



# Inquiry Charter School

## Student and Family Handbook 2021-2022

### Inquiry Mission

The mission of Inquiry Charter School is to educate all students in methods that encourage creativity, support problem solving and produce life-long learners. We believe that how one learns is as important as what one learns. At Inquiry Charter School, we believe that all students, teachers and community members are learners.

### Inquiry Values

Curiosity, Generosity and Growth

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*Copies of the 2021/2022 ICS handbook can be found online and on Parent Square. If you have questions or would like additional copies, please contact [ics@belmontcharternetwork.org](mailto:ics@belmontcharternetwork.org) or call 215-823-5541.*

**INQUIRY CHARTER SCHOOL**

**2021-2022 School Calendar**

July 2021						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

August 2021						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

September 2021						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

October 2021						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

November 2021						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

December 2021						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

January 2022						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

February 2022						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28					

March 2022						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

April 2022						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

May 2022						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

June 2022						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

 School Closed  
 First and Last Day of School

 No School - Staff PD  
 End of Quarter

 PSSA - 3rd - 5th  
 1:00 Dismissal

Aug 16-17	New Staff Report for Professional Development
Aug 18	All Staff Report
Aug 18-25	Professional Development for all Staff
Aug 26	First Day of School for 1st-5th Grade Students
Aug 30	First Day of School for K4 and Kindergarten Students
Sep 6	Labor Day - No School
Oct 8	Professional Development for all Staff
Oct 11	Indigenous People's Day - No School
Nov 11	Veteran's Day - No School
Nov 24-26	Fall Break - No School
Dec 23 - Jan 2	Winter Break - No School

Jan 3	Professional Development for all Staff
Jan 17	Martin Luther King Jr. Day - No School
Feb 21	Presidents' Day - No School
Mar 18	Professional Development for all Staff
Apr 11-15	Spring Break
Apr 26-29	ELA PSSA
May 3	Eid-al-Fitr - No School
May 4-13	Math/Science and Makeup PSSA
May 30	Memorial Day - No School
Jun 10	Last Day of School
Jun 13-14	Snow makeup days
Jun 20	Juneteenth Observed

# INQUIRY CHARTER SCHOOL COMMUNICATIONS



## GENERAL

### School Office

- [ics@belmontcharternetwork.org](mailto:ics@belmontcharternetwork.org)
- (215) 823-5541
  - Paperwork- such as enrollment details, medical, dental, etc.
  - General concerns
  - Attendance
  - Planning/scheduling questions
  - School updates

### Homeroom Teacher

- **Teachers can be reached via email or Parent Square**
  - Classwork and homework questions
  - Student struggling (academic, emotional, etc.)

### Technology

- [helpdesk@belmontcharternetwork.org](mailto:helpdesk@belmontcharternetwork.org)
  - Only after teacher has helped to trouble shoot FIRST.

## FAMILY NEEDS

### Family Support Services

- [ashley.fernandez@belmontcharternetwork.org](mailto:ashley.fernandez@belmontcharternetwork.org)
- (267) 844 - 2597
  - Student emotional and mental health and well-being
  - Housing security
  - Food access
  - Internet access

### Out of School Time (OST)

- [melena.murphy@belmontcharternetwork.org](mailto:melena.murphy@belmontcharternetwork.org)
  - Daycare questions
  - Fees
  - Invoices

## STUDENT SPECIFIC

### Special Education

- [lisa.odell@belmontcharternetwork.org](mailto:lisa.odell@belmontcharternetwork.org)
  - IEP meetings and updates
  - Student needs and accommodations

### Occupational Therapy

- [jillian.tabatcher@belmontcharternetwork.org](mailto:jillian.tabatcher@belmontcharternetwork.org)
  - Meeting times
  - General student needs

### School Nurse

- 267-263-7785
  - Vaccines
  - Medical/dental paperwork
  - COVID concerns

### BSO

- [ayanna.pitts@belmontcharternetwork.org](mailto:ayanna.pitts@belmontcharternetwork.org)
  - Behavior support, questions, concerns
  - 5th grade middle school transition



InquiryCharterSchool



InquiryCharterSchool

## **Home and School Collaboration and Communication**

### **Visiting the School:**

In order to ensure the safety of our staff and students, all visitors entering the building at non-arrival/dismissal times must sign in at the Main Office and wear a visitor's pass for the duration of their visit. There are no exceptions. All doors will be locked during the day and school visitors will need to be buzzed into the building.

### **Volunteering:**

In accordance with Pennsylvania state laws and for the safety of all students, any volunteer that has direct contact with students must provide copies of the following documents to the Main Office.

- Child Abuse History Clearance
- Pennsylvania State Criminal Record Check
- FBI Federal Criminal History Record Check and Fingerprinting\*

Parent volunteers or volunteers who are doing a one-time volunteer experience (such as field trip chaperones or one-time presenters) will not be required to have clearances on file. It is the expectation that these volunteers will never be left alone with any student. All students will remain in the presence of and under the supervision of a teacher or staff member at all times.

Effective July 25, 2015, the fee for the Child Abuse Clearance and the PA State Police Clearance will be waived for a volunteer. A volunteer may request a Child Abuse and PA State Police Clearance at no cost once every 57 months. There will be a charge incurred for the FBI Clearance.

All volunteers are required to obtain a Child Abuse Clearance and PA State Police Clearance. If a volunteer has been a resident of Pennsylvania for the past 10 years, they do not need to obtain an FBI fingerprinting clearance. If they have NOT been a PA resident for the past 10 years, then they must obtain an FBI clearance in addition to the Child Abuse Clearance and PA State Police Clearance.

This policy directly impacts school volunteers who provide direct care or guidance to students. Any parent or volunteer who has questions about obtaining these clearances should inquire at the Main Office.

Please be aware that volunteering is a privilege that can be revoked at any time.

### **Conduct:**

To promote a positive and respectful learning environment, it is expected that parents, students, and staff will conduct themselves in accordance with all school policies and procedures and model appropriate behavior at all times. In instances where conduct is unbecoming or inappropriate, individuals may be asked to leave the building and will only be allowed to return with administrative approval.

Parents, guardians, and family members are encouraged to participate in our school, but they must arrange their visits in advance and follow the school visitor policy. When visiting or observing in their child's classroom, parents should not disrupt instruction or address other students. Violation of this policy may

result in revocation of visitation and participation privileges, including field trips, classroom visits and school events.

Parents and guardians are also encouraged to make appointments with teachers regarding questions or concerns about their child. Please know that we will not interrupt instructional class time for phone calls to teachers, but we will pass on messages and have all calls returned within 48 hours.

**Document Requests:**

Any parent requesting information may report to the Main Office or send an email to [ics@belmontcharternetwork.org](mailto:ics@belmontcharternetwork.org). For parent/guardian convenience and to avoid disrupting daily school business, paperwork requests such as transfer documentation and enrollment materials will be handled within 48 hours and may not be accessible immediately upon request. Please be aware that only the legal guardian of a child may request such materials.

**Meeting Requests:**

To best meet everyone's needs, any parent/guardian who wishes to meet with a member of the school staff, including a classroom teacher, a school director, before-or-after care staff member or any support staff, must contact the staff member for an appointment. The Main Office can pass along a message or provide necessary contact information.

**Mandated Reporting:**

All school staff members are mandated reporters of suspected abuse and/or neglect. Mandated reporters are required by federal and state law to report suspected child abuse or neglect immediately.

**Emergency Contact Information:**

For emergency purposes, up-to-date contact information must be on file in the Main Office at all times. Contact information includes: parent/guardian phone numbers, address, e-mail address, emergency contacts, and parent/guardian employment information. If your phone number or other contact information changes, please notify the Main Office at 215.823.5541 or [ics@belmontcharternetwork.org](mailto:ics@belmontcharternetwork.org) immediately so that we can update our records. It is also important to notify the classroom teacher.

