

Pittsburgh Urban Christian School

Handbook *2015-2016*



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Policies and Procedures Handbook

Welcome to Pittsburgh Urban Christian School. We are grateful that you have chosen our school for the education of your child. We believe Pittsburgh Urban Christian School provides an exciting environment where the Lordship of Christ is clearly proclaimed in every part of our education and life together.

Your child is very special and has been given unique gifts and abilities. We look forward to spending quality educational time with your child. We also recognize that all children require guidance and nurturing from parents and other significant adults. Parents are welcome to invest time with us as we discover together this marvelous creation and the God who sustains it.

As a minimum, please take time to carefully read the contents of this handbook and then review the following areas with each PUCS student in your family:

- Our Educational Practices-pages 10-11
- Family Service Requirement Policy & Clearances Requirement-pages 13-14
- Tuition & Financial Aid-pages 16-17
- Emergency School Closings and Delays-pages 20
- General Information-pages 21-23
- Academic Policy Guidelines-page 24
- Disciplinary Philosophy and Guidelines- pages 25-26
- Bus Conduct Guidelines-page 27

We anticipate an exciting year together. Please continue to pray for the students, families, staff, and Board of Directors of our school.

Rhonda Smith
Board President

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OUR MISSION

The mission of Pittsburgh Urban Christian School is to provide excellent education for a racially and economically diverse group of children in an urban setting. We are committed to education from a broad Christian perspective with a curriculum characterized by integrated thematic units, close student-teacher interaction, and substantive parental involvement. We are committed to developing a diverse staff that is dedicated to facilitating each student's, personal, social, academic and physical growth. We seek to foster a unified community of parents, educators, and churches who will support and participate in this vision for urban Christian education.

OUR FOUNDATIONS

We believe:

Bible-that the Bible as the written Word of God is the Truth by which the Holy Spirit enlightens our understanding of God, ourselves and the world and the infallible authority by which He directs and governs all our activities, including the education of our children. Scripture shapes everything we do at PUCS. II Timothy 3:16; Ephesians 6:4

Creation- that the universe and all things in it are the good work of the triune God in origin, gracious preservation and ultimate restoration; and since its purpose is the glorification of His name, and then we can understand the world rightly only in its relation to God.

Psalm 24:1, 2; Psalm 100:3

People- that all people are created in the image of God to enjoy covenantal fellowship with their creator and to reflect in character and work the excellencies of their Maker. True fulfillment is found in living under God's commands, which lead us to exercise loving dominion, responsible stewardship, and faithful reconciliation. Genesis 1:26-28

Sin- that sin is rebellion against God's authority and that by sinning we have been estranged from our Creator, our neighbor, ourselves, and the rest of creation. We have become corrupt in heart and blind to the true meaning of life and therefore repress and misuse the knowledge of God, which confronts us in creation and scripture. Consequently, we are wholly dependent upon God for our salvation. Genesis 3:16-19

Jesus Christ- that Jesus Christ, our living Lord, of whom the scriptures testify, has reconciled the world to God and redeems our life in its entirety through His life, death on the cross, and resurrection. Through His Spirit He renews our heart to love God and our neighbor, and redirects our understanding to rightly know God, ourselves, and the world. Romans 3:23; John 3:16-17; II Corinthians 5:17

Purpose of Education- that the purpose of Christian Education is to direct and guide the child to commit his/her heart to Christ the truth, to attain understanding and wisdom, and to joyfully perform his/her competent and responsible service of the Lord in church, state, and society.

Parents- that God has given parents the responsibility to nurture and educate their children. As the school is an extension of the home, parental support and involvement in school life is essential. Christian education established and maintained by an association of Christian parents and friends provides a God-centered education not provided elsewhere. Proverbs 22:6

Child- that children are by nature inquisitive and creative. They are entrusted by God to parents, and need loving nurture, careful guidance, correction, instruction, and focused exploration of the world as God’s creation. Ephesians 6:4

Teacher- that the teacher, as a servant of God, exercises authority in assisting parents and the community in the education of children, and exemplifies a model that reflects Christ’s love and encourages each child’s own obedient response to God.

