



FAMILY-STUDENT  
HANDBOOK

2022-2023

**PURPOSE**

Welcome to the 2022-2023 school year! The purpose of this handbook is to better acquaint parents/guardians and students with the policies and procedures which have been adopted by New Story Schools to implement a safe, efficient, and well-operated school.

## ***MISSION & VISION***

New Story Schools educate students with serious and complex behavioral and educational challenges. We provide the necessary supports to help students and their families create new stories of success and growth.

Our vision is for all students to grow and to develop as individuals to prepare for meaningful adult lives. Since the company's inception in 1997, our highly skilled educators and therapists have been working with students and their families to provide personalized education and support to help them overcome challenges and achieve success.

## ***BELIEFS AND PRACTICES***

New Story Schools provide a solid educational program in an environment that allows for social, emotional, and behavioral growth. Our small class size allows staff to focus on the individual needs of the student. Individual needs are met through the implementation of the Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and in collaboration with other related service providers.

The staff at New Story Schools work closely with parents/guardians and the student's home school district and complies with all Commonwealth of Pennsylvania regulations for licensed private schools and special education programs. Each classroom is staffed with a certified special education teacher and other necessary support staff. The type and number of support staff utilized in the classroom is based on the number of students in the classroom and the individual needs of each student. All teachers at New Story Schools are certified by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

## ***STUDENT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES***

Students of New Story Schools are ensured the right of privacy, safety, emotional security, personal property and personal space. This will be strictly adhered to and only changed if the site administrator feels there is a reasonable suspicion of any act or item which may pose serious or illegal threat to any student/staff member at New Story Schools.

## Welcome Back to New Story Schools!

Dear Parent(s) and/or Guardian(s),

On behalf of the staff at New Story Schools, I am happy to welcome you to the 2022-2023 school year! We look forward to a productive partnership with you to ensure your child can achieve their highest potential. Your guidance and support to your child's learning program is valuable. You can best support your child by ensuring that they:

- 1) Attend school daily and arrive on time
- 2) Return all paperwork sent home
- 3) Share school experiences with you so that you are aware of their school life
- 4) Inform you if they need additional support in any area or subject
- 5) Act with the safety of themselves and others in mind

Along with the items listed above, we have a few reminders for the first week of school, which will begin on 8/23/2022:

- 1) Please return the student information packet as soon as possible. These are essential to having the necessary information for our student and medical files.
- 2) We must have a physician's order and prescription to administer ANY medications during the school day.
- 3) Your home school district will be contacting you with the transportation schedules for your child
- 4) Please send your student with any items he/she may need throughout the day, such as hygiene items, snacks, and a change of clothing (if applicable).

We thank you for your support and look forward to collaborating with you this year!

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## *School Hours and Attendance*

### **School Day Schedule**

Classroom schedules/school calendars will be given to each parent/guardian at the beginning of the year and parents/guardians will be notified in the event of a schedule change.

At the beginning of the school day, students will be met by New Story Schools staff at their bus and taken directly to their classrooms. At the end of the school day, students will be taken back to their bus by New Story School staff. Bus drivers will not be permitted to escort students in/out of the building.

Students being transported by car should be dropped off 5 minutes prior to the start of the school day and picked up promptly at dismissal time. Specific drop-off and pick-up information will be distributed at the beginning of the school year.

In certain extreme situations, and as deemed necessary by an administrator and/or school district, a student's school day schedule may be altered to accommodate individual student needs.

### **School Calendar**

#### **Delayed Openings and School Closings**

In the event of inclement weather or mechanical breakdown, the school may be closed, or the starting time may be delayed. These same conditions may also necessitate early dismissal. Reports of closures or delayed opening will be broadcast beginning at 6:00 AM on your local radio/tv stations, [www.newstoryschools.com](http://www.newstoryschools.com), and by School Messenger alerts.

Please do not call the school for delay or closure information, as the telephone lines must be kept open for emergencies.

If your home school district closes, but New Story Schools is still open, you may choose to transport your student to/from school or keep them at home. This would be considered an excused absence. **If your district is open but New Story Schools is closed, do not bring your child to school!**

#### **Attendance and Absences**

Regular school attendance is imperative for student achievement in all areas. As such, students are expected to be in school, on time, each day school is in session, except for personal illness or pre-approved absences.

Absences from school are defined by the state and include legal/excused absences and illegal/unexcused absences. Both types of absences are outlined below. Only the student's parents/guardians may provide an excuse for an absence. The Director reserves the right to determine which absences are, or are not, considered legal or excused absences. In addition, the Director retains the right to request a note, or as deemed appropriate, a physician clearance following an absence.

As per state regulations, students are allotted a MAXIMUM of (10) TOTAL absent (excused or unexcused) days for the school year. Any absence beyond (10) cumulative days will require a doctor's note from there on out. If neglected by parents/guardians, it will be reported to the appropriate authorities for failing to comply with the statutory requirements of compulsory attendance (any student between the ages of six and 18).

### **Legal or Excused Absences**

Students may legally be absent because of personal illness, quarantine, impassable roads, death in the immediate family, or other compelling situations directly affecting the student.

A student returning from a legal or excused absence will be required to provide a note.

The following requires a doctor's note upon returning to school:

- Upon returning from three (3) consecutive excused absences.
- Upon returning from an absence due to a communicable illness/disease.
- Upon returning after exceeding (10) cumulative absences for the school year.

The Director will notify the local home school district in the event a student requires an extended absence due to an illness.

### **Illegal or Unexcused Absences**

Absence of students resulting from parent/guardian neglect, illegal employment, or truancy is unexcused and/or illegal according to compulsory attendance regulations. Parents/guardians are responsible for exercising whatever reasonable supervision and control is necessary for their student to maintain regular attendance.

**A student returning following an unexcused absence will be required to have a note upon their return to school.** The Director, or designee, will contact the parents/guardians of any student who has three (3) consecutive days of unexcused absences to determine why the student is absent and the anticipated return. As required by state law, the Director will notify the Superintendent of the student's home school district when a student has three (3) or more unexcused absences and additionally thereafter in compliance with law.

### **Educational/Vacation Absences**

Parents/guardians may request an educational absence for travel or other personal business. All requests for educational absences must be submitted in writing to the Director. Educational absences will be limited to a maximum of ten (10) days per school year.

