS

It is the policy of YSMCS that student who is tardy three times without a valid excuse shall be counted as having one unlawful absence. Valid excuses are identical to those listed above. Parents must sign students in when they are tardy and fill out the parent notepad with a legitimate excuse to be given to the school and their child's teacher. Please do not drop your child off late without filling out the form. Parents must walk their child in to the front desk when the student is arriving to school late.

### CUMULATIVE LAWFUL ABSENCES

A maximum of ten days of cumulative lawful absences verified by parental notification may be permitted during a school year. All absences beyond ten cumulative days should require an excuse from a physician. Under Section 11.24, students who miss ten consecutive school days shall be dropped from the active membership roll unless the school is provided with evidence that the excuse is legal or the school is pursuing compulsory attendance prosecution.

### CHARTER SCHOOL RESPONSIBILITIES

Charter schools must report to the student's school district of residence when a student has accrued three or more days of unlawful absences. It is the responsibility of the school district to enforce the compulsory attendance laws in accordance with the Public School Code. However, charter schools should also follow PDE's Recommended Responses to Unlawful Absences for the first, second and third unlawful absences including the school/family meeting and implementation of a plan. Charter schools should also refer the child to the county children and youth agency.

Regular school attendance is essential for the student to make the most of his or her Education—to benefit from teacher-led activities, to build each day's learning on the previous days, and to grow as an individual. School employees must investigate and report violations of the state compulsory attendance law. Students absent without permission from school or from any class will be considered truant and subject to disciplinary action. To receive credit in a class, a student must not miss more than 10 days, the class is offered. A student who misses more than 10 days of the class, cannot receive credit for the class, unless the attendance review committee finds that the absences are the result of extenuating circumstances, such as:

- An extracurricular activity or public performance that has been approved by the District's Board of Trustees.
- Required screening, diagnosis, and treatment for Medicaid-eligible students.
- A documented health care appointment—if the student begins classes or returns to school on the same day as the appointment.
- A temporary absence resulting from any cause acceptable to the teacher, CEO, or Superintendent, including personal illness; or illness or death in the immediate family.
- A juvenile court proceeding documented by a probation officer.
- An absence required by state or local welfare authorities.
- Family emergency or unforeseen or unavoidable instance requiring immediate attention.

Please note:

- The District shall excuse students from attending school for the purpose of observing religious holidays when it is a tenet of their faith that they must be absent from school during such time and if, after an absence, the parent, guardian, or person having custody or control of the student submits written notification for the excused absence. The District shall excuse the student for days on which the student must travel to and from the site where the holidays will be observed. Excused days for travel shall be limited to not more than one day for travel to and one day for travel from the site. A student whose absence is excused for religious holidays shall not be penalized for the absence and shall be counted as having attended for purposes of calculating attendance. Students excused under this provision shall be allowed a reasonable time to make up schoolwork missed on those days.

- In those rare circumstances when a student must be absent from school, the student—upon returning to school—must bring a note, signed by the parent, that describes the reason for the absence; a note signed by the student, even with the parent's permission, will not be accepted. Notes must be received within three days of absence, or the absence will be unexcused

- A student absent for any reason should promptly make up specific assignments missed and/or complete additional in-depth study assigned by the teacher. A student who does not make up assigned work within the time allotted by the teacher will receive a grade of zero for the assignment.

- A student is tardy if he or she is not in the classroom when the morning bell rings at 8:12 a.m. Repeated instances of tardiness will result in disciplinary action. If the student's bus is late to school for any particular reason beyond the student's control the school will excuse the tardy on that particular day.

- All anticipated absences must be cleared by the main office at least one full day before the absence. All assignments missed will be due on the day the student returns to school unless otherwise arranged with teachers or CEO. Assignments associated with an anticipated absence will be provided before or after the absence at the discretion of the school. Any absence not cleared in advance will be unexcused.

YSMCS has the right to take extreme absence cases to court.

#### Absence and Tardiness

YSMCS recognizes two kinds of absences and tardiness: excused and unexcused. Please read through the definitions of each carefully so that you understand the meanings of each. Also, you need to be acutely aware of your responsibilities regarding homework, quizzes, and tests when you have an excused absence and the consequences for unexcused absences.

Students must provide a note from a parent/guardian or a doctor for an excused absence to be admitted to school.

#### **A. Excused Absences**

YSMCS accepts only the following as excusable reasons for absence from school. Under the compulsory education law, parents or guardians must notify the school any morning their child is not attending. The excuse shall be submitted to the attendance office and filed as part of the student's school record. An excuse for absence from school may be approved for one (1) or more of the following reasons or conditions:

#### **Unexpected Absences**

### Personal Illness

- Your parent or guardian must call the school each morning you are ill.
- When you return to school, you must bring an explanatory note from your parent or guardian.
- The school may require a doctor's confirmation.
- Illness in the Family
- Your parent or guardian must call the office to explain the situation and estimated time of absence.
- When you return to school, you must bring an explanatory note from your parent or guardian or a doctors note.
- Quarantine of the Home
- Your parent or guardian must call the office to explain the situation and estimated time of absence.
- When you return to school, you must bring an explanatory note from your parent or guardian.
- Such an absence is limited to the length of the quarantine as fixed by the proper health officials.

### Death of a Relative

- Your parent or guardian must call the office to explain the situation and estimated time of absence.
- When you return to school, you must bring an explanatory note from your parent or guardian.

### **Anticipated or Planned Absences**

#### Observance of Religious Holidays

Any student shall be excused for the purpose of observing a religious holiday consistent with his/her creed or belief (Documentation from the family's place of worship is required).  
You must bring a note from your parent or guardian to the office before the day(s) of the absence.  
You must bring a note to the office the day you return. Professional Appointments

- We encourage parents to schedule medical, dental, legal, and other necessary appointments outside school hours whenever possible. If this is not possible, you must bring a note to the office the day of the absence stating clearly the time you are to be dismissed. In addition, the following rules shall apply to this kind of dismissal during the school day:
- Parents must come to the office to pick you up.
- Your parent must sign you out of school and sign back in upon return to school.
- You must return to school when finished if classes are still in session.

### **Educational Trips**

CEO may excuse a student to attend an educational trip under these circumstances.

- The student's parent or guardian prior to the tour or trip submits a written request to the CEO for the excusal two weeks in advance. The length of the trip cannot exceed 5 school days in one school year.
- The student's participation on the tour or trip needs to be approved by the CEO.
- There is an adult who is directing and supervising the student during the tour or trip who is acceptable to both the parents or guardian and the CEO.
- The CEO may limit the number and duration of tours or trips for which excused absences may be granted to a student during the school term.
- If approved by CEO, student is still responsible for completing all work assigned by teacher/s during their absence.

#### **B. Unexcused Absences**

An unexcused absence does become part of a student's school record. You will be marked for an unexcused absence if you

- fail to bring a written note within three school days following an absence;
- leave school without the permission of the CEO;
- are absent from school without parental permission;
- are absent for reasons considered unacceptable to the Administration.

#### **C. Make-up Work for Excused Absences**

1. An absence from school, even for several days, does not excuse you from responsibilities in the classroom on the day you return. If you have an excused absence, you will be given the same number of days that you were absent to make up missed work.
2. To be eligible for make-up work, you must show each teacher the "excused absence slip." On the day you return to school, it is your responsibility to find out what work is required and when the work needs to be completed, and record the due dates.
3. If you are absent for school-related reasons or for an anticipated or planned absence, make arrangements with your teacher(s) for assignments prior to your absence. For students with excused absences, make-up tests will be scheduled at a time designated by the teacher. It is the student's responsibility to take the test at that time. If you fail to do this, the teacher is not obligated to reschedule the make-up. If you fail to make up a test without making other arrangements, the teacher may decide not to give you the test, resulting in a "zero" grade.

#### **D. Make-up Work for Unexcused Absences**

If you have an unexcused absence, your grade(s) in a class or classes will be affected in one of these ways.

- You may not make up work following an unexcused absence.
- Unexcused absences may result in an "F" or "zero" for the day in each class missed.

- Teachers are not obligated to allow you to make up quizzes or tests.

### **Truancy**

Definition of “truant.” The new law explicitly defines “truant” as a child subject to compulsory school laws “having three (3) or more school days of unexcused absence during the current school year.”

Truancy shows a deliberate disregard for the educational program and is considered a serious matter that will have immediate consequences. If you are truant,

- No credit will be recorded for work you missed as a result of truancy;
- A record of truancy will be entered into your record file
- A conference with your parents will be held.

### **F. Habitual Truancy**

New definition for “habitual truancy.” The new law streamlines the definition of “habitual truancy.” Under the new law, “habitual truancy” is defined as a child subject to compulsory school laws “having six (6) or more school days of unexcused absences during the current school year.” Therefore, a child is habitually truant once he or she accumulates six unexcused absences during the course of the school year. These absences do not need to run consecutively.

### **SCHOOL TARDINESS**

In YSMCS, there are two types of tardiness: Tardy to school and tardy to class.

The YSMCS Tardy Policy has been developed to emphasize the importance of each student being in the classroom for the entire period, as well as arriving on time to school every day. Learning the responsibility of getting to class on time is an integral part of YSMCS's standard of excellence, which prepares students for success.

In our school, instructional time is viewed as a precious resource. Consequently, we view chronic tardiness as a serious problem. Note that after each incident you will receive this notice; but if the problem continues additional consequences will be imposed.

Thank you for your support in ensuring students make maximum use of class time and learn to be punctual. School begins at 8:00 a.m. Beginning the day promptly is important and demonstrates commitment to success. If a student comes after 8:30 a.m., he/she needs to get a tardy slip from front office. Tardiness to school will be unexcused even though the parent brings the student to school. Oversleeping, car/traffic problems, etc. are ALL UNEXCUSED. Tardiness is excusable by a school official under the following circumstances:

1. Court appointment
2. Illness of the student
3. Student has a doctor/dentist appointment

A note or phone call from a parent or a professional note from a doctor/dentist will be required to verify the above. Problems with tardiness to school may require adjustments in the family's morning schedule.

### **CLASS TARDINESS**

We view chronic tardiness as a serious problem. Note that after each incident you will receive this notice; but if the problem continues additional consequences will be imposed. Thank you for your support in ensuring students makes maximum use of class time and learn to be punctual. Tardiness are excusable only if a student has a

written note from the nurse, a teacher, or a CEO. The consequences for repeated tardiness to class within a year are as follows:

### SCHOOL DISTRICT RESPONSE TO CHARTER SCHOOL ABSENCES

Under compulsory attendance laws, the parents/guardians of a student who has accumulated three unlawful absences are to receive notice stating any subsequent unlawful absences will result in a citation being filed with the magisterial district judge. The school district of residence should send the notice to parents/guardians immediately

upon notification of the third unlawful absence by a charter school. It is recommended that such notice be sent through certified mail. Future unlawful absences should be filed with the magisterial district judge. Charter schools and cyber charter schools must cooperate with school districts by providing necessary documentation for the truancy filings, and attending the hearings to provide testimony, if necessary.

### CHANGES IN YOUR CHILD'S ROUTINE

If your child needs to leave school early, or if there is to be a change in transportation at dismissal time, please notify the teacher and office ahead of time. If we do not receive a note or phone call from a parent by 2:30 pm, your child will be dismissed according to his/her normal dismissal plan. For your child's safety, he/she will never be released to anyone who is not pre-approved by a custodial parent or guardian.

Children who use bus transportation provided by the Local School District will be sent home on the bus unless a parent, guardian, or designee arrives prior to the departure of the bus to pick him or her up .

If you plan to be out of town, please notify the school, and be sure that the person you have named to be called in case of emergency is available. The office must always have a number to call in case of emergency.

### ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL

If you choose to bring your child to school rather than use school district transportation, staff will be on hand to supervise beginning at 7:50 a.m.. If you are transporting your child, please observe all traffic signs and patterns. If you are dropping your child off please use the main entrance doors. No students will be allowed into the building before 7:50 a.m., unless a meeting is scheduled with a teacher or administrator prior to that specific day.

FOR SECURITY, DOORS REMAIN LOCKED DURING SCHOOL HOURS. CHILDREN ARRIVING AFTER 8:30 AM MUST BE ESCORTED INTO THE SCHOOL THROUGH THE MAIN DOORS AT THE FRONT OF THE BUILDING.

If you need to pick up a child at any time other than regular dismissal at 3:38 p.m. or at the end of their designated club time, please stop at the front desk and sign out in our "Late Arrival/Early Dismissal" book. If you are bringing a child to school late, please stop at the front desk to sign in and fill out a tardy slip. The only valid excuses for tardiness are the same as those for absences.

YSMCS takes your child's safety and security very seriously. We appreciate your support of our efforts.

### DISMISSAL POLICY

These instructions should be kept all year as a reference for dismissal procedures. Please read through and discuss them with your child. Forward any questions to the CEO or Discipline Coordinator. Please remember that all rules and policies are there to keep the students of YSMCS safe and to get them home in the most efficient way possible.

1. Regular dismissal time for all students in grades K thru 6 is 3:38 p.m. sharp. Dismissal time for the "Early Dismissal" days is 12:00 p.m. Please do not arrive at school before dismissal time unless you are picking up your student early and have made arrangements beforehand with the office and homeroom teacher. Parents are expected to pick up their children at most by 3:50 p.m.
2. At the dismissal bell (3:38pm), students who will be picked up will report to Cafeteria. Their parents/legal guardians must pick up all students from cafeteria unless they have a walker pass. Students will not be released until their ride comes. If you are picking your child up, please do not block busses and/or driveways of residents in the area. Use the school parking lot on Shaw Ave.
3. For the parents who cannot pick up their children by 3:50 p.m., YSMCS provides an Extended Day Program. You have to register for the ED program at the beginning of the year.
4. Extended Day program students must be picked up between 5:10 p.m. until 5:15 p.m.
5. Students walking home will be assigned a walker pass, if requested by parents / legal guardians. YSMCS is not responsible for a child who walks home once he/she is off the property of school. If walkers need to wait on campus for any reason, they should ask permission from the after school coordinator or teachers on duty.
6. All Extended Day program students should be signed out before leaving from the main office.

For more information, please contact the Extended Day Coordinator, or main office.

#### EARLY DISMISSAL OF STUDENTS FROM SCHOOL

Because YSMCS is very concerned about your safety and well-being, early dismissal from school is an important issue. In all instances of early dismissal, the following precautions will be taken to insure student's safety.