Community- that God’s purpose for our lives is best known and understood in the context of a faithful community of believers. While the education of children is primarily the responsibility of the parents, all believers have an obligation to uphold education through their persistent prayer, faithful work, and generous support.

Curriculum- that the integrity of all things under a sovereign Lord may be expressed in the interconnectedness of the academic disciplines, and that the God who created and sustains all things be made known. That our pedagogy and activities address children’s varied learning styles and provide concrete, purposeful, and real-life experiences.

Christian School- that the school, established and controlled by an association of Christian believers in accordance with legitimate standards and provisions, possesses the freedom to function in education in total and voluntary submission to Christ the King.

OUR HISTORY

The Pittsburgh Urban Christian School exists as one response to God’s call to take seriously stewardship for children’s growth and development. We hear from the Scriptures and see in the God-created reality around us that all sides of our lives are interconnected with each other. All these ways of living find their true focus and root in Jesus Christ the Redeemer. This understanding is the driving force behind the school’s formation and continuation. It also serves as the foundation of its curriculum.

In the summer of 1980 a group of parents living in Pittsburgh’s East End began discussing the possible formation of a faith-based day school that would be “a light” for students in urban Pittsburgh. As they met together, they became increasingly excited about the idea of becoming a reconciling agent in the city of Pittsburgh.

After submitting the necessary legal work, moving into donated facilities at Fourth United Presbyterian Church, and hiring a teacher, Pittsburgh Urban Christian School opened in September of 1981 with five kindergarten students. Over the next few years, PUCS hired additional teachers, including an Arts Consultant. Not a frivolous “extra,” PUCS recognizes the arts to be an integral part of its thematic units. In 1983 school parents and friends were privileged to enjoy the first children’s spring production, demonstrating the fruits of the academic curriculum embedded in the arts.

From September 1984 through June 1987, the school was located in the Boy’s Club of America building in Shadyside. In September 1987, we moved to the educational wing of Calvary Evangelical Lutheran Church in Wilksburg, where we enjoyed five classrooms, a library, a gym, and an office. Since the 1994-95 school year, when PUCS served 56 students, our enrollment has consistently grown. Today we offer “a light” to over 132 students from Kindergarten through eighth grade.

Following the strategic plan adopted by the Board in 1996, the school has made its financial health a priority. PUCS consistently meets payroll, teachers are paid fairly, and the school's annual budget is based not on expected grants, but on the giving history of our constituency, tuition, and two special fund-raisers coordinated by school families. Also in response to the strategic plan, enrollment has increased with approximately 35% minority students (exceeding our stated target of 30%), and a comprehensive evaluation and standardization of the curriculum has been completed.

As the century changed so did PUCS. In 2000/2001 we added 6th grade to begin the expansion from a K-5 school to a K-8 school. We also began exploring the possibilities of purchasing a building. In the spring of 2005 we purchased former Calvary Lutheran Church with no mortgage. We continued raising funds during 05-06 to begin rehab. In the summer of 2006 we worked with Zambrano Construction and Hosanna Industries, a construction mission to rehab offices and build 2 new classrooms.

OUR TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

Biblical Perspective: We seek to be a Christian School providing children with an education grounded in the truth that God is creator, sustainer, and redeemer. We believe that the Bible as the written Word of God is the Truth by which the Holy Spirit enlightens our understanding of God, the world and ourselves and the infallible authority by which He directs and governs all our activities, including the education of our children. Scripture shapes everything we do at PUCS. (II Timothy 3:16; Ephesians 6:4) We desire to take seriously the call to stewardship of our children's growth and development. All of life, including the studies and disciplines in which our children are engaged, are governed and directed by the authority of the Scriptures. As a school community, we strive to demonstrate the principles, which God has defined for us in Scripture, as we work together in unity.

Small Class Size: Each class will ideally have between 15-18 students. We believe small classes are necessary to meet the varied needs of young children as they grow and develop during their early education. In a small class, children can be known according to their unique gifts, abilities, areas of challenge, learning style, temperament, family background and spiritual maturity. Teachers can genuinely care for and be involved with each child and his/her family.

Multi-Grade Classes: PUCS will intentionally group multiple grade levels together. Children mature socially, emotionally and academically at different rates, and there should be flexibility in a classroom to allow for plateaus and growth spurts. Multi-grade classrooms encourage cooperative learning and the development of leadership skills among students of varying levels. They also provide time for catch-up for those at transitional levels of achievement. At PUCS, our students have many positive opportunities to learn and interact with older and younger children, as well as with adults.