## **Building and Property Safety**

**Weather/Emergency Closings:**

All weather/ emergency information will be announced on CBS Channel 3 and on KYW-1060 under Inquiry Charter School. The schools will also utilize ParentSquare to announce closings via phone, text and email to the primary phone number on file. As a result it is essential for phone numbers to be up-to-date at all times. Note that Inquiry may not always follow the Philadelphia Public School District closings.

**School Property:**

Students are expected to treat school property and equipment with the same respect and care they would treat their own property. If school property is lost, broken, or damaged, the student must report it to their teacher immediately. Damaged or lost items, including lending library books, text books, tablets,

laptops, furniture, classroom materials, etc., may need to be replaced at the student and their family's expense.

**Emergency and Evacuation Drills:**

School-wide drills will take place on a monthly basis. Students are expected to remain silent for the duration of the drill. Emergency drills and evacuations may require students to exit the building without their property, including jackets and book bags. These drills are done for safety reasons and in accordance with school and state laws.

All students will participate in two bus evacuation drills each year, one at the start of school and one in early spring.

**Video Surveillance:**

For everyone's safety and peace of mind, please be aware that 24 hour video surveillance is in use on the premises of INQUIRY Charter School. In accordance with FERPA, video is not released without written, legal permission.

## **Arrival and Dismissal**

**Arrival:**

Being on-time for school each and every day is essential for student success. All students should plan to arrive at school between 8:00am and 8:30am. Students cannot be dropped-off or left unattended before 8:00am unless they are enrolled in the before-care program. The school day begins promptly at 8:30am and any student entering the building after 8:31am will be considered tardy. Breakfast will be available for all students from 8:00am to 8:20am each morning.

Beginning the first full week of school, families will be able to participate in drop-off by driving down Leidy Avenue and around to the school entrance on Thompson Street. Staff will be there each morning beginning at 8:00am to welcome students and escort them into the school. Students who walk or take public transportation should plan to use this entrance in the morning.

All students must be dropped-off by 8:30am. Students arriving after 8:30am will need to be escorted into the building and must enter through the Belmont Avenue entrance.

**Dismissal:**

Dismissal will take place from 3:45pm to 4:00pm on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Thursday is an early release day and students will be dismissed at 1:00pm.

Students who are picked-up more than 10 minutes after dismissal will be considered a late pick-up. The late pick-up fee is \$1.00 per minute. After 23 minutes, students who are still at school will be enrolled in our aftercare program and charged the \$23.00 drop-in fee for that day.

Parents who take public transportation or walk to pick-up their child will use the Belmont Avenue entrance and proceed directly to their child's classroom or the auditorium for dismissal. Bus students will be dismissed from the auditorium via Belmont Avenue.

Please note that students will only be released to individuals who have written permission via email from a parent/guardian and are listed on their emergency contact form. We reserve the right to check photo identification during dismissal on a daily basis to ensure the safety of all students. Please contact the Main Office if you wish to update your emergency contact or pick-up information during the school year.

Inquiry Charter School does not permit early dismissals unless arrangements are made in advance.

**Bus Service:**

Students who are in the 1st - 5th grade are eligible to take the bus to school if they live farther than 1.5 mile away from the school. Families who would like their student to ride the bus to and from school need to call the main office at Inquiry in order to participate in the bus program. If a student who rides the bus changes their address, and still would like to take the bus, the office at Inquiry needs to know as soon as possible, so that your student does not experience a gap in transportation services. It can take up to two weeks to change an address in the system.

The school buses are provided to the students of Inquiry by the School District of Philadelphia. If you experience any challenges with the bus in regards to timeliness, call the school district first and then please let the office at Inquiry know so that we can reach out to the bus companies as well.

Students are expected to maintain the same code of conduct on the bus as in school. In order to take part in the bus program each family needs to read and sign the School Bus Agreement which outlines the behavior expectations for the students who participate in the bus program.

Each year, Inquiry Charter School provides an orientation for students who ride the bus. The following expectations are communicated clearly, modeled and practiced so that students know what is expected.

- Enter and exit the bus via the front door – do not touch any emergency doors or hatches unless there is an emergency.
- Choose a seat and remain seated, facing forward until the bus reaches your stop
- Keep hands, feet, and belongings to yourself and inside the bus at all times
- Sit quietly and use quiet voices to converse with others around you
- Follow the bus driver's directions the first time they are given

Students who have trouble following expectations on the bus will receive a consequence.

**Minor Incidents:** Warning letter or phone call home

Examples: Not sitting in seat, changing seats while bus is in motion, eating on the bus, teasing, swearing, being loud, etc.

**Moderate Incidents:** 1-3 day bus suspension and assigned seat upon reinstatement

Examples: Not following bus driver's instructions, throwing objects, harassment, recording or photographing peers or staff, standing on seat, walking around the bus, play-fighting, etc.

**Severe Incidents:** Minimum 5 day bus suspension; possible indefinite loss of bus privilege

Examples: Destruction of property, fighting, endangering others, making threats to cause injury, etc.

Any student involved in an incident will have a meeting with school administration to mediate the situation and discuss solutions and strategies to avoid a recurrence. Parents and families will be notified as needed, particularly if consequences are involved. If bus privileges are revoked, the decision may be appealed in writing to the Board of Directors.

## **Attendance, Timeliness and Truancy**

Students at Inquiry Charter School are expected to attend school daily. Attending school and being on time every day directly impacts our mission and core values. Attendance is also known to be aligned with student academic success. To ensure our students' success, Inquiry Charter School will not tolerate chronic truancy as defined by absenteeism, tardiness and early dismissals.

### **Excused Absences:**

In accordance with policies outlined by the School District of Philadelphia, Inquiry Charter School will excuse absences for the following reasons:

- Medical Appointments
- Illness
- Required Court Attendance
- Death in the Family

Excused absences for reasons other than those noted above will be at the discretion of the Head of School. **All other absences will be considered unexcused.**

Notes from parents/guardians must be submitted within three (3) days after returning to school and can only excuse up to 3 absences in a row. If your child is absent for more than 3 days in a row, a doctor's note or other appropriate documentation is required. A student's absence does not excuse him/her from the work that takes place while they are not in school. All work must be made up by the student.

### **Tardies:**

**Any student who arrives after 8:30am is considered tardy.** Tardiness is tracked and negatively impacts a student's record. Students who are late miss important instructional time and also disrupt the learning of their classmates and the overall structure of the school day. Excessive tardies (5 or more) will require a parent meeting with an administrator.

### **Early Dismissal:**

**Signing a student out of school prior to dismissal is considered early dismissal.** Early dismissals are tracked and count against perfect attendance. Only early dismissals requested by school administration or required for medical reasons will be excused. Inquiry Charter School is unable to accommodate early dismissals 60 minutes prior to regular dismissal without proper documentation.

Please note that students will only be released to individuals who have written permission from a parent/guardian and are listed on their emergency contact form. We reserve the right to check photo identification during dismissal on a daily basis to ensure the safety of all students.

Total UNEXCUSED Absences	Follow Up
Each Absence	Phone Call Home
3 Unexcused Absences	Letter Mailed Home *Explanation of truancy, habitual truancy, excuse notes *Consequences for students *Explanation of Project Go *Student is considered truant.
5 Unexcused Absences	Family Support Specialist schedules phone or virtual conference with family. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● explain to the family Project go referral process.</li> <li>● Complete the Student Attendance Improvement Plan with the family. Send copy to P.G</li> <li>● FSS Complete a needs assessment to assess if FSS services are needed.</li> </ul> ★ A SAIP conference must still occur even if the family fails to appear.
6 Unexcused Absences	First Referral to Project Go Family Support Specialist schedules phone or virtual conference with family. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● explain to the family Project go referral process.</li> <li>● Complete the Student Attendance Improvement Plan with the family. Send copy to P.G</li> <li>● FSS Complete a needs assessment to assess if FSS services are needed.</li> </ul> ★ A SAIP conference must still occur even if the family fails to appear. *Student is considered habitually truant.
8 Unexcused Absences	Second Referral to Project Go
10 Unexcused Absences	Student continues with District Attorney’s Office “Project Go” Program, may be considered to be dropped from the school roster.

