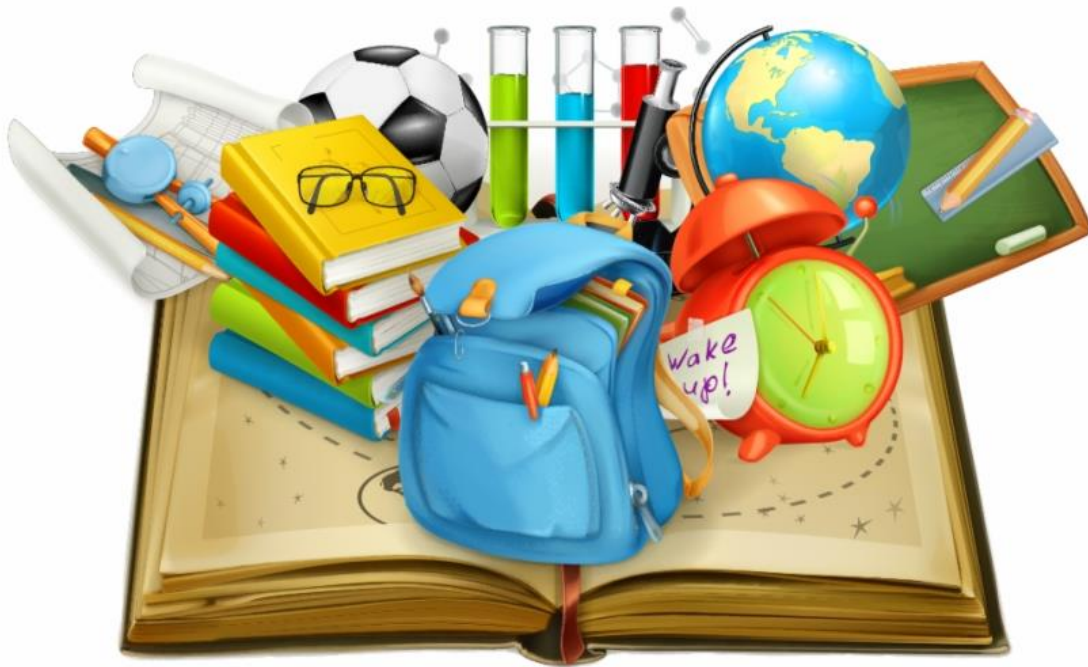




www.bearcreekschool.com

Student / Parent Handbook 2024-2025





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July 1, 2024

Dear Students and Parents,

The upcoming 2024-2025 school year marks the beginning of our 20th year of providing students and parents with a real choice in quality public education. Our continuing goal is to help prepare our students by providing them a strong educational foundation, fostering an appreciation and respect for the natural environment and teaching them the skills necessary to overcome future challenges. During their time at Bear Creek Community Charter School, students will experience significant growth and change. They learn to accept increasing responsibility for their own decisions, actions and words. By embracing a true student-centered philosophy, our program is designed to enable students to succeed and flourish – all part of the “Bear Creek Experience”.

This Handbook is intended to assist students and their families in learning about the mission, core values and expectations of students and parents/guardians of Bear Creek Community Charter School.

Parents choose Bear Creek Community Charter School because they embrace and support high academic expectations for their children – the same high academic expectations Bear Creek Community Charter School demands of its students.

Parents choose Bear Creek Community Charter School because they want their children to get a solid understanding and appreciation for the natural environment in which we all live, and learn how to sustain our environment for future generations.

Parents choose Bear Creek Community Charter School because of the small, safe and community-oriented environment created by our nurturing staff.

We take our responsibility to teach, support and model the elements of this Handbook very seriously. True educational success can best be achieved when the student, school, and home work closely together. We expect students and their parents/guardians to embrace our mission, core values and our high expectations for students. We value communication with the families of our students, and urge parents to take an active role in the educational process including working with their children at home and reaching out to teachers if a challenge arises. We all have a common goal, to ensure our students are successful academically and socially. We need to work collectively together to ensure that happens.

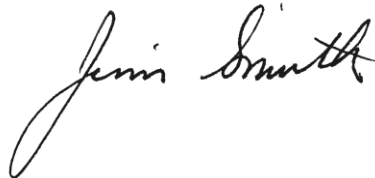
To our students, we ask that you strive to do your best, and urge you to seek support from the staff to assist you in that effort. When people work together toward the same goals, the potential for success is unlimited.

We also look forward to continuing to challenge ourselves to ensure we offer the best possible educational program to students. The upcoming school year is going to be very exciting as well as challenging, as we continue to challenge our students to reach their fullest potential, challenge parents to actively engage with their children, and challenge ourselves to continue to enhance The Bear Creek Experience. A commitment to continuous improvement means a commitment to student success. Your feedback is always welcome and appreciated.

If there is ever an opportunity for myself or others on our team to be of assistance, please don't hesitate to e-mail me at jim.smith@bearcreekschool.com or call me at (570) 820-4070, extension 6204.

Help us carry on our long-established tradition of excellence by learning lots, making memories that will last a lifetime, and enjoying the upcoming school year. Together, let's make the most of the Bear Creek Experience!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jim Smith". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "J".

Jim Smith
Chief Executive Officer

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Mission Statement and Core Values

Our Mission is to embrace a diverse student body and inspire student success through an innovative curriculum, the cultivation of environmental stewardship, and by holding students, parents, and staff accountable for results.

The following core values guide the mission of Bear Creek Community Charter School:

1. Setting high expectations for academic achievement will lead students to be meaningful contributors to society;
2. We have an obligation to expose children to content-rich materials and programs derived from research-based teaching methods;
3. Engaging children at all levels will inspire them to rise to academic challenges and develop a life-long enthusiasm for learning;
4. Quality teachers are critical to student achievement;
5. Staff will be provided the resources necessary to support their success and be held accountable for delivering measurable results;
6. Education is powerful when students, families, school, and the community are involved;
7. Children must be taught their inherent responsibility to respect the environment and will encourage others to do the same;
8. Children will be challenged to develop leadership skills, build self-esteem and exhibit exemplary character;
9. A safe and nurturing environment is essential to student achievement.
10. Complacency is not acceptable. We must create and embrace a culture of continuous improvement for the benefit of our students.

Discrimination Statement

It is the policy of the Bear Creek Community Charter School not to discriminate on the basis of sex, handicap, race, color, religion, or national origin in its educational and vocational programs, activities, or employment as required by Title IX, Section 504, and Title VI. Bear Creek Community Charter School will take steps to assure that lack of English language skills will not be a barrier to admission and participation in all educational and vocational programs.

Student/Parent/School Compact (Title I)

The Student/Parent/School Compact was jointly developed with parents and family members and outlines how parents, school staff, and students will share in the responsibility for improved student academic achievement and the means by which the school and parents will build and develop partnerships to help children achieve the Commonwealth's high standards (ESSA, Section 1116(d)).

The school understands the importance of the Bear Creek Experience to every student and their role as educators and models. Therefore, the school agrees to carry out the following responsibilities to the best of their ability:

1. Provide high-quality curriculum and instruction in a supportive and effective learning environment that enables the children served under this part to meet the challenging state academic standards.
2. Address the importance of communication between teachers and parents on an ongoing basis through, at a minimum:
 - a. Parent-teacher conferences held twice each school year, during which the components of this compact shall be discussed as they relate to the individual child's achievement.
 - b. Frequent reports to parents on their children's progress.
 - c. Reasonable access to staff, opportunities to volunteer and participate in their child's class, and observation of classroom activities
 - d. Ensuring regular two-way, meaningful communication between family members and school staff and, to the extent practicable, in a language that family members can understand.
3. Treat each child with dignity and respect.
4. Strive to address the individual needs of the student.
5. Acknowledge that parents are vital to the success of child and school.
6. Provide a safe, positive and healthy learning environment.
7. Assure every student access to quality learning experiences.
8. Assure that the school staff communicates clear expectations for performance to both students and parents.

The parent understands that participation in his/her student's education will help his/her achievement and attitude; therefore, the parent will continue to carry out the following responsibilities to the best of his/her ability:

1. Volunteering at school and in their child's classroom.
2. Supporting their child's learning.
3. Participating, as appropriate, in decisions relating to the education of their child and positive use of extracurricular time.
4. Create a home atmosphere that supports learning.
5. Send the student to school on time, well-fed, and well-rested on a regular basis.
6. Attend school functions and parent/teacher conferences along with any IEP or disciplinary meetings.
7. Encourage their child to show respect for all members of the school community and school property.
8. Review all school communications and respond promptly.

The student realizes education is important. He/she is the one responsible for his/her own success; therefore he/she agrees to carry out the following responsibilities to the best of his/her ability:

1. Get to school on time every day.
2. Develop a positive attitude toward school.
3. Be respectful of yourself, others and your surroundings – including school property.
4. Be responsible for yourself and act responsibly towards others, including being responsible for completing homework on time.
5. Be accountable for your choices, decisions and actions.
6. Be honest with one another and work to build trust.
7. Be cooperative by carrying out the teacher's instructions and ask for help when needed.
8. Do daily work that is neat and reflects the student's best effort.

Right to Request Teacher Qualifications

As a parent of a student attending a school that is receiving Federal Title I funds, you have the right to know the professional qualifications of the teacher(s) and instructional paraprofessional(s) who instruct your child. Federal law requires every Title I school district to comply and to provide you with the requested information in a timely manner. We are happy to provide this information to you. At any time, you may ask:

- Whether the teacher met state qualifications and certification requirements for the grade level and subject he/she is teaching,
- Whether the teacher received an emergency or conditional certificate through which state qualifications were waived, and
- What undergraduate or graduate degrees the teacher holds, including graduate certificates and additional degrees, and major(s) or area(s) of concentration.

You may also ask whether your child receives help from a paraprofessional. If your child receives this assistance, we can provide you with information about the paraprofessional's qualifications. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) which was signed into law in December 2015 and reauthorizes the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) includes additional right to know requests. At any time, parents and family members can request information on policies regarding student participation in assessments and procedures for opting out, and information on required assessments that include:

- Policies regarding student participation in assessments and procedures for opting out
- Subject matter tested,
- Purpose of the test,
- Source of the requirement (if applicable),
- Amount of time it takes students to complete the test, and
- Time and format of disseminating results.

Our staff is committed to helping your child develop the academic knowledge and critical thinking he/she needs to succeed in school and beyond. That commitment includes making sure that all of our teachers and paraprofessionals meet applicable Pennsylvania state requirements.

Family Educational Rights & Privacy Act – Annual Notice

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

1. The right to inspect and review the student's education records within 45 days after the day Bear Creek Community Charter School ("School") receives a request for access.

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

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

Parents or eligible students who wish to ask Bear Creek Community Charter School to amend their child's or their education record should write the Chief Executive Officer. Clearly identify the part of the record they want changed, and specify why it should be changed. If the school decides not to amend the record as requested by the parent or eligible student, the school will notify the parent or eligible student of the decision and of their right to a hearing regarding the request for amendment. Additional information regarding the hearing procedures will be provided to the parent or eligible student when notified of the right to a hearing.

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

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

A school official typically has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record in order to fulfill his or her professional responsibility.

Upon request, the school discloses education records without consent to officials of another school or school district in which a student seeks or intends to enroll, or is already enrolled if the disclosure is for purposes of the student's enrollment or transfer.

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

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

FERPA permits the disclosure of PII from students' education records, without consent of the parent or eligible student, if the disclosure meets certain conditions found in § 99.31 of the FERPA regulations. Except for disclosures to school officials, disclosures related to some judicial orders or lawfully issued subpoenas, disclosures of directory information, and disclosures to the parent or eligible student, § 99.32 of the FERPA regulations requires the school to record the disclosure. Parents and eligible students have a right to inspect and review the record of disclosures. A school may disclose PII from the education records of a student without obtaining prior written consent of the parents or the eligible student:

1. To other school officials, including teachers, within the educational agency or institution whom the school has determined to have legitimate educational interests. This includes contractors, consultants, volunteers, or other parties to whom the school has outsourced institutional services or functions, provided that the conditions listed in § 99.31(a)(1)(i)(B)(1) - (a)(1)(i)(B)(3) are met. (§ 99.31(a)(1))
2. To officials of another school, school system, or institution of postsecondary education where the student seeks or intends to enroll, or where the student is already enrolled if the disclosure is for purposes related to the student's enrollment or transfer, subject to the requirements of § 99.34. (§ 99.31(a)(2))
3. To authorized representatives of the U. S. Comptroller General, the U. S. Attorney General, the U.S. Secretary of Education, or State and local educational authorities, such as the State educational agency (SEA) in the parent or eligible student's State. Disclosures under this provision may be made, subject to the requirements of § 99.35, in connection with an audit or evaluation of Federal- or State-supported education programs, or for the enforcement of or compliance with Federal legal requirements that relate to those programs. These entities may make further disclosures of PII to outside entities that are designated by them as their authorized representatives to conduct any audit, evaluation, or enforcement or compliance activity on their behalf, if applicable requirements are met. (§§ 99.31(a)(3) and 99.35)
4. In connection with financial aid for which the student has applied or which the student has received, if the information is necessary for such purposes as to determine eligibility for the aid, determine the amount of the aid, determine the conditions of the aid, or enforce the terms and conditions of the aid. (§ 99.31(a)(4)):

5. To state and local officials or authorities to whom information is specifically allowed to be reported or disclosed by a state statute that concerns the juvenile justice system and the system's ability to effectively serve, prior to adjudication, the student whose records were released, subject to § 99.38. (§ 99.31(a)(5))
6. To organizations conducting studies for, or on behalf of, the school, in order to: (a) develop, validate, or administer predictive tests; (b) administer student aid programs; or (c) improve instruction, if applicable requirements are met. (§ 99.31(a)(6))
7. To accrediting organizations to carry out their accrediting functions. (§ 99.31(a)(7))
8. To parents of an eligible student if the student is a dependent for IRS tax purposes. (§ 99.31(a)(8))
9. To comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena if applicable requirements are met. (§ 99.31(a)(9))
10. To appropriate officials in connection with a health or safety emergency, subject to § 99.36. (§ 99.31(a)(10))
11. Information the school has designated as "directory information" if applicable requirements under § 99.37 are met. (§ 99.31(a)(11))
12. To an agency caseworker or other representative of a State or local child welfare agency or tribal organization who is authorized to access a student's case plan when such agency or organization is legally responsible, in accordance with State or tribal law, for the care and protection of the student in foster care placement. (20 U.S.C. § 1232g(b)(1)(L))
13. To the Secretary of Agriculture or authorized representatives of the Food and Nutrition Service for purposes of conducting program monitoring, evaluations, and performance measurements of programs authorized under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act or the Child Nutrition Act of 1966, under certain conditions. (20 U.S.C. § 1232g(b)(1)(K))

Directory Information

FERPA defines "directory information" as information contained in the education records of a student that would not generally be considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if disclosed. A school may disclose "directory information" to third parties without consent if it has given public notice of the types of information which it has designated as "directory information," the parent's or eligible student's right to restrict the disclosure of such information, and the period of time within which a parent or eligible student has to notify the school in writing that he or she does not want any or all of those types of information designated as "directory information."

The primary purpose of directory information is to allow Bear Creek Community Charter School to include this type of information from your child's education records in certain school publications. Examples include: a playbill, showing your student's role in a drama production; the annual yearbook; honor roll or other recognition lists; graduation programs; and sports activity publications. The School has designated the following information as directory information:

- Student's name.
- Age.
- Gender.
- Date and place of birth.
- Address.
- Telephone listing.
- Electronic mail address.
- Photograph.
- Grade level.
- Major field of study.
- Dates of attendance.
- The most recent educational agency or institution attended.
- Degrees, honors and awards received.
- Participation in officially recognized activities and sports.
- Weight and height of members of athletic teams.

Two federal laws require public schools receiving assistance under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) to provide military recruiters, upon request, with three directory information categories - names, addresses, and telephone listings - unless parents have advised the school district that they do not want their child's information disclosed without their prior written consent.

Bear Creek Community Charter School may disclose appropriately designated directory information without written consent, unless you have advised the School to the contrary in accordance with School procedures. This information may also be made available to qualify outside organizations upon request. Qualified outside organizations include, but are not limited to, scholarship providers, trade/technical schools, and potential employers. In recognition of a family's right to privacy, it is the School's policy not to provide directory information to commercial enterprises.

Parents or eligible students (18 years old or above) have the right to have directory information withheld upon written request. If you prefer to deny release of directory information without prior written consent, please submit your request, in writing, to the Chief Executive Officer within ten (10) days of your enrollment. Please submit a separate request for each child attending the School.

Educational Program

Bear Creek Community Charter School's core academic program consists of Mathematics, English Language Arts, Science and Social Studies. In addition, there are four special subjects, which include Music, Art, Physical Education, and Environmental Education.

Grading, Promotion and Retention

Students (all grades and all subjects) will receive a numerical grade on their report cards, along with appropriate teacher comments.

A+	100 – 97
A	96 – 93
A-	90 – 92
B+	89 – 87
B	86 – 83
B-	80 – 82
C+	79 – 77
C	76 – 73
C-	70 – 72
D	69 – 65
F	64 – 0

Promotion from one grade to the next is a two-step process. Students will be considered for promotion upon (1) teacher recommendation and (2) students earning a passing grade in Math, English Language Arts and at least one of the two remaining core academic subjects. Students who are absent from school for thirty (30) or more days may be retained and not promoted to the next grade level.

Students in grades 5, 6, 7, and 8 are eligible for academic honor roll recognition. In order to make the honor roll, must achieve a 93% average or greater in the four core academic areas (ELA, Math, Science, and Social Studies) per marking period, and obtain passing grades in the special subjects.