Discretion is strongly advised in seeking approval for an educational absence. Absence from school can be very detrimental for some students. Parents/guardians are asked to give this careful consideration before deciding on a trip or activity that requires an absence from New Story Schools. Parents/guardians and students must take responsibility for finding out what work will be missed and to secure that work prior to the absence.

## **Persistent Absences and Truancy**

Persistent or excessive absences, whether excused or unexcused, may seriously affect students' performance in school. This includes full day absences, tardiness, and early dismissals. The Director will request a team meeting with the school district, parents/guardians, and the education staff at New Story Schools to discuss persistent or excessive absences.

If it becomes evident that the student has an underlying medical condition that is the basis for the excessive absences the school will consider modifying the student's education program to address the health needs.

In light of truancy legislation passed into law in 2016, the definitions listed below should be reviewed by students and parents/guardians. New Story Schools will issue notifications and develop an attendance improvement plan according to Pennsylvania's Truancy Law.

**Truant:** having three (3) or more school days of unexcused absence during the current school year.

**Habitual truancy:** having six (6) or more school days of unexcused absences during the current school year. These absences do not need to be consecutive to be determined as habitual.

## **Early Dismissal**

Parents/guardians are encouraged to leave their child in school all day. Medical, dental, or other appointments should be scheduled outside school hours and on school holidays whenever possible.

If a student needs to be dismissed early, they must bring a note to the teacher stating the time they will be picked up and the reason for the early dismissal. When picking up a student during the school day, a parent/guardian must check in at the office and sign the student out with the classroom teacher/administrative assistant.

If a student arrives more than 15 minutes after the start of the school day, this is a late arrival and require a parent excuse to be considered present for the school day. Parents are required to sign their child in at the front office upon arrival if it is more than 15 minutes after the start of the school day. It is also the parent/guardian's responsibility to communicate any daily transportation changes directly with the transportation company.

If a student leaves more than 15 minutes before the end of the day, this is considered an early departure and require a parent excuse to be considered present for the school day.

Students who arrive late or must leave early due to problems with transportation provided by the school district will not require a parent excuse.

# *Health and Safety*



## Registration Packet

At the beginning of each school year and/or when a student transitions into the school, a registration packet needs to be completed by the parents/guardians. The registration packet contains a variety of issues/topics including, but not limited to Emergency Information, Student Pick-Up Authorization, Authorization to Release Information, Handbook Sign-Off, Privacy Notice, Restraint and Seclusion Policy, Student Background Information, Health Screening Questionnaire, Medical Assessment, Authorization for Medication Administration, etc.

All registration documentation needs to be completed and submitted to the school before the student begins their attendance. Any issues related to the completion of the registration packet will need to be directed to the Director for resolution.

## Immunizations and Health Exams

All New Story Schools students are required to have an annual Medical Examination performed by a licensed physician each school year. Medical Examination forms will be provided as the student's current file expires.

In addition, immunization records must be provided within 5 days for each student enrolled as required by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. If immunization records are not provided within the first 5 days, the student will be excluded from school until records are received or a plan of care is provided by the parent to the School Nurse and/or Administrator.

On-going health screenings such as dental, vision and hearing, and scoliosis screening are also required based on the grade/age of the student. The New Story Schools nurse or staff will notify parents/guardians when the student requires a health screening. If a student fails a school screening, it is required that they are evaluated by a physician.

## Illness, Injury, and Emergency Transportation

Nurses, designated office staff, teachers, or administrators will provide health assistance and first aid in the event a student becomes ill or is injured at school and the nurse is not present. Nurse/Office/school staff will notify parents/guardians if an injury occurs or in the event a student becomes ill during the school day. If the staff cannot reach the student's parent/guardian, they will contact the emergency contact listed. It is required that all emergency contact numbers are kept current.

If a serious injury occurs, the school/office staff will contact 911 immediately as well as contacting the parent/guardian. In the event of a medical and/or mental health emergency, New Story Schools administrators will use their discretion to call for transportation to the Emergency Department or Crisis Center. If the student needs to be transported via ambulance to the Emergency Department or Crisis Center and a parent/guardian does not reach the school in time to accompany the child, a New Story Schools staff member will go with the student (unless they're excused by regional leadership) either in the ambulance or following in a separate vehicle. Once the parent/guardian reaches the Emergency Department/Crisis Center, the New Story Schools staff member will return to the school unless their presence is required short term to relay information regarding the student to care providers.

**Students should not be sent to school if they are not well enough to participate in normal school activities** or recess. In addition, students should not be sent to school if they currently have, or have had in the prior 24 hours, any of the following symptoms:

1. Fever

2. Vomiting
3. Diarrhea
4. Thick yellow or green discharge from the nose or mouth
5. Rash or skin eruption anywhere on the body
6. Headache (when/if the headache interferes with participating in normal school activities)
7. Aches and pains
8. Cold or flu symptoms

These symptoms are forerunners of many different diseases and staying at home at the onset may shorten the illness and prevent complications. In the event of a pandemic or other unexpected risk to the staff and students' health, the school will follow CDC recommendations and communicate to students and their families. Parents/guardians should contact the school within one hour of the scheduled start time in the event a student is ill and unable to attend school. **Medical information should be reported directly to the Nurses and not through third party staff such as transportation drivers, community agencies, etc.**

## **Communicable Illness**

### Exclusion of Students with Communicable Diseases

In accordance with Pa Code § 27.71 students with any of the communicable diseases noted below will be excluded from school attendance for the days noted for each disease:

1. Chicken Pox – five (5) days from appearance of the first crop of vesicles, or when all the lesions have dried and crusted, whichever is sooner.
2. Diphtheria – two (2) weeks from onset or until appropriate negative culture tests.
3. German Measles (Rubella) – four (4) days from onset of rash.
4. Infectious Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye) – until no discharge is present.
5. Measles – four (4) days from onset of rash.
6. Mumps – nine (9) days from onset or until swelling subsides.
7. Neisseria Meningitidis (Meningitis) – until deemed noninfective after a course of medication or until otherwise shown to be noninfective.
8. Pertussis (Whooping Cough) – three (3) weeks from onset or five (5) days from commencement of appropriate antimicrobial therapy.
9. Respiratory Streptococcal Infections including Scarlet Fever – at least ten (10) days from the onset if no physician is in attendance or twenty-four (24) hours after commencement of appropriate antimicrobial therapy.
10. Tuberculosis – following a minimum of two (2) weeks adequate chemotherapy and three (3) consecutive negative morning sputum smears, if obtainable and a physician's statement that the student is able to return to school.
11. Coronavirus – follow current CDC guidelines on number of days required to be in quarantine and excluded from school.