Field Trips: Field trips and other forms of experiential education are essential components of our integrated curriculum. Our small class size enables the students to go on frequent field trips where they have the opportunity to apply what they are learning in the classroom. At the beginning of the school year, parents and/or guardians are expected to sign a "blanket" permission slip that will be applied to all field trips throughout the entire school year.

OUR CURRICULUM PHILOSOPHY

Introduction

PUCS is founded on the belief that all of life is rooted in Christ the Redeemer who is the integrator of our lives.

Integrated Curriculum

Our lives are like a beautiful tapestry. True understanding is seen as the threads of mathematics, art, history, science, and literature are woven together. Real comprehension of any one of them is distorted if you pluck a thread out of the weaving. Students who attend PUCS do not open a science book, only to follow it with yet another unrelated literature book. Instead, the students connect the influence of scientific discoveries with historical events. An integrated curriculum assembles the various academic disciplines into thematic units.

This thematic orientation provides opportunities that are rooted in the concrete experiences of the child. For example, when children study plants, not only do they learn about the parts and species but are inspired by poems and literature, scientific observations and people like George Washington Carver who advanced our understanding of plants. In addition, they see plants as created by God and entrusted to people to enjoy and use for the maintenance of life, for the well-being of all people, and for God's glory. Each unit begins with a subject already of interest to the child. It then builds on the child's existing experience with new skills and resources from each discipline. Everything that the students do, whether they are investigating, analyzing, or experiencing, will help them develop a deeper understanding for God's creation.

Skill and Conceptual Development

At the same time, where detailed basic skills require conceptual clarity and repeated practice, time is spent focusing on separate domains. In other words, some sets of skills need continual focus for basic skill learning and practice throughout the year. Teachers will focus on personal and social development, learning skills, mathematics and physical development in their daily and weekly routines. For example, students will learn to care for each other through prayer, to organize their belongings and assignments, to memorize math facts, and to exercise their growing bodies. Skills in these areas will be integrated with the themes as appropriate.

OUR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM SEQUENCE

In Kindergarten through 5th grade, the students learn a broad knowledge of science and social studies with a strong conceptual development linking the units in each sub-discipline (e.g. physical science, world cultures) from year to year.

PUCS UNIT THEMES

Grade Level	Science			Social Studies		All School Unit
	Human Body (Who Am I?)	Habitats	Physical Science	American History	World Cultures	
K	Creation: Man is Special	Animals & Plants	Seasons (3 mini units)	Neighbor-hoods	Africa	Changes yearly, chosen by staff.
1	Five Senses	Ponds & Rivers	Weather	Pittsburgh	Asia	
2/3 Year One	Nutrition & Digestion	Plains & Mountains	Basic Chemistry	Pennsylvania	North America	
2/3 Year Two	Muscles & Bones	Forests	Rocks & Minerals	Native Americans	Western Europe	
4/5 Year One	Respiration & Circulation	Deserts	Simple Machines	Civil War	South America	
4/5 Year Two	Nervous System	Oceans	Astronomy	Government	The Middle East	
Middle School 3 Year Cycle	Life Science Physical Science Earth Science			Ancient civilizations World History (Middle Ages – 1800) American History		

OUR MIDDLE SCHOOL CURRICULUM SEQUENCE

- The goals of the PUCS Middle School are to encourage students to develop:
 - 1) a Christian perspective that integrates Biblical principles of redemption and reconciliation found only in Christ with their lives and their learning,
 - 2) a broad knowledge of science and social studies content with strong conceptual links between topics,
 - 3) a depth of skills in each of the eight skill areas, personal and social development, physical development, language and literacy, mathematics, science, social studies, and Spanish, that leads to effective application in a variety of contexts.
- The Middle School structure, atmosphere, and schedule encourage the development of Christian character, leadership, and a variety of gifts.
- Middle School Students experience two integrated courses, one social science and one science. Each of them will last a full year and will aim at synthesizing, formalizing, and deepening the concepts learned during elementary school.
- Language & Literacy and the Arts are integrated into these courses, with particular focus on listening, speaking, reading, and writing, as well as broad coverage of styles of literature, music, visual arts, and performing arts.
- Teachers also relate course content to Biblical themes and events, as well as to the history of Christianity and Christian mission.
- Middle School Students have focused lessons to develop strong skills in Math (Saxon Curriculum), English Grammar and Vocabulary, Spanish, and Physical Education.
- Study skills, Work Management Strategies, and Resource Utilization (e.g., library, computer, etc.) are emphasized throughout the curriculum.