Educational Assessment

Standardized testing and assessments are a key component of our charter and are required by state and federal law. Bear Creek Community Charter School students participate in the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) in the areas of English Language Arts and Mathematics for grades three through eight, and Science for grades four and eight. Eighth grade students in the Algebra I class will take the Keystone exam. Additionally, we conduct the benchmark testing in Math and Reading three times a year in all grades to monitor students' academic growth, along with regularly scheduled benchmarking in other major subjects. i-Ready (Curriculum Associates) is the standard benchmarking assessment administered school-wide for Reading and Math, and Fountas and Pinnell Reading Assessment is utilized as a supplemental assessment in grades one through four. If you have any questions about any of these assessments, please contact your child's teacher.

Intervention & Enrichment

All students, kindergarten through 8th grade, will participate in a daily 45-minute enrichment period as part of the school's Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtII) program. The structure of the enrichment period is based on results of the i-Ready® Diagnostic assessment, where students are automatically placed into student instruction customized to their placement levels. During the enrichment period, additional staff will be available to work with students in small group settings, along with students working independently using the i-Ready software. These online lessons provide a consistent best-practice lesson structure and build conceptual understanding, in addition to being engaging and fun for learners of all levels. Skills are taught through engaging characters and real-world scenarios.

Students practice what they've learned and receive encouraging, corrective feedback to reinforce understanding. Students are assessed at the end of each lesson to support ongoing progress monitoring. The enrichment period provides more personalized instruction and support in Reading & Math.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Conferences may be arranged at any time by contacting teachers either through e-mail or by telephone. If you need to meet with more than one staff member, we ask that you coordinate the meeting through the Main Office. Parent participation and ongoing communication is critical to student success. As such, parents/guardians are required to attend the first quarter parent teacher conference to pick up their child's report card. Report cards will not be sent home without a conference. Conferences must be scheduled and cannot occur spontaneously due to the ongoing responsibilities of the teaching staff. We anticipate, and appreciate parent support.

Academic Support Program (ASP)

The purpose of the Academic Support Program (ASP) is to provide academic supports for struggling students that are necessary for success. The Academic Support Program operates using a team of professionals to identify issues that may be interfering with a student's academic growth, and works with the classroom teacher to implement interventions to help students succeed. The team consists of the Director of Student Affairs, Director of Curriculum & Instruction, Director of Intervention & Support Services, Math Specialist, Literacy Specialist, School Counselor, School Psychologist, and Nurse. The Director of Curriculum and Instruction coordinates the Academic Support Program and serves as the parent liaison. The process begins with a referral (from a teacher, staff member or parent), which is reviewed by the ASP team. Parents/guardians of students referred to the ASP are contacted and either asked to participate in a team meeting or are informed of the team's plan. A plan of action is formulated to support the student in achieving the appropriate academic growth, and a copy of the plan is provided to all stakeholders. Within 30 days of implementation, the plan is reviewed to determine if it was successful, needs to be adjusted, or a completely new plan put into place. Based on that review, further action may be taken.

Learning Support Services

Learning Support falls under the responsibility of the Director of Intervention & Support Services, and consists of learning support teachers, educational paraprofessionals and other professional service providers such as speech and language support, occupational and physical therapy, etc. Students who have specific academic needs and who have or are in need of an Individualized Education Program (IEP) will receive services from the Learning Support team.

Students with an IEP may be provided services in a fully-inclusive classroom or may receive pull-out support, depending on the individual student's needs. Accommodations and/or modifications can be made both in and out of the classroom to help facilitate a successful educational experience for all students.

Child Find Notice: Programs for Eligible or Protected Handicapped Students

In compliance with state and federal law, notice is hereby given by Bear Creek Community Charter School that it conducts on-going identification activities as a part of its school program for the purpose of identifying students who may be in need of special education and related services. If your child is identified by the school as possibly in need of such services, you will be notified of applicable procedures. Individualized services and programs are available for children who are determined to need specially designed instruction due to the following conditions:

1. Autism
2. Deaf-Blindness
3. Emotional Disturbances
4. Hearing Impairment including Deafness
5. Intellectual Disability
6. Multiple Disabilities
7. Orthopedic Impairment
8. Other Health Impairment
9. Specific Learning Disability
10. Speech or Language Impairment
11. Traumatic Brain Injury
12. Visual Impairment, including Blindness
13. Developmental Delay (Only used when child is receiving Early Intervention Services)
14. Gifted with Disability
15. Gifted without Disability

If you believe that your school-age child may be in need of special education services and related programs or your young child (age 3 to school-age) may be in need of early interventions, screening and evaluation processes designed to assess the needs of the child and his/her eligibility are available to you at no cost, upon written request. You may request screening and evaluation at any time, whether or not your child is enrolled in the school program. Requests for evaluation and screening are to be made in writing to the Director of Intervention & Support Services.

In compliance with state and federal law, Bear Creek Community Charter 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 the school program and extra-curricular activities to the maximum extent appropriate to the student's abilities. In order to qualify as a protected handicapped student, the child must be of school age with a physical or mental disability, which substantially limits or prohibits participation in or access to an aspect of the school program. These services and protections for "protected handicapped students" are distinct from those applicable to all eligible or exceptional students enrolled (or seeking enrollment) in special education programs. For further information on the rights of parents and children, provision of services, evaluation and screening (including purpose, time, and location), you may contact the Director of Intervention & Support Services in writing.

All information gathered about your child is subject to the confidentiality provisions contained in federal and state law. The school employs procedures governing the collection, maintenance, destruction, and disclosure to third parties of this information. For information about these policies and procedures, as well as rights of confidentiality and access to educational records, you may contact the Director of Intervention & Support Services in writing. If you have questions regarding the special education process, please contact the Director of Intervention & Support Services.

Gifted Education

In Pennsylvania, mentally gifted is defined as "...outstanding intellectual and creative ability the development of which requires specially designed programs or support services, or both, not ordinarily provided in the regular education program." (22 Pa. Code §16.1) Bear Creek Community Charter School utilizes both academic and cognitive data from a variety of state and local sources in determining whether a student qualifies for gifted education, and reviews data annually for students in grades two through eight. This systematic screening process fulfills the school's obligation to conduct child find activities for students who may need instruction not ordinarily provided in the general education curriculum. If a child in Kindergarten or first grade demonstrates exceptional abilities, the classroom teacher will refer the student to the Academic Support Team for review. When the majority of a student's data falls within a range expected for students who may need gifted education, the student will be referred for additional assessments. If the range of those additional assessments fall within a range expected for students who may need gifted education, the student will then be referred to the Gifted Multidisciplinary Team (GMDT) for a Gifted Multidisciplinary Evaluation (GMDE), which will determine if the student has potential consistent with the definition of mentally gifted or a performance level which exceeds that of other students in the regular classroom. If you have questions regarding gifted education services, please contact the Director of Intervention & Support Services.

Student Support

Bear Creek Community Charter School employs a full-time, certified School Counselor to support our students in achieving their fullest potential. The Counselor is available to all students and parents, and is able to provide a broad array of services that include prevention and/or developmental activities, psychological and achievement testing, and remedial interventions as it relates to academic, personal, social, or career domains of human development. Services include, but are not limited to bully prevention, character development, short-term individual or group counseling, classroom guidance, consultation, crisis management coordination, among others. Services also include community outreach, parental support and education, transitional programs, and staff support relating to student's needs. A key role of the Counselor is to provide academic counseling and assistance to students who have circumstances which are impeding or have the potential to interfere with their ability to grow and succeed academically and fully benefit from the Bear Creek Experience. Referrals to the Counselor can come from any member of the school staff, parent or the students themselves. The Counselor follows the American School Counselor's Association Ethical Codes and Guidelines, including informed consent and confidentiality. Bear Creek Community Charter School also employs a full-time, licensed School Psychologist who is also a licensed Behavioral Specialist. The School Psychologist partners with students, families, teachers and school administrators to create a safe, healthy and supportive learning environment to help strengthen connections among home, school and community.

Student Assistance Program (SAP)

The purpose of this program is for early identification of students who may be experiencing personal, school, family, alcohol, or other drug problems which may create a significant barrier to the learning process, and to provide early intervention using existing in-school services as well as referrals to appropriate community agencies. Participation in the Student Assistance Program is completely confidential. The program is operated using a team of trained staff members, including the School Counselor and Nurse. Luzerne County Children and Youth Services, representatives of drug and alcohol or mental health agencies, students and parents may also be involved in the program. An anonymous referral process is in place that allows parents, staff and students to make referrals to the program. Students may also refer themselves. To learn more about the Student Assistance Program, please contact the School Counselor.

Social Emotional Learning (SEL)

Social Emotional Learning (“SEL”) is a process of developing self-awareness, self-control, and interpersonal skills that are vital for school, work, and life success. Research has shown that an education that promotes SEL has a positive impact on a wide range of outcomes, including academic performance, healthy relationships, and mental wellness. The SSIS™ SEL Brief Scales and the SSIS™ SEL Brief + Mental Health Scales (“SSIS Scales”) assess the “whole social emotional” child because the SSIS Scales focus on both positive and negative social emotional behaviors commonly observed in most children. The SSIS Scales are administered to students in grades three through eight for the purpose of screening students’ social emotional behaviors and identifying areas for skills improvement through classroom instruction and activities.

To complete the SSIS Scales, a student responds to 30 items about a student’s self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, responsible decision making, internalizing emotional behaviors, and externalizing emotional behaviors. (The student is not asked to respond to questions about at-risk behaviors, such as drug and alcohol use, sexual conduct, violence, illegal activity, or suicidal ideation.) The SSIS Scales may also include a teacher and/or a parent responding to the same 30 items from their perspective of the student’s social emotional behaviors.

Homeless Students

Children and youth experiencing homelessness face unique challenges in accessing and succeeding in school. Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homelessness Assistance Act establishes the definition of homeless and the educational rights to which children and youth experiencing homelessness are entitled. Schools are required to provide services to students in homeless situation and we must be able to identify such students.

MCKINNEY-VENTO DEFINITION OF HOMELESS
42 U.S.C. § 11434a(2)

The term "homeless children and youth"—

- A. means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence...; and
- B. includes —
 - i. children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; or are abandoned in hospitals;
 - ii. children and youths who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings...;
 - iii. children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and
 - iv. migratory children...who qualify as homeless for the purposes of this subtitle because the children are living in circumstances described in clauses (i) through (iii).

Miss Melanie Leo, School Counselor, is Bear Creek Community Charter School's homeless student liaison. Please contact Miss Leo at 570-820-4070, extension 6200 if your family becomes homeless or if you become aware of any situation regarding a student that may lead you to believe they are homeless. Please inform Miss Leo of any potential issues you may become aware of that can negatively impact a student.

Professional development and staff training regarding our obligations to homeless students will be provided annually through the pre-service and in-service development schedule.

Self-Injurious Behavior or Suicidal Ideation

Self-injurious behavior includes, but is not limited to, observed or reported threats of suicide, purposeful self-injury, suicidal ideation, and other forms of self-harm. Staff or students who suspect a student to be participating in self-injurious behavior or demonstrates suicidal thoughts should immediately notify the School Counselor or another school administrator. If the aforementioned actions, thoughts, or statements pertaining to these topics are confirmed, the student's parents or guardians will be notified. Student confidentiality is not applicable in life-threatening situations; therefore, confidentiality must be broken when the student becomes a threat to himself/herself and/or others. If parents/guardians are resistant to seek help for the student, the Guidance Counselor may contact Luzerne County Children and Youth Service, or involve police or emergency services if the student is in immediate danger or if the student's parents/guardians cannot be located, are unable to help, or are unwilling to cooperate.

Be advised that the school does not employ a mental health professional, and after consultation with the School Counselor or other school administrator, parents/guardians should seek third-party counseling services. A list of counseling and similar providers is available on the School Counselor's website and can be obtained in writing by contacting the School Counselor.

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline can be reached by calling 1-800-273-TALK or 1-800-273-8255. By calling 1-800-273-TALK (8255) you'll be connected to a skilled, trained counselor at a crisis center in your area. The lifeline is available anytime, twenty-four hours each day, seven days a week.

Safe2Say Something

The safety of our students is a priority for Bear Creek Community Charter School. As part of our ongoing efforts, we are working on a comprehensive strategy that involves students, staff and parents. This strategy has many components, including physical changes to our facility, the addition of a school police officer, staff training in ALICE, and student training using the See Something, Say Something philosophy along with ALICE strategies that are age-appropriate. We have already taken many steps as we continue to make school safety a priority, and more is planned for the upcoming school year.

As part of legislation that was enacted by the Pennsylvania state legislature and Governor (Act 44 of 2018), the Pennsylvania Office of Attorney General has partnered with the non-profit organization Sandy Hook Promise, to roll-out the Safe2Say Something Anonymous Reporting System.

The Safe2Say Something Anonymous Reporting System allows individuals to submit secure and anonymous safety concerns to help identify and intervene when unsafe and/or harmful behaviors take place. The tips can be submitted via an app, online, or a dedicated hotline, and each tip is reviewed by the Safe2Say Something call center housed in the Office of Attorney General. The call center will process and refer each tip to the appropriate school teams and law enforcement according to the level of threat.

This program went live on Monday, January 14, 2019. The toll-free telephone number for the Attorney General's Office Safe2Say Something Tip Line is 1-844-723-2729 (1-844-SAF2SAY) and the web site is www.safe2saypa.org. Tips received that are deemed "non-life threatening" will be forwarded to specific Bear Creek Community Charter School staff via a secure portal, and school staff will then investigate. If a tip is deemed "life threatening", it will be directed to Luzerne County 911, who will engage the Pennsylvania State Police.

This state program does not replace the systems we already have in place to address issues such as bullying, etc., which encourages students to convey concerns to a trusted adult. This could be a teacher, parent, administrator – someone the student trusts – who can then ensure their concern is acted upon. Although the state program provides yet another valuable resource to students and parents, we want to emphasize that students and parents are encouraged to address non-life threatening concerns directly with school personnel whenever possible. This allows valuable information to be shared without delay, provides for a constructive, in-depth two-way dialogue between student and adult, and helps to empower students.

If you have a concern about bullying or other interactions at school:

- Contact your child's homeroom teacher to share concerns so they can attempt to address the situation. E-mail addresses and telephone extensions for each teacher is available online at www.bearcreekschool.com- *Faculty- Staff directory*.
- Contact our School Counselor, Melanie Leo, who can help support your child if he/she faces difficulties at school. Melanie's e-mail is melanie.leo@bearcreekschool.com, and her telephone number (570) 820-4070, extension 6204.
- Contact Kim Stevens, Director of Student Affairs, who can investigate and follow-up on any concerns regarding questionable or unacceptable student behavior. Kim's e-mail address is kim.stevens@bearcreekschool.com and her telephone number is (570) 820-4070, extension 6206.
- Report any life-threatening concerns immediately by dialing 911.

Extra-Curricular Opportunities

Students are encouraged to participate in the many extra-curricular programs offered at Bear Creek Community Charter School. Participation in these programs is a privilege and is therefore subject to the rules and regulations of the school and each individual program. Violation of school attendance, academic, and/or behavioral policies may result in ineligibility in participation in extra-curricular programs.

- **National Junior Honor Society:** This is the nation's premier organization established to recognize outstanding middle school students. More than just an honor roll, National Junior Honor Society honors those students who have demonstrated excellence in the areas of Scholarship, Leadership, Service, Character, and Citizenship. Students in grades 6, 7, and 8 may be eligible for National Junior Honor Society if they maintain a minimum cumulative average of a 93% in core academic subjects, and a passing grade in all other subjects. Students must also complete the application procedure. Violation of school academic, attendance, and/or behavioral policies may result in ineligibility to participate.
- **Music:** Instrumental music lessons are available as an extra-curricular activity. Participation is voluntary and is open to students in grades 5 – 8 that have an interest in learning to play a band or string instrument. Rentals are available through an outside vendor. Please contact the music teacher for details.
- **Middle School Sports:** We offer co-ed soccer and basketball as extra-curricular sports. Students must maintain academic and attendance eligibility as well as pass a physical exam to participate. Additional information may be made available by contacting the athletic director for details.
- **Student Council:** Intermediate and middle school homerooms will each elect two representatives to the student council. This council will meet on a periodic basis to represent the student body in matters that affect the students of the school. Student council members will communicate directly with their team members and advisor, make recommendations, conduct informal research, and help plan and organize activities and events. Student council members must be approved by the student council advisor.

Community Partnerships

Bear Creek Community Charter School partners with several community organizations to aid families and the community.

Kiwanis Clubs:

- **K-Kids** (Kiwanis Kids): is for students in grades K-4. A K-Kid is a kid who has a heart to serve. When students have a heart to serve, they begin to make service a part of their character and a part of their daily life. K-Kids at Bear Creek Community Charter School are involved in many aspects of serving the community and our school.
- **Builder's Club:** Builder's Club is an international organization providing members with opportunities to perform service, build character, and develop leadership for students in grades five through eight.

Plymouth Rotary: The Plymouth Rotary provides a dictionary to each student in the third grade each year. The Rotary also conducts an annual program which donates holiday food baskets as well as holiday food boxes for families in need.

Greater Pittston Santa Squad: The K-Kids and the National Junior Honor Society team up each year to provide necessary items to help those less fortunate in the local community. These groups create an 'Angel Tree' where families can choose an ornament that contains a wish list item for a local child. These donations are then collected at the school and donated to the Greater Pittston Santa Squad. The goal of the Santa Squad is "to help ensure every kid has gifts under the tree, with the support of friends, football, and the generosity of local businesses and residents."