Students who have been excluded for the following communicable diseases will be permitted to return to school immediately following the first treatment:

1. Ringworm – body lesions, except those lesions that have dried, will be covered
2. Scabies.

Students who have been excluded for the following communicable diseases will be permitted to return to school twenty-four (24) hours following the first appropriate treatment:

1. Impetigo Contagiosa (Impetigo).

## 2. Trachoma.

A student who has experienced a communicable disease will be permitted to attend school when they are free of symptoms and has observed the exclusion period. If there is a question about a student returning to school after a communicable disease, the New Story Schools nurse will make the final decision.

### **Medication**

In all cases, it is preferable that a student be administered their medications at home. In the event medication must be administered at school, written authorization/consent will be required by the parent/guardian and the prescribing doctor. In all cases the first dose of any new medication may not be administered in the New Story Schools building.

Medications must be transported to school by the student's parent/guardian, not the student. When medication is not able to be delivered to New Story Schools by the parent/guardian or designee, they must contact the nurse to request an accommodation. The nurse and Director will evaluate this request and determine if a temporary accommodation is warranted. Accommodations are temporary and should not extend into the next school year. Parents/guardians should work towards arrangements to meet the medication transportation requirements set by New Story Schools.

All prescribed medications must be received in the original pharmacy container and must be accompanied by a physician's written order which includes the name of the medication prescribed, dosage, duration, instructions for administration. Students will not be permitted to carry medications on their person or in personal belongings such as backpacks while at school. In addition, no unsupervised self-administration is permitted.

If a student has a known, severe, allergic reaction to stinging insects or other allergies requiring medication, the school must be notified, and the appropriate medications brought to school with a doctor's order. Medication will be kept in the locked cabinet in the school nurse's office or in a locked cabinet in the student's classroom. Emergency medication will also be kept in a secured backpack in each student's classroom to be taken on field trips and during community-based instruction, or to follow the student throughout the building as necessary (i.e. EpiPens, rescue inhalers).

**Students will not be permitted to carry medications on their person or in personal belongings such as backpacks.**

The New Story Schools nurse or other school personnel will not, under any circumstance, provide the student with any type of over the counter (OTC) medication without a doctor's script, which includes the proper dosage/time, etc. and parent/guardian consent form. Students requiring OTC medications must bring a doctor's orders for the administration of the medication and the medication must be brought to school in the original container.

### **Global Positioning System (GPS) Trackers**

Parents or Guardians who desire their student to wear a GPS device due to safety concerns in consideration of the student's behaviors (elopement from the home, etc.) must communicate this desire to the IEP team prior to the device being worn into school. The IEP team will meet with the parent/guardian to determine the appropriate procedures which must be followed regarding any listening

or recording capabilities of the proposed device. All procedures will be agreed upon by the parents/guardians and IEP team and written into the student's IEP.

If a GPS device is worn into a school without prior notification or meeting of the IEP team, the Director/designated administrator will be notified, and the device may be held by the Director.

## Visitors

New Story Schools welcomes and encourages visits to the school by parents/guardians or by other members of the community or interested educators. While visitors are welcome, the paramount concern of New Story Schools is to provide a safe, orderly and inviting learning environment in which disruptions to instructional time are minimized. Therefore, it is necessary for New Story Schools to establish guidelines governing such school visits. The Director of Special Education or other designated school administrator may also establish and enforce reasonable rules to address any potential disruptions to the learning environment due to visitors.

**New Story Schools welcomes and encourages visits to the school by parents/guardians, other members of the community, or interested educators.**

New Story Schools locations maintain locked exterior doors and require all visitors to request admittance by the school's main entrance via doorbell or intercom system. All school visitors must report immediately to the front office at the school to receive permission to be in the school. Visitors must sign in and wear a visitor's pass throughout the duration of the visit. Visitors are also expected to return the visitor's pass to the front office and sign out prior to leaving the school.

Parents/guardians who would like to observe their student's classroom must:

1. Prior to requesting a visit, specifically explain what they would like to learn from the observation and/or educational program. A school administrator will observe the classroom and respond to the parent/guardian regarding the objective.
2. If a visit is still desired, parents/guardians must make arrangements with school administrators **in advance** to set up a day and time for the visit. Unannounced observations disturb the regular functions of the classroom and do not guarantee that a school administrator will be available to accompany the parent/guardian.
3. Report immediately to the front desk on the day and time of the scheduled visit and provide photo identification if requested.
4. Participate in the visit while accompanied by a member of the school administrative team at all times.
5. Visitors may **not** enter the classroom unannounced.

Any individual who disrupts the educational environment, acts in a disorderly manner, damages school property or violates New Story Schools policy or law may be requested to leave. Such individual may also be prosecuted and may be prohibited from attending any other events sponsored by the school for the remainder of the year. Failure to comply with requests to leave school grounds or other restrictions imposed by school staff may result in the filing of trespass charges against the offending individual.

## Search and Seizure

Weapons and drugs in schools endanger students and staff and make it difficult for them to focus on education. To ensure that New Story Schools are safe havens for students and safe workplaces for staff,

this policy authorizes school officials to search students and visitors, the belongings they bring to the school and property owned, leased or used by New Story Schools for school activities, and to seize any weapon or contraband recovered in such searches. The New Story Schools Search and Seizure policy establishes the terms and conditions upon which a search of a student or visitor may be authorized and conducted. Nothing in this policy is intended, nor shall be construed, to create an obligation to search any student or visitor.

### **Animals in School**

No animal shall be brought to school without prior permission of the designated school administrator. Use of animals, including classroom pets, to achieve specific curriculum objectives may be allowed by the designated school administrator provided student health and safety is not jeopardized and the individual requesting that the animal be brought to school is responsible for adhering to the guidelines listed below and any other conditions established by the designated school administrator to protect the health and well-being of students. Any domestic animal entering a school building must have proof of an up-to-date rabies vaccine.