- School CEO may release you before the end of a school day only upon presentation of a written or face-to-face request from your parent or guardian or for emergency reasons.
- You may be released only to a parent or guardian whose signature is on file in the school office or to a properly identified person, authorized in writing by the parent or guardian to act on his/her behalf.
- You may be released "on his/her own" only with verified parental permission.
- No staff member shall permit or cause you to leave school prior to the regular hour of dismissal except with the knowledge and approval of the CEO and with the knowledge and approval of your parents or guardian.
- You may not be released from school to any government agency without proper warrant or written parental permission except in the event of an emergency as determined by the CEO or designee.

Please be reminded that regardless of whether it is a regular or an early-dismissal day, the school building may be locked at 5:30 PM.

#### UNEXPECTED CLOSING OF SCHOOL

In the situation of unexpected circumstances, all school closings and delays can be found on local radio and TV stations including WPXI, WTAE, and KDKA. Parents and Guardians will also be informed by the School Reach system (automated phone calls).

## LUNCH

Lunch menus are posted on the school website and will also be sent home with students. Parents may pay YSMCS for lunches and track each child's account via our online system, or by cash or check made out to Young Scholars of McKeesport Charter School.

Business office will track student lunch purchases and keep you informed of your child's account status. Students are required to have lunch money in their accounts to receive a lunch—no credit is available. If a child comes to school without a lunch and has no remaining money in his or her account to purchase one, a parent will be called to bring lunch to school. (Student will be served a cold sandwich if parents cannot make it.) This may be upsetting for students, especially younger ones, so please monitor your child's account carefully.

## SCHOOL BREAKFAST

The breakfast will be offered to students every morning from 8:00 a.m. - 8:40 a.m. in the cafeteria. The breakfast for each morning will also be posted on the Lunch menu calendar as well.

## **DRESS CODE**

Students are expected to wear the YSMCS uniform at all times and to dress and groom themselves in such a way as to reflect neatness, cleanliness and safety. All students should dress appropriately so as not to disrupt or interfere with the educational program or the orderly operation of the school. The CEO or other duly authorized school official shall determine whether any particular use of the school uniform is in violation of the spirit and/or the intent of this school uniform policy.

Students and parents are expected to honor the uniform code in order that valuable school time is not spent examining student attire to determine appropriateness. At no time will a student be permitted in the building with improper footwear as noted in the Dress Down Policy.

The student's parent will be notified of this violation by verbal (phone call) or written notification given to the student. If a student comes to school on a **second** occasion inappropriately dressed, his/her parent will be notified of this violation by phone call and asked to bring proper dress code items. Until students meet the Dress Code requirements they will not be allowed in to the classroom. They will be doing their work in ISS room with supervision. A student who violates the uniform code on the **third** occasion will be issued a detention. The **fourth** and all incurring violations may result in an out-of-school suspension. **Inappropriate attire jeopardizes the instructional climate and therefore, will not be tolerated.**

### **Guidelines for clarification are as follows:**

Students will not be permitted to enter the building with flops or sandals.

- ✓ Uniforms should be neat and clean.
- ✓ Uniforms may not be worn inside out or backwards.
- ✓ Students must wear a pair of black or brown (low cut) rubber soled shoes or all-black sneakers or all-white tennis shoes.
- ✓ Thermals, hats, caps, curlers, headscarves, bandanas, doo-rags, sweatbands, chains, sunglasses, gloves and coats are not to be worn during school hours.
- ✓ Pants should be worn at the waist and not sag. Belts must be worn with pants. Pants should also not fit too snugly.
- ✓ P.E. uniforms are only permitted in P.E. classes.
- ✓ Uniforms with rips, tears, holes or frayed edges are considered inappropriate for school.
- ✓ Shoes must be worn at all times. Proper dress does not include bedroom slippers, clogs, flip-flops, etc.
- ✓ Students are not allowed to leave their shoes in their lockers/ bags. They are not permitted to bring other shoes and change it in the school unless permitted by school admin.

- ✓ Students will be able to wear boots in the winter.
- ✓ Undergarments must not be exposed.
- ✓ Hair, face and body paint are inappropriate for school.
- ✓ Jewelry and accessories should be appropriate for school and not attract undue attention or pose a safety risk. Students risk the following being confiscated:
  - a) Only stud earrings will be allowed with the limit of 2 per ear.
  - b) No other visible piercing will be permitted such as tongue rings, facial piercing, nose ring, etc.
  - c) All necklaces must be tucked in their shirts and not be made visible.
- ✓ No make-up should be re-applied in school, (all makeup confiscated will be disregarded and not given back). Make-up should be appropriate for school and not attract undue attention.
- ✓ Extreme hairstyles are not permitted (ex. Mohawk cuts, excessive parts, mullets).
- ✓ Extreme dyes or sprays are not permitted (Red, blue, pink, yellow, green, etc.)
- ✓ All shirts must be tucked in pants.
- ✓ Street Clothing (jeans, sweats, slickers, etc.) cannot be worn under the uniform.
- ✓ Belts must be a plain and solid black or brown in color (no metallic belts)
- ✓ Nails must be an acceptable length to ensure the safety of the student and others.

Neatness and cleanliness in personal attire are part of a child's education and the responsibility of the parent(s) or guardian(s). When a child looks and feels good, h/she acts and works accordingly. Personal appearance that constitutes a distraction is NOT PERMITTED.

Hair must be neatly styled. No extreme hair styles.

## OFFICIAL UNIFORM POLICY

Only the school polo shirt (with logo) must be purchased from the uniform establishment designated by YSMCS. (No other garments can be worn in the school building for the polo shirt. Khaki (beige) pants might be purchased from school or outside. Pants should match the school color please check the sample pants in the office or on our website.

### Uniform Top for All Students (With school logo)

- Polo school shirts with short/long sleeves with logo
- Sweater with logo
- Uniform Pants, Belt, and Footwear
- Properly fitting khaki pants
- Brown or black leather belt with standard buckle
- No jeans except when given explicit permission
- Black or brown (low cut) rubber soled shoes and all black/ all white tennis shoes.

### DRESS DOWN DAY (Tag Day) and Friday GYM days

Students are given the opportunity to participate in dress down day (optional). Dress down day is an opportunity for students to wear clothing other than their school uniform. Students are still expected to dress appropriately. A fee may be charged in order to participate if the dress down days are fundraising for an event. Students are prohibited from wearing the following if they chose to participate.

- Open toe/heel shoes (flip flops, sandals, crocs, etc.)
- Skirts
- Shorts
- “Belly shirts” or shirts that expose the mid-section
- Tights
- Ripped jeans
- Sleeveless shirts
- Open front or back blouses
- Pajama pants
- Jewelry (other than stud earrings)
- Scarves, bandanas, flags, hats, gloves, etc.
- Facial piercing
- Offensive messages/pictures on shirt and pant
- Body conforming clothing
- Extremely baggy clothes

### Any offenders will be subject to one or all of the following:

Loss of Tag Day privileges for the rest of the school year and contacting parents to bring in uniform.

### Field Trip Dress Code:

Students are required to wear school khakis, polo, and brown or black shoes to all field trips. Teachers can deviate if there is extensive walking. In that case, students will be permitted to wear all black or all white sneakers. Any student that does not comply with the dress code will not be permitted to attend the field trip. Any monies may be forfeited. (School administrations may approve different dress codes for the field trips.)

## DISCIPLINE POLICY

YSMCS staff and students value the dignity of all members of the school community at all times. We respect the rights of students to make choices and to experience the consequences of those choices. Students are taught decision-making, problem-solving and conflict resolution skills to develop their abilities to make sound choices.

The core of our discipline policy is two-fold: to hold students accountable for their behavior and to help them understand that good behavior is a matter of making wise choices. To the extent that this policy is successful, children will develop into responsible citizens who understand what socially acceptable behavior is and act accordingly because they care for each other and respect the adults who care for them.

### GENERAL DISCIPLINE POLICY

The following methods will be employed when dealing with student behavior:

- Classroom and building rules will be cooperatively established, reviewed, and enforced.
- Positive behavior will be recognized and encouraged.
- Causes for misbehavior will be analyzed to facilitate prevention of behavior problems.
- Alternative approaches for dealing with the child's behavior will be developed based on the analysis of causes as well as the effectiveness of previous approaches.
- Logical and natural consequences for behavior will be applied.
- Communication among staff, students, and parents will be ongoing.
- 
- The effectiveness of behavior plans will be monitored, evaluated, and revised as necessary.

Children and teachers will discuss the following specific school procedures in detail during the first week of school:

- Keep hands, feet and objects to yourself.
- Follow staff directions immediately.
- Walk, except on the playground/ gym.
- Stay on the school grounds.
- Use acceptable language.
- Ask permission before using or touching another student's personal belongings.
- No chewing gum.
- Work and play safely.
- Leave all electronics at home or in a bag/locker

### What to Leave at Home:

Kindles, Nooks, Game Boys, iPod, and other hand-held technology, including cell phones, should remain at home for two reasons: potential loss or breakage, and the risk of distracting students from school activities. The school will not be responsible for loss. If a student is found using any electronic device, it will be confiscated by a staff member, and parents may collect any such items their child brings to school from the main office or Discipline Coordinator at their earliest convenience. Teachers may request that other items stay at home as well. If you want your child to have a phone for emergencies, it should be off during school hours. Student may use it before and after school hours (during bus rides etc.)

YSMCS will comply with state and federal regulations dealing with Student Discipline Code. Parts of Chapter 12 of the Pennsylvania Code are provided below.

### STUDENT DISCIPLINARY CODE OFFENSES and CONSEQUENCES

#### **Level I Offense:**

- Unexcused tardy to class at any time of the day
- Being unprepared to class
- Bringing food/drink to class
- Cheating
- Disturbing class
- Wandering the hallway
- Drawing or writing in textbooks/desk
- Inappropriate behavior to friend/peer
- Inappropriate behavior to cafeteria/hallway
- Involving yourself in a conflict
- Lack of Cooperation
- Leaving paper/trash behind in class
- Lying
- Not Following Classroom Expectations
- Talking back to teacher
- Throwing objects from the window
- Vulgarity

**A Level I offense results in:**

- Student being asked to stay after class to speak with his/her teacher.
- Student's Parent/Guardian being informed by the teacher of his /her inappropriate behavior.
- Student receiving a demerit point based off of their behavior.

**If Level I offenses are recurring, the following consequences may apply:**

- Students will be required to meet with his/her teacher and Parent/Guardian. If it is deemed necessary, the student's parent/guardian will also attend this meeting.
- A Referral Form will be filled out and sent to the Discipline Coordinator where further action would be taken by administration.
- Student will be required to meet with the CEO or his/her designee who will determine if further action is appropriate.
- Student could be sent home. Student will not be allowed to return to school until he/she has met with his/her teacher, the CEO or his/her designee and his/her parent/guardian.

**Level II Offense:**

- Alcohol/Drug related
- Arson
- Fighting
- Theft
- Threats/Intimidation to another
- Tobacco
- Inappropriate bus behavior
- Excessive vulgarity
- Failure to follow instructions during emergency drill
- Destruction of school property
- Leaving the classroom without permission
- Bullying
- Acting in a violent manner not directed at another.

**A Level II offense results in:**

- Student being referred to the CEO or Discipline Coordinator.
- In-School Suspension (see following definition).
- Detention (see following definition)
- Student being sent home. Student will not be allowed to return to school without a parent or guardian.

- Student's parent or guardian being contacted immediately and informed of his /her offense.
- Out-of-School Suspension (see following definition).
- Meeting with student's parent/guardian and the CEO or his/her designee.
- Student being required to perform a service project.
- Student being required to submit a written apology to the appropriate person(s) and/or the whole school community.
- Expulsion (see the following definition)
- If Level II offenses are recurring, the following consequences may apply:
- Expulsion (see definition below)

### **Definitions:**

**Short-term suspension** - refers to the removal of a student from school for disciplinary reasons for a period of fewer than ten days.

**Out-of-School Suspension** - Out of school suspension means a student has temporarily lost the right to attend school or set foot on school grounds during a set period of time determined by the CEO according to offense. Student may not return from suspension without parent/guardian.

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**In-School Suspension** - In-school suspension is the requirement of a student to attend school. Rather than attend classes, the student will spend the day with the CEO or his/her designee until 3:27 p.m. or for as many days as it takes for the student to prove that he/she is prepared to return to class. Assignments from teachers must be brought to the student, who is expected to be on task. The student will work on his/her assignment during the time in which they have that class.

- No student may receive an in-school suspension unless the student has been informed of the reasons for the suspension and has been given an opportunity to respond before the suspension becomes effective.
- Communication to the parents or guardian shall follow the suspension action taken by the school.
- When the in-school suspension exceeds 10 consecutive school days, an informal hearing with the CEO shall be offered to the student and the student's parent or guardian prior to the 11th school day in accordance with the procedures in § 12.8 (relating to hearings).
- The student's school district has the responsibility to make some provision for the student's education during the period of the in-school suspension.

### **ISS Rules**

- Students who sent out of classroom must stay in ISS room with a monitor.
- Students who are in ISS must complete a pack of work from Math, ELA, S.S., and Science etc.
- Students who complete and hand in the required works described above can do extra work assigned by their teacher.
- Students who complete all work before they get out of ISS must read their AR/Level book for the rest of the time.
- Attempting to talk, socialize with other students or staff is not acceptable may result in 1 day out-of-school suspension.

**After-School Detention** - This is the requirement of a student to attend after-school detention with the classroom teacher or his/her designee for the required number of days according to offense. Detention is from 3:45 p.m. until 4:25 p.m. and may not be missed for any reason. Prearranged after-school activities, doctor's appointments, or a job, are not considered acceptable reasons to miss detention. Missing detention or arriving late will result in further disciplinary actions

**Before-School Detention** – This is the requirement of a student to attend before-school detention with the classroom teacher or his/her designee for the required number of days according to offense. Detention is from 7:40 a.m. 8:10 a.m. and may not be missed for any reason. Prearranged after-school activities, doctor's appointments, or a job, are

not considered acceptable reasons to miss detention. Missing detention or arriving late will result in further disciplinary actions.

**Being Sent Home** -Being sent home means a student has to leave school grounds when asked by the CEO or his/her designee with the understanding that the student will go directly home. Parents or guardians will be contacted immediately. The student may not return to school without a parent or guardian.