OUR EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES

Achievement Testing-Achievement tests are scheduled in the spring for students in grades 2 through 8. To aid us in evaluating each child's understanding of academic skills, we administer a nationally normed achievement test. Keep in mind that these scores do not report on a child's spiritual, social, emotional, physical or attitudinal growth, but are simply indicators of general academic progress. They are just one indicator of the child's academic progress. PUCS is not responsible for making up achievement tests for students who have unexcused absences. If your child is sick on the day of a test, call the office immediately. Do not schedule vacations or doctor appointments during this week. Dates for the achievement tests are noted on the school calendar.

Camping Trip-The late May camping trip is a parent led elementary school (grades K-5) annual event. Teachers and parent volunteers supervise the trip. We encourage one member of each family to attend, if possible.

Chapel- Chapel is held on Friday mornings from 9:00-9:30. A teacher or guest speaker leads the school in a time of singing, praying, and sharing. Parents and relatives are always welcome to attend.

Computers- Class size computer lab is available for teachers and students to use as a learning tool. A filtered Internet system is installed on all computers. Computers are used only for educational purposes and are monitored by a staff member at all times.

Evaluation- There are three evaluation periods a year. Evaluations include a checklist and written comments from the teacher. Twice a year teachers meet with each student's parent(s) or guardian to discuss the comprehensive growth and progress of the child in all areas of school life. He/she is evaluated in the areas of personal and social development, physical development, language and literacy, mathematics, science, social studies, and Spanish. Samples of each students work is collected in a portfolio to show growth, using "rubrics" that specify project components and expectations. Students in the Middle School will receive percentage scores in all disciplines.

Homework- At PUCS, our curriculum in the elementary school is arranged in a way that allows students to engage in a full range of focused educational experiences during the school day, thus eliminating the need for much homework in the lower elementary grades. When homework is assigned to students, it may be for one or more of the following reasons: to give additional time to an individual child to pursue a particular interest; to allow a student to finish an incomplete assignment; to practice newly learned skills or to reinforce old skills; to bring the student into contact with out-of-school educational resources; and to promote a growing sense of responsibility in the student. Our curriculum in the Middle School prepares students for High School, which will include writing, research and out-of-school assignments.

In-Service-Teacher in-service days are scheduled several times a year for teachers' development and enrichment.

Library- PUCS is equipped with books and resources for each unit. PUCS students also have access to the Wilkinsburg Public Library at their teacher's discretion.

Recess- Recess/Break Time for grades Kindergarten through 8th grade takes place on the playground across the street from the school on South Avenue. Two teacher aides are always on duty with a first aid kit. Children are encouraged to interact with classmates and creatively play during this free time. We will be outside unless it is raining, extremely cold, or snowing at the time of recess.

Spring Production- The Annual Spring Production is based on our elementary all school unit. Each fall a different topic is studied in depth by the entire elementary school giving them a broader knowledge and understanding of the topic in all disciplines. This produces student written songs, stories, skits, and movement that are put into a script form. During the month of February, the students rehearse; make revisions, and design costumes, sets and programs. The production is held in March and the entire community is invited!

OUR LOCATION

The curriculum also reflects the fact that our community is interlinked as well. It addresses the multi-racial, multi-cultural composition of the city and the world surrounding us. In a distorted and hurting culture, Pittsburgh Urban Christian School is committed to not fleeing the culture nor swallowing it, but to becoming redeeming agents of change in the midst of it all. That means looking our culture square in the eye and discerning what living with a purpose means for here and now. And so, at a time when many private schools are fleeing the city and its accompanying economic and racial realities, PUCS intentionally serves a diverse urban neighborhood.