Student Eligibility to Participate in Extra-Curricular Activities

Students are encouraged to participate in extra-curricular programs and activities offered at Bear Creek Community Charter School and their home school district of residence. Participation in these programs are subject to the rules and regulation of the School and each individual program. Violation of school academic, attendance, and/or behavioral policies may result in ineligibility to participate in extra-curricular activities, including field trips and other events.

Students participating in extra-curricular activities and field trips must be passing all core subjects as of each Friday during a grading period. Core subjects consist of Mathematics, English Language Arts, Science and Social Studies. Students who fail to meet this requirement will lose their eligibility to participate during the following week (immediate following Sunday through the Saturday – seven days).

Students must pass all core subjects during the previous grading period, except that eligibility for the first grading period is based on the student's final grades for the preceding school year. Students who fail to meet this requirement will lose eligibility for at least 15 days of the next grading period, beginning on the first day that report cards are issued.

Bear Creek Community Charter School students who elect to participate in extra-curricular activities within their school district of residence are required to comply with this policy. Bear Creek Community Charter School will notify a representative of a student's school district of residence if an academic concern arises within the context of this policy.

The School reserves the right to restrict participation in extra-curricular activities and field trips for students with more than three (3) unexcused absences or more than fifteen (15) overall

absences in any school year. This may include Earth Fest, Spring Festival, Field Day, class field trips, etc.

A student must be present a minimum of four hours of the school day in order to participate in any school-sponsored activity scheduled for that day. A student who is absent the day before a school holiday or a weekend is not permitted to participate in a school-sponsored activity scheduled for the holiday or weekend unless a valid excuse from a parent/guardian is presented to the staff member in charge of the activity.

Student Participation in Extra Curricular Activities

Students are not permitted to leave extra-curricular activities early – if they are participating; they are expected to stay until the end of the event. Students who feel they need to leave an extra-curricular activity early due to illness, emergency, etc. are to immediately notify a staff member. They should not be calling home to parents and having them show up unexpectedly without notifying a staff member first.

Students attending an extra-curricular activity will only be released to their parents or an individual approved in advance (emergency contact in Parent Portal). Students should not expect to leave an activity with parents of a friend without written permission from their own parent – provided to the school in advance of the event.

Students who failure to follow the School's policies and protocols will lose the privilege of participating in future extra-curricular activities.

Students participating in extra-curricular activities must have permission from a parent or legal guardian to do so. Parents/guardians will be asked to log into their confidential Parent Portal account and give their child permission to participate. By signing the Student/Parent Handbook Acknowledgement Form at the end of this Handbook, parents are also acknowledging they agree to using Parent Portal to approve participation in extra-curricular activities and authorize the Standard Agreement and Release.

Students Attending After School Activities or Sporting Events

Students planning to remain after school to participate in an after-school activity must have a signed permission slip submitted to an employee or staff member who is responsible for the event and who will be staying with the students to provide appropriate supervision, as required by the circumstances of the activity.

Students who are not part of an organized group who wish to attend an after-school activity must be picked up and signed out by a parent at the end of the school day or sent home on school provided transportation. Students are not permitted to stay after school to wait for the start of an after-school activity.

Students in grades K-6 who wish to attend an after-school activity who are not part of an organized group must be accompanied by a parent/guardian. Students in grades 7 and 8 are encouraged to attend after-school activities with a parent or guardian, however, if attending on their own are responsible for compliance with school policies and rules. Infractions of those policies or rules will be subject to the same disciplinary measures applied during the regular school program. Parents or their designee must be available to pick up the child upon notification from the school of an incident or at the end time of the event or activity. Parents should inform the school with a handwritten note if their child is going home with another adult other than the parent/guardian on the list of approved pickup persons.

Participation and/or attendance at school events and activities is not a right and may be denied to any student who has demonstrated disregard for the policies and rules of the school.

Eighth Grade Graduation

The annual Eighth Grade Graduation Ceremony is considered an extra-curricular activity. Students may lose the privilege of participating as outlined elsewhere in the Student-Parent Handbook. Students who would like to participate in this ceremony must participate in the practice sessions leading up to the ceremony (typically three practice sessions); otherwise, they will not be permitted to participate in the ceremony. The School will consider valid excuses for missing one practice, such as serious illness or injury, death in the immediate family, etc., but final determination is at the discretion of the School Leadership Team.

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)

Traditionally school-wide discipline has focused mainly on reacting to specific student misbehavior by implementing punishment-based strategies including reprimands, loss of privileges, office referrals, suspensions, and expulsions. Although discipline in a school setting is important, research has shown that the implementation of punishment when it is applied inconsistently and in the absence of other positive strategies is ineffective. Introducing, modeling, and reinforcing positive social behavior is an important step of a student's educational experience.

PBIS is a framework for adopting and organizing evidence-based behavioral interventions into an integrated continuum that enhances academic and social behavior outcomes for all students.

PBIS system incorporates proactive strategies for defining, teaching, and supporting appropriate student behaviors to create a positive school environment.

PBIS employs a range of positive behavior supports for all students within a school and is implemented in all areas including the classroom and non-classroom settings (such as hallways, buses, and restrooms).

Attention is focused on creating and sustaining primary (school-wide), secondary (classroom), and tertiary (individual) systems of support that improve student behavior.

Teaching behavioral expectations and rewarding students for following them is a much more positive approach than waiting for misbehavior to occur before responding. The purpose of school-wide positive behavioral interventions and supports is to establish a climate in which appropriate behavior is the norm.

Some of the aspects of Bear Creek Community Charter School's program include:

1. Teachers review all rules when students enter the class and/or are moving to another room.
2. Stop Light System (Grades K-2): Students begin each day with a green card. Green means acceptable classroom behavior, yellow is caution, and red indicates that parents will be contacted and informed of the unacceptable behavior that caused the student to move their card, and the incident may be referred to the Director of Student Affairs. Inappropriate behavior causes students to move their card.

3. Morning Meeting: A daily routine that brings students and teachers together to greet one another, to share and respond to each other's news, to think together, to interact together, and to look forward to the events of the day.
4. Reward System: Students will earn points for following school expectations. Points will be redeemable for various incentives.

Student Behavior Expectations

Bear Creek Community Charter School's philosophy on student behavior is based on the fundamental belief that every child who attends school is entitled to a quality education. To help ensure a positive learning environment, the rules of behavior and good manners are expected and encouraged. Bear Creek Community Charter School utilizes a Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support System (PBIS) to encourage and acknowledge appropriate behaviors in all school settings.

The expectations outlined in this section, along with all other student behavior criteria addressed throughout this Handbook, shall collectively be referred to as the "Student Code of Conduct". Bear Creek Community Charter School has four overarching expectations of students, the same expectations we have for our staff and leadership. They are:

1. Be respectful of yourself, others and your surroundings.
2. Be responsible for yourself and act responsibly toward others.
3. Be accountable for your choices, decisions and actions.
4. Be honest with one another and work to build trust

The following are common behavioral expectations of our students. It is not a comprehensive list.

<u>Setting</u>	<u>Expectation</u>
Hallways & Steps	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students will walk on the right side of hallways 2. Students are not to cut corners at the intersections 3. Students will walk up or down the stairs on the right side 4. Where there are two doors, students will use the right hand door 5. There will be no running in the hall 6. There will be no shouting in the hall 7. Pushing, shoving, etc. are dangerous in the hallways and are not permitted 8. No gum chewing
Bathroom	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Respect other student's privacy 2. Respect school property and the property of other students 3. No playing in the sink or with water 4. Place all trash in the trash can 5. Keep hands and feet to yourself 6. No gum chewing

Dining Hall

1. Use the lavatory before the lunch period begins
2. During the first two weeks of school, students must choose where they want to sit and are subsequently assigned to that table for the remainder of the year
3. Students may talk but may not shout to students at other tables
4. No food or drink should be taken from the dining hall after lunch
5. Physical horseplay is not permitted in the dining hall. Examples: arm wrestling, hand slapping, etc.
6. No throwing food, trash, etc.
7. A student must have permission from the teacher in charge to leave the dining hall for any reason
8. Students will not be dismissed from the dining hall until directed by a staff member
9. Do not throw trash away until your table is directed to do so by a staff member
10. Students are required to clean up their table and the area underneath the table where they sit
11. No gum chewing

Outside

1. Students must be accompanied by a staff member
2. Keep hands and feet to yourself
3. Walk directly from one activity area to the next without delay
4. Pushing, shoving, etc. are dangerous and are not permitted
5. No gum chewing

Bus

1. No smoking, eating, drinking, or chewing gum
2. Sit properly and in assigned seat
3. Keep arms, head and possessions inside the vehicle
4. No pushing, shoving, or fighting
5. No yelling, shouting, or engaging in excessively loud talking which could distract the driver
6. No spitting, splashing water or using a water pistol or similar device
7. No pets or other living creature on or in a school vehicle
8. No running after a school vehicle
9. No riding a school vehicle other than the vehicle assigned to the student
10. No throwing objects of any kind
11. No possession of firearms, other weapons, or fireworks
12. No using profanity or making obscene gestures
13. No vandalizing, defacing or damaging a school vehicle

Students are not permitted to chew gum at any time.

Beverages containing high amounts of caffeine and sugar inhibit students from positively participating in the school setting and therefore are prohibited. This includes soda, energy drinks and coffee beverages in any form.

Bear Creek Community Charter School discourages students from bringing electronic devices including: cell phones, iPads, Kindles, Nooks, tablets, Apple/Smart watches and other wireless and/or smart devices to school. If students choose to bring such devices they must be turned off, made inoperable, and stored in a safe place out of sight (purse, book bag or locker) during school hours. Students are not permitted to use cell phones, Blue Tooth devices, smart technology or other personal devices during school hours. The school is not responsible for

lost, damaged or stolen electronic devices or cell phones. Recording or photographing by students with personal devices during school hours or at school events by students is not permitted. Utilizing electronic devices for communication while in school is not permitted. High value items should not be brought to school, and school administrators will not investigate or engage in activity to locate lost or stolen cell phones or electronic devices – leave them home. An initial violation of this policy will result in the confiscation of the cell phone or other electronic device, and parents will be required to retrieve any confiscated devices from school administrators by personally visiting the school. A second or subsequent violation will result in the student not being permitted to bring electronic devices, including cell phones, to school.

Good manners, cooperation, and common sense by students will help foster a safe and enjoyable environment for all students to learn and make the most out of their Bear Creek Experience.

Students and parents are reminded to review the Student/Parent Handbook in its entirety at the beginning of each school year, since it contains updated information on additional expectations as well as operational procedures, rules and regulations. These expectations, along with the other expectations, operational procedures, rules and regulations - apply to all school programs, events and activities, during school hours as well as before and after hours, regardless of location.

Bullying Behavior

Bullying is defined as an intentional, electronic, written, verbal, or physical act or serious of acts directed at another student or students, which occurs in a school setting that is severe, persistent or pervasive; and has the effect of doing any of the following:

1. Substantially interfering with a student's education
2. Creating a threatening environment; or
3. Substantially disrupting the orderly operation of the school; and school setting

Cyber Bullying is defined as the willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices. It includes incidents where students use technology, such as computers, cell phones and other electronic devices, to harass, threaten, humiliate, or otherwise hassle other students or school staff. This behavior can occur on or off school property and during or after school hours. If it is determined that cyber bullying materially and substantially interferes with the operation of the school or causes a substantial disruption of the academic process, disciplinary action will be taken and, when warranted, law enforcement will be notified.

Bear Creek Community Charter School will not tolerate bullying behaviors. Incidents involving bullying will be dealt with on a case by case basis. Students are expected to report acts of bullying to a respected adult (administrator, teacher, paraprofessional, parent), who in turn are expected to notify school administration. Acts of bullying should ultimately be reported to the Director of Student Affairs and/or the School Counselor. A full investigation will be completed for each reported incident and appropriate follow-up actions will be taken.

The following are some examples of unacceptable bullying behaviors and is not all-inclusive:

Physical Aggression

1. Pushing
2. Hitting
3. Shoving
4. Defacing property
5. Spitting
6. Stealing
7. Kicking
8. Humiliating physical acts
9. Locking in a closed or confined space
10. Inflicting bodily harm
11. Any violence against family or friends
12. Threatening with weapons or objects

Social Alienation

1. Gossiping
2. Embarrassing
3. Setting up to look foolish
4. Setting up to take the blame
5. Public humiliation
6. Exclusionary tactics
7. Malicious rumoring
8. Cyber bullying
9. Playing a dirty trick
10. Racial, religious, gender, ethnic slurs or taunting
11. Graffiti

Verbal Aggression

1. Mocking/Name calling
2. Taunting
3. Disrespecting someone's family
4. Teasing about clothes, possessions, appearance

Intimidation

1. Threatening body language
2. Publicly challenging someone
3. Extortion
4. Coercion
5. Threatening to reveal personal information
6. Verbal threats against property or of violence/harm
7. Intimidating phone calls

There is a difference between conflict and bullying. Bullying has two key components (1) aggressive behavior and (2) an imbalance of power.

1. **Aggressive Behavior Component:** One or more people are directing aggression to another person who is unable to stand up for him/herself. The aggressive behavior is unwanted and unprovoked. The only person feeling emotionally upset is the person who is targeted. Whereas the aggressor appears to get some kind of pleasure out of his/her behavior and often feels no regret or remorse.
2. **Imbalance of Power Component:** A key determining factor in bullying involves the imbalance of power. This could be physical size and power, relation to social status, multiple students “ganging up” on an individual, or sheer volume of information used against someone in a cyberbullying scenario. It could also be when a student is just vulnerable in some way making it difficult to defend him/herself.

Bear Creek Community Charter School utilizes the Olweus Bully Prevention Program as the framework to the school’s proactive approach to the issue of bullying. The Olweus model utilizes surveys, classroom lessons, implementation resources and training to promote positive outcomes including reductions in bullying behavior, lower rates of alcohol and other drug abuse, and improved academic achievement. Anti-bullying lessons are incorporated into the school’s educational program, staff and students engage in open dialogue about bullying-related issues, and bully prevention is included as a component to the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports Program as well as the Student Assistance Program. The school routinely coordinates special programs and assemblies addressing this critical topic.

Bear Creek Community Charter School reviews all policies included in the Student/Parent Handbook, including the policy relating to Bullying Behavior, on an annual basis.

Student Dress Code

Bear Creek Community Charter School students are expected to wear attire and accessories that are neat, clean, and appropriate. Students cannot wear anything that would be considered disruptive to a classroom, activity or school environment. The rationale supporting this policy is a continuation of supporting high standards and decorum in an educational setting; promoting an orderly, safe and respectful environment for all; and supporting students and staff in focusing on our primary mission of education.

The information contained in this Handbook is meant to provide examples to students and parents.

Adherence to this policy is the responsibility of both students and parents. Bear Creek Community Charter School staff will enforce this policy. The Board of Trustees reserves the right to change, alter, and/or interpret this policy and the Chief Executive Officer has the discretion of altering this policy for special events and class trips, which will be announced in advance.

Students should exhibit good taste and personal pride through good grooming and dress habits. It is the policy of this school that all students are expected to be neat, clean, and appropriately dressed.

The following are deemed inappropriate:

1. Hats, bandanas, hoods, or other head wear worn in school, except items religious in nature.
2. Coats or jackets worn in school, except items religious in nature.
3. Undershirts or undershorts worn as outer garments.
4. Pajamas, robes, blankets, slippers, etc. with the exception of approved school spirit days.
5. Revealing tank tops, muscle shirts, sheer, see through, tight, midriff bearing, off the shoulder, strapless, camisoles, bathing suit tops. Tank top straps must be at least two inches in width. When a student raises his/her arms, the student's skin should not be visible.
6. Undergarments cannot be visible such as bra straps, boxer shorts or underwear lines.
7. Clothing, jewelry, buttons, patches, or any other item that includes a message or picture that:
 - a. is vulgar, obscene or deemed inappropriate by school administrators;
 - b. promotes drinking, smoking, substance abuse;
 - c. is derogatory to any racial, ethnic, or religious group;
 - d. has a double meaning; or
 - e. depicts or promotes acts of violence or brutality.
8. Beach footwear, such as aqua shoes, flip flops, etc. Students are required to wear sneakers on days when students are participating in physical education or environmental education activities.
9. High heels, which may pose a safety issue for students.
10. Shoes containing wheels, which pose a safety issue for students and can damage school property.
11. Shorts or skirts shorter than fingertip length and cutoff shorts of any kind. The appropriate length for shorts, skirts, and dresses for school can be no shorter than the fingertips with arms extended at one's side.
12. Gang-related attire, such as articles of clothing, head wear or jewelry
13. Clothing, including baggy pants, that ride below the waistline, exposing undergarments
14. Leggings, yoga pants, Jeggings, Spandex and other tight fitting clothing unless worn under dresses/ tunics.
15. Chains that are attached to wallets, belts, etc. that could be considered or used as a weapon
16. Excessively torn, frayed, or distressed clothing including distressed jeans
17. Body piercings other than ears
18. Non-prescription sunglasses may not be worn inside the building.
19. Items considered a weapon, including but not limited to studded jewelry

20. Unnatural or unusual hair colors, hairstyles, large hair accessories, make-up or cosmetic contact lenses that are excessive or distracting.
21. Excessive perfume or cologne
22. Any visible tattoos or body art
23. Items, articles of clothing or accessories, which are considered by the school administration to be disruptive or distracting to the orderly school environment, or are considered a safety concern

Girls and boys of appropriate age and development are to wear proper undergarments.

When a staff member observes a student wearing items that are in violation of the dress code, the staff member will address the student. If necessary, the student will be referred to the Director of Student Affairs. If the clothing is determined to be inappropriate, the student will be given the opportunity to obtain other clothing through a phone call to a parent. A student will not be permitted to attend class until the proper attire is obtained. Ongoing violations of this policy will result in disciplinary action. The Director of Student Affairs and Chief Executive Officer has the authority over the interpretation of this policy.

