Westminster Community Charter School

Student – Parent Handbook

2026-2027

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A guide to learning, expectations and support for our Pride.

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Approved by Board of Trustees

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Mission: At Westminster Community Charter School, we proudly provide students with a rigorous and holistic teaching approach. We cultivate a safe and caring environment so every child can grow to meet their full potential – to find their passions in life and to pursue those passions with joy, skill, and success.

Vision: Westminster Community Charter School is a community school of choice, composed of people from many cultures, backgrounds, languages, and abilities. We work together – staff, students, families, and community partners – to create an environment in which every person belongs, every person works hard and learns, and every person reaches their full promise.

At Westminster, academic excellence and student well-being go hand in hand. We believe students thrive when they feel safe, connected, valued, and challenged. This handbook serves as our guide for creating a positive, consistent, and supportive school community with families, students, and staff.

In our Pride, we can:

- Build strong relationships and a sense of belonging for all community members.
- Teach and reinforce clear expectations.
- Create safe, predictable, and engaging learning environments where scholars learn and grow.
- Use data to provide targeted support for every student.
- Partner with families and our community to promote student success.
- Ensure consistent expectations and accountability across our school.

Every person plays an essential role in bringing our mission and vision to life. Our school pledge:

I promise to value all people
I will make them feel
welcomed, safe, important,
and loved.

Introduction

To achieve our mission, every member of the Westminster Community Charter School must respect the rights of all members of the community. This means creating an environment that is physically, emotionally, and intellectually safe, orderly, and conducive to learning. The information in this handbook provides the guidelines for all of our behaviors and attitudes that will create a positive environment in which each student, parent, and teacher can contribute and learn.

Family Engagement Agreement

At Westminster, we enroll families, not just students. Our school-wide Title I program requires all parents, legal guardians, grandparents, and other family members to play crucial roles in each student's educational experience. It is important that families and the School work together to help students achieve high academic standards. Outlined below are the expectations Westminster maintains for the School and our families:

School Responsibilities:

- Provide a challenging education in a safe and positive learning environment.
- Establish nurturing, professional relationships with students, characterized by mutual respect.
- Keep parents informed of each of their students' progress.
- Model integrity, academic curiosity, responsibility, and creativity.
- Be teachers to all students at all times and be dedicated to teaching ethics and character formation.
- Provide professional development opportunities for all staff.
- Develop and sustain partnerships with parents that support each student's well-being and increasing independence.
- Offer multiple avenues for families to stay informed of updates and events occurring at the School, (i.e., weekly newsletters, event flyers, monthly Parent Advisory Council meetings, annual parent survey distribution, social media updates, etc.)
- Teach, reteach and reinforce clear behavioral expectations consistently.
- Address developing concerns through proactive and supportive measures.
- Establish early partnerships with families to support student growth.
- Utilize restorative practices to repair harm, to promote accountability, and strengthen community.
- Provide targeted interventions for students to support behavioral needs.

Family Responsibilities:

- Provide a home environment that supports the development of positive learning attitudes, habits, and values that are consistent with those of the School.
- Maintain regular contact with teachers and attend all scheduled parent/teacher conferences during the school year.
- Show support and encouragement by participating in a positive manner in School events.
- Check that each child is completing their school work every night.
- Make sure each child attends school and arrives on time every day.
- Make sure that each child is following school and class rules so as to protect the safety, feelings, and rights of all students, staff, parents and him or herself and promote an environment that is

conducive to learning..

- Make sure that each child is in proper uniform daily.
- Respond promptly to school contact, particularly in the event of an emergency or suspension. If we are unable to reach a parent/guardian within 90 minutes, the school will contact the student's emergency contact(s), appropriate authorities, and take any other necessary action to ensure the student's safety and well-being.

Student Responsibilities:



- Learn and practice WCCS expectations: Safe, Responsible, and Respectful.
- Come to school prepared to learn by bringing all relevant materials and leaving home any objects that will interfere with learning.
- Attend school and arrive on time every school day.
- Put in their best effort and complete all class and homework assignments on time.
- Wear their school uniform and shoes every day.
- Follow the school and class rules and be responsible for their behavior.
- Respect all students, staff, parents, and guests.
- Participate in building a positive classroom and school community.
- Take responsibility for choices and participate in reflection or restorative accountability measures when harm occurs.
- Ask and/or accept help when academic, social-emotional, attendance, or behavioral concerns make it difficult to be successful.
- Students shall treat the building and all school property, including books, with care. Failure to do so will result in payment by the parent to replace or repair any damage caused.

Visitor and Volunteer Participation

All visitors, including volunteers, must comply with Westminster's Code of Conduct. Upon arrival, visitors must report to the Main Office upon entering the building. Visitors must provide picture identification when they sign in using the Visitor Management System which conducts background checks and offers an added level of protection for our students. A school badge will be issued and must be always worn while in the school or on school grounds. Visitors are expected to stay in the authorized area of their business and will be accompanied by a staff member when traveling throughout the building and/or grounds. The visitor must return their badge and sign out of the Visitor Management System prior to leaving the school.

- Parents or individuals who wish to observe a classroom while school is in session are required to arrange such visits in advance through the principal's office, so that class disruption is kept to a minimum.
- Teachers will not take class time to discuss individual matters with visitors or volunteers.
- Any unauthorized person on school property will be reported to the principal.

Parents interested in becoming volunteers (i.e. providing service to a classroom, joining the Parent Advisory Council, or serving as a chaperone for a field trip) must complete a Volunteer Application. Please contact the Main Office for more information.

Admissions and Enrollment

In accordance with New York law, the Westminster Community Charter School is open to all students eligible to attend a public school in New York State, without regard to ethnicity, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or any other grounds that would be unlawful if done by a school. Admission of students is not limited on the basis of intellectual ability, measures of achievement or aptitude, athletic ability, disability, race, creed, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, or ancestry. Notwithstanding the above, all children who are enrolled in the Westminster Community Charter School in the current school year have preference to re-enroll annually. If the number of applicants exceeds the available space by grade, applicants are placed into priority-level groups (see below) and then selected on a random basis.

Admission preference is given to students who need special education and/or English language services, then siblings of those students attending the school, then to residing in the District, and finally to students from outside the District - provided any space remains.

Documents required to register students at WCCS:

- Original Certificate of Birth/Adoption with seal or Passport
- Immunization Record: up to date with required immunizations
- Dental Certificate
- Proof of address: current gas or electric bill with name of parent/legal guardian and address, lease agreement, landlord statement.
- Final report card from June or transcript of official transfer if registering during the school year.

Re-Enrollment for Following School Year

In order to determine the number of slots vacant for the following school year, parents of enrolled children who wish to return and siblings of enrolled children, who wish to be enrolled in the following year, must complete a Student Re-Enrollment Form and a Parent/School Contract to be returned by the deadline date. Please note that this Form must be returned to the School Office or your child's spot could be taken because there is an enrollment cap and a waiting list.

Enrollment Period and Admissions Lottery for New Students

Formal recruitment of incoming students begins after December 1st. WCCS advertises open registration and interested families submit applications until April 1st, at which point students will be entered into a lottery. This lottery will be held after April 1st annually and students will be notified shortly thereafter.

In the event of the need for a lottery, admission preference is granted to applicants in the following manner:

- First preference will be given to returning students, who will automatically be assigned a space within the school.
- Second preference will be given to applicants who identify as having an IEP or where English is their second language.
- Third preference will be given to siblings of students already enrolled in the Charter School.
- Fourth preference will be given to residents of the 14215-zip code.
- Fifth preference for admission is for students who reside in the school district of location (i.e., the Buffalo Public Schools).
- Any remaining slots shall be available to applicants residing outside the district of location.

A waiting list shall also be established. The waiting list shall expire annually at the lottery drawing following the next year's enrollment period. Registration packets will be sent to all accepted families.

Academics

Grades are used to indicate achievement and development in each class or subject area in which a student is enrolled. Grading will be based, in part, upon student achievement, participation in classroom discussions, independent work, activities, and projects. Classroom participation, and thus students' attendance, is an important factor in earning high grades. The breakdown is as follows:

Grades K-4:

Grades will be given based on mastery of the NYS Next Generation Standards. The following key will be used:

4	Exceeding Proficiency of Grade Level Standards
3	Meeting Proficiency of Grade Level Standards
2	Approaching Proficiency of Grade Level Standards
1	Below Proficiency of Grade Level Standards
N/A	Not Assessed

Middle School (Grades 5-8):

Middle school students will have a numeric score made up of classwork, assessments, and independent work.