**Daily Behavior Report:** A daily behavior contract is an informal tracking tool used by the school to monitor a student's day-to-day behavior and academic progress until such time that satisfactory results have been achieved. The student's teachers complete this report each day (for certain students). The form is returned the next school day after being reviewed and signed by a parent/guardian. An administrator will review the report to determine whether the student will be permitted to return to class. This process is recorded on the student's discipline transcript.

**Withholding of Privileges:** Students may be denied an opportunity to participate in school-related activities and/or events as deemed appropriate by the administrator. Students may also be required to be accompanied by a parent or court appointed guardian. Consequences may include field trips that have already been paid for, dinner/dances, graduation ceremonies, etc. In these instances, no refund will be provided.

**Parent Shadowing:** Parent shadowing is a very effective method that is used when other informal and/or formal discipline measures have been ineffective. When parents visit the school and "walk in their child's shoes," they are often better equipped to understand and assist their child and the school in resolving the identified problem. Proper arrangements will be made with the parents by teacher/administration.

**Behavioral Contract:** Students who violate the Young Scholars of McKeesport Charter School rules by amassing excessive discipline points will also be required to sign a Behavioral Contract in order to remain a student at YSMCS. This is critical, in that YSMCS believes in engendering youth responsibility. A parent/guardian will also be required to sign the contract as well. The contract includes a daily behavior sheet which students must have completed each school day. Students must return the sheet to school the next day with a parent or legal guardian signature. Students may lose other privileges (Activities, clubs, field trips, etc.)

**Option to Withdraw:** A student may withdraw without penalty from a charter school at any time and enroll in another local school in the school district in which such student resides. A student who is suspended or expelled from a charter school as a result of a disciplinary action taken by a charter school shall also be entitled to enroll in a local school within the local school system in which a student resides, if, under the disciplinary policy of the local school system, such students would not have been subject to suspension or expulsion. In such instances, the local board shall not be required to independently verify the nature or occurrence of the applicable conduct or any evidence relating thereto.

#### **Exclusion and Expulsion -**

- The board of school directors shall define and publish the types of offenses that would lead to exclusion from school. Exclusions affecting certain exceptional students shall be governed by § PA Code Title 22, 14.35 (Reserved).
- Exclusion from school may take the form of suspension or expulsion.
- Suspension is exclusion from school for a period of from 1 to 10 consecutive school days.
- Suspensions may be given by the CEO or person in charge of the public school.

No student shall be suspended until the student has been informed of the reasons for the suspension and given an opportunity to respond. Prior notice of the intended suspension need not be given when it is clear that the health, safety or welfare of the school community is threatened.

The parents and the superintendent of the district shall be notified immediately in writing when the student is suspended

When the suspension exceeds 3 school days, the student and parent shall be given the opportunity for an informal hearing consistent with the requirements set forth in § 12.8(c) (relating to hearings).

- Suspensions may not be made to run consecutively beyond the 10-school day period.
- Students shall have the responsibility to make up exams and work missed while being disciplined by suspension and shall be permitted to complete these assignments within guidelines established by the board of school directors.
- 1. Expulsion is exclusion from school by the board of education for a period exceeding 10 school days and may be permanent expulsion from the school rolls. All expulsions require a prior formal hearing under § 12.8.
- 2. During the period prior to the hearing and decision of the board of school directors in an expulsion case, the student shall be placed in his normal class except as set forth in subsection
- 3. If it is determined after an informal hearing that a student's presence in his normal class would constitute a threat to the health, safety, morals or welfare of others and it is not possible to hold a formal hearing within the period of a suspension, the student may be excluded from school for more than 10 school days, if the formal hearing is not unreasonably delayed. Any student so excluded shall be provided with alternative education, which may include home study.
- 4. Students who are less than 17 years of age are still subject to the compulsory school attendance law even though expelled, and they must be provided an education.
- 5. The initial responsibility for providing the required education rests with the student's parents or guardian, through placement in another school, through tutorial or correspondence study or through another educational program approved by the district's superintendent.
- 6. If the parents or guardian are unable to provide for the required education, they must within 30 days submit to the school district written evidence so stating. The district then has the responsibility to make some provision for the student's education. If 30 days pass without the district receiving satisfactory evidence that the required education is being provided to the student, it must recontact the parent and, pending the parents' or guardian's provision of such education, the district must make some provision for the student's education or proceed under paragraph (3) or do both.
- 7. If the approved educational program is not complied with, the school district may take action in accordance with Chapter 63 of the Juvenile Act to ensure that the child will receive a proper education. See § 12.1(b) (relating to free education and attendance).

### **Hearings**

- Education is a statutory right, and students must be afforded all appropriate elements of due process if they are to be excluded from school. In a case involving a possible expulsion, the student is entitled to a formal hearing, which is a fundamental element of due process.
- A formal hearing is required in all expulsion actions. This hearing may be held before the board of school directors or an authorized committee of the board, or a qualified hearing examiner appointed by the board. Where the hearing is conducted by a committee of the board or a hearing examiner, a majority vote of the entire school board is required to expel a student.
- The following due process requirements are to be observed with regard to the formal hearing:
  - Notification of the charges shall be sent to the student's parents or guardian by certified mail.
  - Sufficient notice of the time and place of the hearing must be given.
- The hearing shall be held in private unless the student or parent requests a public hearing.
- The student has the right to be represented by counsel.

- The student has the right to be presented with the names of witnesses against the student, and copies of the statements and affidavits of those witnesses.
- The student has the right to request that any such witnesses appear in person and answer questions or be cross-examined
- The student has the right to testify and present witnesses on his own behalf.
- A record must be kept of the hearing, either by a stenographer or by tape recorder. The student is entitled, at the student's expense, to a copy of the transcript.
- The proceeding must be held with all reasonable speed.
- Where the student disagrees with the results of the hearing, recourse is available in the appropriate court of the Commonwealth. If it is alleged that a constitutional issue is involved, the student may file a claim for relief in the appropriate Federal district court
- 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 meant to encourage the student's parents or guardian to meet with the CEO to discuss ways by which future offenses can be avoided.
- The following due process requirements are to be observed in regard to the informal hearing:

Notification of the reasons for the suspension shall be given in writing to the parents or guardian and student.

- Sufficient notice of the time and place of the informal hearing shall be given.
- A student has the right to question any witnesses present at the hearing.
- A student has the right to speak and produce witnesses on his own behalf.
- The district shall offer to hold the informal hearing within the first 5 days of the suspension.

### **Due Process**

The CEO may impose short term or long-term suspensions consistent with the provisions of this handbook. The student will be told the reason for the disciplinary action and given the opportunity to present his/her version of the events. In addition, if the suspension contemplated is longer than ten school days, then the student will have the right to present witnesses on his / her behalf.

In the event that a suspension is implemented the school will notify the parent / guardian by phone of the incident and the terms of the suspension. A formal written notice specifying the offenses and the terms of the suspension will be sent to the student's last known address via express mail within twenty-four hours. A student suspended from school may only return to school when accompanied by a parent, guardian or other adult who may be designated.

A student may appeal his / her suspension to the Board of Trustees. The Board shall convene a hearing at the earliest possible date. The Board will give the student the opportunity to present his or her appeal, and may ask questions of the student.

Only the Board of Trustees may expel a student. Upon the recommendation of the CEO, the Board will convene an expulsion hearing. The student will be given a written statement of the charges and will have the opportunity to present his/her case to the Board, call witnesses and have representation present. The student will also receive a list of community agencies and free legal assistance that may be available.

The Board's decision shall be in writing and shall be sent to the student's last known address within 48 hours of the hearing. Notices and conferences will be conducted in the dominant language or mode of communication used by the parents or persons in parental relation to the student.

### **Student Conduct on School Buses**

In order that the bus ride to and from school may be safe, the following rules must be observed:

- Be at the bus stop 10 min. early
- Cross in front of the bus
- Keep bus clean
- No eating on the bus
- Keep all noise at a low level.
- Keep hands, feet and all possessions to yourself.
- Obey the bus driver.
- Remain seated until the driver gives permission for you to leave.

The bus driver will refer discipline problems to the Discipline Coordinator in writing. The penalty for continued misbehavior may range from suspension from riding the bus to suspension from school. All school rules apply while students are riding the buses. All students riding school buses are expected to maintain good conduct while traveling. In situations where a parent or school board prohibits corporal punishment, teachers and school authorities under the following circumstances may still use reasonable force:

- To obtain possession of weapons or other dangerous objects.
- For the purpose of self-defense.
- For the protection of persons or property.

As a result of any broken rules that results in a referral the following tier of consequences will apply.

- 1st referral- Bus discipline letter and phone call home
- 2nd referral- 1 day suspension
- 3rd referral- 3 day suspension
- 4th referral- 5 day suspension
- 5th referral- 10 day suspension
- 6th referral- Loss of bus privileges for the remainder of the year.

\*After any suspension a parent conference must be held before the student is permitted to ride the bus.

### **Discrimination**

Consistent with the Pennsylvania Human Relations Act (43 P. S. § §) shall be denied access to a free and full public education on account of race, religion, sex, national origin, or handicaps.

### **Extended Day Discipline Procedures**

The Extended Day Program is an optional program open to all students, with parental permission. It is intended to be part of the educational offerings at YSMCS. While the atmosphere is more casual than during regular hours, students are still expected to be attentive and behave respectfully toward instructors, volunteers, and fellow students. School Discipline rules and policies will be in place during ED.

If students are not picked up on time, after the third warning, students will be removed from the ED.

If a student is picked up more than 30 min late, the student will be removed from ED after the first time.

### **DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

Students with disabilities have the same responsibilities and rights as other students and may be disciplined for the same behavioral offenses.

Students for whom the IEP includes specific disciplinary guidelines will be disciplined in accordance with those guidelines. If the disciplinary guidelines appear not to be effective or if there is concern for the health and safety of the

student or others if those guidelines are followed with respect to a specific infraction, the matter will be immediately referred to the Committee on Special Education ("CSE") for consideration of a change in the guidelines.

Students for whom the IEP does not include specific disciplinary guidelines may be disciplined in accordance with standard school policy relating to each infraction. The CSE must be notified immediately of any suspension from classes, and will arrange appropriate alternate instruction. If there is any reason to believe that the infraction is the result of the student's disability, the student must be immediately referred to the CSE. If a connection is found, no penalty will be imposed. The CSE will consider a possible program modification. If a student identified as having a disability is suspended during the course of the school year for a total of ten days, such students must be immediately referred to the CSE for reconsideration of the student's educational placement. Such a student may not be suspended for a total of more than 10 days during the school year without the specific involvement of the CSE prior to the 11th day of suspension since such suspensions are considered to be a change in placement. In considering the placement of students referred because of disciplinary problems, the CSE will follow its ordinary policies with respect to parental notification and involvement.

- The CSE shall meet within seven days of notification of any of the following, for the purpose of considering a change in placement for the student involved.
- The commission of an infraction by a student with a disability who has previously been suspended for the maximum allowable number of days.
- The commission of any infraction that is a result of the student's disability.
- The commission of any infraction by a disabled student, regardless of whether the student has previously been suspended during the school year if, had such infraction committed by a non-disabled student, the CEO would seek to impose a suspension in excess of five days.

### **FIRE ALARMS**

In the event that a student believes that a fire has broken out it is the student's responsibility to activate the fire alarm.

- If a student pulls it when no fire has occurred, disciplinary action will be taken. This action will result in suspension and/or expulsion if continued.

### **SEARCHES**

School authorities may search a student's locker and seize any illegal materials. Such materials may be used as evidence against the student in disciplinary proceedings. Prior to a locker search the students shall be notified and given an opportunity to be present. However, where school authorities have a reasonable suspicion that the locker contains materials which pose a threat to the health, welfare and safety of students in the school, student lockers may be searched without prior warning.

### **CHARACTER EDUCATION AT YSMCS**

Young Scholars of McKeesport offers a character education program for building good character, bringing out the best in our students, and ensuring that they acquire the basic life skills that will guide them to lifelong success. The objective of the Character Education Program at YSMCS is to encourage students to take responsibility for their actions, to familiarize them with good character traits, to place role models before them and to help develop good citizens with high moral values. During the year, we will put into practice a well-structured character education plan by means of the Character Education class, which will be one class period per week for grades K-8. The curriculum for the Character Education Program at YSMCS has been built using the following widely-used and approved resource guides: Project Wisdom, Character Counts and Heartwood Institute. To enrich the program, throughout the year we will have special activities and events such as guest speakers from the community and awards and certificates to recognize good behavior. We ask for your valuable and indispensable support and involvement in implementing a successful plan that will benefit our students, our school and our community.

Childhood is a period of time when individuals have imperfect impulse control. Our goal is to encourage children to think about their behavior and see it as a choice that carries consequences, rather than rewards or punishments. Every poor choice is followed by the option to change, and an adult so may clarify the consequence for

not doing. That way, the child retains responsibility for the outcome: consequences are under the child's control and are self-imposed. Making amends is a way of permitting the child to maintain his or her self-esteem, because while a behavior is unacceptable and the damage must be repaired, the child is not "bad". If a student continually makes poor choices, teachers will work with parents to help the child make better ones.

## POSITIVE BEHAVIOR INTERVENTIONS AND SUPPORT

Our Positive Behavior System is an interactive approach that includes opportunities to correct and improve student behavior through four key elements:

OUTCOMES: Academic and behavior targets that are endorsed and emphasized by students, families and educators.

PRACTICES: Interventions and strategies are evidence based.

DATA: Information that is used to identify status, need for change, and effects of interventions.

SYSTEMS: Supports that are needed to enable the accurate and durable implementation of the practices of PBS.

The Positive Behavior System is intended to recognize students for their efforts to demonstrate appropriate behavior and those who exhibit exceptional thoughtfulness, kindness, or helpfulness.

The Positive Behavior System applies during regular school hours and the Extended Day program. (Please see the Extended Day program description for further information.) It is designed to provide the staff with data that allows them to address identifiable patterns of behavior as a team. Records are kept separate from each student's permanent file and do not affect progress reports.