Drugs, Alcohol and Tobacco

The Board of Trustees of the Bear Creek Community Charter School recognizes the increasing national problem related to drug, alcohol and tobacco alcohol use by school age children, and its direct physical, social, and legal implications on the entire school community. The Board feels every avenue should be explored in an effort to eliminate the use of these substances by students.

Possessing, using, distributing, delivering, selling, manufacturing, being involved in any aspect of a related transaction, and/or being under the influence of any drug or mood altering substance, alcoholic beverage, or related paraphernalia on school property, in a locker, desk or book bag, on the student, in the student's clothing, or in student's personal property or vehicle or at any school-sponsored activity, or conspiring to do any of the above acts is a violation of this policy. Included in the classification of drugs are all controlled substances; any synthetic chemical, which has the same effect as a controlled substance; and any item, which is represented as, or believed to be a controlled substance. This policy also includes the use and possession of electronic cigarettes and other vapor-related products.

Possessing, using, distributing, delivering, or being involved in any aspect of a transaction of any steroid or other substance intended to enhance physical or athletic performance is a violation of the drug, alcohol and tobacco policy.

The Pennsylvania Crimes Code and the school's non-smoking policy prohibit the possession or use of tobacco or tobacco-related products by anyone in a school building, in school-related vehicles, during school activities and on school property.

A pupil who possesses or uses tobacco or a tobacco-related product in a school building, in school-related vehicles, during school activities and on school property commits a summary offense. Following the implementation of school disciplinary procedure and/or legal action, the student will be referred to the school's Student Assistance Program. Tobacco is defined as a lighted or unlighted cigarette, cigar, pipe or other lighted smoking product, electronic device that

delivers nicotine or other substance to the person inhaling from the device, and smokeless tobacco in any form.

Tobacco product shall mean (i) any product containing, made, or derived from tobacco or nicotine that is intended for human consumption, whether smoked, heated, chewed, absorbed, dissolved, inhaled, snorted, sniffed, ingested or ingested by any other means, including, but not limited to cigarettes, cigars, chewing tobacco, pipe tobacco, snuff, (ii) any electronic device that delivers nicotine or other substances to the person inhaling from the device, including, but not limited to an electronic cigarette, cigars, pipe, or hookah.

Drugs shall mean (i) substances recognized in the official United States Pharmacopeia, or official National Formulary, or any supplement to either of them; and (ii) substances intended for use in the diagnosis, cure, mitigation, treatment or prevention of disease in man or other animals; and (iii) substances (other than food) intended to affect the structure or any function of the human body or other animal body; and (iv) substances intended for use as a component of any article specified in clause (i), (ii), or (iii), but not including devices or their components, parts or accessories. (PA Statutes, Title 35).

Consumption includes but is not limited to any controlled substance prohibited by law, any alcoholic beverage, products containing tobacco, any legal prescription or patent drug, unless administrative permission for use in school has been granted, and such use is under the supervision of the school nurse, use of substances in a manner that is dangerous to one's health (e.g. sniffing glue, etc.), use of anabolic steroids, use of synthetic marijuana or "spice", and/or use of "Look Alike Drugs" as defined by "The Controlled Substance Drug, Device and Cosmetic Act" of 1972.

Selling shall mean giving any form of drug, tobacco or alcohol to another person for profit.

Trafficking shall mean giving any form of drug, tobacco or alcohol to another person either gratis or for profit.

Use shall mean possession, consumption, transportation, selling, trafficking, distribution, or under the influence of alcohol, tobacco or a drug in the opinion of a school administrator.

At School shall mean any time the student is involved in school activities such as during school hours, on school property, on a school bus, at any school sponsored event, activity or contest, in route to or from school in such cases where the school is responsible for the student as defined by the School Code or on school sponsored field trips.

Disciplinary actions for violation of this policy are:

1. First Offense – Possession, Consumption, Transportation. Such misconduct may result in one or more of the following responses:
 - a. Receive a three day out-of-school suspension during which time an informal hearing will be held to determine if an additional seven day suspension is warranted;
 - b. Be required to participate in on-going counseling with the school counselor or with a school or non-school counselor as designated by administration and or the SAP Team;
 - c. Be denied the participation or attendance at any school extra-curricular activity for 30 school days from the date of the above-stated meeting;
 - d. Be given the names of several counseling centers;
 - e. Be subject to a hearing before the Board of Trustees and may be expelled;
 - f. Be referred to legal authorities for any violations of the law.
2. Second Offense - Possession, Consumption, Transportation. Such misconduct may result in one or more of the following responses:

- a. Receive a three day out-of-school suspension during which time an informal hearing will be held to determine if an additional seven day suspension or expulsion is warranted;
 - b. Be denied the participation or attendance at any school extra-curricular activity for a minimum of 90 and a maximum of 185 school days, extending into the next school year if necessary;
 - c. Be subject to a hearing before the Board of Trustees and may be expelled;
 - d. Be referred to legal authorities for any violations of the law;
 - e. Be required to participate in on-going counseling with the School Counselor as well as a referral to the Student Assistance Program
 - f. Be given the names of several counseling centers.
3. First Offense - Selling, Distributing, and/or Trafficking. Such misconduct may result in one or more of the following responses:
- a. Receive a three day out-of-school suspension during which time an informal hearing will be held to determine if an additional seven day suspension is warranted;
 - b. Be denied the participation or attendance at any school extra-curricular activity for a minimum of 90 and a maximum of 185 school days, extending into the next school year if necessary;
 - c. Be subject to a hearing before the Board of Trustees and may be expelled;
 - d. Be referred to legal authorities for any violations of the law;
 - g. Be required to participate in on-going counseling with the school counselor as well as a referral to the Student Assistance Program;
 - e. Be given the names of several counseling centers.
4. Second Offense - Selling, Distributing, and/or Trafficking. Such misconduct may result in one or more of the following responses:
- a. Be excluded from school pending an expulsion hearing;
 - b. Be subject to a hearing before the Board of Trustees and may be expelled;
 - c. Be referred to legal authorities for any violations of the law.

During a period of suspension, the student will be provided all assignments. The student is responsible for completing and returning all back assignments to their respective teachers on the day of return. It is the student's responsibility to make arrangements for any "in class" make-up work. These arrangements shall be made within the first three school days after the student returns.

Following a suspension, a student will be re-admitted to school only after a conference is held with the student, student's parent or legal guardian and school administrator.

Weapons

This policy includes the possession of a weapon, destructive device, or representing any object as a weapon or destructive device, also known as a "look alike". Possession of a weapon by students which have the potential to inflict serious injury are prohibited in school buildings, in school-related vehicles, during school activities, on the way to and from school and on school property. In addition to the school penalty imposed, the student may be referred to local and

civil authorities including, but not limited to, the provisions outlined in Act 26, Amendment to PA School Code.

For the purpose of clarification, “weapon” includes the following: (1) any device with a blade or point that can puncture the skin, (2) any weapon (including a starter gun) which will or is designed to or may readily be converted to expel a projectile by the action of an explosive, (3) the frame or receiver of any such weapon, (4) any firearm muffler or firearm silencer, or (5) any destructive device. The term “destructive device” is defined to include any explosive, incendiary, poison gas, bomb, grenade, or rocket having a propellant charge of more than four ounces, missile, or any combination of parts either designed or intended for use in converting any device into a destructive device, (6) look-a-like weapon or device such as look-a-like toy guns, or toy weapon represented or brandished to represent the real thing, or (7) anything capable of inflicting injury.

Act 26 of 1995 (amends School Code, Section 1317.2) –The school district shall expel, for a period of not less than a year, any student who brings a weapon onto any school property, any school sponsored activity or any public conveyance providing transportation to a school or school sponsored activity.

Possession of a weapon in school buildings, in school-related vehicles, during school activities, on the way to and from school or on school property may result in a ten day suspension and a formal due process hearing which may result in an expulsion from school for at least one year.

The Chief Executive Officer may recommend discipline short of expulsion on a case-by-case basis.

In the case of an exceptional student, the school shall take all necessary steps to comply with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

The Chief Executive Officer, or his/her designee, shall report the discovery of any weapon prohibited by this policy to local law enforcement officials and shall report all incidents relating to expulsions for possession of a weapon on school grounds to the Department of Education, Office of Safe Schools.

Title IX

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

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

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

Title IX Complaint Procedures

A Title IX Complaint must be made to the Title IX Coordinator to initiate the process. Once a formal complaint is filed, the student may seek either an informal or formal resolution of his or her complaint:

Informal Complaint:

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

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

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

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

Formal Complaint:

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

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

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

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

To the extent possible and allowed by law, confidentiality shall be maintained within the confines of the investigation of the alleged prohibited behavior. All parties will be treated with dignity and due process.

The Charter School is not allowed to access a party's personal records if they are maintained by a physician, psychiatrist, psychologist, or other professional for the purpose of treatment to the party, without consent.

Complaint Dismissal:

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

- That does not describe conduct that meets the definition of sexual harassment;

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

- If the complainant notifies the Title IX Coordinator in writing that the complainant wishes to withdraw the formal complaint or some of its allegations;
- If specific circumstances prevent the Charter school from gathering specific evidence sufficient to reach a determination about the allegation.

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

Sexual and Other Harassment

It is the policy of the Bear Creek Community Charter School to maintain a learning and working environment that is free from sexual harassment. It shall be a violation of this policy for any member of the Bear Creek Community Charter School staff to harass anyone through conduct or communication of sexual nature. It shall also be a violation of this policy for students to harass anyone through conduct or communication of sexual nature.

Harassment based on race, color, religious creed, age, sex, national origin, ancestry, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status, disability, or any other lawfully protected class is a form of discrimination and is prohibited.

Sexual harassment is a form of discrimination. Sexual harassment includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and/or other verbal, visual or physical conduct of a sexual nature where:

- Submission to such conduct is made either as a condition of the student's status in a course, program or activity; or
- Submission to or rejection of such conduct by student is used as a basis for academic or other decisions affecting the student; or
- Such conduct has the purpose or effect of interfering with the right to a student's free and appropriate public education and thus creates an intimidating or hostile educational environment.

The following behavior is specifically prohibited: physical assaults of a sexual nature; other unwanted and unnecessary physical contact with another student or staff member; unwelcome propositions, advances, or sexual flirtations; direct or subtle pressure or requests for dates or sexual activities; verbal abuse of a sexual nature, including but not limited to inappropriate verbal comments about an individual's body or sexual activities; preferential or derogatory treatment based on gender; the inappropriate use of sexually explicit or offensive language in discussions with or to describe an individual; sexually explicit or offensive jokes; and the display of sexually suggestive objects or pictures. This policy also covers electronic communications.

Any student who feels that he or she has been a victim of harassment should bring the problem immediately to the attention of a teacher, guidance counselor or an administrator. Once a complaint has been identified, the Chief Executive Officer must be notified. Bear Creek Community Charter School will investigate all allegations of harassment in as prompt and confidential a manner as possible and will take appropriate corrective action when warranted.

Any student who is found, as a result of such investigation, to have engaged in harassment or discrimination in violation of this policy will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action. Any employee who is found, as a result of such an investigation, to have engaged in harassment or discrimination in violation of this policy will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. Furthermore, retaliation in any form against a student or employee who exercises his or her right to make a complaint under this policy, or who cooperates in the investigation of any such complaint is strictly prohibited, and will itself be cause for appropriate disciplinary action.

Notice of the Policy will be circulated to all school personnel and students by incorporation into student and staff handbooks.

Acceptable Use of Technology

Bear Creek Community Charter School provides on-site internet access to all students for the purposes of educational and personal growth. Your child may use the school's computer resources as long as both a parent/guardian and student understand the responsibilities associated with using these resources, and both sign the acknowledgment that is located at the end of this Handbook. If the parent/guardian and student do not sign the acknowledgment, your child may not use the computer and technology resources available at Bear Creek Community Charter School. You should also understand that Bear Creek Community Charter School has the right to monitor usage of all computer resources, including the internet and e-mail.

Our goal in providing internet access is to help students develop the ability to evaluate and synthesize information from many sources and enable them to work effectively with communication technology. We encourage our students to develop the critical thinking and problem-solving skills that they will need as citizens in an increasingly electronic and global society.

The privilege of internet access comes with the responsibility to use the resource wisely. Access to computerized information on a world-wide basis may mean the appearance of material that is not educationally appropriate in a school setting. Although software and procedures are in place to filter much of the content available to students, monitoring and controlling all such material is impossible. However, the professional staff of Bear Creek Community Charter School believes that the information and interaction made possible by the Internet outweigh the possibility that users may acquire materials that do not support the educational goals of the school. Bear Creek Community Charter School complies with the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA).

Bear Creek Community Charter School has formulated this set of rules to govern use of the Internet on its computers and on other technology used within the school facility. Please read the rules below and discuss each part with your child. If you have any questions, feel free to contact the Director of Student Affairs.

1. Students are responsible for adhering to Bear Creek Community Charter School Acceptable Use of Technology Policy and all other policies outlined in the Student/Parent Handbook.
2. Students are prohibited from accessing inappropriate material while using the school's technology resources and computer network.
3. Use of the school computer system, to include electronic mail and other network communications facilities, to harass, offend, or annoy other persons is forbidden.

4. Transferring copyrighted materials to or from any school network without expressed consent of the copyright holder is a violation of federal law and is prohibited.
5. Students are prohibited from using the school's computer system to engage in and/or promote religious or partisan political beliefs.
6. Students using school computer facilities may not allow any other person to use their password or to share their account. It is the students' responsibility to protect their accounts from unauthorized use by changing passwords periodically and using passwords that are not easily guessed.
7. Any attempt to circumvent system security, obtain or use others' passwords, or in any way gain unauthorized access to local or network resources is forbidden.
8. Use of the school's computer system for commercial gain or profit is not allowed.
9. Students using the network within the Bear Creek Community Charter School may not move, repair, reconfigure, modify, damage or destroy school computer resources or attach external devices to the school network, including wireless devices. Parents and guardians of students who damage or destroy school property will be held financially accountable.
10. Students are not permitted to access personal e-mail, personal electronic accounts, or engage in texting, messaging or online chatting (including the use of Google Docs or any other Google program) during school hours, using school equipment or while on school property.
11. Google Classroom accounts are the property of Bear Creek Community Charter School and are for school use only. Communication using Google for conversational purposes not related to school assignments is prohibited. School Google accounts are deactivated during the summer months when school is not in session, and are deleted following student's 8th grade graduation.
12. First priority for use of the Internet within Bear Creek Community Charter School will be afforded to those students who have an educational need. Bear Creek Community Charter School may impose time restrictions on use of the computer system to insure equity of use.
13. Bear Creek Community Charter School may modify these guidelines at any time, with or without notice.
14. Students using the school's computer facilities are responsible for reading and observing these rules.
15. Students are not permitted to use cell phones, Bluetooth devices or other "smart" technology during school hours. Cell phones must be turned off and secured out of sight. An initial violation of this policy will result in the confiscation of the cell phone or other electronic device, and parents will be required to retrieve any confiscated devices from school administrators by personally visiting the school. A second or subsequent violation will result in the student not being permitted to bring electronic devices, including cell phones, to school.

Discipline Structure

The behaviors listed within each level are only examples. There may be other behaviors of a similar nature, which are not specifically listed, but may be included within each level. Refer to the preceding sections of this handbook, which addresses the school's disciplinary structure for violations relating to drugs, alcohol, tobacco and weapons.

Level I

Minor misbehavior on the part of the student that interferes with or disrupts the learning environment or the orderly operation of the school, its programs or activities. These misbehaviors usually can be handled by an individual staff member, but sometimes the intervention of school leadership is required. Examples of student conduct that fall within this category include, but are not limited to the following:

1. Verbal disruption, including in the classroom, dining hall, hallway, outdoors, or other area as well as during school programs and activities
2. Physical disruption, including in the classroom, dining hall, hallway, outdoors, or other area as well as during school programs and activities
3. Refusal to carry out the direction of a staff member
4. Improper dress attire
5. Possession, operation, sale, or transfer of cell phones, electronic games, bicycles, scooters (includes motorized), audio devices, games, skateboards, inappropriate toys, or distracting objects
6. Presence in unauthorized areas of building or school grounds
7. Loitering in the lavatory or other areas of the school
8. Removing food/beverage from the cafeteria following lunch, without permission
9. Cumulative lateness and/or absenteeism
10. Failure to return permission slips, tests, quizzes, discipline notices, notes or other documents to be signed by parents/guardians
11. Other behaviors of a similar nature

Such misconduct may result in one or more of the following responses:

For a first offense, consequences may include:

1. Verbal reprimand with removal from class
2. Notifying parents by telephone or letter
3. Loss of recess or other school privileges

Continued misbehavior(s) at this level may result in:

1. Additional loss of recess
2. After-school detention
3. In-school suspension
4. Out-of-school suspension

A student may have school privileges suspended or withdrawn for violations of the Student Code of Conduct, including participation in class parties, assembly programs, field trips, and/or special school events.

If a student does not attend after-school detention, the student will receive in-school suspension.

Students with two or more discipline referrals which result in suspensions (either in-school or out-of-school or a combination of both) may be referred to the Board of Trustees for potential expulsion.

Parents will be notified whenever a student receives detention, suspension (regardless of type) or referral for expulsion. Parents may be required to attend a reentry conference with school personnel prior to a student returning from an out-of-school suspension.

Parents/guardians will be held financially accountable whenever student misbehavior results in damage to school property.