Inquiry Charter School is dedicated to the academic, social and emotional success of all students. Regular school attendance is an integral part of this success. In an effort to enforce Pennsylvania's compulsory attendance laws, Inquiry Charter School partners with the District Attorney's office. By signing the handbook acknowledgement form, you are giving your consent for Inquiry Charter School to share your child's educational records with the District Attorney's office in the event your child has excessive unexcused absences. Please note that records from previous years will be included in any referral.

If you object to your child's information being shared with the District Attorney's office, please write a letter to the school stating your objection within 10 days of enrollment. Letters can either be mailed to the school's address or delivered to the Main Office. If we do not hear from you, we will assume consent has been given and will release your contact information if your child violates our school's truancy policy.

Please know that the partnership we have entered into with the District Attorney's office has been entered into with the very best of intentions for all of our students and their families.

### **Quarantine/COVID-19**

In the event that a student or family member has contracted or been exposed to COVID-19, we will continue to accept a doctor's note or other official documentation. If a family is asked to quarantine, the school will provide virtual accommodation. A student's absence does not excuse him/her from the work that takes place while they are not in school. All work must be made up by the student.

### **"Project Go" Partnership with the District Attorney's Office:**

As part of our truancy prevention program, students with 6 or more unexcused absences may be referred to "Project Go", which is an early intervention and prevention program developed by the Philadelphia District Attorney's Office to hold parents and excessively truant elementary and middle school students accountable for truancy.

By law, all children are required to attend school daily until they turn 18. Participating schools notify the Philadelphia District Attorney's Office when a student has exceeded the number of unexcused absences agreed to as the limit for their school. From there, a letter is sent from the District Attorney's Office to the student's parents/guardians advising them of their responsibilities under Pennsylvania law. Students and their parents/guardians are required to attend a group meeting with the Assistant District Attorney, school staff, city agencies and community-based organizations. Parents/guardians are advised that continued attendance problems will not be tolerated and could result in court action for them and/or their child. At the same time, referrals are provided for parenting classes, counseling and other needed services.

If the letter and group meeting are not successful in improving attendance, the student and their parents/guardians are invited to an individual meeting with the Assistant District Attorney and school staff to discuss the child's attendance problems. This meeting focuses on:

- Attendance problems
- Family issues/concerns
- School related issues/concerns
- Legal consequences
- Agency referrals for needed services
- Signed contract outlining responsibilities

If the individual meeting is not successful, the student **and** their parents/guardians are referred to a final meeting with the Assistant District Attorney, school staff and other appropriate representatives. The message is reiterated for the final time.

Failure to improve thereafter results in prosecution of the parents/guardians for Corruption of a Minor, 18 Pa.C.S. §6301(a)(2), a violation of the Public School Code, 24 P.S. §13-1333, and/or, in a particularly egregious case, Endangering the Welfare of a Child, 18 Pa.C.S. §4304. Similarly, a child 13 or older could be prosecuted for a violation of the Public School code (24 P.S. §13-1300, et seq); a child under 13 would be referred to the Department of Human Services as a dependent child.

### **Special Event Attendance:**

In order to attend special events and after-school functions, a student must attend school that day. To attend Saturday special events and functions, a student must be present at school on Friday.

## **Academics**

### **Honor Roll:**

Students in 3rd - 5th grade who demonstrate excellence in their academic achievement will be placed on the Inquiry Charter School Honor Roll. Students with A's and B's (no B-'s) in academic subjects will be placed on the Honor Roll. Students with all A's in academic subjects will be placed on the Distinguished Honor Roll. These students will be acknowledged at School Wide Meeting, and will receive certificates that acknowledge their academic achievement.

### **Homework Policy:**

Homework is an important component of each student's academic growth. Students complete homework assignments to practice skills and strategies that have been taught at school, to review learning so that it stays fresh, to become independent learners, and to take ownership of their learning. Homework is also an opportunity for families to be involved in the learning process with their student. Families, students, and teachers are responsible for ensuring that homework is an effective learning experience.

### **Student Responsibilities:**

- Bring home assignments and materials
- If needed bring home/ care for school computer that may be needed to complete

- assignments Complete homework
- Return assignments and materials to school on time

Family Responsibilities:

- Provide a space for students to do their homework
- Aid student in caring for computer that may be needed to complete assignments
- Make materials available (pencils, crayons, etc.)
- Read directions
- Offer assistance, but not answers
- Let the teacher know if homework is a problem
- Check homework for completion

Teacher Responsibilities:

- Provide homework that is engaging and purposeful
- Give clear directions
- Check homework
- Let families know when homework is not being consistently turned in on time.

All homework will include reading every night. Reading independently and reading with adults is the best way for students to make progress toward their academic goals and to help ensure that our students are life-long learners. Students will be given the opportunity to borrow books from classroom or school lending libraries and will also have access to some texts online. Homework will also include assignments and some projects.

Completing homework will take time and a commitment from families. Please notify the teacher if your student is working on an assignment for longer than the recommended time each night. At no point should homework become a burden for students or families. The following are recommended times for homework by grade-level:

Grade	Reading	Written	Total Time
K(4)	Families and students should spend time reading together (15-20 minutes)	10 minutes	25-30 minutes
K	Families and students should spend time reading together (20 minutes)	10-15 minutes	30-35 minutes
1 <sup>st</sup>	Families and students should spend some time reading together and students should spend some time reading independently. (20 minutes)	10-15 minutes	30-35 minutes

2 <sup>nd</sup>	Students should spend time reading independently. (20 minutes)	15 minutes	35 minutes
3 <sup>rd</sup> – 5 <sup>th</sup>	Students should spend time reading independently. (20 minutes)	20 minutes	40 minutes

**Student Celebrations:**

Students will experience regular in-class recognition for achievement and good behavior. They will also receive shout-outs and recognition at school-wide assemblies, celebrations and events.

**Class Trips**

We sponsor a number of field trips throughout the year, both during the school day and in conjunction with after-care programming, because we believe trips help enhance the school experience. Each student MUST have a permission slip signed by a parent/guardian in order to attend any class trip out of the neighborhood. Neighborhood walking trips (i.e. the local library, Fairmount Park, Concourse Lake, etc.) are covered by permission slips signed during the enrollment process and at the beginning of each school year. Certain circumstances may require an adult to accompany a child on a trip. Students must wear their school uniform on all trips unless it is noted otherwise on their permission slip. All classes consistently go to the pond also known as Concourse Lake in Fairmount Park. This is a short walking trip from school for hands on science classes.

**Technology**

**Computer and Network Usage:**

Use of school computers and networks must be consistent with our goal of educating all students in methods that encourage creativity, support problem solving and produce life-long learners. The failure of any user to follow our computer and network usage policies may result in loss of privileges, disciplinary action, and/or appropriate legal action.

- **Acceptable Use:** School networks and computers are provided to enhance the learning process and help staff and students succeed in meeting their educational objectives. Usage must comply with administrative policies and procedures, federal and Pennsylvania state law and any additional regulations set forth by the Head of School or the behavior policy.
- School computers and other technologies provided are expected to be treated with care. Damaged or lost items including laptops, chromebooks, tablets, etc. will need to be repaired or replaced at the student/families expense.
- **Privileges:** The use of Inquiry’s electronic network is a privilege, not a right, and inappropriate use will result in the suspension or revocation of that privilege.
- **Unacceptable Use:** Each individual is responsible for their own actions and activities while connected to the network. Usage that disrupts the proper and orderly operation of school, threatens the integrity or efficient operation of Inquiry’s electronic network, violates the rights of

others, is illegal or for illegal purposes of any kind, or constitutes misconduct is an unacceptable use. When school devices are being used at home, it is the responsibility of the parents/guardians to help monitor and guide their students to use the devices safely.