## YSMCS ZERO TOLERANCE FOR VIOLENCE POLICY

YSMCS has as its goal to help every student fulfill his or her intellectual, social, physical and emotional potential. Everything in and about the school has been designed to create an orderly and distraction-free environment in which all students can learn effectively and pleasantly. In keeping with the school's mission to promote acceptance and respect for each other, Young Scholars of McKeesport Charter School has an established policy of zero tolerance for deliberate acts of aggression or violent behavior, which result in a student harming another student, him or herself, or school or personal property. This policy is applied consistently, across all grade levels. Violent behavior results in an immediate referral.

### **Weapons**

The district has adopted a weapons policy. Anyone who has reason to believe a weapon is on a school site, bus, or at a school-sponsored activity has a duty to report that information to the site administrator, police officer, or any adult supervisor. Possession is defined as, but not limited to, having a weapon on one's person or in an area subject to one's control in a school environment. Weapons are defined as any object, device, instrument, or substance designed as a weapon or through its use capable of threatening or producing bodily harm, or which may be used to inflict self-injury, including, but not limited to: firearms, loaded or unloaded, functional or non-functional, look-alike or facsimile or having the appearance of a weapon; all knives; objects designed to be worn over fists or knuckles; blackjack, clubs, nunchucks or throwing stars; explosive or incendiary devices; bows and arrows, slingshots, razors; poison chemicals including mace, pepper gas, or similar sprays; firearm muffler, silencer, or ammunition; any object modified to serve as a weapon; articles designed for other purposes such as pencils or scissors but used to inflict bodily harm or intimidate others.

Violation of the weapons policy may result in one or more of these consequences: out-of-school suspension, confiscation of the weapon; notification of the police, recommendation for expulsion or exclusion from school for up to one year. Students with disabilities who violate the policy will be disciplined in accordance with the requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

## GENERAL DISCIPLINE PROCEDURES

The rule of thumb is that in any situation that requires correction, children are made aware of the consequences of their behavior and reminded to make a good choice. From that point on, their behavior tells the teacher or adult what choice was made. There is no need for scolding or verbal criticism: the consequence follows the behavior and is applied in a firm, fair, friendly manner by an adult, with encouragement to make good choices in the future.

- Classroom and building rules will be cooperatively established, reviewed, and enforced.
- Positive behavior will be recognized and encouraged.
- Causes for misbehavior will be analyzed to facilitate prevention of behavior problems.

Alternative approaches for dealing with the child's behavior will be developed based on the analysis of causes as well as the effectiveness of previous approaches.

- Logical and natural consequences for behavior will be applied.
- Communication among staff, students, and parents will be ongoing.
- The effectiveness of behavior plans will be monitored, evaluated, and revised as necessary.

Children and teachers will discuss specific school procedures in detail during the first week of school, such as:

- Keep hands, feet and objects to yourself.
- Follow staff directions immediately.
- Walk, except on the playground.
- Stay on the school grounds.
- Use acceptable language.
- Ask permission before using or touching another student's personal belongings.
- Leave chewing gum at home.
- Work and play safely.

STUDENTS' RIGHTS	STUDENTS' RESPONSIBILITIES
✓ To feel safe in the school environment	
✓ To take full advantage of the learning opportunities	
✓ To work in an environment free from disruptions	
✓ To express their opinions, ideas, thoughts, and concerns	
✓ To have a healthy environment that is smoke, alcohol, and drug free	
✓ To use school resources and facilities for self-betterment under appropriate supervision	
✓ To expect courtesy, fairness, and respect from all members of the community	
✓ To be informed of all expectations and responsibilities	
✓ To take part in a variety of school activities	
✓ To have the right to due process	
✓ To be caring and honest	
✓ To do his or her best to learn and master all he or she can	
✓ To respect school rules, regulations, and policies	

- ✓ To be sure that personal expressions do not interfere with the rights of others
- ✓ To follow state law and school policies concerning substance abuse
- ✓ To respect and protect the personal and property rights of others and of the school
- ✓ To treat all members of the community with full respect, fairness, and courtesy
- ✓ To abide by all the expectations of the school and its community
- ✓ To follow the prescribed guidelines for participation in school activities
- ✓ To adhere to due process procedures

## **STUDENT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **A. PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOL ACTIVITIES**

All students have the following rights:

- To have the opportunity to take part in all school activities on an equal basis regardless of race, sex, national origin, creed, or disability.
- To address the school on the same terms as any citizen.

Similarly, all students are bound by the same rules for exclusion from school activities and public address.

### **B. RECORDS**

The school will not disclose any information from the student's permanent records except as authorized pursuant to The Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), or in response to a subpoena, as required by law. The parent(s) or guardian(s) of a student under 18 years of age, or a student 18 years of age or older, is entitled to access to the student's school records by submitting a written request to the CEO.

### **C. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION**

Students are entitled to express their personal opinions verbally, in writing, or by symbolic speech. The expression of such opinions, however, shall not interfere with the freedom of others to express them, and the author must sign written expression of opinion. Any form of expression that involves libel, slander, the use of obscenity, or personal attacks, or that otherwise disrupts the educational process, is prohibited. All forms of expression also must be in compliance with the Student Disciplinary Code and the school dress code, violations of which are punishable as stated in the Disciplinary Code.

Student participation in the publication of school sponsored student newsletters, yearbooks, literary magazines and similar publications is encouraged as a learning and educational experience. These publications, if any, shall be supervised by qualified faculty advisors and shall strive to meet high standards of journalism. In order to maintain consistency with the school's basic educational mission, school authorities control the content of such publications.

No person shall distribute any printed or written materials on school property without the prior permission of the CEO. The CEO may regulate the content of materials to be distributed on school property to the extent necessary to avoid material and substantial interference with the requirements of appropriate discipline in the operation of the school. The CEO may also regulate the time, place, manner and duration of such distribution.

### **D. SEARCH AND SEIZURE**

A student and/or the student's belongings may be searched by a school official if the official has a reasonable suspicion to believe that a search of that student will result in evidence that the student violated the law or a school rule. Items which are prohibited on school property, or which may be used to disrupt or interfere with the educational process, may be removed from the student by school authorities.

Student lockers and desks remain the property of the school, though the school is not responsible for books, clothing, or valuables left in lockers or desks. A student shall not place or keep in a locker or desk any article or material which is of a non-school nature and may cause or tend to cause the disruption of the mission of the school.

The following rules shall apply to the search of school property assigned to a specific student and the seizure of illegal items found therein:

- School authorities will make an individual search of a student's locker or desk only when there is reasonable suspicion to believe that a student is in the possession of an item which is prohibited on school property or which may be used to disrupt or interfere with the educational process.
- Searches shall be conducted under the authorization of the CEO or his/her designee.
- Items which are prohibited on school property, or which may be used to disrupt or interfere with the educational process, may be removed from student lockers or desks by school authorities.

#### E. OFF-CAMPUS EVENTS

Students at school sponsored off-campus events shall be governed by all the guidelines of the school and are subject to the authority of school officials. Failure to obey the lawful instructions of school officials shall result in a loss of eligibility to attend school sponsored off-campus events and may result in additional disciplinary measures in accordance with the Student Disciplinary Code.

#### F. DISCIPLINE

Prohibited conduct and acceptable school responses to such conduct are set forth in the Student Code of Conduct. In disciplinary matters, students shall have the opportunity to present their version of the facts and circumstances leading to the imposition of disciplinary sanctions to the professional staff member imposing such sanctions. A student may be suspended from instruction only after his or her rights to due process have been observed.

#### **Complaint (Grievance) procedure:**

Any complaints regarding forms of harassment, discrimination or violation of federal law pertaining to civil rights matters should be addressed through the following procedure:

##### **Step 1: Meeting at the Building Level**

Complainants may try to resolve problems promptly through informal dispute resolution with the person immediately involved. If such is not possible or the result is unsatisfactory, the complainant shall meet informally with the CEO. This administrator/supervisor will investigate and will reply to the complainant verbally or in writing, as the complainant prefers within five business days of the initial meeting.

##### **Step 2: Written complaint**

If the complaint is not satisfactorily resolved through Step 1, the complainant may file a written grievance with the CEO within ten business days of disposition at Step 1. The written complaint must include:

- A clear statement of the alleged violation
- The remedy sought by the complainant
- The complainant's signature and date

The CEO will conduct a full investigation of the grievance and will prepare a written report of the investigation that will include:

- A clear statement of the allegations of the grievant and remedy sought.
- A statement of the facts as contended by each party
- A statement of the facts as found by the CEO and evidence to support each fact
- A list of witnesses interviewed and documents reviewed during the investigation
- A narrative describing attempts to resolve the grievance if valid

If the CEO believes the grievance is valid, she/he will recommend appropriate action to the Board of Trustees(BoT).

The report will be filed with the BoT within fifteen (15) days of receipt of the written grievance. A copy of the report will be provided to the complainant.

The BoT will make necessary findings based upon the investigation and report of the CEO. If the grievance is valid, the BoT may accept the CEO's recommendations at their discretion. Any and all recommendations of the BoT shall immediately be implemented by the Charter School. A copy of the BoT's findings and/or recommendations will be provided to the complainant.

### **Step 3: Appeal**

At any stage in this grievance procedure, the complainant has the right to file formal complaint with the:

Philadelphia Office  
Office for Civil Rights  
U.S. Department of Education  
100 Penn Square East, Suite 515  
  
Philadelphia, PA 19107-3323

## **HEALTH AND SAFETY**

### **Emergencies**

In the case of a serious accident or injury, parents, guardians of the emergency contact person will be notified immediately and authorized medical attention will be given. For a very minor injury, the child will be treated in accordance with first aid procedures. Generally, this simply means cleaning a scrape or scratch with warm water and soap and covering it with a band aid. You will be informed immediately of any accident or injury, no matter how minor, affecting your child's head or neck. Injuries other than those requiring minimal first aid are recorded on an accident form.

## **EMERGENCY PLANS**

Student safety is a top priority at YSMCS. The following emergency procedures are practiced at regular intervals so that students and staff are always prepared. Drills take place during regular and extended hours.

### **Emergency procedures: Fire Drills**

A map is posted by the door in each classroom and the Multi-Purpose Room, along with a student roster. The rule of thumb is, regardless of where students are in the building, they should leave by the nearest available exit. All classes move away from the building toward the playing field, where teachers double-check class lists and account

for all students. The same procedures apply during Extended Day Program hours. The Extended Day Coordinator is responsible for teaching volunteers the procedures and checking the building.

#### Emergency procedures: Evacuation Drills

Should the building need to be evacuated due to unsafe conditions, students may have to walk to another location off of school grounds. That location will be announced over the PA system. All other procedures are identical to those for a fire drill. If students are not permitted to return to the building, teachers are prepared to contact parents or an emergency contact person.

The same procedures apply during Extended Day Program hours. The Extended Day Coordinator is responsible for teaching volunteers the procedures and checking the building.

#### Emergency procedures: Lock Down

Should the police department notify the school of the need for a lockdown or if an intruder enters the building, a coded message will be delivered over the PA system. Teachers immediately lock classroom doors from the inside and make sure students cannot be seen from the hallway. If necessary, students assume the same position as for a tornado drill. The same procedures apply during Extended Day Program hours. The Extended Day Coordinator is responsible for teaching volunteers the procedures and checking the building.

#### Emergency procedures: Tornado Drills

An announcement will be made over the PA system that all students should move to the interior hallways and assume a protected face-down position, on knees and elbows, hands clasped behind their necks. Lights should be turned off and doors closed by a teacher, who should be the last to leave the room. Teachers take the student roster and do a headcount once they are out of the classroom. The same procedures apply during Extended Day Program hours. The Extended Day Coordinator is responsible for teaching volunteers the procedures and checking the building.

### **Illness, Injury, and Medication Policies**

YSMCS will have a school nurse or first-aid-trained-person available to discuss or assist with medical problems or concerns. Unless you are ill, you must make an appointment in advance with the nurse.

#### ILLNESS OF INJURY DURING THE SCHOOL DAY

Please follow these three rules if you become ill or are injured during the school day.

- Report to the nurse's office. If the nurse is not available, you should report to the Main Office.
- If you do not inform the office and simply miss class, it is an unexcused absence.
- Do not leave the building without permission. Always report to the main office.

#### MEDICATION POLICY

A new doctor's order for administering medication at school is required at the start of each school year, even if the same prescription was administered the previous year. The medication that is allowed to be kept at school is an inhaler for asthma and/or an epipen.

YSMCS is not licensed to dispense medications of any kind with the exception of the inhaler and epipen. If your student needs to take medication, please give the medication at home or a parent must come to school to administer each dosage.

Medication should not be brought to school unless it is essential to the health of the student. If a student must take medicine at school, these procedures must be followed:

- The medication to be administered by designated school personnel must be: sent directly from the pharmacy or physician's office; or brought to school by the student's parent/guardian.
- The school must receive a Medication Administration Directions Form signed by the student's physician and parent/guardian.
- On the medication container, the following information must be clearly printed:
  - Student's Name
  - Name of the medication o Dosage
  - o Time the medication must be taken.
- Bring in only the amount of medication that is needed for a school day.
- In the case of prolonged need, send in the amount for a clearly specified period such as one week or one month. Extra medication will not be sent home with a student.
- All medication will be kept in a secure location in the nurse's office.

Students are not allowed to carry any medication with them to school. Aspirin, Tylenol, and other patent drugs are not available from YSMCS.

### **HEAD LICE POLICY**

Young Scholars of Western Pennsylvania Charter School (YSMCS) believes that in order to realize its goals and objectives, a safe and clean learning environment must be maintained. In order to create such an environment, the YSMCS will enforce a "no nits/no lice" policy.

Educating staff, parents, and students is one of the most powerful tools in controlling head lice outbreaks. Head lice are easily shared, and parents are encouraged to report any suspected infestation to the school CEO or designee. With proper treatment and notification, the problem can be controlled.

Head lice do not originate in the school and the school cannot prevent their spread. Because schools bring large numbers of children into close contact daily, the potential for the transmission of head lice exists. The school can, however, be helpful to their communities in controlling the spread of head lice by providing educational assistance to those communities seeking to address the issue of head lice. The role for the YSMCS will be education in three areas:

1. Preventing the transmission of head lice.
2. Proper treatment of an infestation.
3. Notification of an infestation.

### **LOST AND FOUND**

There will be a lost and found box in the multipurpose room. If you find books, clothing or personal items on the school grounds, please bring these items to the office. If you lose something, check the lost and found. Every marking period unclaimed lost items will be sent to a charity and the school is no longer responsible for the missing items. The lost and found box can be checked before or after school only. Labeling all removable clothing and items students bring to school will eliminate much of this problem and prevent your having to replace expensive belongings. Indelible markers meant for labeling clothing are available at local stores.