Level II

Misbehavior that is frequent, consistent or serious in nature that interferes with or disrupts the learning environment or the orderly operation of the school, its programs or activities. Examples of student conduct that fall within this category include, but are not limited to the following:

1. Falsifying teacher and/or parent signatures or altering documents signed by teachers and/or parents
2. Inappropriate behavior while riding in a vehicle supporting school activities, including eating, drinking, horseplay, inappropriate language, and failure to carry out the direction of an adult
3. Use of profanity, vulgar and/or obscene words, gestures, and/or other similar actions
4. Throwing of objects without a legitimate purpose (including, but not limited to snowballs or dangerous objects)
5. Use of racial, ethnic and/or derogatory slurs, terms or language
6. Possession of matches or lighters
7. Misconduct in the hallway
8. Other behaviors of a similar nature
9. Continued Level I misconduct

Such misconduct may result in one or more of the following responses:

For a first offense, consequence may include:

1. Verbal reprimand with removal from class
2. Notifying parents by telephone or letter
3. Loss of recess or other school privileges
4. Lunch detention up to two days

Continued misbehavior(s) at this level may include:

1. Additional loss of recess
2. After-school detention
3. In-school suspension
4. Out-of-school suspension
5. Suspension of bus privileges if continued misbehavior on the school bus

A student may have school privileges suspended or withdrawn for violations of the Student Code of Conduct, including participation in class parties, assembly programs, field trips, and/or special school events. If a student does not attend after-school detention, the student will receive in-school suspension.

Students with two or more discipline referrals which result in suspensions (either in-school or out-of-school or a combination of both) may be referred to the Board of Trustees for potential expulsion.

Parents will be notified whenever a student receives detention, suspension (regardless of type) or referral for expulsion. Parents may be required to attend a reentry conference with school personnel prior to a student returning from an out-of-school suspension.

Parents/guardians will be held financially accountable whenever student misbehavior results in damage to school property.

Level III

Misbehavior that is frequent, consistent or serious in nature that interferes with or disrupts the learning environment or the orderly operation of the school, its programs or activities that does not risk the health, safety and well-being of students, staff or others. Examples of student conduct that fall within this category include, but are not limited to the following:

1. Insubordinate, rude, defiant and/or disrespectful behavior
2. Not attending ("cutting") detention, in-school suspension and/or lunch detention
3. Cheating
4. Vandalism, damage or destruction of school property or property belonging to others
5. Theft
6. Truancy
7. Gambling
8. Striking matches, igniting lighters
9. Violation of the school's Acceptable Use of Technology Policy
10. Walking out of class or leaving school property without permission
11. Refusal to carry out the direction of an administrator
12. Other behaviors of a similar nature
13. Continued Level II misconduct

Such misconduct may result in one or more of the following responses:

1. Loss of recess or other school privileges
2. Assignment of after-school detention
3. In-school suspension
4. Out-of-school suspension

A student may have school privileges suspended or withdrawn for violations of the Student Code of Conduct, including participation in class parties, assembly programs, field trips, and/or special school events up to and including 8th grade graduation.

If a student does not attend after-school detention, the student will receive in-school suspension.

Students with two or more discipline referrals which result in suspensions (either in-school or out-of-school or a combination of both) may be referred to the Board of Trustees for potential expulsion.

Parents will be notified whenever a student receives detention, suspension (regardless of type) or referral for expulsion. Parents may be required to attend a reentry conference with school personnel prior to a student returning from an out-of-school suspension.

Parents/guardians will be held financially accountable whenever student misbehavior results in damage to school property.

Level IV

Acts of violence which result in harm or damage to another's person or property; behaviors which pose a threat to the health, safety or well-being of others; and/or criminal acts on school property, in school vehicles, or at school functions, or affecting school property or persons such as students, school employees, or invitees.

Most of these acts are criminal in nature and are so serious that they require administrative actions, which result in the immediate removal of the student from the school, the intervention of law enforcement authorities, and/or consideration of expulsion by the Board of School Trustees. Examples of student conduct that fall within this category include, but are not limited to the following:

1. Intentionally striking, fighting, pushing, or threatening bodily harm to another student or staff member
2. Breaking or entering any school building or vehicle
3. Attacking, fighting, striking, pushing, attempting to strike or harm, threatening, (written or verbal or physical), punching, kicking, pinching, biting, slapping, harassing, and/or intimidating a student while on school grounds or under the jurisdiction of the school or stemming from school event or activity, even if the attack occurs off school property or after hours
4. Attacking, striking, attempting to strike or harm, pushing, threatening bodily harm, or harassing (verbally, in writing, or physically) a school employee, Trustee, vendor, or guest of the school whether on or off property
5. Bullying and/or hazing activities

6. Misusing 9-1-1, fire alarms, or other safety devices
7. Making bomb and/or similar threats
8. Serious violation of the school's Acceptable Use of Technology Policy Other behaviors of a similar nature
9. Criminal acts defined under state or federal law
10. Continued Level III misconduct

Such behavior may result in one or more of the following responses:

1. Loss of school privileges up to and including 8th grade graduation
2. Out-of-school suspension
3. Referral to an outside agency for intervention
4. Notification of law enforcement
5. Referral to the Board of Trustees for potential expulsion

Parents will be notified whenever a student receives detention, suspension (regardless of type) or referral for expulsion. Parents may be required to attend a reentry conference with school personnel prior to a student returning from an out-of-school suspension.

Parents/guardians will be held financially accountable whenever student misbehavior results in damage to school property.

Corporal Punishment

The Pennsylvania School Code expressly prohibits the use of corporal punishment within public educational facilities in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Bear Creek Community Charter School abides by this regulation and prohibits corporal punishment in any form.

Expulsion

Level	Offense	Maximum Potential Consequence
Level 1	Three (3) or more	Expulsion referral to Board of Trustees
Level 2	Two (2) or more	Expulsion referral to Board of Trustees
Level 3	Two (2) or more	Expulsion referral to Board of Trustees
Level 4	One (1) or more	Expulsion referral to Board of Trustees

Exclusions from School

Reference 22 Pa.Code § 12.6. The governing board shall define and publish the types of offenses that would lead to exclusion from school. Exclusions affecting certain students with disabilities shall be governed by §14.143 (relating to disciplinary placements) and 34 CFR

300.519—300.529 (relating to discipline procedures). Exclusion from school may take the form of suspension or expulsion.

Suspension is exclusion from school for a period of from one to ten consecutive school days.

- a. Suspensions may be given by the Director of Student Affairs, Chief Executive Officer, or his or her designee.
- b. A student may not be suspended until the student has been informed of the reasons for the suspension and given an opportunity to respond. Prior notice of the intended suspension need not be given when it is clear that the health, safety or welfare of the school community is threatened.
- c. Parents or guardians shall be notified immediately in writing when the student is suspended.
- d. When the suspension exceeds three school days, the student and parent shall be given the opportunity for an informal hearing consistent with the requirements in §12.8(c) (relating to hearings).
- e. Suspensions may not be made to run consecutively beyond the ten school day period.
- f. Students shall have the responsibility to make up exams and work missed while being disciplined by suspension and shall be permitted to complete these assignments within guidelines established by the governing board.

Expulsion is exclusion from school by the Board of Trustees for a period exceeding ten school days and may be permanent expulsion from the school rolls. Expulsions require a prior formal hearing under §12.8.

During the period prior to the hearing and decision of the Board of Trustees in an expulsion case, the student shall be placed in his normal class. 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 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 ten school days.

A student may not be excluded from school for longer than fifteen school days without a formal hearing unless mutually agreed upon by both parties. Any student so excluded shall be provided with alternative education, which may include home study.

Students who are under seventeen years of age are still subject to the compulsory school attendance law even though expelled and shall be provided an education. The initial responsibility for providing the required education rests with the student's parents or guardian, through placement in another school, tutorial or correspondence study, or another educational. Within thirty days of action by the governing board, the parents or guardians shall submit to the school district written evidence that the required education is being provided as described in paragraph (1) or that they are unable to do so. If the parents or guardians are unable to provide the required education, the school entity shall, within ten days of receipt of the notification, make provision for the student's education. A student with a disability shall be provided educational services as required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C.A. §1400—1482). If the approved educational program is not complied with, the school entity may take

action in accordance with 42 Pa C.S. Chapter 63 (relating to the Juvenile Act) to ensure that the child will receive a proper education. See §12.1(b) (relating to free education and attendance).

Exclusions from Classes – In-School Suspension

Reference (22 Pa.Code § 12.7). A student may not receive an in-school suspension unless the student has been informed of the reasons for the suspension and has been given an opportunity to respond before the suspension becomes effective. 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 Chief Executive Officer 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 entity has the responsibility to make provision for the student's education during the period of the in-school suspension.

Required Hearings

Reference (22 Pa.Code § 12.8). General education is a statutory right, and students shall be afforded due process if they are to be excluded from school. In a case involving a possible expulsion, the student is entitled to a formal hearing. A formal hearing is required in all expulsion actions. This hearing may be held before the Board of Trustees or an authorized committee of the board, or a qualified hearing examiner appointed by the board. When a committee of the board or a hearing examiner conducts the hearing, a majority vote of the entire governing board is required to expel a student. The following due process requirements shall be observed with regard to the formal hearing:

1. Notification of the charges shall be sent to the student's parents or guardians by certified mail.
2. At least three days' notice of the time and place of the hearing shall be given. A copy of the expulsion policy, notice that legal counsel may represent the student and hearing procedures shall be included with the hearing notice. A student may request the rescheduling of the hearing when the student demonstrates good cause for an extension.
3. The hearing shall be held in private unless the student or parent requests a public hearing.
4. The student may be represented by counsel, at the expense of the parents or guardians, and may have a parent or guardian attend the hearing.
5. The student has the right to be presented with the names of witnesses against the student, and copies of the statements and affidavits of those witnesses.
6. The student has the right to request that the witnesses appear in person and answer questions or be cross-examined.
7. The student has the right to testify and present witnesses on his own behalf.
8. A written or audio record shall be kept of the hearing. The student is entitled, at the student's expense, to a copy. A copy shall be provided at no cost to a student who is indigent.
9. The proceeding shall be held within fifteen school days of the notification of charges, unless mutually agreed to by both parties. A hearing may be delayed for any of the

following reasons, in which case the hearing shall be held as soon as reasonably possible:

- a. Laboratory reports are needed from law enforcement agencies.
- b. Evaluations or other court or administrative proceedings are pending due to a student invoking his rights under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.
- c. In cases in juvenile or criminal court involving sexual assault or serious bodily injury, delay is necessary due to the condition or best interests of the victim.

Notice of a right to appeal the results of the hearing shall be provided to the student with the expulsion decision.

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

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

Search and Seizure

Personal storage areas, including desks and lockers, belong to the school and are provided to the student only for limited purposes. The administration has a right to inspect a student's personal storage areas at any time. Furthermore, searches of students may be conducted when school administrators have reasonable grounds for suspecting that the search will turn up evidence that the student has violated or is violating either the law or rules of the school. The scope is permissible when the measures are reasonable related to the objectives of the search and not excessively intrusive in relation to the age and sex of the student and the nature of the infraction.

Pennsylvania law requires that the governing board of every school entity shall adopt reasonable policies and procedures regarding student searches. The school shall notify students and their parents or guardians of the policies and procedures regarding student searches. Illegal or prohibited materials seized during a student search may be used as evidence against the student in a school disciplinary proceeding.

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

Bear Creek Community Charter School reserves the right to screen any person attempting to gain entry into a school building, as well as their bags and other belongings. Such screenings may include the use of metal detection equipment. The School reserves the right to refuse any person entry onto the school campus, or into any school building.

Freedom of Expression

The right of public school students to freedom of speech is guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the Commonwealth. Students shall have the right to express themselves unless the expression materially and substantially interferes with the educational process, threatens serious harm to the school or community, encourages unlawful activity or interferes with another individual's rights.

Students may use publications, handbills, announcements, assemblies, group meetings, buttons, armbands and any other means of common communication, provided that the use of public school communications facilities shall be in accordance with the regulations of the authority in charge of those facilities. Students have the responsibility to obey laws governing libel and obscenity and to be aware of the full meaning of their expression. Students have the responsibility to be aware of the feelings and opinions of others and to give others a fair opportunity to express their views. Identification of the individual student or at least one responsible person in a student group may be required on posted or distributed materials. School officials may require students to submit for prior approval a copy of materials to be displayed, posted or distributed on school property.

Bulletin boards must conform to the following:

- 1) School authorities may restrict the use of certain bulletin boards.
- 2) Bulletin board space should be provided for the use of students and student organizations.
- 3) School officials may require that notices or other communications be officially dated before posting, and that the materials be removed after a prescribed reasonable time to assure full access to the bulletin boards.

School newspapers and publications must conform to the following:

- 1) Students have a right and are as free as editors of other newspapers to report the news and to editorialize within the provisions in paragraphs (4) and (5).
- 2) School officials shall supervise student newspapers published with school equipment, remove obscene or libelous material and edit other material that would cause a substantial disruption or interference with school activities.
- 3) School officials may not censor or restrict material simply because it is critical of the school or its administration.
- 4) Prior approval procedures regarding copy for school newspapers must identify the individual to whom the material is to be submitted and establish a limitation on the time required to make a decision. If the prescribed time for approval elapses without a decision, the material shall be considered authorized for distribution.

- 5) Students who are not members of the newspaper staff shall have access to its pages. Written criteria for submission of material by non-staff members shall be developed and distributed to all students.

The wearing of buttons, badges or armbands shall be permitted as another form of expression within the restrictions listed herein.

School officials may set forth the time and place of distribution of materials so that distribution would not materially or substantially interfere with the requirements of appropriate discipline in the operation of the school. A proper time and place set for distribution is one that would give the students the opportunity to reach fellow students. The place of the activity may be restricted to permit the normal flow of traffic within the school and at exterior doors.

Visitor Policy

Due to the ever increasing demands to keep students safe while in school, Bear Creek Community Charter School is asking that all visitors respect and fully comply with the visitor policy. It is our belief that a cooperative effort is the most successful way to maintain a safe school environment for both students and staff. We thank you for your support in this effort.

Visitors are permitted inside the building only with approval of school administration. All visitors seeking to gain access into the school building must enter through the main entrance (under the canopy) and report to the main office upon arrival. Visitors must present valid photo identification, such as a driver's license, and once approved, will be issued a visitor badge. This visitor's badge must be worn at all times on school property and when the approved business is complete the visitor is expected to report back to the main office, sign out, and return the visitor badge prior to exiting the building.

Bear Creek Community Charter School reserves the right to screen any person attempting to gain entry into a school building, as well as their bags and other belongings. Such screenings may include a search of state and/or federal criminal databases, sex offender registries, the use of metal detection equipment, and the search of packages and belongings. The School reserves the right to refuse any person entry onto the school campus, or into any school building.

Student Arrival and Dismissal

Arrival Procedures

Parents transporting students to school each day can do so between 8:00 a.m. and 8:30 a.m. in the designated student/parent drop off loop. Parents must remain with their vehicles and cannot leave their vehicles unattended or park in the loop. *The school cannot accept students prior to 8:00 a.m. Please do not leave your child unattended outside of the school building. Please wait for school staff to be outside prior to leaving your child at school.* Parents and other visitors wishing to enter the school must park in the designated visitor parking area. Do not park in visitor parking and allow students to walk from your car to the front door without being escorted by an adult.

Late Arrivals

Parents arriving late (after 8:30 a.m.) to drop off students must park in the designated visitor parking area and walk their student to the main office where they must be signed in. Students

arriving after staff has left the student/parent drop off loop and entered the building are considered late/tardy and must be escorted into the building by a parent. Please do not drop your child off late and allow them to walk in alone as you will be called and asked to return to sign your child into school.

Dismissal Procedures

Student dismissal is 3:15 p.m. All students need to be picked up by 3:30 p.m. Parents who choose to pick up their students should park in the designated visitor parking area and will proceed to the back doors, located at the rear of the building. Students will be assigned a color designation (i.e. red, blue, etc.) and dismissed accordingly. This will allow families to be dismissed together. Parents are asked to immediately leave the dismissal area once all family members are present. Bear Creek Community Charter School reserves the right to request photo identification from anyone picking up a student, prior to releasing the student.

Color designations have been assigned by Primary and Secondary colors and should be called in the following order: Red, Yellow, Blue, Green, Purple, and Orange.

If you have any questions in regard to the arrival or dismissal procedures, please contact Kim Stevens at 570-820-4070, extension 6206 or at kim.stevens@bearcreekschool.com.

Students are prohibited from riding a school bus that services a district other than their home district of residence. Students may not ride a different bus than the one they are assigned to and may not bring a friend from a different bus home with them.

Attendance

The Public School Code requires all children of compulsory school age to attend school, with certain exceptions. For the purposes of this policy, school attendance includes both physical attendance within the school building, and participation in mandatory distance learning activities and assignments. Students returning to school after periods of absence are required to submit parents' written explanations for such absences within five (5) business days of the absence, and certification by a health care provider of medical reasons for absences may be required if the child has been absent for three (3) or more consecutive days. Regardless of whether the note is handwritten by a parent/guardian or provided by a physician, the note is required within 5 days of the student's return to school. Handwritten notes may be handed in to the teacher and/or taken a picture of and emailed to office@bearcreekschool.com to ensure that the handwritten excuse is received within the required timeframe. An email without an attached handwritten note is not an acceptable note of absence. A photo of a physician's note may also be emailed to office@bearcreekschool.com.

Bear Creek Community Charter School can only be effective in educating a child if the child is in school. Therefore, every effort should be made to have every child attend school regularly. Poor school attendance may be symptomatic of a more serious problem. School personnel will make attempts to work with parents to help the child resolve the underlying problem. In those cases where the underlying problem cannot be resolved, the school must still make every effort to have the child to attend regularly.