While it is possible for city neighborhoods to provide a wealth of cultural resources unknown to the suburbs, they can also be a concentrated reminder of the brokenness of our world, which is hidden in other places. PUCS recognizes that for all young people we must offer a path of dignity, hope and wisdom that our education provides. It is here that PUCS seeks to be a “light” in its own community and surrounding areas.

THE PEOPLE

The Board of Directors

The Board of Directors is responsible for establishing policies, approving of budgets, overseeing the raising of scholarship and operating funds, offering of staff contracts, finalizing class sizes, and the monitoring of the overall direction of the school. The PUCS Association approves members. The Board meets monthly at the school. Complete information is outlined in the Constitution and by-laws of the Association.

Pittsburgh Urban Christian School Association

The purpose of the Pittsburgh Urban Christian School Association is to establish, maintain and operate a school for the daily instruction of children. Pittsburgh Urban Christian School’s academic standards meet the requirements set forth by the Department of Education of the State of Pennsylvania.

Members of the Association are parents, supporters and friends of the school. The Association meets four (4) times a year for learning, socializing, reviewing the budget and to approve selected board members.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

FAMILY SERVICE REQUIREMENT POLICY

In order to adequately meet the needs of the school, we have developed a more formalized system of parent volunteerism.

All school families are required to complete 24 hours of service to the school per year. Parents keep track of the service hours on a tracking card located in the school office. You can fill out your card when at the school or email in service hours to the office@pucs.org (Please note that final tallies of hours have due dates)

In order to incentivize the service requirement, parents will receive a tuition credit for the hours they have worked – up to a maximum of \$30 in the Summer, \$200 in the Fall and Spring to correspond with the following required hours:

- 3 hours are to be completed during the Summer Work Days - Hours due to office by Sept 15th
- 21 hours are to be completed during the Fall & Spring school year - Hours due to office by April 30th

We understand that work and family schedules can be very demanding, making it difficult for some parents to serve during the school day. Some parents have enlisted a close relative (grandparent or aunt/uncle) to serve in their place at the school. We also realize that some parents, particularly those new to PUCS, may be unaware of the specific areas of need within the school. For this reason we will provide ***notice of the various available opportunities in the PUCS Post and at the Parent Association Meetings.*** Some of the opportunities can take place from home or during the evening or weekends.

Any parent who is willing to invest the considerable amount of time and energy required by serving on the board or as chair of one of the committees (including Parent Association Coordinators) will automatically have satisfied their requirements.

Adapted September 2013

When serving at the school, these guidelines are to be followed:

- All parent drivers, overnight chaperones, volunteers or employees for any PUCS event must have an act 33 Clearance (PA Child Abuse History) and an Act 151 Clearance (Criminal Investigation) on file in our office. These clearances will remain valid for as long as your child remains at PUCS. ***All families entering for the first time or re-entering after a time away from PUCS must submit these clearances. You may obtain these forms through the school office. If new families' forms are in the PUCS office by October 1st, PUCS will pay the \$10.00 fees and send them to the state offices.***

- All parents who drive on field trips must have a copy of their current license and car insurance policy in our office files. **This must be done every new school year.**
- All volunteers and visitors must report to the office to ensure the safety of the students.
- Parents or guardians who desire to visit classrooms (class observation) must call the school office in advance and arrange an appropriate time for the visit. Parents who wish to meet with a teacher may make an appointment by calling or emailing the office or the teacher directly.

ADMISSIONS POLICIES

Admissions

- Students of any background or belief are welcome to apply to Pittsburgh Urban Christian School. However, as stated in the Foundation and Curriculum portions of this handbook, students and parents must realize that our school is based on Christian principles, which are woven into the fabric of the school and be willing to support their children in this type of education.
- A child applying for kindergarten must be five (5) years old by August 31st of the year for which he/she is seeking enrollment. First graders should be six (6) years old by August 31st.
- The office administrators keep a list of applicants and when the applications are received. When facilities or staff limits space, new students will be accepted on a first come basis. The admission of new students during the school year is subject to available space within the given classroom.
- Every prospective student must participate in an educational assessment. The educational assessment is used as a tool to reveal the academic progress of a particular student.
- All prospective kindergarten students are required to attend a pre-kindergarten day that gives the staff an opportunity to observe each child in a group situation.
- If a student is transferring from another school to Pittsburgh Urban Christian School, all records must be received and reviewed before admission is complete.
- All new students are on a nine- (9) week probationary period. If a student is not able to meet PUCS' academic requirements or behavior expectations, the education director will meet with the parent(s) to discuss what actions need to be taken.