Grades K-8:

If student work is not completed within classroom time as well as extended opportunities, students may be asked to complete the assignment(s) at home and return them back to school. Extended project work may be brought home by students to continue the completion of the unit project; these would be included in the assessment category.

If a parent/guardian knows their child will be absent for several days, it is possible for homework assignments to be sent home if a parent/guardian request works at least one week prior. The parent/guardian must contact the student's classroom teacher(s) to make arrangements for missed assignments.

Grade-level Promotion and Retention of Students

At the elementary and middle levels (K-8), students who master all grade level standards will be promoted. Students who do show mastery in one or more basic core subjects —ELA, Mathematics, Social Studies, and Science — shall have their cases considered on an individual basis and may be retained.

A recommendation for retention shall be decided through a case-by-case conference approach involving the Teacher, Counselor, and Parent/ Guardian. All information will be forwarded to the Principal for review. The Principal, considering all information, will make the final decision for retention.

Factors to be considered include teacher recommendation; academic growth and classroom achievement; standardized test scores; social, emotional, and physical development; attendance; and family conference.

Early Identification and Intervention for Grade-level Retention

Classroom teachers are expected to make every effort to identify early those students at risk of failing/retention. Administration must be notified promptly if retention is anticipated. The Teacher or designee will then contact the parent/guardian and set up a meeting to review data and develop an action plan for the student.

Promotion to High School

The following criteria are needed to be promoted to high school:

- Overall class average above 65 in ELA and Math and passing either Science or Social Studies,Attendance plays a vital role as well. Students that have absences that equal or exceed 10% of the school year may jeopardize promotion.
- Students who fail 2 or more core courses must attend summer school. Summer school is mandatory for 7th & 8th grade students who fail.
- Students who have not successfully passed more than one class are not eligible to participate in graduation.

Academic Honesty Policy

WCCS supports a learning environment where honesty is valued. Academic dishonesty compromises this standard and will not be tolerated. It is important that each student's work solely reflects their best effort. Academic dishonesty hinders the ability of a teacher to diagnose or remediate the work of a student. Academic dishonesty transcends being solely a private matter between teacher and student. It is of concern to the entire school community.

Examples of academic dishonesty include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Plagiarism: The act of taking ideas, writings, etc. from another and passing them off as one's own with providing appropriate reference to the source. This includes the use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools (e.g., chatGPT, Claude).
- Giving or receiving information during quizzes, tests, or examinations.
- Collaboration on assignments or reports after being directed otherwise.
- Unauthorized use, receipt, or distribution of quiz, test, or examination items or questions.
- Unauthorized use or misuse of technology and/or copying technology files, AI, etc.
- Copying another student's work.
- False information included in college, scholarship, or financial aid application.
- Cheating in any form.

A single violation of this policy will result in the following consequences:

1. Notify parent/guardian.
2. The student(s) will receive a zero for the academic work.
3. The student's future work will be closely scrutinized.
4. Other appropriate actions, including but not limited to disciplinary measures, may be taken according to the severity of the case.

Uniform and Personal Appearance

Dress Code

WCCS students wear a uniform to help create a safe and orderly environment, and eliminate the competition and distractions caused by varied dress styles. You will be expected to arrive in uniform every day. Students are REQUIRED to remain in their uniform for the entire school day, including lunch periods.

GRADES K – 8
Tops: **Navy Blue School Logo Top** ● WCCS Embroidered short sleeve polo. ● WCCS Embroidered Sweatshirt **Short-Sleeve Polo shirts** - students should not wear any visible shirt underneath their polo. If students are cold, they can wear a school sweatshirt.
Bottoms: **Khaki or Navy (color)** ● Uniform or Dress Pants* ● Uniform or Dress Shorts** ● Uniform Jumper ● Uniform or Dress Skirt*** ***Dress Pants** - do not include denim, ripped material, leggings, or jeggings. Dress pants shall be made of cotton, polyester blend, or wool. ****Dress Shorts** - must be made of dress pant materials and have at least a 7-inch inseam; the bottom must be hemmed (no cut-offs). *****Dress Skirts** - must be made of dress pant materials and have at least a 9-inch inseam; the bottom must be hemmed (no cut-offs).
Clothing that is ripped, cut, slashed, or has holes, is prohibited, even on dress-down days. Clothes with rips that are filled underneath are not allowed.
Footwear: **Shoes or Sneakers** ● Rubber Bottom Shoes - appropriate for running and playing. ● Cotton, leather, or man-made leather, solid uppers ● Shoes must have enclosed heels and toes. ● No sandals, slides, slippers, high heels, house shoes, moccasins, boots, flip-flops, rubber body shoes, or Crocs are allowed. ● These footwear requirements are due to safety issues.

Additional Dress Code Requirements and Limitations

In addition to making sure you are wearing the school uniform, WCCS requires that you follow these additional guidelines in terms of uniform appearance and personal appearance:

- Headgear should not be worn in school except for those whose religious beliefs require it and who have medical concerns. Students may not wear hats, caps, silk scarves, bonnets, sports

bands, bandanas, sunglasses, combs, picks, etc., inside the building. Students may wear solid color, non-tying headbands, 2 inches or less in width, to keep hair out of their face or to cover edges.

- Hoodies, coats, jean jackets, jogging/athletic suits, gloves, or clothing generally accepted as outerwear may not be worn once students arrive at school and never in class. In cold weather, students should wear a school sweatshirt.
- Jewelry that may be deemed a weapon is not allowed. This includes, but is not limited to, rings covering multiple fingers, spiked necklaces, oversized hoop earrings, belts with large buckles, and chain-like objects.
- Clothing associated with gangs or street clubs/crews is not acceptable.
- All clothing, including socks, must be deemed school appropriate.
- Special clothing may be required in specific situations.

Dress Down - Dress Code

On certain days students may be permitted to have a non-uniform top day. The following guidelines must be adhered to:

- Westminster Community Charter School T-shirt and uniform bottom.
- Theme shirt and uniform bottom.
- Dress Down - shirt of choice.
- Uniform pants are required on all dress-down days.
- Clothing that is ripped, cut, slashed, or has holes, is prohibited, even on dress-down days. Clothes with rips that are filled underneath are not allowed.
- Shoes must be approved sneakers or rubber bottom shoes. No sandals, slides, slippers, high heels, house shoes, moccasins, boots, flip-flops, rubber body shoes, or Crocs are allowed.

Backpacks/Totes/Purses/Fanny Packs are not allowed in classrooms or the lunchroom. Backpacks and totes should only be used to transport books and supplies to and from school. Any student attempting to enter a class with the above items will not be allowed in class. Students must leave backpacks in the coatroom or their locker from arrival until dismissal. Backpacks for middle school students must fit in the lockers. If your student's backpack is larger than their locker and will NOT fit, direct them to speak to their homeroom teacher.

Parent/Guardian Partnership

If your child comes to school out of uniform, you will be contacted to bring them appropriate clothing. If there is an extenuating circumstance, please notify the school in writing or a call. Westminster polo shirts and crew neck sweatshirts can be purchased online through the school website or in the Main Office.

Arrival and Dismissal Procedures

Westminster Community Charter School Staff has established busing, car rider and walker procedures and rules to provide the safest and most efficient transportation environment for our students. Anyone driving around the school during school hours, and especially during arrival or dismissal, should drive slowly through the car rider zone, located on the Westminster Avenue side of the building. Please watch carefully for children and adults crossing the parking lot.