### **PHONE CALLS**

Teachers will not allow students to make phone calls during class time from anywhere. If a student comes to the main office to use the phone for any other reason beyond sickness or emergency, s/he will be asked to return to class. If there is a phone call that needs to be made it can be done during lunchtime or after school.

Parents calling the school during normal school hours to speak with their child are restricted unless it is an emergency. Messages will be delivered by the last period. Messages taken after school hours will be given to the child whenever possible by paging the child to the main office to pick it up. Parents are not permitted to call teachers during instructional time.

## **LUNCH PERIODS**

All students will remain at school during the lunch period. You may buy your lunch at school, or you may bring a packed lunch. If you have a special situation, you will need to meet with the CEO or his designee. During the lunch period, you will be expected to display good manners and courtesy. You must eat your lunch only in the lunch area. You will be expected to clear your place and dispose of all trash appropriately. Teachers on duty during the lunch period will hold you responsible for your behavior.

## **CAFETERIA/LUNCH CONDUCT**

- Dispose of plates and utensils in garbage bins.
- Keep tables, seats, and floors clean.
- Talk in a normal voice (classroom voice). Do not shout.
- Keep cafeteria lines orderly: no pushing, running, horse playing or cutting in lines.
- No loitering in the cafeteria and hallways during lunch. Be seated unless otherwise instructed.
- Keep hands, feet, personal belongings and food to yourself.
- No backpacks or books are allowed in the lunch area.
- Students who mutilate or deface school property will be fined an amount necessary to cover the cost of restoring the damaged property, as well as receive appropriate disciplinary action.
- Appropriate language is to be used at all times.
- Ordering food from outside without an approval from the administration is not allowed.

### **Cafeteria Conduct:**

*It is important that all students act in an orderly fashion and display appropriate manners at all times in school – including the cafeteria.*

- While in the cafeteria, you must still act like a professional student.
- Wait in line patiently; all students will be served in a timely manner.
- Keep your voice at an appropriate level. This means that the others at your table should hear you, but those at other tables should not be able to hear you.
- If you are assigned a lunch detention, you will get lunch and report to the detention room in a timely manner.
- Throw away your own garbage and clean your table before exiting.

Please remember that the YSMCS rules apply to you from the moment you step into school until the moment you exit the building.

- Return disposable trays, trash and debris to trash cans.
- Keep tables, chairs, and floors clean.
- Talk in a normal voice (classroom voice) or even less than that voice.
- Keep cafeteria lines orderly... no pushing, running, or cutting in lines.
- No loitering in the cafeteria.
- Keep hands, feet, personal belongings and food to oneself.
- No backpacks or books allowed in the cafeteria.

- Students who mutilate or deface school property will be fined an amount necessary to cover the cost of restoring the damaged property, as well as receiving appropriate disciplinary action.

Behavior contrary to these expectations may be reprimanded. See *Consequences*.

### **PUBLIC AREAS: HALLWAYS AND RESTROOMS**

Hallways and restrooms are areas used by all members of YSMCS. Because everyone uses these areas, there are rules of conduct that all students must follow. During class time, students are not to be in the halls or restroom without a pass from their teacher or the main office.

- You may not loiter in the halls, lunchroom or restrooms.
- Eat only in the multipurpose room.
- Walk; don't run, in the halls, lunchroom, and restrooms.
- Use polite and appropriate language while in these areas.
- Loud or disruptive noise is not permitted.
- You must do your part to keep these areas clean and safe.
- Keep belongings in lockers, not on the floor outside them.
- Make sure you clean up after yourself and appropriately dispose of all trash.
- Report any leaks, spills, or other problems in the lavatory to a teacher or the office.
- Do not roughhouse, push, or wrestle.

**Restrooms:** Students are not permitted in the restrooms between class periods unless they have a hall pass from an authorized staff member. Behavior contrary to these expectations may be reprimanded. See *Consequences*. There are rules of conduct that all students must follow:

- Students should not be found in the lavatory without a pass.
- Students should not loiter.
- Students should not eat.
- Students should refrain from the use of any profane or vulgar language.
- Students may not yell, scream or make excessive noise while in these areas.
- Students must do their part to keep these areas clean and safe.
- Make sure you clean up after yourself and appropriately dispose of all trash.
- Report any leaks, spills or other problems in the lavatory to a teacher or the main office.
- Do not roughhouse, push or wrestle with others.
- 

### **RESTRICTED AREAS**

After arriving at school, students may not leave the building for ANY reason without written permission of the CEO or being accompanied by a teacher.

Students may not use a classroom without the permission of a teacher.

Students may not use or remove any item from a teacher's desk.

The playground of the school is off limits except when permission given.

Construction areas are out of bounds.

Any other areas that are determined by the CEO or administration.

All the areas mentioned above are out of bounds for students who are part of any after-school activities.

Teachers on special duty at school have the authority and discretion to correct any pupil and submit referrals to the office.

### **SCHOOL ACTIVITIES**

YSMCS will offer a range of activities that will enrich student learning during the school day and after school.

Because the safety of students is very important to us, specific rules will apply to these activities.

### **FIELD TRIPS**

Grade level, team or activity sponsored day field trips are offered to most students. Any student who has demonstrated the inability to follow rules may also be prohibited from participating. This determination will be made by the administration. Field Trips offer exciting ways to learn. YSMCS students will have the opportunity to go on field trips at various times throughout the school year. For all field trips, they will be expected to follow these rules:

- Students must bring to school the **Field Trip Permission Slip** signed by their parents or guardian by the specified date. No phone calls will be accepted as permission.
- Students must follow the Dress Code unless otherwise specified.
- Students must abide by YSMCS codes of student conduct while on the field trip.

Students that do not adhere to the following policies will not be permitted to attend the trip. This may include forfeiting payment(s).

## **SCHOOL PICTURES**

A contracted photographer will photograph students in school sometime in the fall. Students may purchase the entire package of photos or a partial package.

### **Photography/Video Release Policy**

The YSMCS website is a tool to communicate with school families, teachers, prospective students, and the larger community. To enhance this experience, we use photos and videos to show student involvement in various activities. In addition, there will be times that we will invite the Local News to our school to cover an event and your child's picture or videos may be taken.

In order for students' images and videos to appear on the YSMCS website or any news publication, it is not required, however **recommended** that we obtain parental permission. If you are not giving permission to release your child's photo or video publishing, you need to contact our school office to fill out the form not to release them.

## **SCIENCE FAIR**

Young Scholars of McKeesport Charter School will organize a school-wide science fair every year. Due to our high expectations from our students in science, math and technology, each student from grades 3 - 6 are required to complete a research project in one of these areas (individual or group). Failure to do so will result in failing the 25% grade towards their marking period science class. A student wins a trophy or medal in the science fair, or in any other competition/contest in which he/she represents the school, and then the school owns the trophy or medal and displays it.

Science fair handbook is going to be provided to the students by YSMCS Science Fair Committee. Every student is required to follow the guidelines cited in the Science Fair Handbook.

## **STUDENTS ID CARDS**

Student's teachers will be issued a card for each student. The teacher will hold on to the card for the purpose of school related trips. Each student is not responsible for the care of their card unless it is issued to them by a teacher.

## **TEXTBOOK AND SUPPLIES**

YSMCS may use classroom sets for each course. YSMCS will hold each student's parent/guardian responsible for the condition of the textbook issued at the beginning of the year. Each student should take care to see that these books are not lost, stolen, damaged, or defaced. Students will have to pay to replace any books that are damaged or not returned. Students must return all textbooks and workbooks at the end of the year. Should a student withdraw or be expelled, all textbooks must be returned to YSMCS immediately.

When textbooks are checked out, the textbook will be registered and the condition of the book will be noted. When you return the book, its condition will be checked. If you lose the book or damage it by writing in it or ripping it so that another student cannot use it, you will have to pay the current price value of the book.

Many of the classes will use consumable supplies – from materials to workbooks. Students will be required to pay for these consumable materials. If there is a special circumstance, families should meet with the administration.

**FINAL REPORT CARDS, TRANSCRIPTS AND/OR WITHDRAW FORM WILL NOT BE ISSUED UNTIL ALL TEXTBOOKS ARE RETURNED IN GOOD CONDITION.**

## **HEALTH AND WELLNESS**

The Pennsylvania Department of Education required all schools to have a Wellness Plan in place by September 1, 2006. This is an initiative to implement recognized nutrition, physical education, and physical activity goals in all K-12 schools. YSMCS has a physical education program in place, and teachers build physical activity into their schedules throughout the day. Clubs promoting physical activity are part of the Extended Day program. Every student participates in a 20-minute recess at lunch time, held outdoors unless the weather is inclement or the temperature drops below 32 F degrees. All children are expected to participate—if your child is not well enough to go out for recess, s/he is not well enough to be in school. Please dress your child for the weather.

You can support the efforts of YSMCS to promote student health and wellness by sending healthy, balanced meals and snacks. Sugary snacks and treats will not be distributed to students, and children who bring them will be expected to save them for lunchtime. Soda, unless it is sugar free, is not allowed.

**\*\*PLEASE NOTE: IN ORDER TO SEND A CLEAR AND CONSISTENT MESSAGE TO CHILDREN ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF GOOD NUTRITION, CAKE OR CUPCAKES TO CELEBRATE BIRTHDAYS OR OTHER EVENTS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED. FROZEN YOGURT OR FRUIT JUICE BARS, WHOLE GRAIN MUFFINS WITH A DUSTING OF POWDERED SUGAR, MINI BAGS OF MICROWAVE POPCORN, AND SINGLE SERVING SIZE BAGS OF CHEX MIX ARE EXAMPLES OF NUTRITIOUS ALTERNATIVES.**

A list of sample healthy food choices is included below. If you have questions, please contact your child's teacher. Thank you for your support as we join the fight against the obesity epidemic in this country!

Crunchy	Chewy	Creamy	Juicy
Pretzels, Popcorn, Mini Flavored Rice Cakes, Animal Crackers, Trail Mix Granola Bars, Baked Chips, Graham Crackers, Cereal, Air Crisps, Apples, Baby Carrots, Celery Sticks	Raisins, Dried Fruit, Bagels, Breakfast Bars, Rice Krispie Treats, Graham Treats, Chewy Granola Bars	Pudding Packs, Cheese Cubes, Milk, Yogurt	Juice Packs, Jello Packs, Applesauce, Canned Fruit, Cherry Tomatoes, Tangerine, Orange, Grapes

### **YSMCS Birthday Celebration Policy**

YSMCS has a Celebration Policy to avoid interrupting instruction for birthdays and other celebrations or events. Parents, please coordinate all plans in advance with the classroom teacher to avoid any hurt feelings, misunderstandings, or scheduling conflicts! If you would like to have a short class birthday acknowledgement for your child, please speak with your child's teacher in advance. Parents should be mindful of the district's nutritional policy as well as the dietary restrictions of students in the classroom. These birthday recognitions are short (ten minutes) and limited to the classroom community.

Please be sensitive to children who are not allowed to take part in parties for family or religious reasons. Do not take pictures without permission – not all children have a signed photo release on file.

Parents are asked to drop off the treats in the main office, and these treats will be delivered to the classroom. Birthday party invitations are not to be distributed at school. Please send such invitations via the U.S. Mail system

The school will not permit bouquets of balloons and other celebratory decorations to be sent to the classrooms. These can be distracting to students' learning.

Birthday celebration request must come from parents one week in advance. Both teachers and parents can come to an agreement on the best date for the celebration.

All birthday celebrations should take place after 2:45 pm.

The District prohibits any distribution of food or treats outside the school lunch program, except foods that are individually, commercially wrapped. Foods made at home may not be distributed within the school. If your child wants to bring a birthday treat, encourage them to bring in a healthy snack or even better; bring an item for the classroom such as a classroom book (signed and dated by your child) or other classroom supplies such as pencils, erasers, etc. The reason for this strict interpretation of school district policy is because of the growing number of students who struggle with food allergies, diabetes, and childhood obesity. **Individually packaged items that would be considered healthy snacks include: pretzels, baked crackers, and granola bars.** Attention! Attention! **Please do not send cupcakes, doughnuts or sheet cakes for your child's birthday treats. These items are not individually wrapped and do not meet the guidelines of our district policy. Cupcakes, cakes, doughnuts will be sent back home!**

We are strongly encouraging families to send non-food items on birthdays. Instead of a food item, please consider sending something for the class to enjoy such as:

- A game for the classroom
  - A classroom book (A nice touch would be having your child pick it out, sign it, and date it.)
  - A classroom set of items for each child to keep such as pencils, pens, erasers, markers, etc.
- The items listed above will still make your child feel special and they will last a lot longer than a food item.

### HEALTHY SNACK FOODS

Rule of thumb: If sugar is listed as the first or second ingredient on the package, make a different choice.

- Prepare fresh vegetables or purchase them prepared in the supermarket produce section, including sugar snap peas, carrots, celery, broccoli florets, cherry tomatoes, etc.
- Make vegetables more appealing by serving with dip, such as store-bought dressings (like low-fat ranch) or homemade dressing made with yogurt or reduced-calorie mayonnaise.
- Whole-grain crackers and chips include graham crackers, rice cakes and baked tortilla chips.
- Try bean dips such as hummus and black bean dip, and salsas for dipping chips and crackers.
- Fresh fruit of all kinds is good. Grapes, apples, bananas, oranges and pears are usually available most of the year. Berries and melon chunks appear in summer.
- Expensive but delicious, "Just Tomatoes" brand of dried fruits and vegetables crunchy like chips but have no fat.
- Get dried fruit of any kind (avoid banana chips, which are fried, and anything with a "yogurt" covering).
- Nuts and seeds include peanuts, pumpkin seeds, and sunflower seeds— most come unsalted. Serve them alone, mixed with dried fruit or combined with whole-grain cereals and grains.
- Portable and kid-friendly cheeses include string cheese and Laughing Cow minis, including the low-fat version.

- Whole-grain breakfast cereals and other whole-grain mixes (such as low-fat granola) can be served without milk, taken to school in a Ziploc baggie.
- 100 percent fruit or vegetable juice. Canned and packaged fruit products in juice
- Low-fat or nonfat milk or yogurt
- Pretzels

For birthday celebrations, children like applesauce or carrot/raisin muffins with a little sifted powdered sugar for a topping, instead of frosting. Frozen yogurt bars make a great change of pace too.