- **Privacy:** Any electronic communications or files created on, stored on, or sent to, from, or via the electronic network are considered school property. Consequently, users should not have any expectation of privacy with regard to such messages and files. Users should know that such messages and files can be recovered from the electronic network's back-up system even after they have been deleted from a user's individual account.
- **Network Etiquette:** All users are expected to abide by the generally accepted rules of network etiquette.
- **Security:** Network security is a high priority. If any user observes a security problem on the network, they must notify the system administrator by emailing [helpesk@belmontcharternetwork.org](mailto:helpesk@belmontcharternetwork.org) immediately and should not disclose the problem to other users. Users are expected to maintain the confidentiality of their account login information and password. Users are not allowed to use another individual's account without permission from that individual.
- **Copyright Web Publishing Rules:** Copyright law and Inquiry Charter School policy prohibit the re-publishing of text or graphics found on the Internet or on Inquiry Charter School websites or file servers without explicit written permission.

### **Personal Electronics:**

Students are not permitted to use cell phones, tablets, video game devices, or any other sort of personal electronic devices on school grounds during school hours, which includes lunch, recess, and after-care. Students who need to make a phone call during the school day will be allowed to use the phone in the Main Office.

While students are encouraged to leave their cell phones and other electronics at home, we understand that some students may need their phone before or after school and will have it with them during the school day. Our policy is that all cell phones must be **TURNED OFF** and stored out of sight during the entire school day. Each morning, students will turn off their phone and turn it into a school staff member. Phones and other electronics will be stored in a secured location for the duration of the school day and returned before dismissal. Students who do not comply with this policy and choose to use their phone or other electronics during the day will have their device confiscated and their family contacted by school staff. Additionally, the student may be subject to any other consequence as detailed in the behavior policy.

The state of Pennsylvania maintains a 100% prohibition policy on the possession of any electronic device during PSSA testing. Please note that Inquiry Charter School is not responsible for the theft, damage or loss of any student electronic device, including devices that are collected or confiscated by school staff.

## **Food and Cafeteria Policy**

Inquiry Charter School participates in the National School Lunch Program and offers students a healthy breakfast and lunch at school every day. Our menu follows all nutritious meal guidelines to ensure our students are always ready to learn. Please note that we will accommodate documented dietary restrictions, medical allergies and limited religious preferences, including no pork. Inquiry Charter School is able to accommodate a vegetarian diet upon request. All restrictions will be followed throughout the

whole school year.

A copy of the breakfast and lunch menu will be posted on the website and sent home each month. All students are eligible to receive breakfast and lunch at school, though we recognize some students may choose to bring a nutritious meal from home instead. Students who bring a lunch from home must bring a complete meal, which includes a protein (cold meat, tuna fish, sun butter, yogurt, etc.). A nutritious lunch should also include a fruit or vegetable along with 100% fruit juice, water or milk. Soda is not allowed. Peanuts or peanut products (including peanut butter) are not allowed due to allergy concerns.

Please note that students may choose to bring a lunch from home or eat school lunch on a day-to-day basis. However, students are not allowed to pick and choose components of a school lunch and their lunch from home unless there are documented dietary substitutions.

All students at Inquiry Charter School will receive a snack daily. The snack is not part of our meal program.

## **Uniforms**

Inquiry Charter School requires all students to wear uniforms on a daily basis to foster school pride and identity. Uniforms also support our school culture and help students stay focused on their academics.

Students in Kindergarten (4), Kindergarten, and 1<sup>st</sup> grade will wear their gym uniform every day. The uniform consists of a T-shirt, gym shorts, sweatpants and sweatshirt, which are all printed with the INQUIRY logo and available from Cramer's Uniforms.

Students in 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grade will have both a school uniform and a gym uniform. A navy polo, embroidered with the INQUIRY logo, is available from Cramer's Uniforms and will be paired with gray bottoms (pants, skirt, or jumper). Sweatshirts and sweaters are available for cold weather. The gym uniform will only be worn on gym days and is also available from Cramer's.

All students should wear solid navy blue or black shoes. Solid-color navy or black sneakers are acceptable.

### **General Uniform Expectations:**

- Blue jeans or patterned leggings are not acceptable under a skirt or dress
- No flip-flops, backless shoes or boots
- Pants must fit appropriately and be worn at or above the waistline.
- Shorts and skirts must be no more than 3 inches above the knee.
- Head coverings worn for religious reasons are permitted inside the building. Any other type of head gear (i.e., hats, sweatbands, hoods, visors, skullcaps, bandanas, etc.) is not permissible. Excessive jewelry and/or makeup are not permitted.
- Outerwear (coats, jackets, hoodies, scarves, gloves, mittens, etc.) are not permitted to be worn in the building.
- On school sanctioned or earned dress down days, outfits must still be deemed school appropriate. Otherwise, they will be considered out of dress code.

### **Consequences:**

If a student is out of uniform, the school will contact their parent/guardian and request someone bring a uniform to school immediately. If necessary, the school can provide a gently used uniform for the student to wear that day. Repeated violation of the uniform policy will result in a mandatory parent meeting.

When dressing your child for school, please remember that they will likely get dirty. They play outside and use markers, paint, glue etc. in the classroom on a daily basis.

Please make sure all coats, gloves, hats, extra sets of clothing, etc. are clearly labeled with your child's name. The school will make every effort to recover missing items but ultimately Inquiry Charter School is not responsible for lost or stolen items.

## **Out of School Time (OST)**

### **What is it:**

This encompasses Before Care, After School, Summer Camp and Daycare for qualifying families

**How to enroll:** Fill out an application. Applications can be found in the main office. Once the application and necessary paperwork is handed in, enrollment fee is paid and students are approved by the Out of School Time Coordinator students can start attending. If families have a past due balance from previous years that must be paid off before attending.

**Behavior:** Students are still held to the same code of conduct in Before and After School as during the school day.

**Clubs:** Clubs occur 3-4 times a year. Fliers go home with students from their classroom teachers. Extra fliers can be found in the main office. Enrollment for clubs is on a first come, first serve basis. Spots are limited and fill up quickly. Costs for clubs are separate from regular care payments.

**Costs:** Inquiry Charter School is an ELRC (formerly known as CCIS) provider and able to accept ELRC payment from participating families. For families that do not qualify for ELRC, private pay is accepted. Please see the application for costs associated with care.

**Late Pick-Ups:** If there is a late pick up after 6:00 pm Parents/guardians will be charged \$1 per minute for each minute they are late. For example, if you pick your child up at 6:07pm, you owe \$7.00. Late fees must be paid that night. Please note that if staff members are unable to reach you by 6:30 pm and the building is closing, they are required to contact the police to pick-up your child. Your child will be exited from the program the following day.

## **Behavior Policy**

Our behavior policy reflects our core values of curiosity, generosity and growth. When students violate these values, we work to provide opportunities for students to learn from their choices and rebuild relationships with their peers. We want our students to learn in a *safe, calm, and peaceful* environment where all learners can grow socially, emotionally, and academically each day.

Teachers and staff are constantly working to:

- Provide more encouragement than correction for students
- Notice growth towards behavior goals and expectations
- Teach and reteach our school's behavior expectations
- Give prompt, frequent, and explicit feedback to students

Students who demonstrate a commitment to our values will be recognized through awards at assemblies, shout outs during announcements, merit trips and through positive phone calls and notes home to families.

At times, all students will experience difficulty meeting our behavior expectations. Our staff will respond in calm and respectful ways to help students make progress towards success. Many problems that arise will be handled in the classroom. If difficulties persist or are severe enough, other school staff will be involved in helping to problem solve around the student's behavior.