In the event that Virtual Learning becomes necessary, attendance will be taken during each class meeting, with the exception of a Flexible Instructional Day due to inclement weather. (Flexible Instructional Days will require an attendance question to be completed as well as

asynchronous assignments completed.) A student needs to attend and engage throughout the duration of each class meeting in order to be counted as present for that class meeting. Attend and engage includes having the camera and microphone/speaker engaged. Students who do not attend the class meeting or do not have their camera on, do not engage when called upon during the class or log on and off within a class meeting, resulting in missing the majority of the instruction will be marked absent. Students that log onto a class late or leave a class early, but attended the majority of the meeting will be marked tardy.

Class meeting attendance is cumulative in calculating daily attendance. Class meeting attendance for each grade level is as follows:

- Kindergarten (K): 2 class meetings equals 1 day of attendance
- First (1st) grade: 2 class meetings equals 1 day of attendance
- Second (2nd) grade: 3 class meetings equals 1 day of attendance
- Third (3rd) grade: 3 class meetings equals 1 day of attendance
- Fourth (4th) grade: 3 class meetings equals 1 day of attendance
- Fifth (5th) grade: 4 class meetings equals 1 day of attendance
- Sixth (6th) grade: 4 class meetings equals 1 day of attendance
- Seventh (7th) grade: 4 class meetings equals 1 day of attendance
- Eighth (8th) grade: 4 class meetings equals 1 day of attendance

Excused Absences

Possible excused absences from school are:

1. Student illness
2. Doctor/dental appointments
3. Quarantine of the individual or home
4. Death in the immediate family – students may be excused from school for up to three days to attend funeral services of the student’s parent, sibling, grandparent, aunt or uncle.
5. Impassable roads, as determined by the school bus ability to transport
6. Religious holiday or instruction at the written request of the parent
7. Educational field trips, approved in advance by school administration - see requirements below
8. Other urgent reasons as approved in advance by school administration

Late

Students are considered late if they arrive after 8:30 a.m. without a handbook approved excuse. Students’ arrival time will be logged when a parent/guardian signs them in. Upon accumulating one school day worth of unexcused late hours, a total of 6 hours and 45 minutes, students acquire one unexcused absence on their attendance report.

Flexible Instructional Days

Due to a change in state laws, Pennsylvania’s public schools have the ability to implement Flexible Instructional Days in lieu of traditional in-person instruction. Flexible Instructional days

are considered an alternate approach to delivering instruction if a circumstance arises that prevents instruction in customary manner, such as inclement weather.

Bear Creek Community Charter School applied for permission to utilize flexible instructional days, and has received the appropriate approvals from the Pennsylvania Department of Education. In the event that Bear Creek Community Charter School chooses to utilize a Flexible Instruction Day, students, parents and staff members would be notified via a PENS alert, e-mail blast and through our local media and social media outlets (WNEP, PA Homepage, Facebook). Parents and students will be directed to check their child(ren)'s teacher's webpage and Google Classroom for more information.

Flexible Instructional Days have two mandatory components: (1) Students must complete an online attendance question; and (2) Students must complete the assigned work. Work may be Synchronous (live online) or asynchronous (independent work).

Student attendance will be taken through a Google Form posted on each teacher's webpage. The online attendance question can be found at the top of every homeroom teacher's webpage in the red bar. It should be filled out once per student. Parents, guardians and students can use the link on any page for any student, so someone with multiple students does not need to visit multiple teacher webpages.

Upon completion of the online attendance question, students are to log in to Google Classroom and complete the posted lessons under the direction of a certified teacher. Each student in Bear Creek Community Charter has a Google account and is a member of their teacher's Google Classroom. Students in grades kindergarten through fourth are to will complete work in mathematics and English Language Arts. Students in grades five through eight are required to complete assignments in the four core subjects of math, English Language Arts, Science and Social Studies. Student work is to be submitted in Google Classroom by 11:59 p.m. of the Flexible Instruction Day. All student work assigned during a Flexible Instructional Day is graded and counted as part of the student's overall grade. Any questions about student work should be directed to the student's teacher via Google Classroom or e-mail.

Students are required to both complete work and answer the attendance question to be considered present. Bear Creek Community Charter School will continue to monitor student attendance on Flexible Instructional Days. If it is determined that students and families are not sufficiently engaging, flexible instructional days may be eliminated and make-up days will be added on at the end of the school year.

Educational Field Trips

Bear Creek Community Charter School will accept one request for an educational field trip per academic year for each student. An educational field trip may not exceed five (5) school days. Parents requesting permission to exclude a child from school for an educational field trip must obtain advance written approval from school administration at least ten school days in advance of the trip. The request must include the reason for the trip, the location, and the duration of the trip. Educational Field Trip Forms are available through Parent Portal in PowerSchool.

Upon returning from an approved educational field trip, students must complete a written report regarding their educational experiences while on the trip.

Students are required to make up any class work or tests that are missed during the pre-approved absence.

Bear Creek Community Charter School strongly urges parents to refrain from scheduling pre-approved absences during the first week of the school year and during specified days when standardized tests are being administered. Trip requests during these time periods will be denied.

Students who are Truant or Habitually Truant, or students who have already been absent fifteen or more days (excessively absent) may be refused permission.

Students, who in the opinion of school administration as advised by professional staff, are performing less than satisfactorily in any major academic subject, will not be granted permission for pre-approved absence.

Any educational field trip taken without advance permission, or not in compliance with this policy, will be treated as an unexcused/unlawful absence.

Absence Verification

When a student returns to school after an absence, a written excuse must be provided by a parent/guardian. Verbal or telephone notifications do not count for purposes of an excuse. The written excuse must contain all of the following:

- Student's first and last name (printed)
- Date or dates of absence
- Reason for absence (printed)
- Signature of parent or legal guardian

This excuse must be one of the permissible reasons for absence stated above in order for the absence to be excused.

A written excuse from a physician's office will be required for any absence due to illness or injury that is three or more consecutive school days in duration. If the student was seen by a physician due to illness, the physician note is required to be submitted within five (5) days of the student's return to school.

A written excuse is required for all student absences. Upon exceeding ten (10) written excuses provided by a parent in a given school year (excessively absent), a written excuse from a physician's office will be required for any additional absences.

An absence excuse may be handwritten, a picture of the original excuse note taken, and submitted through email to office@bearcreekschool.com. An email alone is not acceptable as an absence excuse.

Unless a written excuse is provided to the school within five (5) business days after the student returns to school, the absence will be permanently counted as unlawful. Excuses will not be accepted after five business days.

Unexcused/Unlawful Absences

All other absences not identified as Excused Absences, which occur without prior administrative approval, will be considered unexcused and unlawful.

Truant

Truant is defined as a student having three (3) or more school days of unexcused absence during the current school year. This applies to both in-person learning and distance learning. Within ten (10) school days of the child's third unexcused absence, Bear Creek Community Charter School shall provide the child's parent or legal guardian with a notice, which will include a description of the consequences if the child becomes Habitually Truant and will include an offer of an attendance improvement conference with the parent/guardian/designated family member, child, and appropriate school personnel.

Habitually Truant

Habitually Truant is defined as a student having six (6) or more school days of unexcused absences during the current school year. This applies to both in-person learning and distance learning. Within ten (10) school days of the child's sixth unexcused absence, Bear Creek Community Charter School must, as required by Pennsylvania Law, do one of the following:

1. Refer the child to a community-based attendance improvement program;
2. Refer the child to Luzerne County Children and Youth Agency for services or possible disposition as a dependent child under the Juvenile Act; or
3. File a citation against the parent/legal guardian of a habitually truant child in magisterial district court.

In all cases, where a school refers a habitually truant child to Luzerne County Children and Youth Agency or magisterial district court, Bear Creek Community Charter School must hold a student attendance improvement conference, with or without the participation of the child's parent or legal guardian.

Dropping a Student

Students who are at any time in the school term absent from school for ten (10) consecutive school days, may thereafter be removed from the active membership roll unless the school has been provided with evidence that absence may be legally excused or compulsory attendance prosecution has been or is being pursued. When this occurs, the student's parent/guardian will be notified in writing along with the student's school district of residence.

Excessive Absences

Upon exceeding fifteen (15) absences in a given school year, a written excuse from a qualified medical professional in a physician's office will be required. The written excuse must include the name of the medical office, the date of the visit, the date(s) the student was under the physician's care, and include a statement that the student was actually seen by the physician or physician's assistant. The total number of absences includes days for an excused educational trip. This applies to both in-person learning and distance learning. Physician notes are due within 5 days of the student's return to school.

Students who are absent from school for thirty (30) or more days may be retained and not promoted to the next grade level. Students with excessive absences of thirty (30) or more days may have school privileges suspended, including participation in class parties, assembly programs, field trips, and/or special school events up to and including 8th grade graduation.

Attendance Requirements and School Activities

The School reserves the right to restrict participation in extra-curricular activities and field trips for students with more than three (3) unexcused absences or more than fifteen (15) overall absences in any school year. This may include Earth Fest, Spring Festival, Field Day, class field trips, etc. This applies to both in-person learning and distance learning.

Notification of Accumulated Absences

A parent/guardian will be provided written notification when the following occurs:

1. A student has three (3) unexcused absences and is considered Truant
2. A student has six (6) unexcused absences and is considered Habitually Truant
3. A student accumulates fifteen or more absences (excused or unexcused) and is considered Excessively Absent

Parents/guardians can view their child's current attendance online through the PowerSchool Parent Portal. A link is available on the school's web page at www.bearcreekschool.com and select Parents -> Parent Portal.

Parents/guardians can receive ongoing e-mail notifications of student attendance online through the PowerSchool Parent Portal. To register, access the school's web page at www.bearcreekschool.com and select Parents -> Parent Portal.

Leaving Early

Parents should make every effort to schedule appointments for their children outside of the instructional day. However, there may be times when students must be excused from school during school hours. Students who are to be released early must present their teacher with a written request from their parent/guardian upon arrival at school so school staff is prepared for the student's early departure.

Students who require an early dismissal must provide a written note from a parent or guardian to their homeroom teacher no later than homeroom period of the same day. No student will be permitted to leave school before the end of a school day unless a parent or guardian comes into the main office to sign the student out. No student will be dismissed on the basis of a telephone call.

Absences from school because of an early dismissal, except Excused Early Dismissals, will count toward the allowable limit set by the attendance requirement policy. Students who are late or who leave for early dismissal shall be counted absent in accordance with the schedule below. Attendance will be recorded as follows:

Arrival before 11:31 a.m. = Late

Arrival after 11:31 a.m. but before 12:31 p.m. = a.m. absence (1/2 day)

Arrival after 12:31 p.m. = Absent all day

Early Dismissal before 10:20 a.m. = Absent all day

Early Dismissal after 10:20 a.m. but before 1:15 p.m. = p.m. absence (1/2 day)

Lateness

A student who is late for school arrives to school with their parent/guardian along with a valid reason for their lateness will be considered an excused late. All other late arrivals are considered unexcused late. Being late to school interferes with a student's educational program and is disruptive to the school day. To that end, lateness will be handled according to the following procedures:

- After 8:30 a.m. students who arrive to school late must be escorted by a parent/guardian to the main office to be signed in.
- Ongoing lateness or tardiness will be subject to administrative review and may result in having school privileges suspended, including participation in class parties, assembly programs, field trips, and/or special school events up to and including 8th grade graduation or further disciplinary action
- Students are considered late if they arrive after 8:30 AM without a handbook approved excuse. Students' arrival time will be logged when a parent/guardian signs them in. Upon accumulating one school day worth of unexcused late hours, a total of 6 hours and 45 minutes, students acquire one unexcused absence on their attendance report.

Students arriving after staff has left the student/parent drop off loop and entered the building are considered late/tardy and must be escorted into the building by a parent/guardian. Failure to do so will result in a call to the parent to return to the school, and the student remaining in the office until the parent arrives. The School reserves the right to consider Late arrivals as well as Early Release when calculating Perfect Attendance.

Make Up Work

Students who have been absent from school will be required to contact each teacher upon their return to receive all missed assignments. Students will be allowed as many days to make-up the work as days they were absent from school. This applies to both in-person learning and distance learning.

If a student is absent for two days and it is anticipated that they will miss a third day, parents may contact the office to arrange for missed class work to be collected from teachers so that it can be picked up at the office. Parents/guardians must call in the morning of the third day and pick work up in the late afternoon in order to give teachers time to gather assignments. Due to the demanding academic schedule teachers are not able to gather assignments on the spur of the moment.

For absences of less than three days, the student can check the teacher's website for class assignments and should make arrangements for other make-up work when they return.

Emergency Contact Information - Students

It is imperative that Bear Creek Community Charter School has the most current contact information for student's parents/guardians on file at all times, along with current contact information for other designated individuals (family members, etc.) who the School can

contact in an emergency who can pick the child up from school if they can't reach a student's parents or legal guardians. Not having the most current contact information is a challenge for the School, and we need the help of parents and legal guardians to ensure our information is accurate. This information is used in the event of medical emergencies, transportation issues, etc. Parents are asked to provide current information to the School at the beginning of each school year for not only parents and guardians, but for other emergency contacts too. Emergency Contact Information is available for review and updating through the Parent Portal account in PowerSchool. This information must be reviewed and updated no later than the end of the first week of school each year. This access is available to parents throughout the school year and is requested to be updated during the school year, as appropriate.

Medication

Based on recommendations of the American Medical Association and the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bear Creek Community Charter School discourages the administration of medication at school. Realizing that under certain circumstances, it will be necessary for students to take or be administered medications while at school, the following procedure shall be followed:

1. The parent or guardian should provide a written request for the administration of the prescribed medication at school.
2. Written orders are to be provided to the school nurse from the private physician detailing the diagnosis or type of illness involved, the name of the drug, dosage, time of administration, and side effects. A separate authorization shall be submitted for each medication. The label does not take the place of a doctor's note.
3. The medication should be brought to the school by the parent/guardian in the original container, appropriately labeled by the pharmacy or physician.
4. Unused quantities cannot be sent home with the child and will be discarded at the end of the school year unless picked up by a parent.
5. Students are not permitted to carry medications with them in school except in circumstances authorized by the school nurse. Such exceptions include students with asthma or other potentially life-threatening illnesses, who may self-administer when a nurse is not physically present. Permission for such possession and self-administration must be on file with the school nurse.
6. Over the counter medications will not be administered without a doctor's note.
7. Any student who is taking medication because of illness must report to the school nurse before going to homeroom. The medication will be left with the nurse for during the school day.
8. The school nurse is not authorized to administer medication unless all of the above conditions are met.
9. When a child taking medication is scheduled for a class trip, the school nurse or another licensed nurse will administer the medication.

Students are not permitted to bring medications of any type (cough drops, cough medications, over-the-counter medications, prescription drugs, etc.) to school except as outlined in #5 above. If medicine must be taken at certain intervals, the parent must assume responsibility of transporting said medication.

Inhalers & EpiPens

Any child of school age that desires to possess and self-administer an asthma inhaler or EpiPen in a school setting must demonstrate the capability for responsible behavior in the use of an asthma inhaler or EpiPen to the parent and school nurse. Students must have permission for carrying and taking the medication from physician, physician assistant, or certified nurse practitioner. Students needing emergency medications such as asthma inhalers and/or EpiPens should be prepared to have a care plan outlined by their physician involving parents and the school nurse. Meeting with the school nurse should be arranged prior to the start of the school year and during the school year on an as needed basis.

Written request is required from the parent/guardian that the school entity comply with the physician's order and relieving the school entity or any school employee of any responsibility for the benefits or consequences of the prescribed medication when it is parent-authorized and acknowledging that the school entity bears no responsibility for ensuring that the medication is taken. Students may lose this privilege if the medication is misused or they fail to comply with this policy. State law permits school personnel to administer emergency medications, such as EpiPens, in life threatening situations.

Communicable Diseases

Parents are asked to report any and all communicable diseases to the school nurse. These include chicken pox, strep throat, influenza, coronavirus, COVID-19, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), head lice, mononucleosis, impetigo, ringworm, scarlet fever, pink-eye, fifth disease, pinworms, and scabies. Bear Creek Community Charter School cannot exclude a child from recess, environmental education, or physical education class unless he/she presents a note from a health care provider stating the specific limitations to be placed on his/her activities. Children should not attend school in the following situations:

- Diarrhea/Vomiting: A student with diarrhea and/or vomiting should stay home and return to school only after being symptom free for twenty-four (24) hours.
- Fever: The student should remain home with a fever of 100 degrees or greater. The student can return to school after he/she has been fever free for twenty-four (24) hours without fever reducing medication such as Motrin or Tylenol. Any child with a fever of 100 degrees or higher at school will be sent home.
- Rashes: Common infectious diseases with rashes are most contagious in the early stages. A student with a suspicious rash should return to school only after a health care provider has made a diagnosis and authorized the student to return to school.
- Pink-Eye (conjunctivitis): A student with red eye(s) and white, green or yellow discharge must be excluded from school until evaluated by a health care provider. If there is a diagnosis of pink-eye and the student is given antibiotics, the student may return to school after being on the antibiotic twenty-four (24) hours.
- Strep Throat: After a diagnosis of strep throat, the student may return to school after twenty-four (24) hours of antibiotic treatment.
- Respiratory Viruses, including but not limited to COVID-19, RSV and Influenza (flu): After a diagnosis of a respiratory virus, students may return when symptoms have improved overall for at least 24 hours, and if a fever was present, it has gone for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication. Students are encouraged to wear a mask upon return for five (5) days.

Lice

Bear Creek Community Charter School conducts screenings of all students for head lice twice each year, as well as on an as-needed basis. Screenings are conducted individually, in a private setting. If a student is found with nits or active head lice, the School Nurse will contact the parent by telephone and the student will be sent home. Students are permitted to return to school after one treatment. Upon return, the student and their parent/guardian must report to the School Nurse for an additional screening. From the time the student is determined to have lice; the parent will have three (3) days to resolve the problem. Any additional time beyond the three days will result in the student's absence(s) being marked illegal. Bear Creek Community Charter School reserves the right to restrict a student's return to school based upon the outcome of treatment and the results of screening procedures.