## BUS RULES FOR STUDENTS

### Waiting for the Bus

- Be on time for the bus but do not arrive at the stop earlier than 10 minutes before the time at which the bus usually arrives.
- Observe all safety precautions while waiting for the bus:
- Do not play in the roads
- If possible, avoid crossing streets
- Whenever you must cross a street, do so only if you are sure that no moving vehicles are approaching from either direction
- Do not push, pull, or chase any other students
- Avoid trespassing on private property and being noisy
- As your bus approaches, line up at least six feet off the street, and do not approach the bus until it has stopped and the driver has opened the door. Again, avoid pushing others in the line.

### Loading the Bus

- Get on your bus quickly and be seated at once.
- Listen carefully and obey any directions issued by the driver.

### Unloading the Bus

- Do not leave your seat until the bus has come to a complete stop and the driver has opened the door.
- Again, obey any directions issued by the driver.
- Leave the bus quickly but in a courteous manner without pushing other students.
- If you must cross a street as you leave the school bus, be sure to walk in front of the bus (never in back) at a distance of at least 12 feet away from the bus. If you are too close to the front of the bus, the driver will not be able to see you, and a serious accident could occur.
- Again, be sure to observe all safety precautions as you travel from your bus stop to your home.
- Violation of the Local school district transportation Office bus rules may result in loss of bus privileges.

**Bus Conduct Expectations:** Students are only permitted to board the bus they are assigned to use. Conduct on the bus is expected to be the same as in the classroom. Safety depends on the skill of the drivers and nothing should be done to distract them. Students may be denied bus privileges when behavior is inappropriate. Riding on the school bus extends the regular school day for those students. All actions taken by the administration can and will be enforced. Consequences include, but are not limited to, bus suspension or out of school suspension. Students who are not authorized to ride any bus will result in other administrative action.

Riding the bus is a privilege. Students who wish to enjoy this privilege must abide by the following rules and regulations in order to help to ensure safe and orderly bus transportation. Students who engage in any bus misconduct, may be suspended from the bus for five (5) to ten (10) days or may be recommended to the YSMCS Board for bus expulsion. Parents will be notified of the students' bus violations. Failure to abide by these safety procedures will result in the following sequence of events:

- **First Referral**- Students may be suspended from riding the bus for **one (1) to five (5) days** with parent contact or conference requested.
- **Second Referral**- Students may be suspended from riding the bus for **five (5) to ten (10) days** with parent contact or conference requested.
- **Third Referral**- Student may be suspended from riding the bus permanently for that corresponding school year and may lose their bus privilege for the duration of their enrollment at YSMCS.

Parents/Guardians are expected to review proper bus conduct with their children. YSMCS will expect students to adhere to the follow Bus Conduct Expectations:

- Ride only the bus designated by school (Sticker will be provided)
- Show respect for the driver at all times
- Enter and leave the bus in an orderly manner
- Remain seated while the bus is in motion
- Avoid reckless and boisterous activity at all times, including during waits at pickup points
- Talk in a reasonable tone of voice and avoid loud noises or profane language
- Extend no portion of the body or other object out a bus window
- Keep aisles clear at all times
- Refrain from bringing animals or bulky, unmanageable projects onto the school bus
- No horseplay or physical contact with others on the bus
- No bullying
- No extortion of property of others by threat or intimidation/Theft
- No vandalism
- No tampering with emergency doors
- Refrain from partaking in any physical altercation
- Refrain from smoking, eating, and drinking on the bus; and students

## **NETWORK/COMPUTER POLICY**

Computers are used to support learning and to enhance instruction. Computer networks allow people to interact with many computers. The Internet allows people to interact with hundreds of thousands of networks. It is a general policy that all computers are to be used in a responsible, efficient, ethical and legal manner. Failure to adhere to the policy and the guidelines below will result in revocation of the user's access privilege. Unacceptable uses of the computer include:

- Violating the conditions of the Education Code dealing with student's rights to privacy.
- Using profanity, obscenity, or other language that may be offensive to another user.
- Reposting (forwarding) personal communication without the author's prior consent.
- Copying commercial software in violation of copyright law.
- Using the network for financial gain, for commercial activity, or for any illegal activity.
- Damaging any part of hardware or software of computer network system.
- Visiting or using sites not instructed by teacher.

The person in whose name an account is issued is responsible at all times for its proper use. Users must not give a password to another user. Users should change passwords frequently.

As the Internet provides connections to other computer systems located all over the world, users (and parents of users, if the user is under 18 years old) must understand that the school does not control the content of the information available on these other systems. Some of the information available is controversial and, sometimes, offensive. The school does not condone the use of such materials.

#### RESPONSIBLE USERS MAY UNDER SUPERVISION:

- Use the Internet to research assigned classroom projects.
- Use the Internet to explore other computer systems.

#### RESPONSIBLE USERS MAY NOT:

- Use the Internet for any illegal purpose.
  - Use impolite or abusive language.
  - Violate the rules of common sense and etiquette.
  - Change any computer files that do not belong to the user.
  - Send or get copyrighted materials without permission.
  - Users must not give their password to anyone.
- 
- Use the Internet to send electronic mail (email) to other users.

System operators will have access to all user accounts, including email. If any person does not follow the rules above, use of the network will be cancelled. There will be no second chances.

If the user is not sure how to do something on the computer, he/she is supposed to ask a teacher or the computer specialist in the school.

#### STUDENT SERVICES

##### SPECIAL EDUCATION

YSMCS provides special education services, including learning support for students with disabilities and contracts with IU#3 for occupational and speech & language therapy. When a struggling student does not respond to typical classroom interventions, adaptations, and accommodations, a parent or teacher may request an evaluation to determine if a learning disability exists. If so, the child may qualify for additional services under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. A team including teachers, specialists, parents or guardians, and others develop an Individualized Education Plan. The plan details additional instruction and other services, either in or outside the regular classroom, specifically tailored to the child's needs.

Instructional strategies might include the use of manipulatives, emphasis on visual over auditory learning, repetition, mnemonics, assistive technology, and so on. Frequent assessment guides instruction to determine the effectiveness of chosen strategies, which are adjusted as necessary to the student's needs. Thanks to small class size and the presence of two teachers in each room, individualized instruction congruent with the requirements of a student's Individualized Education Plan can be maintained when the special education teacher is not present.

Speech & Language and Occupational Therapy are also available for students who are identified as needing services.

#### **Resource for families: Is my child growing and developing normally?**

As parents/guardians, each of us undoubtedly asks this question of ourselves at times. On one hand we do not want to be overly anxious parents and create problems where none exist. On the other hand, research shows that if there is a problem, the earlier the specialized help is provided, the better the chance for remediation. So, how

do we really know if we should be concerned? The following information about expected developmental milestones and skills may assist parents/guardians in assessing this:

### **General Development Milestones:**

#### **6 Months**

Rolls from stomach, reaches for toy, transfers toy from one hand to the other, looks for noise made near him/her, makes sounds for specific reasons (hunger, wet), helps hold bottle while drinking, plays with toes, pats mirror image, puts everything in his/her mouth, watches toys held in front of him/her and moved slowly.

#### **1 Year**

Sits without support, pulls self to stand, crawls on all fours, cookies or crackers (may not be neat), plays “pat-a-cake” or “peek-a-boo,” turns pages of magazine or book (more than one at a time), picks up small objects with thumb and index finger.

#### **2 Years**

Walks well, walks up steps, two feet on a step, speaks several words which are understandable and meaningful, refers to self by name, recognizes self in mirror, feeds self with spoon, drinks from a cup, occupies self in play, plays with an adult (rolls ball to adult), builds a tower of four blocks, puts two words together, shows body parts (eyes, nose, toes) when asked.

#### **3 Years**

Walks up steps, one foot for each step, walks on tiptoes, runs easily, unbuttons, unwraps candy, uses words to make needs known, speaks in three-word sentences: “Mommy go home,” undresses self, is toilet trained, helps adults by putting away toys and clothes, turns pages one at a time, recites nursery rhymes, imitates adults doing simple tasks.

#### **4 Years**

Tells stories, speaks clearly and can be understood by non-family members, dresses self with help, feeds self with fork, washes face and hands, gets along with other children, balances on one foot, builds a tower of ten blocks, copies a circle, matches some objects and colors.

#### **5 Years**

Hops on one foot, marches in time, catches a ball with their hands, brushes their teeth, cares for all toilet needs, follows two step directions, points to shapes, names five colors, copies a square, circle; counts to four, shares and takes turns.

### **Signs of Physical, Sensory, Mental, Emotional Disabilities**

Some indications that your child may be a student with a disability in order to meet the first part of the two-part definition of eligible disability under federal/state law are:

- Difficulty performing tasks that require reading, writing, or mathematics
- Emotional issues over a long period of time, which affects your child’s ability to learn
- Consistent problems in getting along with others
  
- Difficulty communicating
- Lack of interest, or ability in age-appropriate activities

- Resistance to change
- Difficulty seeing or hearing that interferes with the ability to communicate
- Health problems that affect educational performance, including attention problems

Parents/guardians who have questions about their child's development or disability may speak with their family physician or health care provider, school district, or the Allegheny Intermediate Unit. With questions or concerns please contact:

David Aiden  
CEO  
Young Scholars of McKeesport Charter School  
413 Shaw Ave. McKeesport, PA 15132  
412 673 7300

A full description and explanation of parent/student rights and resources with respect to Special Education services are available at the front desk of the school and on the school website.

#### ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

Students who learn English as a second language or who come to school with limited proficiency in English are evaluated for inclusion in the ESL program, which provides small group instruction in English grammar, vocabulary, writing, and other skills that support academic success. Instruction is coordinated with each student's regular curriculum, but also emphasizes essential communication skills that support social interaction.

## HEALTH SCREENING

Students receive routine health screening annually, in keeping with PA Dept. of Education guidelines. All students are measured for height, weight, and body mass index, and specified grades also receive vision and hearing evaluations. This will be done by the school nurse and Health/Physical Education teacher.

## EXTENDED DAY PROGRAM

The Extended Day program of YSMCS is a privilege to its students. It serves students by providing quality competitive educational, vocational, recreational and social programs. Specifically, extended hours support children in their learning of world languages, achieving their full potential in core subjects and enriching their lives with various activities, according to their interests and talents. In order to achieve the vision of global citizens who are proficient in two world languages, science and math and use of technology, we strongly encourage your child's participation during extended hours. Staff members, volunteers and tutors will provide extended day lessons and activities. All clubs will prepare children for local, regional, national, and international competitions. Students may participate in certain clubs for a set period of time and others will run for the entire year.

The following list is a sampling of clubs that may be offered during the year. The extended day program will take place Monday through Thursday. We expect children to participate in Foreign Language Clubs to strengthen their skills and fluency levels.

- Language Tutoring will use a variety of games and activities to promote Spanish, Turkish and Turkish/Spanish language skills.
- Foreign Language clubs that will train students in folk dance, poetry readings, and multicultural musical performances.
- Math Club will use a variety of games to promote skills and thinking strategies.
- Science Club is for students with an interest in science who will be given an opportunity to experience hands-on activities and experiments in the various areas of science.
- Cheerleading Club teaches will be a physically active club as we will stretch, run stunt, cheer, chant, and practice minor tumbling skills.
- Arts & Crafts Club is for students with an interest in art, who will work with different methods and materials not usually experienced in art class.
- Computer Club is for students with an interest in computer technology. They will learn new skills and practice those previously learned.
- YSMCS Newsletter Club is for students who are interested in publishing.
- Sports Club is for those with an athletic inclination and who wish to engage in sports activities.
- Reading Club will involve various reading activities such as silent reading, book sharing, dramatic expression etc.
- Community service activities teach social responsibility within the school and beyond.
- Other clubs may be formed throughout the year if interested parents offer to share a skill, talent or interest with our students.

The program does not operate during weekends, school vacation and holiday periods, teacher in-service days and other days as listed in the academic calendar. Please remember that if your child is not picked up by 5:20 p.m. a warning is issued for the first incident, and for the third incident your child will be removed from Extended Day.

## SNACKS

Students will be provided with a light snack, or they may bring one for extended hours snack time. Snack examples include crackers, string cheese, popcorn, fruit, and juice. Since some students have severe food allergies, please remind your child that sharing food is not allowed.

In keeping with the requirements of the YSMCS Wellness Policy, please avoid sending soda or sugary snacks.

## REGISTRATION FOR CLUBS AND ACTIVITIES

There will be open registration for activities for kindergarten through sixth grade students during September. (Please check the school calendar for the ED start date) After this initial period, the registration will close unless the individual clubs can adequately serve additional students. If a preferred club is full, students can be put on a waiting list and given the opportunity to choose from other clubs depending on their needs and interests. It is the decision of the club supervisor to decide what an appropriate number of students is for that specific club.

Participation in the Extended Day Program is highly recommended, though not compulsory. However, once a child has enrolled in a club, regular attendance is mandatory to maintain enrollment. Missing more than 3 sessions will result in the child being removed from the club if there is a waiting list. This is done so that other students may have an opportunity to participate. Parents who choose not to have their children participate pick them up promptly at 3:40 pm.

**It is important to remember that the Extended Day Program is not a childcare service. Students who demonstrate by their behavior that they really do not wish to participate in clubs disrupt the program for other students, teachers and volunteers, will be unenrolled. The Extended Day Coordinator is responsible for making this decision and will consult with parents or guardians should the need arise.**

## VOLUNTEERS

YSMCS has an active and extensive volunteer program for extended hours activities (3:50p.m.- 5:10p.m. Monday - Thursday), and depends upon the interest and participation of parents and other adults to provide enrichment and club activities for students. YSMCS is also open to parent volunteers to help with the food serving process during lunch time. The Extended Hours Coordinator and staff will provide training and guidance for volunteers as needed. Volunteers need to sign in at the front desk and get a Volunteer tag each day. While regular volunteering is most appreciated, occasional participation is also helpful. Please consider participating in this vital part of the YSMCS program.