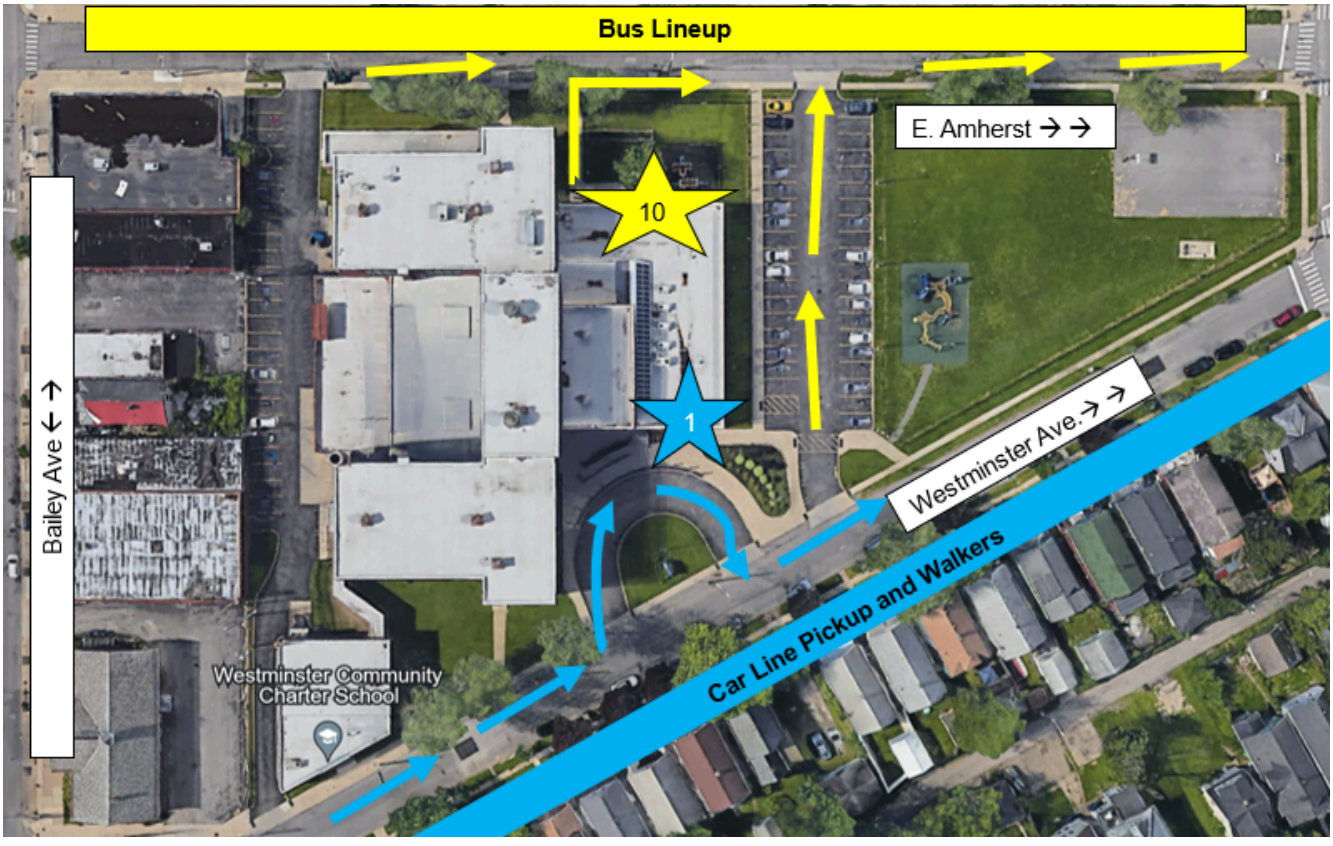
Morning Procedure

The school day begins at 7:25 a.m. Please do not drop off your child before 7:00 a.m. If you have a childcare issue, please contact the Main Office to discuss a solution. Any student dropped off after 7:25 A.M. is tardy and must receive a tardy pass from school staff. Students with excess tardies are being negatively impacted by the loss of instructional time. Being tardy 10 minutes a day can add up to missing 5 days of school. Students with excess tardies may have disciplinary consequences. Students have three minutes from the time written on the late pass to report to their homeroom. If your student arrives after 7:55 you must bring them into the building and sign them in as Tardy.

Dismissal Procedure

Dismissal begins at 2:00 p.m., and all students should be picked up by 2:10 p.m. No student can be released early after 1:30 P.M. In order to have our students exit the building in a safe and timely manner, please follow the dismissal process below:

- Students taking the school bus will be dismissed on the East Amherst side of the building and main parking lot (east side of the building) for non-BPS buses. Cars will not be allowed to park or wait for students during dismissal in these areas.
- Students who are walking or being picked up by car, will be picked up on the Westminster Avenue side of the building. Cars should enter the carline at the back of line. For the safety of all students, do not cut into the line as cars pull away.
- At risk of being ticketed by the Buffalo Police Department, no business driveways should ever be blocked.



Dismissal Procedures for Pick-Up

Each family will be provided with a hanging tag with the family car number. This should be hung from the rear-view mirror of the vehicle. Multiple hanging tags will be provided upon request. This will be used to link students with people who can pick them up.

If the person who is picking up a student is unable to provide the appropriate family car number, they will be required to show identification and have the student's School Pass form checked. Any person not on the form will be unable to pick up a student(s) without parent or guardian permission.

- Students will not be dismissed unless their number is entered.
- *All car riders must be picked up by 2:10 p.m. If you are late picking up your child, the administration will give you a warning. If the problem continues, the administration will notify the Buffalo Police Department. If you are running late, please call the office to make arrangements. We do not have additional staff to monitor children after 2:10 p.m.

********Text messages or cell phone calls from a parent/guardian to a student cannot be used to release a student from school at dismissal.**********

Walkers

- Walkers will be dismissed at 2:00 and will leave from Westminster Ave. side of the school.
- Walk Up pick-ups will be permitted between 2:00 and 2:10 p.m.

School Attendance Policy

Students are required to attend school all days that school is in session for the full day, 7:25 a.m. – 1:55 p.m., unless they have a valid (excused) reason. Students that arrive after 7:25am will be considered tardy. Students that habitually miss school without a valid excuse may be considered truant. Definitions of these terms and more information about excused and unexcused absences are below

Leaving the Building

Students are not permitted to leave the building during school hours. Students are only permitted to leave with parent/guardian or parent/guardian designee. A parent/guardian must sign in at the office when entering the school building. A parent/guardian must also sign their child out when leaving school for any reason.

Attendance policies are based on the principle that regular school attendance maximizes the student's interaction with their teachers and peers and are a significant component of academic success. Improved school attendance generally increases student achievement.The New York State Department of Education has defined any student who misses 10% or more school days as chronically absent. Missing just two (2) days of school a month – for any reason – can be a problem for kids, in a number of ways.

Children who are chronically absent in kindergarten and first grade are less likely to read on grade level by the time they reach third grade. For older students, being chronically absent is strongly associated with failing at school – even more than low grades or test scores. When absences add up, these students are more likely to be suspended and drop out of high school. Chronic absenteeism is also linked with teen substance abuse, as well as poor health as adults. Please help support your scholar's educational success by having them at school, all day, and every day. In order to support you with this the following supports are in place.

Therefore, WCCS attendance policy provides for the early identification of attendance problems and effective methods to address the issue(s). Successful implementation of any attendance policy requires cooperation among all members of the education community, including parents/guardians, students, teachers, administrators, and support staff. WCCS has made the commitment to:

1. Maintain adequate attendance records on each student, in order to ensure that each student maximizes achievement of academic standards.
2. Increase school completion for all students.
3. Identify general attendance patterns in order to design attendance improvement efforts.
4. Ensure student's whereabouts can be accounted for.
5. Identify patterns of student behavior that may require student and /or parent/guardian attention.
6. Attendance is monitored as part of WCCS's Multi-Tiered System of Supports. Students may receive increasing levels of support based on attendance patterns, barriers, and documented need.

Supporting Student Attendance

WCCS attendance policy provides for the early identification of attendance problems and effective methods to address the issue(s). Successful implementation of any attendance policy requires cooperation among all members of the education community, including parents/guardians, students, teachers, administrators, and support staff. WCCS has made the commitment to:

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3. Identify general attendance patterns in order to design attendance improvement efforts.
4. Ensure student's whereabouts can be accounted for.
5. Identify patterns of student attendance behavior that may require student and /or parent/guardian attention.
6. Attendance is monitored as part of WCCS's Multi-Tiered System of Supports. Students may receive increasing levels of support based on attendance patterns, barriers, and documented needs.

School Level Supports Around Attendance

Universal Prevention - All students

- Each day a child is absent, the parents will receive a robo-call notification that they are not at school.
- If a child is absent for three consecutive days within a week without notifying the school, the teacher or another Westminster staff will call to check in on the child and see if they need any support.

Early Prevention – Students who have missed more than 8% of days will receive additional supports.