Ticks

Bear Creek Community Charter School is located in a rural area that is endemic to ticks. Ticks are generally found in wooded or brushy areas, on the edge of hiking or animal trails, or the edge of a lawn where it meets a wooded or brushy area. In Pennsylvania, the peak time of year for exposure to the nymph stages of ticks that are actively seeking hosts is April through July. There are various health concerns related to tick exposure, including the potential for Lyme disease. The risk of being bitten by a tick can be decreased by using the following precautions:

- Wear light color clothing so ticks can be spotted more easily;
- Avoid wearing shorts when active outdoors in areas where ticks are active;
- Tuck pant legs into socks or boots, and shirts into pants; and
- Wear a hat, long sleeved shirt, and long pants for added protection.

As part of Environmental Education Class during the months of March and April of each school year, students will receive instruction on precautions related to tick exposure. In the event a tick attaches itself to a student at Bear Creek Community Charter School, the student will be directed to the School Nurse for assessment. Depending upon the location of the tick attachment and other factors, the tick may be removed from the student. The School Nurse will clean the area of attachment with alcohol. The School Nurse will notify the student's parent. Parents of students who have been bitten by ticks are urged to consult with their primary care physician for additional medical follow-up. Each situation will be assessed individually, and in some cases, the School Nurse will choose not to attempt to remove the tick. In this situation, the parent of the student will be notified and be asked to come to the school to take the student to seek medical care from the family's primary care physician.

Special Dietary Needs

In providing food service to its students, Bear Creek Community Charter School shall not discriminate on the basis of disability. Bear Creek Community Charter School shall make substitutions in foods for students who are considered disabled under 7 CFR Part 15b and whose disability restricts their diet. Bear Creek Community Charter School may also make substitutions for students without a disability who are unable to consume the regular lunch because of medical or other special dietary needs. Substitutions shall be made on a case by case basis only when supported by a statement of the need for substitutions that includes recommended alternate foods.

Such statements shall, in the case of a student with a disability, be signed by a physician, or in the case of a student without a disability, by a recognized medical authority. The following procedure will be followed when accommodating a student with a special medical or dietary need.

The parent or guardian of the student will provide the School Nurse with a written statement signed by a physician that includes the following:

1. The food items the student may not consume;
2. Recommended substitutions the student is permitted to consume;
3. Instructions relating to specific portion sizes;
4. The date on which the dietary substitution should begin;
5. The date on which the dietary substitution shall end, if applicable.

Food that is in the classroom for any reason must be prepackaged with the ingredients identified on the package. It is the responsibility of the teacher to speak to the Nurse in advance and identify any student allergies in the classroom, and to inform classroom parents of those allergies prior to an activity.

Students with food allergies participating in any school-wide event where food is involved must notify their teacher and the school nurse in advance that they will be in attendance. Students with food allergies cannot eat food items that are not clearly identified with their ingredients.

Immunizations

The following Immunization Policy is based on requirements of the Pennsylvania Department of Health

Children entering school (ALL GRADES) must have received the following immunizations:

- Four (4) doses of tetanus*(1 dose on or after 4th birthday)
- Four (4) doses of diphtheria* (1 dose on or after 4th birthday)
- Four (4) doses of polio
- Two (2) doses of measles**
- Two (2) doses of mumps**
- Two (2) doses of rubella (German measles) **
- Three (3) doses of hepatitis B
- Two (2) doses of varicella (chickenpox) or evidence of immunity

*Usually given as DTP or DT or Td

**Usually given as MMR

On the FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL, unless the child has a medical or religious/philosophical exemption, a child must have had at least one dose of the above vaccinations or risk exclusion.

If a child does not have all the doses listed above, needs additional doses, and the next dose is medically appropriate, the child must receive that dose within the first five (5) days of school or risk exclusion. If the next dose is not the final dose of the series, the child must also provide a medical plan (red and white card) within the first five days of school for obtaining the required immunizations or risk exclusion. If a child does not have all the doses listed above, needs additional doses, and the next dose is not medically appropriate, the child must provide a medical plan (red and white card) within the first five (5) days of school for obtaining the required immunizations or risk exclusion. The medical plan must be followed or the child may face exclusion from school.

The following vaccines are required for students entering 7th GRADE:

- One (1) dose meningococcal conjugate vaccine (MCV)
- One (1) dose of tetanus, diphtheria, acellular pertussis (Tdap) - if five years have elapsed since last tetanus immunization

On the FIRST DAY OF 7th GRADE, unless the child has a medical or religious/philosophical exemption, a child must have had the above vaccines or risk exclusion.

School health officials will review the child's immunizations to verify the child meets the standards set by the Pennsylvania Department of Health. If a child's immunization records do not meet state requirements, the child will not be permitted to attend school. In the event immunization is against the child's religious beliefs or a parent has a strong moral or ethical conviction against immunization, the parent must provide the School Nurse with a signed "Statement of Exemption to Immunization Law" form stating the reason for the objection. If immunization is not medically advisable at a particular time, a physician must sign the "Statement of Exemption to Immunization Law" form. If a child is exempt from immunization, he/she may be excluded from school during an outbreak of a vaccine preventable disease.

Health Screening Programs

Pennsylvania Public School Code of 1949, Section 1402(a) states that each child of school age shall be given vision and hearing tests, a measurement of height and weight, and such other tests as the Advisory Health Board may deem advisable to protect the health of the child.

Body Mass Index, Height & Weight Screening

The Pennsylvania Public School Code states that height and weight measurement shall be conducted at least once annually. Every effort shall be made to determine the pattern of growth for each child so that his weight and height can be interpreted in light of his own growth pattern rather than those of his classmates. Nutrition is recognized as a critical factor in the promotion of health and the prevention of disease. Moderate malnutrition can have lasting effects on children's cognitive development and school performance. When children are hungry or undernourished, they have difficulty resisting infection and therefore are more likely than other children to become sick, to miss school, and to fall behind in class. They are irritable and have difficulty concentrating; and they have low energy levels. Unhealthy eating patterns may result in under-nutrition, iron deficiency anemia, and overweight and obesity.

Overweight and obesity in children and adolescents represents one of the most challenging conditions to treat. Yet intervention is necessary as recent data from the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) indicates approximately one in five children in the United States is overweight, a statistic that has doubled in the last three decades. Overweight is associated with an increased incidence and prevalence of hypertension and diabetes mellitus before and during adulthood as well as with the later development of cardiovascular disease in adults (Krauss, et al. 2000).

In early 2003, the Department of Health unveiled the Pennsylvania Nutrition and Physical Activity Plan to Prevent Obesity and Related Chronic Diseases. One of the goals of this plan is to increase parent/guardian awareness of the BMI-for-Age measure as a screening tool to assess growth patterns in children and youth. BMI is a weight for stature index that can be used to help determine whether the student is within a normal growth pattern, overweight, at risk of becoming overweight or underweight.

Growth screening enables school health professionals to:

1. Monitor growth and development patterns of students;
2. Identify students who may be at nutritional risk or who may have a common nutritional problem;
3. Notify parents/guardians of screening results with a recommendation to share findings with the student's health care provider for further evaluation and intervention, if necessary.

Students are screened annually in all grades. Annual BMI results are available to parents upon request. Students will be weighed and measured in a setting that provides privacy. Confidentiality is always important and care is taken to ensure that findings are not accessible to other students or shared with staff.

Annual Physical Examinations

Annual physical examinations are required for all new students enrolling in Kindergarten, all new students enrolling in any other grade, and existing students entering sixth grade. Physicals must be completed and returned prior to the first day of school or you're the child will be excluded from attending school. Physical exams could be completed and dated up to one year in advance of the start of school. We encourage parents to obtain a copy of the physical forms from the School Nurse and take them to the student's family physician to be completed. Copies of the physical form and all other school health forms are available on the School's web site at www.bearcreekschool.com - click on Student Health Services.

Dental Screening

Dental diseases are the most prevalent chronic conditions of children in the United States and the major cause of loss of teeth in children and adolescents. Dental diseases account for much pain and disruption of time and attention in school. Dental diseases untreated are progressively destructive of teeth, gums and bony supporting structures. Dental disease is largely preventable by the practice of appropriate dental and oral hygiene care. Schools have played a considerable role in delivery of dental services to children from the earliest days of school health. The school dental health program in Pennsylvania is an integral part of the total school health program.

The mandated dental examination program represents the minimum dental health services which students in specified grades must receive. The dental examination provides baseline data for determining the dental health status of the pupil population served.

Parents/guardians are encouraged to have their family dentist perform the examinations and report the results of the examination on approved forms provided by the school and returned to the school to be included in the comprehensive school health record. Examinations done by the family dentist within four months prior to the opening of school are accepted for the required examination that year. Annual dental screenings are required for students in kindergarten, first, third and seventh grades. Please be prompt in returning the examination form so that the School Nurse can keep your child's school health record updated.

Vision Screening

The purpose of a school vision screening program is to identify students with visual impairments. Visual problems can and do affect the educational, social and emotional development of children. Early detection of vision problems assures the child of the opportunity of taking the best advantage of his/her educational opportunities. Ninety percent of all information is transferred to the brain via the eyes. Most vision problems are correctable, at least to some degree. Impaired vision is most damaging in primary grades because it is at these grade levels that the foundations for learning are taught. Those children with vision loss severe enough to require special educational opportunities must be identified early if they are to be helped.

Although it is recommended that every child has an eye examination very early in life, vision screenings continue to provide an important tool in the early detection of vision disorders in the pediatric population. However, the opportunity for vision screenings is not always afforded to every child in the early years of life. As attendance at school is mandated for all children in Pennsylvania, the school setting provides an accessible place where children may have their vision screened. It is possible for children in Pennsylvania as young as four to have their vision screened if they attend kindergarten.

Recognizing the above statements, vision screening has been rightly mandated for Pennsylvania school age children since 1957. Students are screened annually in all grades. Results of vision screening will be provided annually to the student's parent or guardian. The most important aspect of the screening program is referral with follow-up. The child who fails the screening should receive a comprehensive eye examination by an eye care specialist.

Hearing Screening

The purpose of the school hearing screening and threshold testing program is to identify children with hearing impairments. Results of the hearing screening program have shown that five to ten percent of the school-age population does not pass audiometric tests. The majority of these children are in need of medical treatment. Such treatment may result in restoration of hearing and prevention of permanent hearing impairment. Communication is an integral part of human behavior. Seldom does one consider the implications of not being able to hear. The most serious effect of a hearing loss is the interference with and breakdown of communication between persons. In a child, some of the consequences may be:

1. Interference with normal speech and language development;
2. Development of abnormal social growth and behavior;
3. Interference with education and human potential;

4. Development of adjustment problems in the child and his/her family;
5. Isolationism in a hearing world.

A child's behavior in the classroom may indicate the possibility of a hearing loss. The child may be inattentive, may ask for frequent repetitions, or his/her achievement may be low. The observation of such behavior will assist in identifying children in need of help and indicate the need to assess hearing levels. While it is extremely important to conduct hearing tests on the young, school age student to ensure early identification of those with hearing loss and for hearing conservation purposes, it is equally important to conduct hearing tests on the older adolescent. The older student is less likely to complain of ear or hearing problems than a younger child; the impact on their ability to perform can be as detrimental as on a young child. This is an annual screening for students in kindergarten, first, second, third and seventh grades. Results of hearing screening will be provided annually to the student's parent or guardian.

Scoliosis Screening

Scoliosis is a lateral and rotary curvature of the spine, most commonly found during the adolescent growth period. It is estimated that approximately 4% of school-age children will have a curvature in varying degrees. The effect of scoliosis depends upon its severity, how early it is detected, and how promptly it is treated. The purpose of the screening program is to detect possible curvature of the spine in children. If the condition is detected early and appropriately treated, progressive spinal deformity may be prevented. The screening test is very simple and can be performed in less than a minute. A trained screener will check the student's back by observing it while the student is standing and bending forward. This is an annual screening for students in sixth and seventh grades. Parents will be notified if there is any reason to have the student examined by the family's primary care provider for further evaluation.

Pennsylvania's Children's Health Insurance Program

CHIP is short for the Children's Health Insurance Program - Pennsylvania's program to provide health insurance to all uninsured children and teens who are not eligible for or enrolled in Medical Assistance. There are a lot of reasons kids might not have health insurance - maybe their parents lost a job, don't have health insurance at work or maybe it just costs too much. Whatever the reason, CHIP may be able to help. Parents may think their kids can't get CHIP because they make too much money. Not true! CHIP covers all uninsured kids and teens up to age 19 who are not eligible for Medical Assistance. No family makes too much money for CHIP because there is no income limit. For many families, CHIP is free. Families with incomes above the free CHIP limits will pay low monthly premiums and co-pays for some services.

CHIP is administered by private health insurance companies that are licensed and regulated by the Pennsylvania Insurance Department and have contracts with the Commonwealth to offer CHIP coverage. Once enrolled, children are guaranteed 12 months of CHIP coverage unless they no longer meet the basic eligibility requirements. Families must renew their coverage every year in order for the coverage to continue. CHIP insurance companies send renewal notices 90 days before their benefits are going to end, and families must fill out and send the renewal information back to their CHIP insurance company in order for benefits to continue.

For more information on Pennsylvania's Children's Health Insurance Program, visit www.chipcoverspakids.com. Figuring out insurance questions these days can be complicated, but applying for CHIP is simple. Knowledgeable, courteous counselors are available at 1-800-986-KIDS (TTY/TDD 1-800-451-5886) to assist you. A counselor will also help you sort through the information and can help you apply for CHIP and other social service programs.

Parent Emergency Notification System (PENS)

Bear Creek Community Charter School has implemented the Parent Emergency Notification System to allow the School to quickly contact parents in the event of an emergency. The system allows the School to send emergency text messages to cell phones and/or e-mail addresses of parents and other interested parties, including employees who register to receive the message. To receive text messages, your cell phone must have text messaging capabilities. Bear Creek Community Charter School will not share the cell phone numbers or e-mail addresses of subscribers with any third party vendors, and this system will only be utilized in the event of an emergency. Bear Creek Community Charter School will make every effort to use this system effectively and efficiently, but cannot guarantee subscribers will receive every message due to factors beyond our control (i.e. cell phone powered off, out of cell phone service area, etc.). While there is no charge to you for using this system, your cell phone service provider may charge you a fee for the connection time used or text messages received.

To register for the system, please visit the School's web page at www.bearcreekschool.com and select "Emergency Notification" from the "Parents" tab. Enter your name, cell phone and email information (see below). Select which "home" school district you reside in, and finish by selecting "Sign Up Now". You can unsubscribe at any time by using this same web page. The School encourages all parents and staff to update PENS with new cell phone and e-mail information each year to ensure current information is available for the system to use in the event an emergency alert is issued. Emergency alerts are generally issued for severe weather events, school evacuations, or other similar emergency situations that may arise.

Transportation

School bus transportation is the responsibility of your local school district if its borders are within ten (10) miles of Bear Creek Community Charter School. To arrange for bus transportation for your children, please call your district of residence transportation office.

Wilkes-Barre Area School District
730 South Main Street
Wilkes-Barre, PA 18711-0375
Phone: (570) 826-7116
Contact: Sylvia Decker

Wyoming Valley West School District
450 North Maple Avenue
Kingston, PA 18704
Phone: (570) 288-6551
Contact: Anthony Dicon

Hanover Area School District
1600 Sans Souci Parkway
Hanover, PA 18706
Phone: (570) 831-2300 Ext. 179
Contact: Hollie Evans

Wyoming Area School District
20 Memorial Street
Exeter, PA 18643
Phone: (570) 655-3733 Ext. 2346
Contact: Angelo Falzone

Pittston Area School District
5 Stout Street
Yatesville, PA 18640
Phone: (570) 654-2415 Ext. 2205
Contact: James O'Brien

Crestwood School District
281 South Mountain Boulevard
Mountain Top, PA 18707
Phone: (570) 474-6782 Ext. 304
Contact: Meghan Nealon

Pocono Mountain School District
PO Box 200
Swiftwater, PA 18370
Phone: (570) 839-7121
PMSD East: Extension 30437
PMSD West: Extension 31422

STA Bus Line
771 Scott Street
Wilkes-Barre, PA 18705
Phone: (570) 823-8611
Contact: Janelle Davison

Myers Bus Company
446 Elm Street
Kingston, PA 18704
Phone: (570) 288-8035
Contact: Phillip Myers

HA Transportation
2221 Sans Souci Highway
Hanover, PA 18706
Phone: (570) 417-8393
Contact: Henry Elmy

Pace Transportation
123 Armstrong Road
Pittston, PA 18640
Phone: (570) 883-0620
Contact: Rob Pace

Pace Transportation
123 Armstrong Road
Pittston, PA 18640
Phone: (570) 883-0620
Contact: Rob Pace

Rinehimer Bus Lines, Inc.
1899 Slocum Road
Wapwallopen, PA 18660
Phone: (570) 868-3667
Contact: Moon Eckrote

First Student
East Transportation:
(570) 839-7121 ext. 30430
West Transportation:
(570) 839-7121 ext. 31420

If you choose to drive your child to school, drop off times are from 8:00 a.m. to 8:30 a.m. We are unable to accommodate parents dropping off students prior to 8:00 a.m. Pick up times are from 3:15 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the back doors in the rear of the building. Please use extreme caution when travelling in the school parking lot and remember that the school buses have the priority and right of way.