## VISITORS

Visitors are welcome to observe classroom activities. When planning a visit, a teacher and administration must give pre approval for your visit. Please understand that each teacher is responsible for the students in his/her class and cannot spend class time talking or conferencing with parents. You may arrange an appointment to talk with your child's teacher by calling the school office or sending a note with your child. If you bring something for your child during the day, please leave it at the front desk. If you are here to visit or work in a classroom, please stop by the front desk to sign in and obtain a Visitor or Volunteer tag.

Visitors for educational reasons are welcome at YSMCS. Visitors must register with the office when they arrive. Parents also must check in at the office. Parents/Students wishing to bring visitors to YSMCS must complete the Student Visitor Form and receive approval from the office at least one (1) school day in advance. Do not bring guests to school without prior arrangements.

## HOMEWORK GUIDELINES

Homework reinforces what has been learned in class, prepares students for upcoming lessons, extends and generalizes concepts, teaches responsibility, and helps students develop essential study habits. Assignments are adjusted as necessary to meet the needs of individual learners and learning styles. Homework is one vehicle for home-school communication, and parents can assist in making it a positive experience for their children.

Each teacher has process and expectations for homework that will be communicated with you. Our Teachers consider grade-level and age when determining the amount and length of homework. If your child is struggling with completing homework, please communicate with the teacher. In addition, A daily minimum of 15-30 minutes of at-home recreational reading (or being read to) is strongly advised for all students.

## REPORTS AND GRADING SCALE

All students will be assigned a progress report grade in all classes at the end of the designated progress report periods (Refer to school calendar) all progress reports will be sent home with the student. All students will be assigned a report card grade in all classes at the end of every Marking Period. YSMCS will have Report Card night 3 times per year each at the end of the marking periods. If parents do not attend the report card night report card will be mailed out. Please notify the school office for any address or contact number changes.

The school is responsible for printing and issuing progress reports and report cards in a timely fashion. It is the parent's responsibility to request a report from the front office if it was not received on time. If you do not get your progress report or report card, please call the main office at (412) 673-7300.

It is the parent's responsibility to ensure that students submit their homework on time. You may also get online information about your child's progress by logging onto our website at [www.YSMCS.org](http://www.YSMCS.org)

YSMCS is dedicated to excellence in education, and we strive to create a caring and efficient communication between home and school.

All classes except for Kindergarten at YSMCS will follow this standard scale for assigning letter grades for each trimester reporting period. Teachers will establish the grading policies and procedures for their classes individually, and their grades will correspond to this scale.

A+	97 - 100
A	94 - 96
A-	90 - 93
B+	87 - 89
B	84 - 86
B-	81 - 83
C+	78 - 80
C	76 - 77
C-	73 - 75
D+	70 - 72
D	67 - 69
D-	65 - 66
F	0 - 64

The Scholars land Honor Roll serves as a mark of excellence to recognize students who excel academically. The High Honor Roll and Honor Roll lists are prepared at the end of each marking period. They are based on letter grades and include all subjects.

To qualify for Scholars List, a student shall have all A's (For K All Outstanding). To qualify for Honor Roll, a student shall have all A's and B's. (For K and All Satisfactory)

### GRADE PROMOTION

K thru 6<sup>th</sup> grade promotion from one grade to another in YSMCS shall be based on the following criteria:

A student who has not maintained a grade average for a school year equivalent to at least 65 on a scale of 100 may not be advanced from one grade level to the next.

A student must maintain a yearly average of 65 in Reading A  
student must maintain a yearly average of 65 in Writing

A student must maintain a yearly average of 65 in Mathematics. A  
student must maintain a yearly average of 65 in Social Studies A  
student must maintain a yearly average of 65 in Science.

### **Promotion**

In order for a student to be promoted to the next grade level the following criteria must be met.

- Students must have all passing grades in core subjects: language arts, mathematics, social studies and science.
- Students who fail two or more core subjects will be retained at their present grade level.
- YSMCS is not conducting summer school for its students.
- Excessive absences may be considered as a factor in promotions.

### MUSIC AND HEALTH & PHYSICAL EDUCATION

All students will receive general music classes and participate in physical education classes every week. You will receive a schedule of classes so that your child will wear or bring sneakers on gym days.

### ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES

At YSMCS, formal assessments fulfill an important function in the assessment of each student's academic performance. As external assessments (4sight, Star Math, Star Reader, etc) are used on a state-wide basis as measures of student performance, students at YSMCS are exposed to formal assessments not only for the purposes of assessment but also for experience in assessment conduct, procedure and technique.

Consequently, the school has in place a "Code of Conduct" pertaining to assessments.

- Students are to remain silent during all examinations unless directed otherwise by the supervising teacher.
- Under no circumstances are students permitted to distract other students during examination.
- Students must bring appropriate equipment for each exam and are not to borrow equipment or anything else during examinations. Students are expected to wear the school uniform to all examinations.
- Students are not to be late for examinations and will NOT be permitted to leave early.
- Latecomers will not be granted extra time to complete the exam.
- Students are responsible for the collection of their work.
- Students who are absent from any examination are required to present themselves to the subject teacher immediately upon their return to school. All exams must be made up within 3 days of absence; however, the student must present a reasonable excuse to be eligible for a make-up exam or project.

In the event of any violation of the above rules during an examination the student will, in the first instance, receive a zero. After the event, a review of the situation will determine if a zero award is to be made or a lesser/harsher penalty imposed.

ANY STUDENT FOUND TO BE CHEATING DURING EXAMINATIONS AND/OR DETERMINED TO HAVE CHEATED WILL RECEIVE A ZERO AND THEIR PARENTS WILL BE NOTIFIED. DISCIPLINARY ACTION MAY BE TAKEN BY EITHER THE SUBJECT TEACHER OR BY A SCHOOL CEO. SEE THE CHEAT/PLAGIARIZE POLICY.

#### PARENT-TEACHER COMMUNICATION

Parents are advised to contact the classroom teacher directly should a concern or issue arise, in the belief that most problems are best solved by those directly involved. A simple phone call or an email is enough to clarify or resolve most matters. If a concern is not addressed to everyone's satisfaction, Administration will provide further assistance. The staff welcomes your input and feels strongly that education is a team effort.

#### HOME VISITS

YSMCS has a home visit program. In order to foster a strong and cooperative home/school relationship, teachers will make home visits to as many families as time allows. This is an opportunity for your child to forge a stronger bond with his or her teacher, and for you to visit with the teacher outside of school, in a more social and relaxed atmosphere. Please be assured that the teaching staff will do our best to plan to visit every family at least once during these crucial elementary school years.

#### FORMS AND PERMISSION SLIPS

A number of important forms are sent home at the beginning of the school and throughout the year. These are required to assure the health and safety of your child, and to make your preferences known to the school with respect to optional opportunities and activities. Please return all required forms immediately and keep the others on file for use as needed.

#### UNLAWFUL HARASSMENT/BULLYING

##### Anti-Bullying Policy: Purpose

It is the policy of the Young Scholars of McKeesport Charter School (YSMCS) to provide a safe and orderly educational environment that is free from harassment and/or bullying and conducive to the mission of the organization to provide each and every student the best opportunity to receive the education to which she/he is entitled under state and federal law. The organization asserts that it has a compelling interest in promoting an educational environment that is safe and conducive to learning.

It is the intention of the YSMCS, consistent with state and federal law, to strive to maintain a learning environment which is free of harassment and/or bullying since the organization finds that incidents of harassment and/or bullying prevent students from receiving the education to which they are entitled, materially disrupt the mission of the organization to educate the children, substantially interfere with a student's educational performance and foster incidents of violence.

It is the purpose of this policy to prohibit and prevent acts of harassment and/or bullying and violence. YSMCS does recognize that students retain certain rights under state and federal law, including freedom of expression, although such rights are not necessarily coextensive with the rights of adults in society at large. It is not the purpose of this policy to impinge upon the legitimate rights of students or school personnel under state and federal law in the school environment. This policy defines harassment and/or bullying and violence, specifies and describes prohibitions, outlines reporting procedures, provides for the undertaking of appropriate remedial actions calculated to stop the harassment and/or bullying and/or violence, and prohibits retaliation against those who, in good faith, report harassment pursuant to this policy.

Definitions:

"Bullying" is any repeated and pervasive written, verbal or electronic expression, physical acts or gestures, or a pattern of behavior that is intended to cause distress upon one or more students in the school, on school grounds and school vehicles, at a designated bus stop, or at school activities or sanctioned events. Bullying includes, but is not limited to, harassment, hazing, intimidation or menacing acts of a student which may, but need not be based on the student's sex, race, color, ethnicity, religion, national origin, disability or sexual orientation.

"Harassment" means knowingly pursuing a pattern of conduct that is intended to threaten, alarm or terrorize another person. "Disability Harassment" is defined as intimidation or abusive behavior toward a student based on disability that creates a hostile environment by interfering with or denying a student's participation in, or receipt of benefits, services, or opportunities in the School. Harassment and Disability Harassment include, but are not limited to:

- Verbal acts, teasing, inappropriate use of sarcasm or demeaning jokes
- Name-calling, belittling
- Nonverbal behavior such as graphic or written statements
- Conduct that is physically threatening, harmful, or humiliating; or
- Inappropriate physical restraint by adults

"Racial Harassment" consists of physical or verbal conduct relating to an individual's race when the conduct:

- Has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive academic environment;
- Has the purpose or effect of substantially or unreasonably interfering with an individual's academic performance; or
- Otherwise adversely affects an individual's academic opportunities.

"Sexual Orientation Harassment/Homophobic Bullying" consists of physical, verbal, electronic communication or gestures relating to an individual's sexual orientation when the conduct is intended to threaten alarm or terrorize the person.

"Sexual Harassment" means any unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other inappropriate verbal, written, or physical conduct of asexual nature. Sexual harassment may take place under any of the following circumstances:

- When submission to such conduct is made, explicitly or implicitly, a term or condition of obtaining an education; or
- Submission to or rejection of that conduct or communication by an individual is used to factor decisions affecting that individual's education; or
- That conduct or communication has the purpose or effect of substantially or unreasonably interfering with an individual's education, or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive educational environment.
- "Hazing" means committing an act against a student (or a group of students), or coercing a student (or a group of students) into committing an act that creates a risk of harm to a person.
- This would include initiation practices connected with student organizations. This also applies to any and all GANG imitation activities or practices. Hazing includes but is not limited to:
  - Any type of physical brutality such as whipping, beating, striking, branding, shocking, or placing a harmful substance on the body.

- Any type of physical activity such as sleep deprivation, exposure to weather, confinement in a restricted area, calisthenics or other activity that subjects the student to an unreasonable risk of harm or that adversely affects the mental or physical health or safety of the student.
- Any activity involving the consumption of any alcoholic beverage, drug, tobacco product or any other food, liquid, or substance that subjects the student to an unreasonable risk of harm or that adversely affects the mental or physical health or safety of the student.
- 
- Any activity that intimidates or threatens a student with ostracism, that subjects the student to extreme mental stress, embarrassment, shame, or humiliation, that adversely affects the mental health or dignity of the student or discourages the student from remaining in school.
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- Any activity that causes or requires the student to perform a task that involves a violation of state or federal law, or School policies.

### **Notice of Prohibition against Bullying and Anti-Bullying Interventions**

"Bullying" behavior by any student at YSMCS is strictly prohibited and such conduct may result in disciplinary action, including suspension and/or expulsion from school. "Bullying" means any repeated and pervasive written, verbal or electronic expression, physical act or gesture, or a pattern thereof, that is intended to cause distress upon one or more students in the school, on school grounds, in school vehicles at a designated bus stop, or at school activities or sanctioned events. Bullying includes, but is not limited to hazing, harassment, intimidation or menacing acts of a student which may, but need not be based on the student's race, color, sex, ethnicity, national origin, religion, disability age or sexual orientation that a reasonable person under the circumstances should know will have the effect of:

Placing a student in reasonable fear of physical harm or damage to the student's property; or The CEO or designee is REQUIRED to make a reasonable effort to notify the parent or guardian of a student who commits a verified act of intimidation, harassment, or bullying of the response of the school staff, and consequences that may result from further acts of bullying.

Retaliation against an individual who either orally reports or files a written complaint regarding harassment, intimidation, bullying and hazing, is prohibited. The right to confidentiality for both the complainant and the accused shall be preserved whenever possible. Confidentiality, however, cannot be guaranteed at the onset of an investigation as it cannot be predicted what will be discovered or what kind of hearing will result.

If harassment or bullying continues, the (alleged) aggressor will be immediately suspended and removed from the school, pending a long-term hearing. In regards to Special Education students, Special Education procedure and/or protocol will be followed. IEP and/or behavior management plans will also be consulted as a determinant for consequences, and for interventions to address the issue. To the extent permitted under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), school staff is REQUIRED to make a reasonable effort to notify the parent or guardian of a student who is a target of bullying of the action taken to prevent any further acts of bullying.

### **Investigating Intimidation, Harassment, or Bullying Behavior**

The CEO or his/her designee will appropriately and promptly investigate all reports of harassment, intimidation, bullying, or hazing. In determining whether the alleged conduct constitutes bullying, the totality of the circumstances, the nature of the conduct, the student's history, and the context in which the alleged conduct occurred will be investigated. The following are key points to consider during the investigation process:

The administrator/designee(s) will make a reasonable effort to inform the parents/guardians of the victim, and the accused, of any formal report of harassment, intimidation, Bullying or hazing.

- The administrator/designee(s) will inform them at that time whether or not an investigation will take place.
- The investigation shall consist of personal interviews with the complainant, the individual(s) against whom the complaint was filed, and others who may have knowledge of the alleged incident(s) or circumstances giving rise to the complaint. The investigation may also consist of other methods or documents deemed relevant by the investigators.
- The School may take immediate steps to protect the complainant, students, teachers, administrators, or other school personnel pending the completion of an investigation.
- The investigation shall be completed as soon as possible. The School will be responsible for processing and maintaining a file of all formal incidents. Said reports may be reviewed by the School administration and may also be used to compile data regarding the extent of bullying within the School. The School-wide student PBS reporting system will be utilized to track formal incidents to include Bullying harassment, intimidation and hazing.

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### **Consequences for Bullying**

Verified acts of bullying shall result in intervention by the CEO or his/her designee that is intended to ensure that the prohibition against bullying behavior is enforced.