- Tier 1 supports will continue.
- Parent(s)/Guardian(s) will be notified in writing that the student has been placed into a Tier 2 attendance support level.

- Parent(s)/Guardian(s) will attend a parent meeting in person or on the phone with the school counselor to determine what the school can do to support the student with their attendance.
- The possibility of student retention will be addressed.
- If the student is absent, the Parent(s)/Guardian(s) will receive a call from a child support team member.

Intensive Intervention – Students who have missed more than 15% of days will receive higher levels of supports.

- Tier 2 support will continue.
- Each student will be assigned to a success mentor who will meet with them weekly to see if they need anything to help them be successful at school.
- Parent(s)/Guardian(2) will receive a letter in the mail to notify them that the student has reached Chronic Status.
- The parent(s)/guardian(s) will attend an in-person parent conference with the assistant principal and school counselor.
- The possibility of student retention will be addressed.
- Home visits will be conducted for families who are not responding to the school attempts to reach out.
- As a last resort, Child Protective Services may be called if parents are not willing to meet and/or discuss the attendance issue with the school and if the student is academically failing due to their lack of attendance.

Definitions of Excused and Unexcused Absences, Tardiness and Early Departures

Absent – The student is not in the school building for the entire day or does not attend the assigned class during the entire period of time allotted for that class.

Tardy – A student enters the building after the designated arrival time, or a student enters a class after the designated start time.If a student arrives at WCCS after 7:25 am, they are considered tardy to school.

> **Excused Tardiness:** If you arrive at school late due to a medical or court appointment, you must provide documentation. Failure to do so will result in an “unexcused tardy.” You will be given a “late slip” for admittance to class. You will have three days to bring in a note to change this to an excused tardiness.

Truancy- Truancy is the unlawful absence or irregular attendance upon instruction by a student of compulsory education age and is defined as a significant, unexcused absence rate that has a detrimental effect on the child’s education.

New York State law requires that a student attend school. Truancy will not be tolerated. Parent/Guardian conference and penalties will occur as a result of truancy.

- Students with attendance concerns will have letters sent home frequently to advise parents of their attendance concerns.
- The student will be referred to the School Counselor/ Social Worker.
- Students and Parents will attend an “Attendance Meeting.”
- Home visits to offer support will be arranged.

- Students will be referred to PINS (person in need of supervision) Division.

Both Excused and Unexcused Absences count toward determination of Chronically Absent.

Excused Absences	Unexcused Absences
1. Personal illness 2. Illness or death in the family 3. Unsafe travel conditions 4. Religious observance 5. Medical appointments 6. Quarantine 7. Required court appearances 8. Approved high school visit 9. Approved cooperative work programs 10. Late bus	1. Family vacation 2. Baby sitting 3. Hair cut 4. Obtaining learner's permit or license 5. Oversleeping 6. Private instruction 7. Wedding 8. Any other reason not listed in "excused" list

Early Dismissal: A student leaves the building prior to the designated dismissal time, or a student leaves a class prior to the designated dismissal time.

1. A Parent/Guardian should try to make appointments for students so as not to interfere with the school day.
2. If it is necessary for a student to leave school early, a written request from the parent/guardian must be submitted to the school by 9:00 a.m. The student should turn their note to their HR teacher unless they arrive late when they should give it to the office. The note will be verified by a telephone call. If verification cannot be obtained, the student will not be released.
3. Students with special permission to leave early must be signed out and picked up by an approved adult.
4. No student will be released for early pickup after 1:30 P.M. If a student is released for the day before 1:30 P.M., they may not return for after school activities, such as sports practice or club meetings, for that day.
5. Any student who does not attend at least 3 hours of school is not eligible to participate in any after school activity or event.

Student Attendance and Participation

WCCS believes that classroom participation is related to and affects a student's performance and grasp of the subject matter and, as such, is properly reflected in a student's final grade. For purposes of this policy, classroom participation means that a student is in class and prepared to work.

Transfer students and students re-enrolling after having dropped out will be expected to attend a prorated minimum number of the scheduled class meetings during their time of enrollment.

Students will be considered in attendance if the student is:

a) Physically present in the classroom or working under the direction of the classroom teacher during the class schedule meeting time.

b) Working pursuant to an approved independent study program.

c) Receiving approved alternative instruction.

Students who are absent from class due to their participation in a school sponsored activity are to arrange with their teachers to make up any work missed in a timely manner as determined by the student's teacher. Attendance at school sponsored events where instruction is substantially equivalent to the instruction which was missed shall be counted as the equivalent of regular attendance in class.

Upon returning to school following a properly excused absence, tardiness, or early departure, it shall be the responsibility of the student to consult with their teacher (s) regarding arrangements to make up missed work, assignment and/or tests in accordance with the time schedule specified by the teacher.

Classroom Tardiness

Students have ample time in between classes. Failure to arrive at their next class within the designated time will result in the student being marked tardy (unexcused) unless the student presents a pass. If a student arrives at school during the change of classes, report directly to your next class. Students are responsible for any missed work due to tardiness.

Attendance Data Collection and Record Keeping

The record of each student's presence, absence, tardiness, and early departure shall be kept in a manner consistent with State Department of Education Commissioner's Regulations. An absence, tardiness or early departure will be entered as "excused" or "unexcused" along with the reason as stated.

Attendance shall be taken and recorded in accordance with the following:

a) The Attendance Policy begins upon the first day of formal enrollment in the school. Enrollment in class begins when a teacher is notified of placement. Attendance is marked beginning the first day of school.

b) Any absence from a school day or portion thereof shall be recorded as excused or unexcused in accordance with the standards articulated in this policy.

c) If a student is absent for more than fifty percent (50%) of a given class period, it will be considered an absence.

A record shall be kept of each scheduled day of instruction during which the school is closed for all or part of the day because of extraordinary circumstances including adverse weather conditions, impairment of heating facilities, insufficiency of water supply, destruction of or damage to the school, or such other cause as may be found satisfactory to the Commissioner of Education. Attendance records shall also indicate the date when a student withdraws from enrollment or is dropped from enrollment in accordance with Education Law Section 3202(1-a).

WCCS Acceptable Use Policy for Technology

The Westminster Community Charter School makes available a variety of technologies to support learning and enhance instruction. Our goal is to provide access to technology tools to facilitate resource sharing, maximize instructional opportunities, and increase communication.The users of these tools assume certain responsibilities, including the use of technology in an ethical manner.

This policy applies to all students at Westminster Community Charter School. A violation of the WCCS policy may lead to loss of computer or device privileges and/or discipline. Under certain circumstances, violations of the WCCS policy may give rise to civil and/or criminal liability. WCCS may also pursue legal action as deemed appropriate against individuals for unauthorized access, use, or destruction of information assets.

Policy Guidelines for Acceptable Use of Technology Equipment at School

WCCS provides school technology that includes, but is not limited to, computers, tablets, printers, copiers, cameras, and interactive web resources for the academic use of students. Students are not to bring in personal devices (e.g., cell phones, smart watches, Chromebooks, tablets, Bluetooth earbuds/headphones, etc.). When using WCCS computers, networks, equipment, and supplies, students are expected to respect the privacy of others and the security of the Westminster Community Charter School System.

- Only use your user ID and password – do not use another person's user ID and password.
- Do not share your password.
- Do not try to disrupt, interfere with, or destroy computers, tablets, networks, equipment, or information.
- Do not access, store, or transmit information that is hateful, harassing, insulting, offensive, false, or defamatory, sexually explicit, obscene, or otherwise inappropriate.
- Do not interfere with the academic or work activities of others.

Respect the copyrights and licenses of software and information

- Do not copy, download, install, or distribute software in violation of copyright laws or licensing agreements.
- Do not copy, share, or transmit information in violation of copyright laws.

Respect the integrity of our computers, networks, and equipment

- Do not try to access computers or networks for which you do not have permission.
- Do not install software, applications ("apps") or peripherals on a WCCS device.
- Do not bypass any security system or feature put in place to protect, monitor, or restrict access to information (e.g., do not try to avoid WCCS or GoGuardian web content filters).
- Do not create, download, install, or use software or equipment that can be used to "hack into" or damage a computer or network.
- Do not change, remove, or damage devices, networks, or equipment.
- Do not use software or hardware to keep WCCS staff from accessing information.
- Students must understand that attempts to override, disable, alter, or circumvent security restrictions, management systems, or device firmware will be considered intentional damage and shall result in disciplinary consequences.