#### Service Animals (Guide or Assistance Dogs)

New Story Schools does not permit discrimination against individuals with disabilities, including those who require the assistance of a service animal. New Story Schools will comply with Federal law concerning the rights of persons with guide or assistance dogs and will permit such animals on school premises and on school transportation. The dog must be wearing an up-to-date rabies tag on its collar.

### **Emergency and Disaster Drills**

Fire drills are necessary for the safety of the students and are performed monthly. Students will learn specific directions for reaching a point of safety from any area of the building in which they may be located. Students are required to remain with their class and to remain quiet in order that instructions can be heard and carried out.

Since this process could be potentially disruptive and difficult, time will be spent learning this skill at the start of the school year and will be reinforced throughout the school year. Social stories may be used to aid in instruction for fire drills, and the staff requests parents/guardians reinforce the fire drill procedure at home through reading the social stories and practicing the drills. Any visitors at the time of a fire drill must participate in the drill.

### **Emergency Evacuations**

In the event of an emergency, the New Story Schools staff will notify parents/guardians or the student's emergency contact person as quickly as possible. In the event of an emergency requiring evacuation from the classroom, or room where the students are located, the students will be escorted from the room and relocated to a safe area within the building. If the building in which New Story Schools is located requires evacuation, the students will be escorted out of the building to a pre-designated location.

At all times, the New Story Schools staff will work in conjunction with state, county, or local authorities to ensure students are relocated to a safe holding place. Parents/guardians will be notified of the student's location as soon as the student's safety and welfare has been secured. School staff will notify parents/guardians of the evacuation location whether the primary location or a safe alternative is used. Parents/guardians that cannot be reached should monitor local radio and television stations regarding evacuation locations.

## **Suicide Prevention**

New Story Schools is dedicated to protecting the health and well-being of all students by having procedures in place to prevent, assess the risk of, intervene in, and respond to suicide. New Story Schools:

- recognizes that physical, behavioral, and emotional health is an integral component of a student's educational outcomes,
- further recognizes that suicide is a leading cause of death among young people,
- has an ethical responsibility to take a proactive approach in preventing deaths by suicide, and
- acknowledges the school's role in providing an environment which is sensitive to individual and societal factors that place youth at greater risk for suicide and one which helps to foster positive youth development.

## **Mandated Reporter Obligation**

New Story Schools staff and administrators are required by law to report evidence or suspicion of child neglect or abuse. Those who fail to report according to state regulations can be held accountable under the law. No one, including a child's parents/guardians can interfere with this reporting requirement. Any questions regarding this policy can be addressed with the Director.

## *Student Conduct*

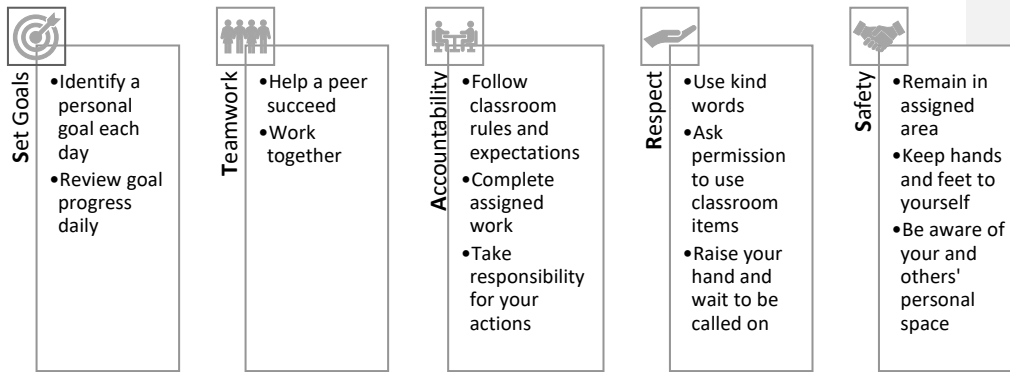
### **General School Rules**

1. Students are required to follow all the procedures outlined in the Health and Safety Plan.
2. Students must walk in the halls at all times. Running, pushing, and shouting are not allowed.
3. Gum is not to be chewed in the building or on school grounds.
4. Do not deface or damage school property, material or equipment. Students who do so may be required to make repayment for replacement or repair.
5. Respect the property of others.
6. Fighting/physical abuse is not allowed.
7. Verbal abuse is not allowed.
8. Harassment and sexual harassment are prohibited.
9. Possession of potential weapons is prohibited.
10. Drugs, alcohol, and tobacco in any form are prohibited (both possession and use).
11. **CELL PHONES:** The New Story Schools protocols on cellular telephones are designed to ensure that the use of cell phones does not interfere with teaching and learning during the school day.
  - a. Students do not need to use a cell phone during the regular school day. In any instance requiring an emergency communication with a student, staff will immediately assist the student, a parent, or other responsible adult with that situation by using a school telephone.
  - b. Students bringing cellular telephones or electronic devices to school do so at their own risk. New Story Schools will not assume any liability for any lost, stolen or damaged cellular telephone **and/or any other electronic devices** either in school or in their possession.
  - c. Specific guidelines and protocols for the use and possession of cell phones will be distributed to Parents/guardians at the beginning of the school year by school administrators.
  - d. Due to the evolving nature of emerging technologies, additional rules and regulations may be added throughout the school year.

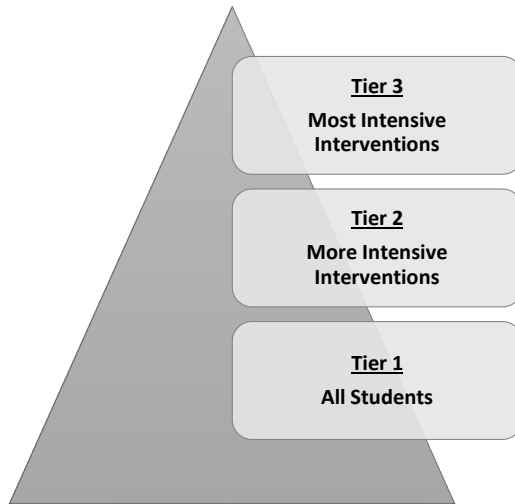
## STARS

We believe each student deserves a safe and supportive learning environment. New Story Schools staff will create regular opportunities for students to learn, practice, and firmly establish STARS behaviors that will contribute to this desired learning environment.