Bullying behavior can take many forms and may vary dramatically in how serious it is, and what impact it has on the targeted individual and other students. Accordingly, there is not a single disciplinary response to bullying. Conduct that rises to the level of "bullying" as defined above will warrant disciplinary action against the (alleged) aggressor of such bullying. The extent to which to impose disciplinary action is a matter of professional discretion of the CEO/designee(s).

Consequences may include detention, in or out-of-school suspension, alternative placement or expulsion. Other interventions may include Restorative Justice, mediation or the involvement of other programs adopted by the school to address bullying behaviors. Special Education students will be subject to disciplinary action specified within their IEP or Behavior Management Plan.

### **Consequences for Knowingly Making False Reports**

False reports of Bullying behaviors will be regarded as serious offenses and will result in disciplinary action or other appropriate sanctions.

### **Procedures for Notification:**

YSMCS shall inform students, parents and personnel that harassment and/or bullying will not be tolerated by means of one or more of the following:

- Distribution of policy through school website.
- Publication in handbooks.
- Assembly presentation. Bully awareness week to be set by PBIS team.
- Training session(s).
  
- Posting of notices/signs.
- Other means of notice to be implemented by the school.

The school shall use its discretion in developing and initiating age-appropriate programs to effectively inform students, parents and personnel about the substance of the policy and procedures in order to help prevent harassment and/or bullying.

### **Threats of Violence**

- Threats of violence toward other students, school staff, or facilities are prohibited and may result in suspension or expulsion, regardless of whether the student has previously engaged in such conduct.
  
- All employees and students are required to report evidence of threats of violence to the CEO or designee. Such reports shall be investigated by CEO/designee(s). Reporting procedures shall follow the standards outlined above.
  
- In cases of threats that may constitute a serious violation of criminal law, the CEO/designee(s) shall notify law enforcement authorities.
  
- In cases of threats that constitute a minor violation of criminal law, the CEO/designee(s) has the right to notify law enforcement authorities if appropriate

The YSMCS Staff, Board, and Administration look forward to a wonderful school year. With your participation and support, we expect each student to develop academically, socially, and emotionally. Our motto, composed by one of our first-year students, says it all:

## LET'S GROW TOGETHER, GLOBALLY.

The initial responsibility for a review of the policy is that of the student. If an acceptable solution is not reached during a meeting of the student and the activity director, the building Lead Person will be informed of the need to review the request.

The CEO will meet with the concerned student and the activity director (instructor) to obtain needed information. A decision by the Lead Person concerning resolution of disagreement will be provided all interested parties

### **Homeless Education Assistance Program**

YSMCS' McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Program is a federally funded program for children at our school. The McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act guarantees a free and appropriate public education for all homeless children. "Homeless" is defined as "anyone lacking a fixed, adequate, regular nighttime residence."

YSMCS students, qualify for certain rights and protections under the federal McKinney-Vento Act if they live in any of the following situations:

- Staying in the home of other people due to unavailable housing, financial hardship, or similar circumstances
- Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks (in some instances, e.g., leaking roof, no heat), public places, or campgrounds due to unavailable suitable housing options
- Living in an emergency shelter or transitional housing
- Runaway or unaccompanied (not living in the direct care of a legal parent or guardian) youth
- Refugee and migrant youth

The law makes sure that homeless students receive free and suitable public education by removing barriers to school enrollment and full, basic, daily participation in school activities.

#### **This includes:**

- Immediate enrollment as long as other students living in the same area would be eligible to attend the school unless there is overcrowding or a specialized selection process
- Free and reduced school lunch
- Help with any necessary enrollment documents
- Help setting up transportation services (if the student qualifies)
- Help to get basic uniform clothing
- Help with basic school supplies
- Help with basic clothing needs

The Homeless Liaison may be able to provide information on community agencies that provide health and human services.

Parents and guardians of children who may qualify for this service, or whose living situation changes during the school year such that their children become homeless, should contact Mrs. Trinch.

She can be reached at:

**Sarah Trinch**

**Phone: (412) 673-7300, ext. 101**

**Email: [trinch@ysmcs.org](mailto:trinch@ysmcs.org)**

Mrs. Trinch and the rest of our staff will work to ensure that the education of any of our children who experience homelessness is disrupted as little as possible.

### **SPECIAL NOTE**

**It is the school's responsibility to publish the student handbook on the school website. During open house, a copy of the student handbook will be provided to each parent. Copies will also be available in the front office. It is important that each student attending YSMCS and their parents have read, understood, and agreed with the content of the student handbook by signing and returning to the office.**

**YSMCS reserves the rights to delete, add, and amend any changes to this handbook. Any changes to this handbook will be posted on the school website.**

## STUDENT CONDUCT CONTRACT

Because all of you have elected to apply to YSMCS, we anticipate that all students will not only accept their rights as members of our school community, but also their responsibilities to other members of that community. We ask each of you to carefully read over and sign the student contract on this page and, as the school year unfolds, do your best to behave in ways that will enhance your own and others' ability to learn.

As a student of YSMCS, I will do my best to do the following:

### Be Safe

- I will walk as I transition throughout the building.
- I will be careful with my property, the property of the school and the property of others.
- I will ask for permission before using other's property.
- I will not leave a space or building without permission.
- I will only bring approved items to school – I will not bring anything that will distract or harm others.

### Be Responsible

- I will attend school regularly and arrive ready to learn.
- I will be in class on time with all necessary materials.
- I will make good use of class time by completing and turning in work.
- I will make up missed assignments.
- I will ask for help when I need it.
- I will keep the school clean.
- I will follow all behavior expectations.

### Be Respectful

- I will consider for the rights and feelings of others.
- I will speak to others respectfully, not using profanity or uncomplimentary names.
- I will show respect for all people working or helping in the school.
- I will not take away from the learning of others.
- I will follow the dress code and arrive at school in my uniform.

**I agree to follow all requirements of the YSMCS Student Handbook.**

**I agree to follow the Student Code of Conduct.**

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Student Name

Student Signature

Date

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Parent/Guardian Name

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

**Young Scholars of McKeesport Charter School  
Annual Child Find Notice and Student Records Notice**

## **Screening and Evaluation**

Young Scholars of McKeesport Charter School employs the following procedures for locating, identifying and evaluating the needs of school age students who may require special education programs and/or services. These procedures, as required by state regulation, are as follows:

As prescribed by Section 1402 of the Pennsylvania school code, the district routinely conducts health screenings for kindergarten (K) through 12th grade students and new students without history of recent exams: Vision (Gr. K-12); Hearing (Gr. K, 3, 7 and 11 and any student with a known history of hearing loss); Mandated Physical Exams (Gr. K, 6, and 11); Dental Screenings (Gr. K, 1, 3, and 7); Scoliosis Screening (Gr. 6, 7) and Body Mass Index (BMI) screening (Gr. K-12). Also, school nurses provide vision and hearing screenings for students who are referred for an evaluation or reevaluation regarding Chapter 14/Individualized Education Plan (IEP) special education services and Chapter 15/504 Student Services Plan accommodations.

Speech and language skills are screened in kindergarten and on a referral basis by speech clinicians.

Gross-motor and fine-motor skills, academic and social-emotional skills are assessed by the teachers and support staff. Screening activities include: review of group-based data such as cumulative enrollment and health records, report cards and academic skills scores. Identified needs from these screening sources, as well as information obtained from parents and outside agencies, is assessed, noted within the student's record and discussed with parents.

Young Scholars of McKeesport Charter School has intervention/prevention teams in place to support students as a pre-referral system. At the YSMCS a RTII team has been established as part of the pre-referral intervention process. The team consists of CEO, Director of Instruction, guidance counselor, regular education teachers, reading specialists, school psychologist when needed and special education staff when needed. Parents are also part of this process and are contacted and strongly encouraged to participate in all phases of the RTII team process. The RTII team assists teachers and parents with supporting students who are experiencing academic, behavioral, medical, emotional and social skills difficulties.

Assessment data is used by the team to meet the student's specific needs by recommending modifications or adaptations to the regular education program, creating interventions to address the problem and monitoring the student's response to intervention, or to document the need for further evaluation.

If it is determined that a student is in need of further evaluation, the student is referred for a multidisciplinary team (MDT) evaluation, which requires parent permission and includes parent input. Next, a "Prior Written Notice for Initial Evaluation and Request for Consent Form" is issued to the parent to sign giving the school district permission to conduct the evaluation. The school has 60 calendar days to complete the evaluation. After the evaluation is completed, an evaluation report is prepared which includes specific recommendations for the types of intervention necessary to meet the needs of the student and to determine the child's eligibility for special education services based upon a disability.

When the evaluation report is completed parents are invited if necessary to a multidisciplinary team meeting to review findings and plan for the student's needs. After the MDT evaluation is completed, the parents are given a NOREP, which they sign to indicate their agreement or disagreement with the recommendation.

Parents of students who suspect that their child has a disability and is in need of special education may request an RTII meeting or multidisciplinary team evaluation of their child through a written request to the CEO

Services for School Age Students with Disabilities or Mental Giftedness:

The Young Scholars of McKeesport Charter School provides a free, appropriate public education to students with disabilities or mental giftedness according to state and federal rules. To be eligible, the child must:

- Be of school age
- Have a disability or mental giftedness and be in need of specially designed instruction
- Meet eligibility criteria for one or more of the following physical or mental disabilities as set forth in the Pennsylvania State Standards: autism, deaf-blindness, blindness, visual impairment, emotional disturbance, specific learning disability, other health impairment, traumatic brain injury, and speech/language impairment, orthopedic impairment, hearing impairment, deafness, multiple disabilities or mental retardation.
- Services designed to meet the needs of eligible disabled students include:
  - The annual development of an individualized education program (IEP or Gifted IEP).
  - A Triennial multidisciplinary re-evaluation for students with disabilities (except for those students with mental retardation where evaluation remains biennial).
  - Range of supports for students from itinerant level to supplemental level to full time level special education support within the school district or placement in a full-time special education disabilities class outside of the regular school.

The extent of special education services for disabled or mentally gifted students and the location for the delivery of such services are determined by the parents and the district staff at the IEP team meeting and are based on the student's identified needs and abilities, chronological age and the level of intensity of the specified intervention. The school also provides related services, such as transportation, physical therapy, occupational therapy and assistive technology if they are required to enable the student with disabilities to derive educational benefits.

Prior to initiation of services, parents of a student with disabilities are presented a "Notice of Recommended Educational Placement/Prior Written Notice" (NOREP) and parents of a mentally gifted student with a "Notice of Recommended Assignment" (NORA) with which they agree or disagree. If parents agree to the program outlined by the multidisciplinary team and the parent signs either the NOREP or NORA, then the program is implemented for their child. If parents disagree with the program being recommended, they have the right to request IEP facilitation, mediation and/or a due process hearing. Parents are issued their "Procedural Safeguards" which outlines in detail their legal rights as a parent of a child identified as having a disability or considered mental gifted.

Lastly, if a child proves to have a disability or handicapping condition under PA Chapter 15 and the American Disabilities Act and it is determined the child is entitled to services and accommodations that are necessary to enable them access and safety when participating in programs and activities of the school, then a 504 Student Services Plan is outlined between the parent, district LEA and district staff. Parents are also given "Procedural Safeguards" for

Chapter 15 504 Student Services Plans, which outlines their rights as a parent of a student who has a disability and requires accommodations.

#### **Services for Protected Handicapped Students:**

The school will provide to each protected handicapped student without discrimination or cost to the student or family those related aids, services or accommodations which are needed to provide equal opportunity to participate in and obtain the benefits of school programs and extracurricular activities to the extent appropriate to the student's abilities. To qualify as a protected handicapped student, the child must be of school age with a physical or mental handicap, which substantially limits or prohibits participation in or access to an aspect of the school program. Services for protected handicapped students are distinct from those applicable to disabled students enrolled in special education programs. Protected handicapped students fall under Pennsylvania's Chapter 15, sometimes known by its federal name, Section 504 (of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act). In contrast, students with disabilities who qualify for special education services are covered by the regulations contained in Pennsylvania's Chapter 14. While both Chapter 14 and 15 provide services to students, there are technical differences between the two. Additional information about evaluation procedures and provision of services to protected handicapped students is available by contacting the CEO D. Aiden at [aiden@ysmc.org](mailto:aiden@ysmc.org) or calling school at 4126737300

#### **Services for Preschool Age Children:**

Act 212, the Early Intervention Systems Act, entitles all preschool age children with disabilities to appropriate intervention services. Young children experiencing developmental delays or physical or mental disabilities are eligible for early intervention services if it is determined that they meet eligibility requirements.

The Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare is responsible for providing services to infants and toddlers, defined as children from birth to three years of age. Contact the Early Learning Institute, 2510 Baldwick Road, Pittsburgh, PA, 15205-4104, 412-922-8322.

The Pennsylvania Department of Education is responsible for providing services to preschool age children from ages three through five. Contact the Allegheny Intermediate Unit, Project DART, 425 East Waterfront Drive, Homestead, PA 15120, 412-394-5941.

You may find information regarding the appropriate developmental milestone descriptors for infants and toddlers at the Center for Disease Control (CDC) website: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/ActEarly/default.htm> For additional information regarding the signs of developmental delays, please contact the CEO Mr. D. Aiden at [aiden@ysmcs.org](mailto:aiden@ysmcs.org) or call at 4126737300.

#### **Confidentiality of Student Records:**

The privacy rights of parents and students are mandated by federal legislation known as the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA - C.F.R. Part 99), most recently amended in November 1996, state regulations (Chapter 14-Special Education Services and Programs, Chapter 12-Student Rights and Responsibilities) and district policy.

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is a federal law that affords parents the right to have access to their children's education records, the right to seek to have the records amended, and the right to have some control over the disclosure of personally identifiable information from the education records. When a student

turns 18 years old, or enters a postsecondary institution at any age, the rights under FERPA transfer from the parents to the student (“eligible student”). The FERPA statute is found at 20 U.S.C. § 1232g and the FERPA regulations are found at 34 CFR Part 99.

It is the intent of this Annual Notice and policy to inform both the parent(s)/guardian(s) and eligible children (i.e. students 18 and older) of their rights relevant to their privacy rights in the collection, maintenance, release and destruction of these records as required by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), 20 U.S.C. ‘1232g, 34 C.F.R. part 99.

Questions regarding the above information or requests for a copy of the records policy may be referred to: CEO, Mr. Aiden, at [aiden@ysmcs.org](mailto:aiden@ysmcs.org) or by phone at 4126737300.