Use information systems for authorized purposes only

- Only use computers and networks for academic activities – not to play non-academic games or for prohibited or illegal activities.
- Do not access the Internet from WCCS facilities using any network or computer not provided by WCCS.

Protect information from loss, theft, disclosure, or unauthorized use

- Do not access or share information for which you do not have permission or help others to do so.
- Do not give information to others that could help them gain access to the computers or networks of WCCS.
- Take care of the devices and equipment assigned to you to prevent loss, theft, damage, or unauthorized use. Report any loss, theft, unauthorized disclosure, or unauthorized access to a teacher or administrator.

Note: Westminster Community Charter School monitors its computers, devices, and networks, in accordance with the Child Internet Protection Act (CIPA) and has put other safeguards in place to protect information as it is stored, transmitted, and displayed. Students should have no expectation of privacy when using WCCS computers, devices and networks and anything they do can be viewed by administration at any time.

Code of Conduct

Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) for Students

The Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) program is a value and incentive based program that focuses on student learning, practicing, demonstrating, and being rewarded for exhibiting positive behaviors throughout the day. We will focus on our school values throughout the year, each month having a focus value:

Month	WCCS Focus Value
September	Trust
October	Respect
November	Patience
December	Bravery
January	Accountability
February	Love
March	Inclusivity
April	Loyalty
May	Open-Mindedness
June	Community

At WCCS, PBIS is built on five key practices:

- Explicitly teaching and modeling school-wide expectations
- Reinforcing positive behavior through consistent recognition
- Building meaningful relationships with students and families
- Using restorative and proactive practices to address challenges
- Using behavior, attendance, and academic data to guide continuous improvement
- The Code of Conduct for Westminster Community Charter School requires students, teachers, staff, invitees, visitors, volunteers, and contractors to be responsible, respectful, and safe at all times on and off campus.

WCCS celebrates students for their positive choices, growth, and achievements. Students may be recognized through:

- Verbal praise and classroom recognition
- Positive phone calls, emails, and Dojo messages home
- PBIS raffle tickets and Special Paw raffles
- Lions Letters
- Opportunities to shop at the Dojo Store
- Schoolwide PBIS community events.
- Lions Pride celebrations: recognizing achievements such as Honor Roll, Merit Roll, academic growth, attendance growth, demonstration of school values, positive behavior growth, and other student accomplishments

Maintenance of Public Order on School Property

The following rules shall govern the conduct of students, teachers, staff, licensees, invitees, visitors, volunteers, and other persons, whether or not their presence is authorized, on all property or facilities operated under the auspices of the charter school.

These rules and penalties are not to be considered exclusive or to preclude in any way the prosecution and conviction of any person for the violation of any federal, State, or local law, rule, regulation or ordinance, or the imposition of a fine or penalty provided for therein. Additionally, these rules and regulations should not be construed to limit, but rather exist in conjunction with any other codes of conduct established for the school, such as a disciplinary code and/or a bill of student rights and responsibilities.

Prohibited Conduct

No person, either singly or in concert, shall engage in conduct that impedes the maintenance of public order on school property. Examples of violations of conduct include but are not limited to the following:

- Improper dress in violation of the dress code
- Create, impersonate, or falsely represent WCCS through unauthorized social media accounts or pages, or post, share, or distribute false, defamatory, or malicious content about the school, its students, or staff.
- Indecency (including clothing/exposure, picture, or public display of affection)
- Use inappropriate gestures, language, and/or actions
- Insubordination or failure to comply toward staff members
- False allegations against students, staff and/or volunteers.
- Be in unauthorized areas of the building including students leaving class without the permission of a staff member
- Distribute or post on school property any written material, pamphlets, or posters without the prior approval of the Principal or designee.
- Harassment, coercion, discrimination, bullying, and cyber-bullying of any student or staff member.
- Create or distribute any AI-generated deepfakes with malicious intent or inappropriate impersonation nor manipulate any digital content to deceive, embarrass, or harm others.
- Malicious and willful types of behavior that endangers the welfare of others or inciting others to engage in inappropriate behavior.

- Willfully cause physical injury to any other person, or threaten to use force, which would result in such injury. For physical altercations, all parties, no matter who instigated or started the altercation, will be held accountable.
- Physically neither restrain or detain any other person, nor remove such person from any place where they are authorized to remain, except as necessary to maintain the established educational process.
- Willfully damage, destroy, or vandalize school property, nor remove or use such property without authorization.
- Without permission, express or implied, enter into any private office or classroom of an administrative officer, teacher, or staff member.
- Enter or remain in any building or facility for any purpose other than its authorized use or in such a manner as to obstruct its authorized use by others.
- Without authorization, remain in any building or facility after it is normally closed, nor without permission to enter any building or facility prior to its normal opening.
- Refuse to leave any building or facility after being required to do so by the Principal or designee or an authorized administrative officer or their designee.
- Willfully obstruct or interfere with the free movement of persons and vehicles.
- Deliberately disrupt or prevent the peaceful and orderly conduct of classes, lectures, and meetings or deliberately interfere with the freedom of any person to express protected views, unless such disruption is necessary to maintain order of the educational process.
- Possess on school property any rifle, shotgun, pistol, revolver, knife, chain, club, or other weapon, whether or not the person has a license to possess such weapon. Further, it is the duty of the Principal or designee to inform the police of the presence or use of any such weapon or implements used as weapons on school property.
- Violate any Federal or State statute or regulation, local ordinance, or school policy.
- Possess, use, or distribute alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, unauthorized prescription drugs, or drug paraphernalia (including vapes and e-cigarettes).

Staff members are required to report violations of these rules to the Principal or designee and to make reasonable efforts to stop prohibited conduct. The Principal or designee is responsible for the enforcement of these rules.

Penalties and Enforcement

Whenever possible and appropriate, WCCS will use the least intrusive, most supportive response that addresses the concern, while considering student needs, circumstances, and school safety. Examples may include:

- reteaching expectations
- reflection/problem-solving
- restorative conversation or circle
- mediation when appropriate
- behavior goal setting
- family meeting
- targeted interventions and small groups
- Check-In/Check-Out or mentoring

- behavior contracts

Students found in violation of the above Code may face disciplinary penalties such as, but not limited to those listed below. Definitions for each of these actions can be found under "Additional Disciplinary Actions"

- Parent Conference
- Behavior Contract
- Loss of Privileges
- In School Intervention
- Out of School Suspension
- The withdrawal of authorization to remain on school property
- Suspension or restriction of access to school property
- Long-term suspension or expulsion
- Arrest

Adults (staff, visitors, volunteers, etc.) found in violation of the above Code may also face disciplinary action, including but not limited to removal from property, suspension and/or restriction of visitor access to the property, and/or penalty by law.

Student Discipline Code

This Code sets forth the charter school's policy regarding how students are expected to behave when participating in school activities on and off school grounds, and how the school will respond when students fail to behave in accordance with these rules.

In all disciplinary matters, students will be given notice and will have the opportunity to present their version of the facts and circumstances leading to the imposition of disciplinary sanctions to the staff member imposing such sanctions. Depending on the severity of the infraction, disciplinary responses include suspension (short or long term), exclusion from extracurricular activities, and expulsion. Where appropriate, school officials also will contact law enforcement agencies.

Definitions

For purposes of this Code:

- ***"short term suspension"*** shall refer to the removal of a student from school for disciplinary reasons for a maximum of five days.
- ***"long term suspension"*** shall refer to the removal of a student from school for disciplinary reasons for more than five days up to the remainder of the school year.
- ***"expulsion"*** shall refer to the permanent removal of a student from school for disciplinary reasons.

Short-Term Suspensions

A student who is determined to have committed any of the infractions listed below shall be minimally subjected to a short-term suspension on a case-by-case situation based on the individual circumstances of the incident and the student's disciplinary record. Such a student may also be subject to any of the disciplinary measures set forth in the discipline matrix, and, depending on the severity of the infraction, a long-term suspension also may be imposed and referrals to law enforcement authorities may be made.

In addition, a student who commits any of the acts listed, which would ordinarily result in a short- term suspension, may, instead or in addition, be subject to a long-term suspension at the Principal or designee's discretion.