Please note that physical aggression is not acceptable and will not be tolerated at Inquiry Charter School. Children exhibiting physically aggressive behavior will lose a privilege. When the behavior is serious, children may be sent home from school or suspended. A parent/guardian meeting may be required before they are allowed to return to school.

**Non-Negotiable Actions:**

To ensure a safe and positive learning environment for students and staff, the following non-negotiable actions may lead to an extended suspension/ expulsion hearing, following due process procedures.

Non-Negotiable Actions are defined as:

- An act that is illegal, requiring police notification
- Any injury requiring medical attention that is suffered by the victim(s)
- An incident that is reported to the state in the annual report
- Behavior that puts the safety of members of the school community at risk

**Kindergarten (4) – 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Behavior Supports:**

<b>Classroom Behavior Supports:</b>
<i>Take a Break Chair</i> Students are asked to take a short break in the classroom. Students are instructed on how to sit appropriately in the chair and how to use self-calming techniques so that the student can re-focus and join the class.
<i>Conference with a Student</i> Student and teacher discuss the problem and work together to solve the problem.

<p><i>Logical Consequences</i>                  Loss of a privilege until the student is ready. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● If a student is not handling the tablet responsibly, the student will choose a different activity until s/he is ready to handle the tablet appropriately.</li> <li>● Cleaning up a mess that was made</li> <li>● Practicing a behavior again</li> <li>● Repairing a relationship through an apology, kind words, a note, etc.</li> <li>● Desk space or carpet space moved to a different area so that the student is able to focus</li> <li>● Loss of privileges including trips and special events</li> </ul>
<p><i>Re-teaching of a Behavioral Expectation</i>                  Student will receive a lesson around the behavior. This may occur during the student's free time (recess, centers, etc.)</p>
<p><i>Take a Walk</i>                  Student will take a quick walking break to refocus and join the class ready to learn.</p>
<p><i>Buddy Break</i>                  Student will take a break in another classroom in their designated break spot.</p>

Students who are not experiencing success with the behavior supports implemented in the classroom may need additional support.

<p><b>Additional Behavior Supports:</b></p>
<p><i>Behavior Support Office</i>                  Student may be taken to the Behavior Support Office. In this room, students will be able to sit calmly for a few moments and reset their behavior before returning to class. Students will be accompanied by an adult during this time (teacher, teaching assistant, building support staff, etc.). Students who need adult assistance resolving a conflict with another student(s) will utilize the conflict resolution table in this room.</p>
<p><i>Conference with School Staff</i>                  Student may be taken out of the classroom to problem solve with a school staff member. Student will be a part of the conversation to determine a plan for resolution of the problem (apology, consequence, restorative practices, etc.).</p>
<p><i>Individual Behavior Plan</i>                  If the student, teacher, or student's family notices that the student needs more support to be successful, an individual behavior plan may be put in place. A conference will be held with the student's family, teacher and administration. This is considered a Tier 2 intervention in the MTSS process.</p>
<p><i>Loss of Privileges</i>                  Students may lose privileges including field trips, athletics, special event participation and after-school</p>

activities.
<p><i>Family Involvement</i></p> <p>Families will be contacted by a staff member about inappropriate behavior.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Contact with the family may be initiated in order to communicate what happened and how the problem was solved.</li><li>• Contact with the family may be to help problem solve. Families may be asked to meet with the teacher, school staff members, and administration to create a plan that will support students during the school day.</li></ul> <p>Contact with the family may be made to notify the family that the child needs to be picked up and stay home for the remainder of the school day to reset. If this occurs, the student and family will meet with staff before reentering the classroom.</p>
<p><i>Possible Suspension</i></p> <p>Student may be suspended from school. Students who are suspended may be required to return with a parent/guardian to discuss the incident and strategies to help the student be successful in class moving forward.</p>

**Duty to Inform:**

If a student becomes aware that a fellow student is in possession of illegal substances, firearms, weapons, or any items that could endanger their safety or the safety of others, that student has a duty to inform an adult such as a parent, teacher, counselor, director, or staff member immediately.

If a student indicates, says or demonstrates a desire to harm another person or themselves, our family support specialist will assess the situation and create a safety contract with the student. If it is determined that a parent meeting must be held, parent participation is mandatory. FSS will help to develop recommendations to support the student. A copy of the safety contract will be provided to the parent.

**Use of Restraints:**

Restraints to control acute or episodic aggressive or self-injurious behavior may be used by a trained staff member when a student poses an immediate risk to themselves or to others and less restrictive measures are ineffective. The IEP team will meet to review the appropriateness and effectiveness of an IEP if restraints are used to control the behavior of a student with a disability. The use of restraints may not be included in an IEP for the convenience of staff, as a substitute for an educational program, or as a form of punishment. Mechanical restraints, which are used to control involuntary movement or lack of muscular control for students with certain conditions, may be employed only when specified by an IEP and endorsed by a medical professional qualified to make the determination. Mechanical restraints prevent injury and promote normative body positioning and physical functioning for these students.

**Use of Aversive Techniques for Handling Behavior:**

The following aversive techniques for handling behavior are considered inappropriate and may not be used by agencies in educational programs:

- Corporal punishment
- Punishment for a manifestation of a student's disability
- Locked rooms, locked boxes, or other locked structures or spaces from which the student cannot readily exit

- Noxious substances
- Deprivation of basic human rights, such as withholding meals, water, or fresh air
- Suspension constituting a pattern
- Treatment of a demeaning nature
- Electric shock

### **Inquiry Charter School- Suspension and Expulsion Procedures and Guidelines:**

An exclusion from school can occur by suspension or expulsion. The following policy governs the process for excluding any Inquiry Charter School student. All students will be afforded due process if they are to be excluded from school. Any case involving possible expulsion will also require a formal or informal hearing in accordance with the Pennsylvania School Code.

#### **Suspension:**

Suspension is the exclusion of a student from school for a period of one (1) to ten (10) consecutive school days.

The Head of School or person in charge of school discipline may suspend any student for violation(s) of the behavior policy for up to ten (10) consecutive school days. They are responsible for submitting a written report of the suspension and the reason(s) for the suspension to the CEO.

Suspensions lasting more than two (2) days require the CEO's prior approval. A student will not be suspended for more than five (5) days at a time except in cases where it is determined that the student's continued presence poses a disruption to the academic process or a threat to the safety of the school community. Students suspended for more than five (5) days will be reviewed for expulsion. Suspensions may not run longer than ten (10) consecutive school days. The school will hold a conference with the student and communicate the circumstances surrounding the infraction to both the student and their parent prior to issuing a suspension. The student conference will notify the student of the reason(s) for which they are being suspended, give the student an opportunity to respond to allegation(s), discuss the student's behavior and corrective action(s), and document the student's behavior and intervention. In addition, the school will notify the student's parent/guardian in writing. The parent/guardian letter will act as written notification of the charges against the student and provide justification for the suspension.

Prior notice of a suspension is not required where it is clear that the health, safety or welfare of the school population is threatened.

An informal hearing/reinstatement meeting with the parent/guardian may be required following the commencement of suspension. If this informal hearing/reinstatement meeting is required, it must be completed before the student can be reinstated. The purpose of the informal hearing/reinstatement meeting is for the school to present its evidence to the parent and to permit the student to explain the circumstances surrounding the event leading to their suspension. It is also an opportunity to show why the student should not be suspended any further or considered for expulsion when applicable, and to discuss ways to avoid future offenses. Informal hearings/reinstatement meetings will be conducted by the Head of School or person in charge of school discipline unless the student is being considered for expulsion.

The informal hearing/reinstatement meeting with parent/guardian will take place no later than the third day of a suspension that lasts longer than 2 days, unless both parties agree otherwise and will comply with

the requirements of due process. Due process begins if the student is being recommended for expulsion by the Head of School at the informal hearing/reinstatement meeting. If that is the case, then due process will begin immediately, witnesses will be presented and the CEO or her appointee will conduct the meeting.