New Applicants and Fees

Application and accompanying forms should be completed and sent to the Pittsburgh Urban Christian School with a non-refundable \$25.00 fee. If the student is accepted, an additional \$50 enrollment deposit must be paid. There is a \$100 enrollment deposit for a family of 2 or more.

NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

The Pittsburgh Urban Christian School admits persons of any race, color, nationality and ethnic origin to all the rights and privileges, programs and activities generally accorded to school personnel and students. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship programs or other school-administered programs.

HEALTH REQUIREMENTS

Physical Examinations

We require that **all new students** have a physical and dental examination.

A hearing, vision, and TB screening must be included in this examination. Parents must have medical forms updated when their child enters 6th grade, and dental forms when their child enters 1st, 3rd and 7th grade. The Wilkesburg School District nurse will provide vision and hearing screening at PUCS during the year

- ❖ All students must have 2 doses of varicella (chicken pox), 4 doses of tetanus (1 dose after 4th birthday; 3 doses if series started after 7 years of age), 3 doses of polio, 2 doses of mumps, 1 dose of rubella, 3 doses of hepatitis B,
- ❖ All 7th and 8th graders must have a Meningitis vaccine (MCV4) and a TDap vaccine.

*You must provide documentation if your child is exempt.

Also required students participating in any sports is a **PUCS Athletics-Insurance and Physical Registration Form**. Your family physician must sign this form before the child is able to play any sports and insurance information provided to the school.

Immunizations

The PA Department of Health stipulates the immunization requirements for school admittance. Your physician has access to these requirements. Please obtain a copy of your child's immunization record from your family physician to be placed in your child's school health record. We must have written proof on file that each child has been immunized against diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, poliomyelitis, measles, mumps, rubella and hepatitis

Emergency Medical Authorization Form

The Emergency Medical Authorization Form must be on file in the unlikely event that your child needs emergency treatment and we are unable to reach you. You will receive all necessary health forms in the student enrollment package once your child has been admitted.

WITHDRAWAL AND TRANSFERS

Please follow these procedures if you need to withdraw or transfer your child to another school:

- Parent(s) must notify the school in writing, stating the date of transfer, the name and address of the new school the child will attend, and if needed, the family's new home address.
- All financial obligations must be met before school records will be forwarded. (Please see Prepaid Tuition.)

TUITION AND FINANCIAL AID

Tuition and Fees

Tuition is set yearly by the board. Tuition is payable in twelve (12) monthly installments running from June through May. There is an activity fee of \$120 per child for the year, which is taken out June, July and August.

Re-Enrollment, and Sibling Enrollment

Forms for re-enrollment and sibling enrollment will be sent home at the beginning of the new calendar year. *There is a \$50 (per student) non-refundable re-enrollment deposit* that is applied to the first month's tuition of the next school year. The first tuition payment for the next school year is due on June 1. On-time monthly payments throughout the summer guarantees your child(ren)'s Fall enrollment.

Late Tuition

A **\$30.00 late fee** will be added to your FACTS account if your tuition payment is paid five days after your due date which will be either the 1st or 15th of the month depending on what you set up in FACTS.

Unpaid Tuition

If payment has not been received by the end of the month, the account is considered one month delinquent. Delinquent accounts will be handled in the following manner:

- **1-month delinquent:** The family will be notified that they are delinquent. They must pay the overdue amount plus the late fee immediately, or contact the school accountant to make other payment arrangements.
- **2 months delinquent:** The family will be notified that they are delinquent and are placed on Tuition Probation. The school will begin the process to remove the child(ren) from the school. Once the removal process has been completed, the child(ren) will not be permitted to attend classes at PUCS until the account is made current. All records will be held until payment is received. If a family is not able to pay their monthly tuition because of illness, injury, job loss or death of family member, the parent(s) must contact the school bookkeeper immediately. Our goal is that all families will be able to meet their financial obligations so PUCS is able to meet its financial obligations.