Procedures and Due Process for Short-term Suspensions

An administrator may impose a short-term suspension. Before imposing a short-term suspension, the administrator shall verbally inform the student of the suspension, the reason(s) for it, and whether it will be served in school or out of school. The student shall be given an opportunity to deny or explain the charges. Parent notification will be made in writing. When appropriate and consistent with school policy and law, WCCS may:

- assign reflection or restorative learning before the student's return
- communicate with the family about next steps
- hold a re-entry meeting
- develop a re-entry/support plan
- identify restorative actions and/or accountability measures
- consider whether additional student supports are needed upon re-entry from suspension

The administrative decision to impose a short-term suspension or removal may be appealed to the Board of Trustees of the charter school in accordance with the School Complaints Procedure pursuant to Education Law section 2855(4).

Long-term Suspensions

A student who is determined to have committed any of the infractions listed below shall be subject minimally to a long-term suspension, unless the Principal or designee or Board of Trustees determines that an exception should be made based on the circumstances of the incident and the student's disciplinary record. Such students may also be subject to any of the disciplinary measures listed under Penalties and Enforcement, a referral to law enforcement authorities, and/or to expulsion.

Disciplinary Infractions that may result in Long-term Suspension

- Assault on any student or staff member.
- Possess, use, or attempt to use, or transfer any firearm*, knife, razor blade, explosive, mace, tear gas, or other dangerous object of no reasonable use to the student at school.
- Commit or attempt to commit arson on school property.
- Possess, use, or distribute any alcoholic beverage, tobacco, marijuana, unauthorized prescription drugs, or drug paraphernalia on school property or at school-sponsored events.
- Intentionally cause physical injury to another person.
- Vandalize school property causing damage.
- Possess any explosive device.
- Make a false bomb threat or pull a false emergency alarm.
- Any threat (physical, verbal, or electronic) of inflicting violence or causing serious harm to another individual
- Create or distribute any AI-generated deepfakes with malicious intent or inappropriate impersonation or manipulate any digital content to deceive, embarrass, or harm others.
- Commit any act, which school officials reasonably conclude warrants a long-term suspension.

***Expulsion as a result of bringing a firearm to school**

Federal and State law require the expulsion from school for a period of not less than one year of a student who is determined to have brought a firearm to the school, or to have possessed a firearm at school, except that the head of school may modify such expulsion requirement for a student on a case-by-case basis, if such modification is in writing, in accordance with the Federal Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994 (as amended). “Weapon,” as used in this law means a "firearm," as defined by 18 USC§8921, and includes firearms and explosives. (New York Education Law §3214(3)(d) effectuates this federal law.) The head of school shall refer a student under the age of sixteen who has been determined to have brought a weapon or firearm to school to a presentment agency for a juvenile delinquency proceeding consistent with Article 3 of the Family Court Act except a student fourteen or fifteen years of age who qualifies for juvenile offender status under Criminal Procedure Law § 1.20(42). The head of school shall refer any pupil sixteen years of age or older or a student fourteen or fifteen years of age who qualifies for juvenile offender status under Criminal Procedure Law § 1.20(42), who has been determined to have brought a weapon or firearm to school to the appropriate law enforcement officials.

Procedures and Due Process for Long-term Suspensions

Only the Principal may impose a long-term suspension. Such a suspension may be imposed only after the student has been found guilty at a formal suspension hearing. In certain circumstances, the Principal or designee may recommend expulsion of the student from school. Upon determining that a student's action warrants a possible long-term suspension, the Principal or designee shall verbally inform the student that they are being suspended and considered for a long-term suspension (or expulsion) and state the reasons for such actions. The Principal or designee also shall notify the student's parent(s)/guardian(s) in writing. Where possible, notification also shall be provided by telephone if the school has been provided with a contact telephone number for the parent(s)/guardian(s). Such notice shall provide a description of the incident or incidents, which resulted in the suspension and shall indicate that a formal hearing will be held on the matter, which may result in a long-term suspension (or expulsion). The notification provided shall be in the dominant language used by the parent(s) or guardian(s). At the formal hearing, the student shall have the right to be represented by counsel, question witnesses, and present evidence.

If the Principal or designee has initiated the suspension proceeding, the Principal or designee shall personally hear and determine the proceeding or may, in their discretion, designate a hearing officer to conduct the hearing. The hearing officer's report shall be advisory only and the Principal or designee may accept or reject all or part of it. The Principal or designee's decision after the formal hearing to impose a long-term suspension or expulsion may be appealed to the Board of Trustees of the charter school in accordance with the School Complaints Procedure pursuant to Education Law section 2855(4).

Additional Disciplinary Measures

The disciplinary measures listed below may be imposed in addition to short-term or long- term suspensions or, if an exception has been made by the Principal to the imposition of a minimum suspension, in place of such suspension. Behavior not listed in Part A or Part B of this Code but determined by appropriate school staff to warrant disciplinary action, including but not limited to missing classes without permission and arriving late to class without a reasonable excuse, also may be subject to these additional disciplinary measures.

The Principal or designee may only impose in-school suspensions and suspensions of transportation. All other disciplinary measures may be imposed by faculty members or a teacher, who must inform the Principal or designee of such action within a reasonable time.

Behavioral Contract

School staff may design written agreements with students subject to punishment under this code to identify target behaviors, define expectations, and describe consequences, provided that the affected

student and their parent(s)/guardian(s) are informed of the decision to enter into a behavioral contract. Any student on a behavioral contract will be closely monitored by support staff monthly for progress at which time the contract may become void pending appropriate behavior.

Loss of School Privileges

After notice to the student and parent(s) or guardian(s), a student may be suspended from participation in any or all-extracurricular activities. The student and parent(s) or guardian(s) shall be given an opportunity to meet informally with the Principal or designee or teacher involved.

In School Short-term Suspension

Students may be temporarily removed from the classroom and placed in an alternate location where the student will receive substantially equivalent education. The student and their parent(s)/guardian(s) will be given a reasonable opportunity for an informal conference regarding such suspension with whoever was involved in imposing the suspension.

Provision of Services During Removal

WCCS will ensure that alternative educational services are provided to a child who has been suspended from school in accordance with the law. Instruction will take place virtually. WCCS will, for those students removed for a period of less than 10 days, ensure that each affected student receives all classroom assignments and a schedule to complete such assignments during the time of their suspension. Provisions will be made to permit a suspended student to make up assignments or tests missed as a result of such suspension. The school will also provide additional alternative instruction and appropriate means to assist the student, so that the student is given an opportunity to complete assignments.

During any subsequent removal that, combined with previous removals, equals 10 or more school days, but does not constitute a change in placement, during the school year, services must be provided to the extent determined necessary to enable the child to appropriately progress in the general curriculum and in achieving the goals of his or her IEP. In these cases, school personnel, in consultation with the child's special education teacher, make the service determination. During any removal for drug and weapon offenses (pursuant to CFR 300.520(a)(2)) services will be provided to the extent necessary to enable the child to appropriately progress in the general curriculum and to progress towards the goals in their IEP. These service determinations will be made by the CSE of the student's district of residence. The school will place students in interim alternative educational settings as appropriate and mandated by CFR 300.520(a)(2).

During any subsequent removal that does constitute a change in placement, but where the behavior is not a manifestation of its disability, the services must be provided to the extent necessary to enable the child to appropriately progress in the general curriculum and in to progress towards meeting the goals in their IEP. The CSE of the student’s district of residence will make the service determination.

Discipline Procedures for Special Education Students

In addition to the discipline procedures applicable to all students, the following procedures are applicable to students with disabilities. The school will comply with Federal and State Regulations. A student not specifically identified as having a disability but whose school district of residence or charter school, prior to the behavior, which is the subject of the disciplinary action, has a basis of knowledge (in accordance with 34 CFR 300.527(b)) that a disability exists shall be disciplined in accordance with these provisions.

If a student identified as having a disability is suspended during the course of the school year for a total of eight days, such student may be referred to the Committee for Special Education (CSE) of the

student's district of residence for reconsideration of the student's educational placement. Such a student shall not be suspended for a total of more than 10 days during the school year without the specific involvement of the CSE of the student's district of residence prior to the 11th day of suspension, because such suspensions may be considered to be a change in placement.