**Due Process Requirements for an Informal Hearing/Reinstatement Meeting With Parent/Guardian:**

- The student and parent/guardian will be given written notice of the reason(s) for the suspension.
- The student and parent/guardian will receive sufficient notice of the time and place of the informal hearing/reinstatement meeting.
- The student may question any witnesses present at the informal hearing/reinstatement meeting.
- The student may speak and produce witnesses who may speak at the informal hearing/reinstatement meeting.
- The school will offer to hold the informal hearing/reinstatement meeting within the first three (3) days of a suspension unless both parties agree to a later date. The parent/guardian can request to reschedule with reasonable cause.
- In addition, parents/guardians and students will be notified of their right to review student records and any witness statements.

**Expulsion:**

Expulsion is the exclusion of a student from the school district, by a majority vote of the Board of Directors, for a period of time exceeding ten (10) consecutive school days. Expulsions may be permanent or for a specified period of time.

Inquiry Charter School will only seek to exclude a student when absolutely necessary. The student handbook illustrates the types of offenses that could lead to exclusion and the school's process for pursuing those offenses. If a student is expelled from school, pursuant to state regulations, the parent/guardian is responsible for ensuring the student's continued education.

\*Please note that exclusions affecting students with disabilities will be governed by applicable state and federal laws and regulations.

A student may be permanently expelled from Inquiry Charter School for misconduct, disobedience, and/or severe infractions as outlined in this handbook. No student will be expelled without an opportunity for a formal expulsion hearing before the Board of Directors, a duly authorized committee of the Board of Directors, or a qualified hearing examiner appointed by the Board of Directors.

Expulsions will be brought before the Board of Directors by the CEO or designee who will notify the Board of Directors that the school is recommending a student for expulsion. The Board will weigh all of the evidence presented by the school administration and by the student and student's parents/guardians at the formal expulsion hearing before voting on the question of whether or not the student should be expelled.

The Board will vote on whether the student should be expelled for any length of time or whether a

lesser sanction will be imposed. The Board or its designee shall notify the student's parents/guardians of the date of the vote prior to the vote taking place. The parents/guardians will have the opportunity to address the Board. Expulsions will be effective upon the affirmative vote of a majority of the Board.

Expulsions are permanent unless a period of time for the expulsion is specified at the time the Board votes on the expulsion. Expulsions for weapons-related offenses are a minimum of one year.

**Expulsion Hearing - Due Process Requirements:**

- Written notification of the charges will be sent to the student's parents/guardians by certified mail.
- At least three (3) days' notice of the time and place of the hearing, which will include a copy of this policy, hearing procedures, and notice of the right to representation by legal counsel. A student may request the rescheduling of the hearing if they can present reasonable cause for extension.
- The hearing will be private unless the student or parents/guardians request a public hearing. Representation by counsel at the parent's/guardian's expense
- Disclosure of the names of witnesses against the student and copies of their written statements The right to request that witnesses against the student appear in person and answer questions or be cross examined
- The right to testify, present arguments and call witnesses on the student's behalf.
- A written or audio record will be kept of the hearing and a copy made available to the student by request. The hearing will be held within ten (10) but not more than fifteen (15) school days from the date of the suspension or the date notice of charges is received, unless a delay is mutually agreed to by both parties due to extenuating circumstances.
- Notice of a right to appeal the results of the hearing will be provided to the student along with the expulsion decision.
- A written adjudication shall be issued after the Board of Directors has voted to expel or not expel a student. The adjudication may include additional conditions or sanctions.

**School Attendance Policy for Excluded Students:**

Students serving an out-of-school suspension must make up missed work and exams when they return to school and will be allowed to complete all assignments according to school guidelines.

Students who are being reviewed for expulsion and are awaiting a formal hearing by the Board of Directors will be placed in their normal class unless it is determined that they pose a safety risk to the school community.

If the results of an informal hearing/reinstatement meeting indicate that a student's presence in their normal class constitutes a threat to the health, safety or welfare of the student or others and it is not possible to hold a formal hearing within the period of suspension, a student may be excluded from school for more than ten (10) school days but no longer than fifteen (15) school days, unless both parties mutually agree to extend the exclusion.

If a student is expelled from school by the Board of Directors, the parents/guardians of the student will assume full educational responsibility. Within 30 days, they must submit written documentation to the school indicating whether or not they have obtained alternative education for their student. If a

parent/guardian is unable to provide the required education, the school will make provisions for the student's education within 10 days of initial notification.

A student with a disability will be provided educational services as required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

**Students with Disabilities:**

Inquiry Charter School complies with Chapter 711 of Title 22 of the Pennsylvania Code pertaining to the discipline of students with disabilities and students thought to be eligible for disabilities services. In accordance with this policy, students identified as intellectually disabled can only be suspended with written permission from the parent/guardian or written approval from the Pennsylvania Department of Education Bureau of Special Education. Students with other disabilities, including 504 service agreements, may be suspended for up to five (5) consecutive days or fifteen (15) cumulative days per school year without receiving special education procedural safeguards.

If a student with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 Services Agreement commits an infraction that violates school policy, the student may be recommended for suspension or expulsion. The following actions or considerations require a manifestation determination meeting:

- Referral for expulsion
- Suspensions lasting more than ten (10) consecutive school days
- Suspensions totaling more than fifteen (15) school days in one year
- A pattern of behavior and exclusion totaling more than (10) days in one year
- Suspension of one (1) day for a student with an intellectual disability
- Transfer request for an alternative education setting due to disciplinary concerns

**Manifestation Determination:**

If a student with a disability is excluded from school, the LEA, parent, and relevant members of the IEP team must conduct a manifestation determination review meeting within ten (10) days to discuss the student's educational placement. If an alternative placement is being requested or considered for a serious infraction, the meeting must take place within twenty four (24) hours. In accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), written notice is provided to the parent/guardian outlining the recommended disciplinary action and the date of the proposed meeting. During the manifestation determination meeting, the student's most current evaluation, IEP and placement are reviewed to determine if the infraction is a result of their disability. Two questions must be answered during this meeting:

1. Is the student's behavior caused by, or did it have a direct and substantial relationship to, the student's disability?
2. Was the misconduct in question a direct result of Inquiry Charter School's failure to implement the student's IEP?

If the team determines that the behavior is NOT a manifestation of the student's disability, then the Code of Conduct is applied as outlined above. However, the student cannot be suspended for more than five (5) consecutive or fifteen (15) cumulative school days without receiving appropriate educational services. A Notice of Recommended Educational Placement (NOREP) is issued indicating the results of the determination meeting and the parent/guardian is given a copy of the Procedural Safeguard Notice

(PSN)\*. If necessary, the IEP team will meet to review and revise an existing behavior intervention plan or to complete a functional behavior assessment and intervention plan addressing the behavior. The IEP team will also determine the appropriateness of an interim education setting. The student's IEP will be revised to include services and modifications designed to prevent the behavior from recurring and enabling the student to continue participating in the general education curriculum.

\*If a parent/guardian disagrees with the decision, they can request an expedited Special Education Hearing and a hearing officer appointed by the Commonwealth will review the manifestation determination.

If the team determines that the behavior IS a manifestation of the student's disability, a change of placement may be considered given one of the following circumstances: (1) the student carried a dangerous weapon to school or a school function; (2) the student knowingly possessed or used illegal drugs or sold/solicited the sale of a controlled substance while at school or a school function; (3) the student inflicted serious bodily injury upon another person while at school, on school premises, or at a school function. Under these circumstances, Inquiry Charter School has the right to remove the student from school, issuing a NOREP for an interim alternative education setting of up to forty-five (45) days.

\*\*If the behavior is determined to be a manifestation of the student's disability, the infraction is not considered "special circumstances" and it is considered likely that the student will cause injury to themselves or others if maintained in their current placement. In this case, Inquiry Charter School may request an expedited hearing by a Special Education Hearing Officer to obtain a forty-five (45) day interim placement.