Specific behaviors and strategies may look different depending on each student's unique needs and abilities, but the STARS standard of behavior applies to all students.



## TIERS Model



All New Story Schools locations are in the process of implementing the Tiers of Intensive Educationally Responsive Services (TIERS) model. This model includes proactive strategies for addressing students' needs for services beyond what the general education environment can offer, specifically regarding students with emotional and behavioral disorders. At New Story Schools our strategies involve much more frequent support than is typical for this model when it is used in a general education setting. Additionally, New Story Schools is utilizing this model across both AS (Autistic Support) and ES (Emotional Support) populations whereas in general education settings it is typically only applied to ES populations.

The three tiers, briefly described below, are being systematically rolled out across New Story Schools. All students receive Tier 1 supports, students who require more intensive interventions will receive both Tier



1 and 2 supports, and students who require the most intensive interventions will receive supports from all three tiers.

Instructional, Behavioral, and Social/Emotional Supports	
Tier 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment for presence of academic skill deficits</li> <li>• Curricula with empirically established likelihood of skill acquisition</li> <li>• Curricula implemented with fidelity</li> <li>• Token economy motivation system</li> <li>• Good behavior game</li> <li>• Social skills instruction</li> <li>• Social emotional learning</li> <li>• Time-away</li> <li>• Daily conferencing</li> <li>• Self-governance meetings</li> <li>• School-home communication system</li> <li>• Office disciplinary referral teaching and de-escalation process</li> </ul>
Tier 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All Tier 1 supports</li> <li>• Behavior contracting and goal setting</li> <li>• Mentor-based programming</li> <li>• Self-monitoring protocol</li> <li>• Small group counseling</li> <li>• Daily school-home communication system</li> </ul>
Tier 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All Tier 1 &amp; 2 supports</li> <li>• Weekly cognitive behavior therapy tailored to the student’s specific mental health concerns</li> <li>• Behavior support plan based on Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA)</li> <li>• Coordination of wraparound services</li> </ul>

**Weapons**

Possession or transfer of weapons on school property is prohibited. For the purposes of this policy, weapons are defined in Section 1317.2 of the school code of 1949, as amended, and includes, but is not limited to: any knife, cutting instrument, cutting tool, firearm, shotgun, rifle and any other tool, instrument or implement capable of inflicting serious bodily injury.

Parents will be promptly informed of all incidents and subsequent action taken by the school and by law enforcement officials on the case.

The illegal use or possession of weapons on school property or during school sponsored activities shall be reported to the local law enforcement officials and shall be considered potential basis for suspension and/or recommendation for expulsion.

New Story Schools reserves the right to do all-school weapon searches. Those involved or suspected of being involved in illegal activities may be subjected to a personal search based on reasonable cause. Illegal property may be confiscated and used as evidence.

## Safe2Say Something

New Story Schools is committed to continuing to improve the overall safety of our schools as well as our students, educators and administrators. As part of these efforts, we are participating in the “Safe2Say Something” (S2SS) anonymous TIP reporting program. This program, which is mandated under PA state law/Act 44, teaches students, teachers, and administrators how to recognize warning signs and signals, especially within social media, of individuals who may be a threat to themselves or others.

The program encourages students to **Say Something** to a trusted adult OR use the anonymous TIP reporting system via a mobile app, computer or telephone. Students and any others that may be aware of a threat will learn to:

- Recognize the signs and signals of at-risk behaviors – especially within social media
- Take every sign and signal seriously; act quickly to get help by talking to a trusted adult OR
- Report a TIP anonymously through the Safe2Say Something (S2SS) program [www.safe2saypa.org](http://www.safe2saypa.org) or 1/844-SAF2SAY

All TIPS are received by the Office of the Attorney General 24/7 Crisis Center, who will then decide whether school administrators and/or emergency response teams need to be involved to resolve the situation.

## Drugs and Alcohol

Drug and alcohol abuse are major problems confronting our society and our community. The primary concern of New Story Schools is to help those students with drug and/or alcohol problems. To this end, students are encouraged to seek help. Although confidentiality shall be extended to students seeking help, it cannot be extended to students who have been apprehended for illegal use or possession of drugs and/or alcohol. Students are reminded that drug and/or alcohol use or possession is illegal. Therefore, the use or possession of drugs and/or alcohol on or around New Story Schools property or during school-sponsored activities is prohibited.

The illegal use or possession of drugs and/or alcohol on school property or during school sponsored activities shall be reported to the local law enforcement officials and shall be considered potential basis for suspension and/or recommendation for expulsion.

## Smoking

New Story Schools prohibits smoking and use or possession of any electronic/vapor cigarette, cigarette and/or tobacco products. New Story Schools recognizes that smoking presents a health hazard which can have serious consequences for both smoker and non-smoker and is therefore of concern. New Story Schools, in compliance with the laws established by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, prohibits smoking and the use or possession of any tobacco products in school buildings, on school buses, on school property or at any school sponsored activity. Therefore, the provisions of the Pa. Statutes relating to smoking and the use of smokeless tobacco in any form by students will be enforced by referral to the student’s school district. Parents/Guardians and/or visitors found smoking on New Story Schools property may be asked to cease smoking or to leave the premises.

## Bullying/Cyberbullying

New Story Schools believes that all students have a right to a healthy, safe and positive learning environment. New Story Schools has an obligation to promote mutual respect, tolerance and acceptance.

It is recognized that bullying has a negative impact on student health, welfare and safety within the learning environment. Therefore, New Story Schools does not tolerate bullying behavior by any student.

Bullying behavior may include, but is not limited to, intentional physical, psychological, verbal, nonverbal, written or electronic act or series of acts directed toward another student or students which occurs in or outside of the school setting which is severe, persistent or pervasive and has the effect of: interference with a student's education, creation of a threatening or hostile learning environment or substantial disruption of the operation of the school.

### **Lockers**

New Story Schools authorities and/or local police departments may search a student's locker and seize any illegal or inappropriate materials. Students' lockers are property of New Story Schools. Such materials may be used as evidence against the student in disciplinary proceedings.

New Story Schools, in conjunction with local police departments, reserves the right to conduct locker searches, use dogs trained to detect drugs, and conduct any other investigative activities as deemed appropriate by the police department. It is not New Story Schools' intent to entrap students, but to deter the use and sale of drugs at New Story Schools.