During any subsequent removal that, combined with previous removals, equals 10 or more school days, but does not constitute a change in placement, during the school year, services must be provided to the extent determined necessary to enable the child to appropriately progress in the general curriculum and in achieving the goals of his or her IEP. In these cases, school personnel, in consultation with the child's special education teacher, make the service determination. During any removal for drug and weapon offenses (pursuant to CFR 300.520(a)(2)) services will be provided to the extent necessary to enable the child to appropriately progress in the general curriculum and to progress towards the goals in their IEP. These service determinations will be made by the CSE of the student's district of residence. The school will place students in interim alternative educational settings as appropriate and mandated by CFR 300.520(a)(2).

During any subsequent removal that does constitute a change in placement, but where the behavior is not a manifestation of its disability, the services must be provided to the extent necessary to enable the child to appropriately progress in the general curriculum and in to progress towards meeting the goals in their IEP. The CSE of the student's district of residence will make the service determination.

In considering the placement of students referred because of disciplinary problems, the CSE of the student's district of residence is expected to follow its ordinary policies with respect to parental notification and involvement.

The school shall work with the district to ensure that the Manifestation Team of the student's district of residence meets upon any of the following:

- The commission of an infraction by a student with a disability who has previously been suspended for the maximum allowable number of days.
- The commission of any infraction by a disabled student, regardless of whether the student has previously been suspended during the school year; if such infraction was committed by a non-disabled student, the School Administrator would seek to impose a suspension in excess of five days.

Procedures and Due Process for Special Education Students

If discipline which would constitute a change in placement is contemplated for any student, then (1) not later than the date on which the decision to take such action is made, the parents of the student with a disability shall be notified of that decision and provided the procedural safeguards notice, and (2) immediately if possible, but in no case later than 10 school days after the date on which such decision is made, the CSE of the student's district of residence and other qualified personnel shall meet and review the child's disability and the behavior subject to the disciplinary action.

If, upon review, the district of residence determines that the child's behavior was not a manifestation of his or her disability then the child may be disciplined in the same manner as a child without a disability, except as provided in 34 CFR §300.121 (d) (which relates to the provision of services to students with disabilities during periods of removal).

Parents may request a hearing to challenge the manifestation determination. Except as provided below, the child will remain in their current educational placement while the hearing is pending.

If a parent requests a hearing or an appeal regarding a disciplinary action relating to weapons or drugs to challenge the interim alternative educational setting or the manifestation determination, the child shall remain in the interim alternative educational setting pending the decision of the hearing officer or until

the expiration of the term period provided for in the disciplinary action, whichever occurs first, unless the parent and charter school agree otherwise.

Records of Student Discipline

WCCS will maintain written records of all suspensions and expulsions including the name of the student, a description of the behavior engaged in, the disciplinary action taken, and a record of the number of days a student has been suspended or removed for disciplinary reasons.

Student Rights and Responsibilities

Participation in School Activities

All students have the following rights:

- To have the opportunity to take part in all school activities on an equal basis regardless of race, color, national origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation, gender, and sex.
- To address the school on the same terms as any citizen.
- Similarly, all students are bound by the same rules for exclusion from school activities and public address.

Permanent Student Records

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

Notification of Rights Under the Family Educational Rights and Schools Privacy Act (FERPA)

The Family Educational Rights and Schools Privacy Act (FERPA) affords parents certain rights with respect to the student's education records. They are:

1. The right to inspect and review the student's education records within 45 days of the day Westminster receives a request for access. Parents should submit to the principal a written request that identifies the record(s) they wish to inspect. The principal will make arrangements for access and notify the parent 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 believes are inaccurate or misleading. Parents may ask Westminster to amend a record that they believe is inaccurate or misleading. They should write to the principal; clearly identify the part of the record they want changed and specify why it is inaccurate or misleading. If the administration decides not to amend the record as requested by the parent, the parent will be notified of the decision in writing, and they will be advised of their right to a hearing regarding the request for amendment. Additional information regarding the hearing procedures will be provided to the parent when notified of the right to a hearing.
3. The right to consent to disclosures of personally identifiable information contained in 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. A school official is a person employed by Westminster as an administrator, instructor, or support staff member (including health or medical

staff); a person serving on the Board of Trustees; a person or company with whom Westminster has contracted to perform a special task (such as an attorney, auditor, medical consultant or therapist); or a parent or student serving on an official committee, or assisting another school official in performing his/her tasks. A school official has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record in order to fulfill his/her professional responsibility.

4. The right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by Westminster to comply with the requirements of FERPA. The name and address of the office that administers FERPA is:

   Family Policy Compliance Office

   U.S. Department of Education 600 Independence Avenue

   Washington, D.C. 20202-4605

Westminster may release "directory information" without consent as required by Section 99.3. This may include, but may not be limited to, information such as the student's name, address, telephone listing, date and place of birth, participation in officially recognized activities and sports, weight, and height of members of athletic teams, photos/images, dates of attendance, and most recent educational institution attended. Parents wishing to prevent the release of such information about their child(ren) must submit a written request to the Main Office no later than October 1.

Freedom of Expression

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

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

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

Search and Seizure

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

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

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

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

Dignity for All Students Act (DASA) (Enacted July 1, 2012)

The New York State Dignity For All Students Act (Dignity Act) was signed into law in 2010. This legislation amended State Education Law by creating a new Article 2 –Dignity for All Students.

- The Dignity Act states that NO student shall be subjected to harassment or discrimination by employees or students on school property or at a school function based on their actual or perceived race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender, or sex.
- The Dignity Act amended Section 801-a of New York State Education Law regarding instruction in civility, citizenship, and character education by expanding the concepts of tolerance, respect for others, and dignity.
- The Dignity Act also amended Section 2801 of the Education Law, instructing Boards of Education to include language in the codes of conduct to comply with the Dignity Act.

The goal of the Dignity Act is to create a safe and supportive school climate where students can learn and focus, rather than fear being discriminated against and/or verbally and/or physically harassed. All public elementary and secondary school students have the right to attend school in a safe, welcoming, considerate, and caring environment.

Dignity Act Coordinator/Civil Rights Coordinator: Joseph Fabiano, School Counselor

<u>Definitions for Student Rights and Responsibilities:</u>

School Property – means in or within any building, structure, athletic playing field, playground, parking lot, or land contained within the real property boundary line of a public elementary or secondary school, or in or on a school bus.

School Bus – means every motor vehicle owned by a public or governmental agency or private school and operated for the transportation of pupils, children of pupils, teachers and other persons acting in a supervisory capacity, to or from school or school activities, or, privately owned and operated for compensation for the transportation of pupils, children of pupils, teachers and other persons acting in a supervisory capacity to or from school or school activities.

School Function – means a school-sponsored extracurricular event or activity.

Disability – means (a) a physical, mental or medical impairment resulting from anatomical, physiological, genetic or neurological conditions which prevents the exercise of a normal bodily function or is demonstrable by medically accepted clinical or laboratory diagnostic techniques or (b) a record of such an impairment or (c) a condition regarded by others as such an impairment, provided, however, that in all provisions of this article dealing with employment, the term must be limited to disabilities

which, upon the provision of reasonable accommodations, do not prevent the complainant from performing in a reasonable manner the activities involved in the job or occupation sought or held.

Emotional harm – that takes place in the context of "harassment or bullying" means harm to a student's emotional well-being through creation of a hostile school environment that is so severe or pervasive as to interfere with a student's education unreasonably and substantially.

Employee – means any person receiving compensation from a school district or employee of a contracted service provider or worker placed within the school under a public assistance employment program, pursuant to title 9-B of article 5 of the Social Services Law, and consistent with the provisions of such title for the provision of services to such district, its students or employees, directly or through contract, whereby such services performed by such person involve direct student contact

Gender – means a person's actual or perceived sex and includes a person's gender identity or expression

Sexual Orientation – means actual or perceived heterosexuality, same-gender attraction, or bisexuality

Harassment/bullying – means the creation of a hostile environment by conduct or by threats, intimidation, or abuse, including cyberbullying, that:

a) has or would have the effect of unreasonably and substantially interfering with a student's educational performance, opportunities, or benefits, or mental, emotional, or physical well-being; or

b) reasonably causes or would reasonably be expected to cause a student to fear for his or her physical safety; or

c) reasonably causes or would reasonably be expected to cause physical injury or emotional harm to a student; or

d) occurs off school property and creates or would foreseeably create a risk of substantial disruption within the school environment, where it is foreseeable that the conduct, threats, intimidation, or abuse might reach school property.