## **Student and Family Support**

Our school offers Family Support Services to assist families and students in identifying any barriers to student success. The FSS services focus on strengthening academic ability, personal/social/emotional well being and family empowerment. Please note that our school's Family Support team members are not therapists; however, they can provide temporary/short term support to help students overcome acute issues. Our Family Support Specialist has a comprehensive, innovative approach to helping each student be successful at ICS. Please reach out to the main office if you are interested in learning more about these services.

### **Food Distribution**

Fresh and nutritious meals can be picked up weekly on Thursday at 1pm. These meals are provided in addition to daily breakfast and lunch for any family needing additional support.

### **Family Engagement**

At Inquiry we value the educational partnership between families and the school. We look for ways to include our parents and guardians. We provide opportunities for parents to learn from and engage with each other during Chat & Chews. These cafe-style events are offered each month and they take place in the morning, just after arrival. In addition to the Chat & Chews, we will be hosting several Lunch & Learns throughout the school year. The Lunch & Learn program provides parents with valuable knowledge to better equip and support parents through the challenges of raising young people. We will cover topics like: Getting my child to open up about what they are thinking/feeling, How to get more support for my child, Sleep routines and Keeping my child safe on social media. We also have several school wide and grade level events that include families throughout the school year. These events are communicated in our

newsletters, calendars and social media.

### **McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act of 2001/Pennsylvania's Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness Program:**

The federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act of 2001 requires all youth experiencing homelessness to have educational access, attendance and success in school. McKinney-Vento also provides funding to states to support statewide homelessness initiatives. Pennsylvania's Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness Program works to ensure homeless children are provided with a free and appropriate public education on an equal basis with all other children in the state.

#### McKinney-Vento Act: Definition of Homelessness

An individual who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, including children and youth who are:

- Sharing housing
- Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds
- Living in emergency or transitional housing
- Abandoned or runaways
- Awaiting foster care
- Living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings
- Migratory children who qualify as homeless because they are living in the circumstances described above

#### McKinney-Vento Act: Enrollment

Public School must immediately enroll students experiencing homelessness even when lacking:

- Proof of residency
- Guardianship
- Birth certificates, school records, or other documents
- Medical records, including immunization records
- Required dress code items, including uniforms

#### McKinney-Vento Act: Support

- Homeless students who move have the right to remain in their school of origin (i.e. the school the student attended when permanently housed or in which the student was last enrolled, which includes preschools) if that is in the student's best interest.
- If it is in the student's best interest to change schools, homeless students must be immediately enrolled in a new school, even if they do not have the records normally required for enrollment.
- Transportation must be provided to or from a student's school of origin at the request of a parent, guardian, or, in the case of an unaccompanied youth, the local liaison.
- Homeless students must have access to all programs and services to which they are eligible, including special education services, preschool, school nutrition programs, language assistance for ELL students, Title I programs, career and technical education, gifted and talented programs, magnet schools, charter schools, summer learning, online learning, before and after

school care, etc.

- Unaccompanied youth must be accorded specific protections, including immediate enrollment in school without proof of guardianship.
- Parents, guardians and unaccompanied youth have a right to dispute an eligibility, school selection, or enrollment decision.

In accordance with the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act, the Philadelphia Department of Human Services (DHS) and local education agencies (LEAs), including Inquiry Charter School, must work together to support educational stability for children and youth placed in out-of-home care. Philadelphia DHS and LEAs must collaborate to ensure that children and youth placed in out-of-home care are able to remain in their school of origin (current school) unless it is not in their best interest to do so.

Every time a child or youth is placed in out-of-home care, or their placement location is changed, Philadelphia DHS and LEAs will internally consult about possible factors indicating it is not in the best interest of the child to remain in their school of origin. When these factors exist, there must be a joint determination by the LEA and DHS to change their school placement. Philadelphia DHS and the LEA will then work together to comply with the requirements of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), including working collaboratively to establish a transportation plan.

#### Inquiry Homelessness Liaison

The Director of Family Support Services is the designated homelessness liaison for Inquiry Charter School. If you are experiencing homelessness, we are here to support you. Please contact the Main Office so that we can connect you with a member of our Family Support Services team.

## **Enrollment and Required Documentation**

The enrollment process is managed by Main Office staff and is mandatory for all new students. The following documents are required to formally enroll a student at Inquiry Charter School:

- Completed Enrollment Packet
- Proof of Residency (Any 2 of the following are acceptable: deed, lease, mortgage agreement, notarized Residency Agreement, current utility bill, current credit card bill, property tax bill, vehicle registration, driver's license, and DOT identification card)
- Proof of Legal Custody (Required if you are the legal guardian of a student)
- Home Language Survey
- Parent Registration Statement
- Proof of Age (Any of the following are acceptable: birth certificate, baptismal certificate, passport, notarized statement indicating date of birth, prior school records showing date of birth)
- Student Immunization Record

The following documents are required for a student to attend Inquiry Charter School:

- Physical Assessment Record (Though we encourage all students to have a yearly physical exam, updated physical assessments are only mandated for students entering Kindergarten(4),

- Kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> Grade after initial enrollment.)
- Dental Examination Record (An updated dental assessment is required at initial enrollment and for students entering 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.)
- Any Previous School Records (Academic, Attendance, IEP, Disciplinary, etc.)
  - A release form is included in the enrollment packet if you would prefer for the school to obtain these records directly.

If a child with a disability (who had an IEP that was in effect in a previous public agency in the same state) transfers to a new public agency in the same state and enrolls in a new school within the same school year, the new public agency (in consultation with the parents) must provide FAPE to the child (including services comparable to those described in the child's IEP from the previous public agency) until the new public agency either (1) adopts the child's IEP from the previous public agency; or (2) develops, adopts, and implements a new IEP.

If a child with a disability (who had an IEP that was in effect in a previous public agency in another state) transfers to a public agency in a new state and enrolls in a new school within the same school year, the new public agency (in consultation with the parents) must provide the child with FAPE (including services comparable to those described in the child's IEP from the previous public agency) until the new public agency (1) conducts an evaluation and (2) develops, adopts, and implements a new IEP, if appropriate, that meets the applicable requirements.

### **Confidentiality and Student Records Policy:**

Inquiry Charter School, Belmont Academy Charter School, Belmont Charter School and the Community Education Alliance of West Philadelphia share student information amongst themselves for educational purposes. The schools and various programs protect the confidentiality of personally identifiable information regarding its eligible, thought to be eligible, and qualified handicapped students (if not protected by IDEA '97) in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) and other applicable federal and state laws, policies and regulations. "Education records" include those records that are directly related to a student including computer media and video, which are maintained by the educational organization or by a party acting for the educational organization. Inquiry Charter School, Belmont Academy Charter School and Belmont Charter School maintain education records for all students, which include but are not limited to:

- **Personally Identifiable Information:** Confidential information that includes, but is not limited to, the student's name, name of parents and other family members, the address of the student or the student's family, and personal information or personal characteristics which would make the student's identity easily traceable.
- **Directory Information:** This information is contained in a student's education record, but is not generally considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if disclosed. It includes, but is not limited to, the student's name, address, telephone number, date and place of birth, major field of study, participation in officially recognized activities and sports, weight and height, dates of attendance, awards received, and records from the most recent educational agency or institution attended.

### **Student Health Information:**

All parents must complete a health information packet for their child at the start of the school year.

Medical and allergy forms must be updated yearly. Annual physical assessments are recommended for all students, but they are only required for students entering Kindergarten (4), Kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> grade after initial enrollment.

Any student with an injury or illness during school hours will be seen by the school nurse or office staff. If, after examining a student, the school nurse deems medical attention necessary, the child's parent/guardian may receive a phone call or letter requiring them to seek medical attention for the student prior to allowing them to return to school. If a student is suffering from any illness or symptom (fever, flu, etc.) that prevents them from participating in the instructional day, the student must be picked-up from school IMMEDIATELY. If a parent does not address the student's health issue in a timely manner, we reserve the right to send the student to the Emergency Room.