### **Vandalism**

New Story Schools expects students to take pride in their school building and to make every attempt to keep it in good condition. While New Story Schools may not be able to stop school vandalism from occurring altogether, reasonable measures can be taken to protect school property and to deal with those individuals who cause damage to it.

Any student who damages, disturbs, or destroys school property is expected to make restitution. A student may also be requested to cooperate and work with custodial personnel to help clean up any damage caused by the student. Students who violate New Story Schools policy will be dealt with on an individual basis regarding appropriate discipline.

A student involved in an act of vandalism and/or property destruction is subject to one or more of the following disciplinary actions based upon the severity of the misconduct: warning and student conference with treatment team, parent notification, recommendation for expulsion, referral to law enforcement for disorderly conduct, criminal damage to property and other citable offenses. Students may also be subject to a loss of privileges. Example: If a student commits computer vandalism, they lose privileges to use the computers at school.

New Story Schools may also provide written notification to the student's parents/guardians requesting that the school property be restored or replaced in accordance with the actual damages as determined by the Director. Any adult student involved in the vandalism or destruction of school property may be held solely responsible for the damages.

### **Academic Integrity**

New Story Schools expects staff and students to demonstrate high standards of academic integrity. Academic integrity is defined as respect for the others' ideas and work through proper acknowledgment and referencing. No cheating of any type on schoolwork, tests or quizzes will be tolerated.

Whenever a student is found to have violated the Academic Integrity Policy and/or course-specific rules, these procedures will be followed:

1. The teacher will document the violation and report it to the Director.
2. The Director will review the student's disciplinary record and determine whether the violation in question is the student's first (or subsequent) offense.
3. The teacher and Director will confer with the student and may contact the student's parents as well as the student's school district to determine the need for a meeting. The purpose of the team meeting is to review the Academic Integrity Policy, clarify why the work or behavior in question constitutes a violation of it, and help prevent future violations.

### **Acceptable Internet Use**

New Story Schools' Acceptable Use Internet Policy applies to all technology resources in use by New Story Schools students. This includes but is not limited to computers, phones, video equipment, copy machines, e-mail addresses and information storage devices. The use of these resources is a privilege and must be treated as such by all students. New Story Schools reserves the right to access and monitor all aspects of its technology systems and devices, and students should not expect any information stored on New Story Schools equipment or systems to be private.

Students are to use on-campus internet access for academic purposes. Examples of internet sites that may not be visited outside of academic use at New Story Schools include but are not limited to the following:

- recreational use of sites such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Pandora, etc.
- gaming or gambling sites
- pornographic or otherwise sexually explicit sites
- sites promoting "how to" documents encouraging violence or illegal acts
- sites that promote racism or hate speech

Students may not use technological tools with malicious intent, for example, to bully or harass others. All students must respect the privacy of others. Any attempt to access private files, phone or e-mail messages is considered theft.

Students may not in any way vandalize equipment or software that belongs to New Story Schools or any other organization to which New Story Schools has access. Examples of unacceptable behavior include but are not limited to the following:

- damaging, hacking or destroying networks, computer hardware or software
- physical abuse to equipment
- the creation or intentional use of malicious programs

Consequences of violating these policies will be in keeping with the school's disciplinary system. For violations, access to technology may be revoked for a period of time in addition to probation, suspension or expulsion from school.

### **Public Displays of Affection**

Being overly affectionate in school creates an environment that is not conducive to concentration and learning, therefore students are expected to refrain from inappropriate, intimate behaviors on campus or at school related events and activities.

Inappropriate public displays of affection will not be tolerated. This behavior will result in a

parent/guardian meeting and possible suspension if inappropriate behavior continues after being warned. The expression of feelings of affection toward others is a personal concern between two individuals and not of others surrounding them. Therefore, good taste and respect for others is the guideline for appropriate behavior.

### **Student Elopement from School Grounds**

In the event a student actively elopes (runs away) from school grounds and is no longer within the boundaries of school property, employees will immediately notify a member of the leadership team so that all reasonable steps can be taken to discharge the duty of care owed to that student. The reasonable steps to be taken will vary and depend on the individual circumstances of the case and the individual student.

### **Playground**

Recess is a time when students can work on many skills, both physical and social. Interaction with other students during recess is encouraged. Students will be taught correct and safe usage of all equipment and will be assisted in following this instruction. Older students will be provided with opportunities for age-appropriate activity such as 4-square and basketball. Teamwork and sportsmanship will be emphasized during this time.

The Director, in consultation with classroom teachers, will decide if recess will be held outside or inside. All students will remain within the designated play area and the playground will be supervised by teachers and staff whenever students are present.

In an effort to avoid injury, rough play is not allowed on the playground or in the school building. This includes, but is not limited to, tackling, wrestling, pushing, and shoving.

### **Disciplinary Action**

The Director and other New Story Schools staff will collaborate with the local home school district and parents/guardians regarding disciplinary concerns or issues. The local home school district will be responsible for developing the appropriate disciplinary plan of action which may include suspension and/or expulsion. At all times the Director, in conjunction with the administrative team and the Regional Director, reserves the right to immediately suspend and/or expel a student that has endangered the well-being of another student or has violated state and/or school regulations.

### **Use of Non-Violent Crisis Intervention Techniques**

In the event a student is behaving in a manner that is a clear and present danger to themselves and others, emergency safety techniques may be utilized. If emergency safety techniques (as specified in the Restraint & Seclusion Policy included in the registration packet) are used, such use must be immediately reported to the Director and the [NPCI Report Form](#) completed.

Pennsylvania Code requires that an IEP meeting takes place within 10 school days when an emergency safety technique is utilized, unless the meeting is waived by the parent. Below is the procedure New Story Schools will follow when an emergency safety technique is used:

1. Within 24 hours of the incident, an invitation to the IEP meeting within 10 school days of the emergency safety technique will be sent to the parent/guardian along with the [IEP Meeting Waiver Form](#). This meeting serves the purpose of discussing the incident as a team and adjusting the plan as needed.

2. If the parent/guardian would like to waive (choose not to have) the meeting, they may indicate on the form that they wish to do so.
  - a. After 3 incidents, an IEP meeting will be held regardless of whether the parent/guardian has waived the meeting or not. Parent/guardian participation is encouraged but not required.
3. If the parent/guardian wants to participate in the IEP meeting but is unavailable at the identified meeting date/time, the Waiver form should be returned with the requested meeting date/time.
4. It is the parent's responsibility to indicate that they want to waive the meeting or request another day/time within 10 school days of the incident.
5. Any incidents that occur between the date the invite was initially sent, and the scheduled IEP meeting will be discussed at the upcoming meeting.