For purposes of this definition, the term "threats, intimidation or abuse" shall include verbal and non-verbal actions.

Cyberbullying means harassment/bullying, as defined above, through any form of electronic communication.

Reporting Discrimination, Harassment, and Bullying: Students can report any acts of harassment, discrimination, bullying, and cyberbullying to any staff member, faculty member, or employee. An anonymous report form can be found on the school's website.

Miscellaneous

Cell Phones and other Internet-enabled Devices

In accordance with New York Education Law § 2803, students attending Westminster Community Charter School are to be free from all non-school issued internet-enabled devices and phones from the start of school through the end of the school day, with limited exceptions. Cell phones and other personal electronic devices (including smartphones, flip phones, tablets, laptops, e-readers, smartwatches, smart glasses and any other personal web-capable device and the headphones and/or earbuds connected to those devices) brought onto school grounds are to be locked away in school-provided lockable containers upon entry into the school through the time they exit for the day. It is the responsibility of the student and/or parent/guardian to properly label any electronic device brought

to school. Westminster will not be liable for lost electronic devices that are not properly labeled or properly secured.

Lockers

Middle School students will be assigned a locker for their individual use at WCCS. This locker is for storing books, coats, and personal items necessary for school. Locks will be issued to students at the start of the school year. If the lock is lost, the cost of the lock will be placed on the student at a cost of $15.00. The lock will follow the child through their middle school years. The lockers should not be used to store valuable items you bring from home. WCCS will not be liable for personal items you leave in your locker or bring to school with you. To keep your school items safe, we strongly advise you to keep your locker private. **Do not trade lockers with another student. Do not let another student share your locker.** It is your responsibility to see that your locker is kept locked and in order at all times. You should report any damage, vandalism, or non/working condition of your homeroom. Please remember that your locker is school property and remains at all times under the control of the school; however, you have full responsibility for the security of your locker and what is in it. Periodic locker clean outs will be expected and supervised by WCCS staff to ensure that lockers are kept clean and orderly.

Lost and Found

There will be a lost and found area in the atrium. If you find books, clothing, or personal items on the school grounds, please bring these items to the office. If you lose something, check the lost and found. If the items are not claimed after five (5) days, they will be donated to a local charity. **Students that lose class novels will be asked to pay the replacement cost of $5.00.

Lunch Periods

All students will remain at school during the lunch period. Lunch is provided free of all costs for students, or students may bring lunch. During the lunch period, students will be expected to be safe,respectful and responsible. Teachers on duty during the lunch period will hold students responsible for their behavior. Students are expected to:

- use the appropriate voice level
- remain seated unless given permission
- follow adult directions
- treat others respectfully
- move safely
- When finished eating, the students will clean up their area and can choose an activity if time permits.
- Inappropriate behavior will result in loss of cafeteria privileges.
- Students are not allowed to leave the cafeteria without a pass/permission.
- Students should bring snacks or drinks that are individual portion sizes.

Class/School/Hallway Conduct

Hallways, stairwells, and lavatories are areas used by all members of WCCS. Since everyone uses these areas, there are rules of conduct that all students must follow.

We Are Safe

- Walk appropriately and keep hands, feet, and objects to yourself.
- Follow adult directions and safety procedures.

We Are Responsible

- Arrive prepared and on time.
- Use Schoolpass and follow hallway procedures.
- Care for school property and shared spaces.
- Tell trusted adults about leaks, spills, or problems.

We Are Respectful

- Use an appropriate voice level and word choice.
- Respect others' learning and personal space.
- Keep common spaces clean.

After-School Clubs and Activities

YWCA is the current after school program at WCCS. Participants must adhere to the established YWCA after school code of conduct. Additionally, Westminster Clubs, Sports and Band are a great way for students to enrich their education than by taking part. If you stay for an after-school activity, you will be expected to follow these rules:

- You must be with a teacher or other staff member at all times.
- You must abide by the WCCS code of student conduct while participating in the activity.
- You may not stay after school to wait for another student.
- You must provide your own transportation. A full list and description of after school clubs and activities will be posted after school starts and students will have an opportunity to explore those that look interesting.

Sports Eligibility

We have established certain requirements for a student to meet in order to be eligible for participation in extracurricular activities. A student must meet several criteria to be eligible:

- Demonstrate good citizenship.
- Have a 90% attendance rate excluding excused absences at the start date of the club, sport, or activity.
- Quarterly grades may only be below 65% in one class, this class cannot be Physical Education. A student who falls below a 65% in any class, may have 2 weeks to get their grade at or above a 65%. If the student fails to do so, they will be asked to leave the club, sport, or activity.
- Follow all other guidelines included in the Westminster Community Charter School Student-Parent Handbook.

Kaleida Health Clinic

WCCS provides a full-service health clinic. The clinic is run by Kaleida Health and operates on school days from 7:00 a.m.- 3:00 p.m. including the summer during school hours. The clinic consists of a Nurse Practitioner, a Medical Assistant, and a Social Worker. The health services include on-site pediatric primary care services, which may include first aid due to injuries/accidents, and sick visits and administration of medications in accordance with State Education Department guidelines.

Medications

Medications must be sent to the school in the original prescription bottle for the protection of the student and the school. There must be a note from the physician stating that medication cannot be administered outside of school hours. The note must state the amount and time of the dosage.

The parent or guardian must sign a note giving permission to administer the medication for a specific period of time including prescription medication and any over-the-counter medication. Verbal and/or telephone requests to administer medication are not acceptable.

In cases where a student requires medication during school hours, written physician verification is required. Parental permission for school personnel to supervise the consumption of medicines is also mandatory. A consent form may be obtained from the office or school nurse.

Immunizations

Before a child can be permitted to enter and attend school, parents/guardians must present documentation that their child has received all required doses of vaccines or that their child has at least received one dose of each of the required vaccines and is waiting to receive the subsequent doses at the appropriate time intervals. Proof of immunization must be provided within 14 days after the first day of school in September.

Communicable Disease

When a communicable disease is reported in a classroom, a notice will be sent home with each student in that class. If your child is diagnosed as having a communicable disease, please contact the school nurse. According to NYS Education Law, any child with an undiagnosed rash, temperature over 100 degrees, vomiting or any communicable disease will be excluded from school until diagnosed and/or treated. Parents/guardians will be notified.

If your child has lice, or you suspect the occurrence of lice, please contact the school nurse. Your child must be examined before being readmitted to the school. This procedure is very important in preventing the spread and reoccurrence of lice.

Sick Child Pick-up

If a student must leave the school during school hours due to illness, the school nurse will contact the parent/guardian. Students should be picked up and signed out at the Health Clinic.

Food Service Program

Westminster Community Charter School provides a free breakfast, lunch, and snack daily to all students.

Meal Modification Policy

Schools must make substitutions for students who are considered to have a disability and whose disability restricts their diet. Westminster Community Charter School will ensure that all food service areas are accessible and will provide auxiliary aides and services as needed. Federal regulations require schools and institutions to serve alternative meals at no extra charge to those children whose disability restricts their diet in such a way that they cannot fully participate in the food service program without some modification to the foods offered on the scheduled menu. Parents must request the special meals from the school and provide the school nurse with a doctor's note with the food item to be avoided, a brief explanation of how exposure affects the student and a recommended substitute. The nurse will compile these food allergies by grade level for the food service director on a regular basis.

Halal Food Options

Due to the large population of students and families in our district that follow Islamic dietary practices, our cafeteria provides a Halal option for each meal. The food service director receives a list each day with the number of students that could possibly request a Halal meal so that those students have that option available.

Procedure for Complaints of Discrimination related to the Food Service Program

Students can report any complaints of discrimination to any staff member, faculty member, or employee. This can be written, verbal, or anonymous. All staff must be trained in referring them to the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form and provide appropriate instructions on where and how to submit the form. The form must be submitted within 180 days by the person alleging discrimination. In addition, the Principal must be notified immediately of any complaints of discrimination at 716-816-3450.

Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410

Fax: (202) 690-7442

Email: program.intake@usda.gov

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.), should contact the Agency (State or

local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, (AD-3027) found online at: https://www.usda.gov/oascr/how-to-file-a-program-discrimination-complaint and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter as per the instructions above. This institution is an equal opportunity provider.