Books and Materials

All textbooks must be covered. Students will be responsible for keeping them in good condition. Students should never keep folded papers in their books because eventually the book bindings will break. If a book is damaged, lost or stolen, the student's parents/guardians will be required to pay for replacement of the book. The appropriate collection efforts will be taken to collect reimbursement for lost, stolen or damaged books and other school property.

Lost or Damaged School Property

Students and their parents/guardians will be held financially responsible for the replacement of lost or damaged textbooks or other school property lost or damaged by students. The appropriate collection efforts will be taken to collect reimbursement for lost, stolen or damaged books and other school property.

Lockers

Each student in grades 3 through 8 is assigned a locker in which belongings, other than valuables, can be stored. The student is responsible for the locker's neatness and condition. Food is not to be left in lockers overnight. Students must not place stickers on the inside or outside of the lockers. Students are not to change locker assignments. Students should immediately report defective lockers to the office.

It is strongly recommended that valuable items not be brought to school and left in lockers. Lockers are equipped with locks and should be kept locked at all times. Combinations should not be revealed to anyone. Students assume responsibility for items removed from improperly locked or unlocked lockers. The administration reserves the right to inspect lockers at any time. Students and their parents/legal guardians will be held financially responsible for the replacement of locks or lockers that are damaged or lost by the student.

A student is not to use a locker during class time unless they have a pass from a teacher. Students may go to their locker before homeroom, before and after lunch, and after school.

Lockers belong to the school and are provided to the student only for limited purposes. The administration has a right to inspect a student's locker at any time. The administration inspects and/or searches lockers as often as may be necessary to maintain order and to protect the safety and well-being of the school community. These searches may or may not involve the aid of law enforcement canine. During such a search, it is expected that all closed containers kept in lockers will be opened and their contents examined.

Student book bags must be able to fit into the student's locker with a door to the locker secured. Book bags with wheels are not permitted.

Personal Property

The school is not responsible for any personal property brought to school by a student. Students should not bring money, cell phones, portable equipment, money, or anything else of value. If a personal article must be brought to school, it should be kept secured in the student's locker for safekeeping.

Lost and Found

The lost and found is located in the Commons under the stairs and is purged quarterly. Lost articles may be claimed after school. The school is not responsible for any personal property placed in lost and found.

Meal Accounts

Each student is provided a school meal account, where funds can be deposited to pay for school meals (breakfast and lunch). We ask that all parents avoid sending cash to school – checks payable to Bear Creek Community Charter School can be sent into school for deposit into a child's school meals account.

Bear Creek Community Charter School understands that there will be times when parents forget to send in money. Students who do not have money in their account and fail to bring money or a lunch to school will be provided a full school lunch. They will not be provided anything beyond a full lunch, including seconds, snacks, ala carte items, etc.

Children need healthy meals to learn. Students who continually come to school without lunch or money to purchase a lunch are a real concern. Bear Creek Community Charter School administrators reserve the right to contact the appropriate social service agency to address the concern related to the student's health and welfare. Parents will be notified (note home, e-mail, letter, or telephone call) if a child's account becomes negative. The cost of providing meals to students when they fail to bring a lunch or lunch money will be added to the student's school meal account. All negative lunch balances remaining at the end of the year (when students take meals without payment) are the responsibility of the student's parent/guardian. All negative balances must be paid prior to the end of each school year. The School reserves the right to pursue all available collection efforts, including action with the local magistrate, for unpaid account balances.

Bear Creek Community Charter School participates in the National School Lunch Program, and based upon household income and family size, students may qualify for free or reduced priced school meals. We urge all parents/guardians to complete a new Free and Reduced Priced School Meals Family Application and return it to the school. For more information, visit the Food Service section of the school's website.

Outstanding Financial Obligations of Students and Parents

Students and parents shall be held responsible for all outstanding financial obligations to Bear Creek Community Charter School. Financial obligations include:

- Lost or damaged books;
- Lost or damaged school equipment, materials, or other school property;
- Outstanding or negative balances on a student's school meals account;
- Bad checks returned for insufficient funds, closed accounts, or other reasons, including bank fees.

Students and parents are encouraged to resolve financial obligations as they are incurred. Outstanding financial obligations shall carry over from one school year to another, as permitted by law.

Notification

Reasonable attempts to notify the parent/legal guardian of outstanding financial obligations will be made. This may include backpack letters, letters sent home via U.S. Mail, e-mail messages and telephone calls.

Consequences

Any student with an outstanding financial obligation or debt to the School will not be permitted to participate in extra-curricular activities such as field trips, Spring Festival, Field Day, etc. Such restrictions can also be applied to other activities such as school dances, extra-curricular athletics and other after-school and/or non-legally mandated activities.

Any eighth grade student with an outstanding financial obligation or debt to the school will not be provided tickets to the 8th Grade Graduation Ceremony and will not be permitted to participate in the event.

Students and parents shall be responsible for the cost to repair and/or replace all school property that may be lost, damaged or destroyed as a result of student acts, activities or negligence. In particular, students who damage or lose a textbook or piece of school equipment are obligated to pay the full replacement price.

Any student, parent, and/or guardian who fails to honor and fulfill his/her financial obligations shall be subject to any and all authorized actions available to the School, including the pursuit of outside collections and civil/criminal legal action.

School Meals

Bear Creek Community Charter School Meals Policy is published and made available to students and parents in the Student/Parent Handbook. The Handbook is available online at www.bearcreekschool.com.

Bear Creek Community Charter School participates in the National School Lunch Program, and based upon household income and family size, students may qualify for free or reduced priced school meals. We urge all parents/guardians to complete a new Free and Reduced Priced School Meals Family Application annually prior to September 30 or anytime during the school year if the family's financial situation changes, and return it to the school.

Applications are mailed home to all families annually. Applications and additional information is available online at www.bearcreekschool.com and from the School Office. Assistance in completing the Application is available upon request.

This policy shall comply with changes made to the Pennsylvania School Code by Act 55 of 2017, including but not limited to:

- The School is prohibited from denying a school food program meal to any student who requests one but does not have the money to pay for the meal at the time of service in his/her meal account;
- Communication about a student's school meal debt will be directed to the parent/guardian;
- The School will not publicly identify or stigmatize students because they have a school meal debt;
- Students will not be made to do chores or other work to earn a school meal;
- The School will not direct a student to discard a meal that has been served to them because they cannot pay for it at the time of service or because they have an existing school meal debt.

Pennsylvania law permits schools in restricting privileges or activities of students who owe money for school meals if those same restrictions apply to students who owe money for other school-related purposes.

Homeless Students

Students experiencing homelessness are automatically eligible for free meals through federal school meal programs. The School, in collaboration with the Bear Creek Foundation, also has an established process to assist students experiencing homelessness with other necessities such as school materials, clothing, etc. For more information, contact Melanie Leo, School Counselor.

Students in Foster Care

Students in foster care are categorically eligible for free school meals without submission of a free and reduced-price household application. This means that a student in foster care can receive free school meals based on third-party documentation of their foster status.

Field Trips

Field trips are special functions associated with "The Bear Creek Experience" and are considered a privilege. Since students represent Bear Creek Community Charter School, they should dress appropriately and should behave in a respectable, polite manner towards teachers and chaperones in charge, both on the bus and at the specific destination. All school policies are in effect on field trips. To ensure student safety, parents or other relatives are not permitted to meet the students at the field trip location. All participants on field trips must be approved through the main office and have all required clearances on file. School administrators may exclude students from field trips for academic, attendance and/or disciplinary purposes.

Students participating in School-sponsored field trips must have permission from a parent or legal guardian to do so. Parents/guardians will be asked to log into their confidential Parent Portal account and give their child permission to participate. By signing the Student/Parent Handbook Acknowledgement Form at the end of this Handbook, parents are also acknowledging they agree to using Parent Portal to approve field trip participation and authorize the Standard Agreement and Release.

The School reserves the right to restrict participation in extra-curricular activities and field trips for students with more than three (3) unexcused absences or more than fifteen (15) overall absences in any school year. This may include Spring Festival, Field Day, class field trips, etc.

Fire Drills

Fire drills are conducted at least once a month. When the alarm signals a fire drill, all students will leave the room in single file and walk out of the building through the nearest exit. Complete directions for the fire drill and proper exit routes are posted in each room and students receive training from classroom teachers. There will be no conversation during the fire drill.

Inclement Weather

In the event that school will be delayed or closed because of weather conditions, announcements to this effect will be made over local television – particularly WNEP TV Channel 16. Additionally, Bear Creek Community Charter School has implemented the Parent Emergency Notification System (PENS) which is a tool to keep parents informed of weather related and other emergency issues. PENS is an automated internet-based system that allows parents to register their e-mail address and cell phone number to receive emergency related notifications, informational updates and information about weather related emergencies. To register for this system, log onto the Bear Creek Community Charter School's website at www.bearcreekschool.com and select Emergency Notification from the Resources section.

Because the Wilkes-Barre Area School District provides transportation to the vast majority of Bear Creek Community Charter School students, it is common for the Charter School to close or delay in a fashion similar to the District.

Volunteer Program

Research supports that family involvement in a child's education is an extremely important factor in raising student self-esteem and academic achievement. School wide family volunteer input dramatically increases the effectiveness of the school's overall quality of educational, academic, and social programs.

Additionally, family volunteer hours are a significant element of the school's charter. A successful volunteer program assures that we are in compliance with our school's charter. Based on the mission statement and goals of Bear Creek Community Charter School, every family must be involved in the volunteer program.

The charter for Bear Creek Community Charter School requires parents to volunteer 2 hours per month during the school year. With approximately 9 full months for the school year, parents should strive to volunteer a total 18 hours anytime throughout the school year to meet the minimum requirements.

Volunteer hours will be counted towards chaperone selection for field trips. Chaperones will be selected by April 15th of each year. Parent volunteers who have completed 18 hours will receive their name in a drawing for field trips, for every ten hours over that they will receive an extra chance. Hours will be collected from April 1st of the previous school year to March 31st of the current year.

Volunteer hours must be recorded to be counted. Volunteer hours can be submitted using Parent Portal. Parents should complete the Volunteer Hours form by clicking Forms, then Volunteer Hours Record under Volunteer Program. Forms should be filled out completely and

submitted no later than the 10th of the month for the previous month's activities. For volunteers who do not have a Parent Portal account, please request a Volunteer Record Slip from the Main Office to complete and return. Forms should be filled out completely and submitted no later than the 10th of the month for the previous month's activities.

Volunteer Clearance Requirements

It is the policy of Bear Creek Community Charter School that all volunteers are required to comply with Pennsylvania's Child Protective Services Law in obtaining clearances. All required clearances must be on file in the main office prior to performing any volunteer service involving the interaction with children. This includes volunteering for class parties, school events and field trips.

All volunteers must submit the volunteer application and certifications prior to the commencement of service. The Volunteer Application can be accessed through Parent Portal. Any person who does not have access to a Parent Portal account who would like to volunteer may request a hard copy of the form from the Main Office. All prospective volunteers must obtain the following certifications:

- Report of Criminal History from the Pennsylvania State Police (PSP); and
- Child Abuse History Certification from the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (Child Abuse).

Volunteer clearances may be accessed at the following website:

<https://www.dhs.pa.gov/KeepKidsSafe/Pages/default.aspx>

Additionally, a fingerprint-based federal Criminal History (FBI) submitted through the Pennsylvania State Police or its authorized agent is required if the prospective volunteer has lived outside the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in the last ten (10) years.

Prospective volunteers who have been a continuous resident of Pennsylvania for the past ten (10) years must swear or affirm in writing that they are not disqualified from service based upon a conviction of an offense under 23 Pa.C.S. § 6344. If a volunteer has not been a resident of Pennsylvania for the past ten (10) years, but obtained their FBI certification at any time since establishing residency, they must provide a copy of the certification to the Director of Student Affairs and they are not required to obtain any additional FBI certifications.

Pennsylvania's Child Protective Services Law, as amended, requires that volunteers who come into contact with children must obtain criminal background check and child abuse clearances from the FBI, Pennsylvania State Police and the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services every 60 months. -volunteer clearances are valid for 60 months from the date of issue

Change of Student Residency / Change of Address

Parents/guardians are required to notify Bear Creek Community Charter School in writing when they move (change of address) by completing a *Student Change of Address Notification Form* and providing proof of residency, including an updated Pennsylvania Driver's License or Photo Identification Card with the correct address.

Pennsylvania law states that a school-age child is entitled to attend the public schools of the child's district of residence. A child's district of residence is that in which the parents or guardians reside. Parents/guardians have the right to enroll their child in a public charter school if they so desire. The school district or charter school has no obligation to enroll a child until the

parent, guardian or other person having control or charge of the student making the application has supplied proof of the child's age, residence, and immunizations as required by law (22 Pa. Code § 11.11). Such requirements are further detailed in Bear Creek Community Charter School's Student Admission Policy.

Bear Creek Community Charter School has certain legal and contractual obligations to the various public school districts in which its students reside. Accordingly, ensuring accurate residency information for Charter School students, and maintaining current proof of residency documentation is essential.

If the Charter School learns that a student has moved, and the student's parent/guardian has not yet contacted the Charter School to provide the appropriate Proof of Residency, the Charter School will make two attempts to contact the parent/guardian to obtain the required documentation. This may include a telephone call, voice-mail message, e-mail and/or U.S. mail to their last known address of record.

If a parent/guardian fails to prove the required documentation within ten (10) calendar days following the Charter School's request, the student will forfeit their enrollment and may be removed from the membership rolls of the Charter School.

Within five (5) business days after removing a student from the membership rolls of the Charter School, the Charter School shall notify the student's school district of residence (based on the student's last known address of record) in writing of such action, and will also provide a copy of the written notification to the student's parent/guardian via U.S. Mail to the student's last known address of record.

Parent Resources

Safe2Say Something Anonymous Tip Line- Pennsylvania Office of Attorney General

The Safe2Say Something Anonymous Reporting System allows individuals to submit secure and anonymous safety concerns to help identify and intervene when unsafe and/or harmful behaviors take place. The tips can be submitted via an app, online, or a dedicated hotline, and each tip is reviewed by the Safe2Say Something call center housed in the Office of Attorney General. The call center will process and refer each tip to the appropriate school teams and law enforcement according to the level of threat.

Phone: 1-844-723-2729 or 1-844-SAF2SAY

Web: www.safe2saypa.org

PA 211 NEPA

PA 2-1-1 NEPA / Help Line is the after-hours crisis service for twenty-one different organizations serving Bradford, Luzerne, Sullivan and Wyoming Counties. With one phone number, callers gain free, confidential access to thousands of program and services that can help improve the quality of their lives – services ranging from aging to mental health, child abuse/neglect reports, drug and alcohol services, runaway help, energy assistance, homeless homelessness and victim services.

Dial 211 or visit www.nepa211.org

Catholic Social Services

Catholic Social Services offers family support, drug and alcohol, housing and homelessness, youth services, and a variety of other programs. The mission of Catholic Social Services of the Diocese of Scranton is to serve Individuals and families in poverty and hardship, as we are called by Christ to do, and to respond compassionately to their needs. Catholic Social Services is a non-profit community service organization operating on a non-sectarian basis.

Call (570) 822-7118 or visit www.cssdioceseofscranton.org

Commission on Economic Opportunity (CEO)

The mission of CEO is to promote self-sufficiency among low-income and vulnerable populations by confronting the causes and reducing the effects of poverty. Some of the programs offered by CEO include a food bank, energy assistance, United Way Emergency Services, SAT preparation, and college scholarships.

Call 1-800-822-0359 or visit www.ceopeoplehelpingpeople.org

Student/Parent Handbook

Acknowledgment

2024 – 2025 School Year

Students and parents must read the Student/Parent Handbook and both must sign this acknowledgment. The acknowledgment form must be completed and returned to Bear Creek Community Charter School by the end of the first week of school. School policies apply to both in-person and distance learning. The complete Student/Parent Handbook is available on the school web site at www.bearcreekschool.com. If you require a printed hard copy because you do not have access to the web site, please call the Main Office at (570) 820-4070.

We understand as parents, we have voluntarily chosen to enroll our child/children at Bear Creek Community Charter School. We understand the School's Mission and Core Values. We acknowledge reading the Student/Parent Handbook and reviewing it with our child/children. We agree to comply with its contents.

We understand the importance of attendance and its impact on the academic process. We agree to ensure our child/children attend school, arrive on time, and are ready to learn. We understand that the School has an attendance policy that will be enforced. Excessive absenteeism, truancy and habitual truancy have consequences under school policy and state law, and may result in a citation being filed with the local magisterial district judge. I received information on Pennsylvania's new Truancy Law.

We read and discussed the School's behavior expectations and discipline structure. As the parent/guardian, I assume responsibility for my child and agree to cooperate and work with the school staff as it relates to this policy.

We read and discussed the School's policy on Acceptable Use of Technology, and understand what is expected of students as it relates to this policy.

We understand that any lost or damaged school property as a result of a student's actions will be the responsibility of the parent/guardian.

We understand that Bear Creek Community Charter School will make a complete school lunch available to any student who forgets to bring a lunch and does not have money to pay for a lunch. The cost of school meals provided to students is the responsibility of the parent/guardian, and we agree that any negative balance due and owing Bear Creek Community Charter School will be paid in full at the end of the school year.

As parent/guardian, I understand that Bear Creek Community Charter School believes strongly in parental involvement, and embraces parents as a key partner in the educational process. As a parent/guardian of a Bear Creek Community Charter School student, I agree to openly communicate and problem-solve with the school staff to ensure the student is working towards achieving his/her fullest potential. I further agree to support and participate in school programs that are designed to enhance and support the educational process.

Student's name (printed and/or signature) _____

Parent's name (printed) _____

Parent's signature _____

Date Signed _____