## General Information

### Dress Code

New Story Schools is committed to maintaining an overall environment conducive to the development and maintenance of positive growth and progress. Student dress must meet community and legal standards of health, safety, and modesty, and may not substantially disrupt the work and discipline of the school.

Any articles of clothing that depict alcohol or other drug abuse (beer advertisements, etc.), inappropriate sexual material, vulgarity, or graphic violence are prohibited at New Story Schools. Also prohibited are any articles of clothing that deride or denigrate others. These include hats, shirts, buttons, etc. Students are also expected to cover their bodies appropriately. This means no half shirts, excessively short pants or skirts, or shredded jeans.

If students are inadequately attired, they will be referred to a school Administrator for further action and/or consequences. If students come to school wearing a prohibited item, they will be directed to reverse it or conceal it by any New Story Schools staff observing them. If students refuse to cooperate, they will be directed to an Administrator to resolve the conflict. Any questions regarding “appropriateness” will be determined by the Administrator onsite.

Any repetition of these behaviors will also result in contact with parents or referral representatives to further resolve the matter.

### Clothing/Hygiene

Parents/guardians should send a set of clothing to New Story Schools in a labeled bag so that clean/dry clothing is available in the event a change of clothing is required. In the case that the student is known to have incontinence events, the parent/guardian should send adequate replacement clothes in the event they are needed, and to replace them as they are used.

Parents/guardians are also required to provide any necessary personal care hygiene items such as soap, shampoo, sanitary wipes, diapers, toothbrush, toothpaste, deodorant, pull-ups or sanitary pads that the student may require. It is requested that students carry a book bag large enough to carry a folder and a change of clothing to facilitate the transport of items to/from the school and home.

### Lunch

If lunch is not provided at your school location, each student must bring their lunch to school. Lunch may be eaten in a designated lunchroom (when available) or in a classroom. Self-sufficiency will be encouraged, so parents/guardians are requested to keep this in mind when packing the student’s lunch. If a spoon or fork is needed for the student’s lunch these should be included. Some heating of food is possible but New Story Schools has limited microwave usage. Students should include an ice pack in their lunch bag to ensure safe storage of cold items.

Lunch is an important time in the day, not only for eating but also for socialization. Students are expected to sit quietly at the table and to eat their lunch within a reasonable

**If the student arrives without their lunch, the parent/guardian will be called to bring lunch to the student. There are no food services in the building unless otherwise specified by school administrators.**

period of time. Food may not be thrown, and students are to clean up their area after they have finished eating. Fighting is not permitted under any conditions or for any reason in the lunchroom.

### **Student Valuables**

Money or valuables should be left at home. Each student is responsible for their personal property. Watches, rings, and other jewelry items should be worn with discretion since they can become lost and/or become the object of behavior issues. Toys should be left at home unless they are part of a homework assignment or behavioral program. If previously prohibited electronics or cell phones are seen on school property, they will be confiscated, and a parent or guardian will be responsible to come to the school to get the device(s). Anything not claimed at the end of the school year will be donated. New Story Schools is not responsible for the loss, theft, or damage to personal property brought to school.

### **Homework**

Homework is any work assigned by the teacher to be completed by the student outside of the regular classroom without the immediate and direct supervision of the teacher. It is the student's responsibility to bring the completed homework assignment to class on time. Parents/guardians are encouraged to support their student in completing homework assignments.

Homework will be assigned on a limited basis in the early grades, with increasing homework as the student gets older/more capable. It is requested that parents/guardians develop a daily routine and establish a set place in the home for homework to be completed. Taking an interest in your student's homework helps reinforce the importance of completing their homework. Completion of homework on time is also a great way to help build self-esteem.

### **Field Trips**

Field trips are integral to the school curriculum. Teachers/Administrators are responsible for planning and preparing relevant trips that are conducive to the learning process. Field trips may be scheduled to locations that enhance and reinforce classroom studies. Some students will be involved in Community Based Instruction (CBI). All students participating in field trips must have a permission slip signed by a parent/guardian for each field trip taken. If a student is involved in a regularly scheduled CBI program one permission slip will cover all aspects of the program.

### **Transportation**

New Story Schools expects that your local home school district, upon agreeing to place your child in New Story Schools, will provide transportation to and from school. However, it is the parent/guardian's responsibility to make those arrangements with the local home school district. It is also the parent/guardian's responsibility to communicate any necessary changes to the student's daily transportation. New Story Schools is not responsible for providing transportation to and from school, nor is it responsible to provide transportation to after-school programs or day care.

### **Student Driving**

New Story Schools prohibits all students from independently driving to and/or from school premises. Students are also prohibited from parking any vehicle on New Story Schools property.



## Walking to School

Any occasion when a parent/guardian would like to permit or discontinue their student walking to or from a New Story Schools building requires written permission. Please contact your New Story Schools Administrator for a copy of this permission form.

## Custody Information

If court-determined custody is in effect, the Director must be provided with a copy of the custody order to place in the student's file. This will enable the school to maintain a neutral position, ensure the safety of the student, and avoid embarrassment for both parent/guardian and student. Custody information will be kept confidential.

## Student Pick-Up

All parents/guardians must provide the following information on a form provided by New Story Schools:

1. Name, address, phone numbers, and relationship to student of ALL individuals to whom the student may be released. **This information should be updated as necessary throughout the school year.**
2. Name, address, and relationship to student of ALL individuals to whom the student may *NOT* be released. Court documentation (court order, PFA, or other legal documentation) must be attached to this form if a student is not to be released to a parent/guardian. The school cannot withhold a student from a parent/guardian unless proper court documentation is presented to the Director.
3. A signature on the document signifies that you agree with the content on the form and that the student may be released to any of the individuals identified.

No student will be permitted to leave the facility throughout the day, other than regularly scheduled school transportation, without the required information. All parents/guardians should fill out the required form even if the student rides a school bus in the event of an early dismissal or other emergency.