Student medication can only be administered by the school nurse or designated personnel. Parents/guardians must complete an annual consent form, signed by a medical professional, specifying student medication dosage and instructions. Forms are available in the Main Office. Medicine will only be administered according to doctor's instructions. School personnel are not permitted to administer over-the-counter drugs to any child. Children are not allowed to bring medication to school without proper documentation. Under no circumstances can medicine be in a student's possession. All medicine brought into school must be in the original pharmacy packaging and should be brought to the office immediately. This includes medicated cough drops.

The School District of Philadelphia requires that all students receive certain immunizations and examinations. Parents must comply with these requirements. Beginning this year, children who do not meet these requirements will have five (5) days upon entering school to meet compliance. After that, they will not be allowed to return to school. Please see the following chart for clarification.

Grade Level	Immunizations Required	Physical Assessment	Dental Assessment	Medical & Allergy Forms	Permission to Administer Medication (if necessary)
Elementary	Diphtheria & Tetanus: 4 doses *Must have 1 does after 4 <sup>th</sup> birthday Pertussis: 4 doses Polio: 4 doses *Only 3 doses required if 3 <sup>rd</sup> was administered after age 4 Measles: 2 doses Mumps: 2 doses	Within a calendar year	Every 6 months	With a calendar year	Within a calendar year

	Rubella: 2 doses Hepatitis B: 3 doses Varicella: 2 doses				
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## Student Health Services

### **Community Health Center:**

Inquiry Charter School students and their families have access to a variety of health services offered at Belmont Charter School’s Community Health Center, located inside Belmont Charter School at 4030 Brown Street. The health center operates during non-school hours for the benefit of students, families and the broader community served by schools within our network. Primary care services are provided through a medical home model (primary care physician) or urgent care model, including CLIA-waived lab services and reproductive health care.

### **Student Health Services Policy:**

In partnership with Education Plus Health, Inquiry Charter School provides school-based health services including state mandated screening and care coordination. The following services are provided on-site:

- Immunization, physical and dental assessment monitoring
- State-mandated health screenings, referrals and follow-up
  - Vision Screening – All Grades
  - BMI Assessment – All Grades
  - Hearing Screening – K – 3<sup>rd</sup>
- Primary care, upon request, at the Belmont Charter School Health Center
- Documentation and reporting (SHARRS)
- Chronic health condition oversight, guidance and management
- On-call advisement from a certified nurse practitioner

Under the supervision of a certified nurse practitioner, a medical assistant or licensed nurse will provide health screening and health record management. Assistance with insurance will be provided as needed. The nursing assistant will work with Inquiry Charter School staff to share relevant student health information on a *need to know* basis, in accordance with HIPPA and FERPA regulation. All staff will abide by strict confidentiality practices to ensure student privacy. Medical information will be stored in Inquiry Charter School’s student information system, PowerSchool, as well as secure spreadsheets for tracking and reporting purposes. Mandated reports, including the annual SHARRS report and vaccine report for Kindergarten students, will be completed and submitted by Education Plus Health staff.

## Special Education

### **Intervention Services:**

At Inquiry Charter School, we implement a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) as part of our Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtII) process. RtII is a multi-level approach to providing

academic and behavior supports and interventions for struggling students. Through these interventions, we are able to begin intensive interventions within the general education setting and help struggling students before they fail.

**Notice of Services for Students with Disabilities Including Special Education and Protected Handicapped Students:** INQUIRY Charter School provides special education and related services to children with disabilities who are in grades Kindergarten (4) through 5<sup>th</sup> grade. The purpose of this notice is to describe (1) the types of disabilities that might qualify the child for such programs and services, (2) the special education program and related services that are available, (3) the process by which the public schools screen and evaluate such students to determine eligibility, and (4) the special rights that pertain to such children and their parents/legal guardians.

**Children Served in Special Education Programs:**

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

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

**Description of Special Education Programs:**

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

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

Special education is designed to meet the needs of each eligible student, including specifically designed instruction conducted in the classroom, home, community settings, hospitals, institutions and other settings.

Related services that are available to students include transportation and corrective and other supportive services that help an eligible student benefit from special education. Examples include: speech pathology and audiology, psychological services, physical and occupational therapy, social work services, school health services, medical services for diagnosis or evaluation, parent counseling and education, recreation counseling services, rehabilitation counseling services and assistive technology services.

### **Referral of Children for Screening and Evaluation:**

Inquiry Charter School has a variety of procedures to identify children needing special education, including “screening” and “evaluation.” If a disability is suspected, teachers, other school personnel or parents may refer a child for screening and/or evaluation. Parents suspecting that a child may have a disability and need special education can request a screening or evaluation at any time by calling the Main Office, talking with their child’s teacher, submitting a written request, or contacting the Head of School. Screening of children, using immediately available data sources such as health records, parent interviews and history, functional vision and hearing evaluations, and speech and language screenings are completed on request. If the screening leads to a recommendation for evaluation, the evaluation team will conduct the evaluations. No evaluations may be conducted without written parental permission.

State and federal law affords many rights and protections to children with disabilities and their parents. A summary of these rights and protections follows. Interested persons may obtain a complete written summary of the rights and protections afforded by law, together with information about free or low cost legal services and advice, by contacting the special education coordinator or school principal.

### **Services and Programming for English Language Learners:**

Inquiry Charter School provides educational programming for English Language Learners (ELL) and assures their appropriate participation in all aspects of the school curriculum. In accordance with our philosophy to provide all students with a quality educational program, appropriate, planned instructional programs are provided for students who identify their dominant language as anything other than English. The goal of ELL programming is to increase English language proficiency for eligible students so that they are able to meet academic standards and achieve academic success. Services are designed to be inclusive and are integrated into the classroom setting as much as possible. Eligible students are often identified through the enrollment process based on the Home Language Survey (provided in the parent’s native language) and previous school records, but can be identified throughout the year based on family interviews, MTSS referrals and placement assessments.

More information about the structure of ELL programming at Inquiry Charter School is available on our website and in the Main Office. **Rights and Protections:**

- **Prior Written Notice:** The public school must notify the parent in writing whenever it proposes to initiate or to change the identification, evaluation, educational program or placement of a child or whenever it refuses to initiate or make a change in identification, evaluation, educational program, or placement requested by a parent. Such notice must be accompanied by a written description of the reasons for the proposal or refusal, the options considered, if any, and the reason why such options were rejected.
- **Consent:** The public school cannot proceed with an evaluation or reevaluation or with the initial provision of special education and related services without the written consent of the parent. A public school may override the lack of consent for an initial evaluation by requesting the approval of an impartial hearing officer or judge following a hearing. If the parent fails to respond to a written request for permission to reevaluate, however, the public school may proceed with the proposed reevaluation without consent. A public school may not seek a hearing to override the refusal of a parent’s consent to an initial placement in special education.
- **Protection in Evaluation Procedure:** Evaluations to determine eligibility and current need for

special education and related services must be administered in a manner that is free of racial, cultural, or linguistic bias. Evaluations cannot consist of a single test or assessment and testing must be a valid measure of the psychological, social, emotional or other learning characteristic or behavior that the school is using it to measure. Testing and assessment must be administered in accordance with professional standards and the criteria established by the publisher. It must be administered in the native language of the child.

- **More Information:** Detailed printed information about available special education services, programs and policies is available from the school upon request. Anyone interested should contact the Head of School. Information and communications are in English, but will be provided in the native language or other mode of communication used by parents, if appropriate. More information can also be found on our website: [www.belmontcharternetwork.org](http://www.belmontcharternetwork.org)

*\*Please note that the policies and procedures outlined in this version of the INQUIRY Family Handbook are subject to change. Updated copies will be kept in the Main Office and made available upon request. You can also find the most recent version on our website.*