**The parent/guardian is ultimately responsible to ensure that their student is picked up at the end of the day. It is the prerogative of the New Story Schools staff to make the final decision as to whether a student is exhibiting escalated behaviors that make placing him/her on the bus a safety issue for other passengers or the driver. (Escalated behaviors include any behavior that is considered at-risk behavior for self, others, or the bus driver).**

## Failure to Pick Up a Student

In the event a student is unable or unwilling to be transported by van or bus provided by the student's school district, a parent/guardian will be contacted to pick up the student. It is a parent/guardian's responsibility to pick up their student or arrange for an emergency contact to pick up the student within a timely manner prior to the end of business that day. If the parent(s)/guardian(s) and emergency contacts are unable to be reached or cannot pick up the student, local law enforcement may be contacted and will be informed that the student has no lawful custodian present at the time of school closure. If the parent or any other authorized individual is still unable to be located, local law enforcement may release the student to Child Protective Services.

**Commented [SG1]:** This is another one that comes up frequently and was just discussed on the school safety call- is uber an option and if not, is the school van and employee driving the only other option if parents cannot/will not pick up?

**Commented [NP2R1]:** Not all sites have school vans and I'm not certain about an uber. Schools should issue the failure to pick up a student letter when a student is picked up after school hours and this should be reviewed with the parent. Law enforcement is usually very helpful in these situations.

Uncooperative behavior by the parent(s)/guardian(s) shall be considered potential basis for suspension of the student and/or recommendation for expulsion on the grounds that New Story Schools cannot maintain the safety of the student.

### **Student Records**

New Story Schools maintains complete and accurate records for each student enrolled. These records will include information on behavioral goals, academic goals, and other activities. Records will be kept current and available for inspection during regular school hours by authorized individuals. Records will not be made available to any other person or agency without the written permission of the parents/guardians.

All required registration documents must be completed and on file at New Story Schools when the student enters for their first day of school. This includes, but is not limited to, all past school records, Medical Examinations forms, immunization records, and Emergency Contact information.

If a student leaves New Story Schools, their records and health information will be released to the parent or guardian. If records are to be released to any other party or school, a signed release must be completed by the parent or guardian and approved by the Director. A copy of the records will be kept on file for 7 years after the student's 21<sup>st</sup> birthday, after which point records will be destroyed.

### **Individual Education Plans (IEP)**

New Story Schools follows the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) process, including required forms, as outlined and approved by the Pennsylvania Department of Education. IEP's will be conducted annually, or more frequently as determined necessary by the IEP team members. Parents/guardians may visit the PA Department of Education website to view IEP materials and guidelines. Alternate IEP forms or reformatting of IEP forms will not be permitted.

Therapy services ordered as part of the IEP are the responsibility of the local home school district unless the necessary therapist(s) are available in New Story Schools. The New Story Schools staff will communicate with parents/guardians regarding what services are available in the school and will collaborate with the local home school district regarding therapy needs.

## Communication

### PowerSchool Family Access

PowerSchool is the Student Information System (SIS) currently used to store each student's educational record and special education documentation. Family Access is a feature of the SIS that is available for parents/guardians (as of November 2022) to stay in touch with their students' progress and keep open lines of communication with school staff. Parents/guardians can log in to this portal to view and complete forms for their student(s), view the school calendar, see grades and report cards, and submit changes to contact information.

Any questions regarding logins to this portal should be directed to a school director or administrator.

### SchoolMessenger

New Story Schools uses SchoolMessenger to communicate quickly and efficiently with students and their families. By providing up-to-date contact information to school administrators, parents/guardians can opt into text alerts, emails, and phone calls from the school. Subscription to these alerts can be changed at any time should the parent/guardian decide they no longer want to receive them.

### Change of Address/Telephone Number

At the start of the school year, parents/guardians will be requested to provide current addresses and telephone numbers for each student enrolled. Maintaining updated information throughout the school year is very important for all students enrolled in New Story Schools. Updates to the student's information and parent/guardian contact details can be provided via phone call, email, or in-person to school administrators. Parents/guardians may also make these changes in the Student Info tab of the PowerSchool Family Access portal. **Parents/guardians are requested to notify the school and appropriate transportation service providers immediately in the event of a change of address or telephone number that occurs during the school year.**

**NOTIFY THE SCHOOL DISTRICT  
AND TRANSPORTATION OF ANY  
CHANGES WITH CONTACT  
INFORMATION.**

### Progress Reports

All students enrolled in New Story Schools will receive a performance report on a quarterly basis. Progress reports may be sent home with the student, posted in the PowerSchool Family Access portal, or mailed directly to the Parent/guardians. Performance reports will be discussed with parents during parent/teacher conferences or other team meetings. Parents/guardians may contact the teacher with questions regarding a student's performance report.

### Parent-Teacher Conferences

Parent-teacher conferences will be held intermittently and may take place in the school or by telephone. The student's teacher will advise parents/guardians regarding scheduling parent-teacher conferences or the need for other types of communication. At any time, parents/guardians may request a parent-teacher conference to discuss issues of concern.

## **Student Privacy**

New Story Schools uses photography and videotaping for several purposes throughout the school year. However, students will not be photographed or videotaped without the permission of the parents/guardians. Pictures will be shared with parents/guardians periodically throughout the school year. Videotapes of student performance are used by the school to track progress and evaluate the student program as well as for teacher development. Parents/guardians having questions regarding the New Story Schools policy for photograph and videotaping should contact the Director.

Students are prohibited from utilizing any technological device to record audio, video or still picture of other students, teachers or employees as well as any New Story Schools property.

If any school employee becomes aware that an individual or student is operating a recording device without permission, the employee must notify the Director/designated school administrator immediately. The Director will confiscate the device and contact the parent/guardian to discuss further procedures and the removal of any recording from the device.

No individual or student shall photograph, videotape or tape record any person or any part of the building without prior approval by the Director/designated school administrator. Any individual or student who disrupts the educational environment, acts in a disorderly manner or violates New Story Schools policy or law, may be requested to leave. Such individual also may be prosecuted and may be prohibited from attending any other events sponsored by the school for the remainder of the year.

## **Exceptions**

Students who require exceptions to the Handbook due to individual needs will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Also, there may be situations which arise during the school year which are not specifically defined in the Parent-Student Handbook. For any such issues, the Administrative Team for New Story Schools reserves the right to amend these guidelines to ensure the safety and well-being of the students and staff.