Prepaid Tuition

Tuition paid during summer months is *not* prepaid tuition and **is not refundable**. If payment is made in advance of when the payment is due and the child subsequently withdraws from PUCS, the family will be refunded any tuition paid in advance of when due, less a twenty-five dollar (\$25.00) processing fee.

Revised 2003-2004

First Day of School

All families are expected to remain current in tuition payments. If on the first day of school, families are not current; their children will not be allowed to begin school.

Financial Aid

Financial aid must be renewed each year by application with an accompanying update of evidence of need on FACTS. This is due at the time of re-enrollment period which happens just after the start of the new calendar year.

STUDENT ARRIVAL, DISMISSAL AND ATTENDANCE POLICIES

Student Arrival Time

Students may not enter the school before 8:30 a.m. and must arrive by 8:45 a.m. If a student arrives before 8:30 a.m., he/she must wait on the bus, or with a parent or guardian.

Tardy Students

- Parent(s) and guardians need to insure that their child(ren) arrive on time, as tardiness is disruptive to the classroom schedule.
- Any student arriving after 8:45 a.m. *for any reason* is considered tardy and must report directly to the office to receive a tardy (pink) slip. The pink slip goes with the student to the classroom, and the student is marked tardy on the attendance sheet.
- After 5 tardies the education director will arrange a meeting with parents to address the problem.

Absences and Excuses

Education is a growing and sharing process. The staff is committed to nurturing the students to the highest level of their God-given ability. For this growing process to occur, it is expected that each student attend school on a regular basis.

Parent(s) and guardian(s) should do the following when a child is absent:

- Call the office by 9:00 a.m. to explain why the student is not at school and ask to have homework sent home or arrange to pick it up.
- ***If you have not called by 9:00 a.m., homework may not be sent home.***
- Please email office@pucs.org or send a written excuse with the student when he/she returns to school stating the reason for missing school

If parent(s) or guardian(s) do not communicate with the school, the teachers are not responsible for arranging make up work or tests for the student.

When 15 days of school are missed, the teacher and/or education director will meet with the student's parent(s) or guardian to discuss the student's progress. The student will only pass to the next grade level if he/she is capable and ready for the next grade level.

Dismissal

Students will be dismissed at 3:05 p.m. Half-day kindergarten students will be dismissed at 12:05.

**ALL FULL DAY STUDENTS MUST BE PICKED UP BY 3:05 P.M.
PLEASE BE PROMPT!**

Early Arrival and Late Dismissal Fees

In order to help families be punctual, after a total of 5 early arrivals or a total of 5 late pick-ups (each-not combined), **PUCS will charge parents/guardians a \$10 fee for each subsequent early arrival or late pick-up.**

If your child is a non-bus student....

- Parent(s) and guardian arrive at the school no later than 3:05 p.m. Students who do not ride the bus home are dismissed from the side door of the gym (the Ross Avenue side of the school).
- Please be considerate of our staff by picking your child(ren) up on time. The PUCS staff often has meetings after school.
- **If your child(ren) is permitted to walk home alone after school, please submit a letter of permission for the school files.**

If your child rides the bus....

- All K-5 students will load the buses from the gym, grades 6-8 will load from the red doors. Buses are permitted to leave at 3:05 p.m.
- Students who normally ride the bus will sit in their bus lines, even if they anticipate being picked up by a parent. Parent(s) or a guardian(s) need to arrive no later than 3:05 p.m. (on Center Ave.) in order to pick up a student who normally rides the bus. If the adult has not arrived by 3:05 p.m., the student will be put on the bus. **Please do not call the office to ask for your child to be held back.** Please note that if a student is in the Parent Pick-up line, the student cannot be switched to the bus line.

Other Dismissal Policies

- The school is required, by law to release students only to their parents or other parent-designated alternatives. Consequently, PUCS requires students planning to go home with someone other than their parent(s) or guardian to submit a note from their parent(s) or guardian giving them permission to do so.
- Absolutely no bus switching is allowed due to insurance liability. School districts will not allow children to ride a different bus home with friends. Walkers may not ride buses at any time.

Parking

- When picking up students, park on Ross Avenue. Center Street along the front of the school is for bus parking only.
- Do not double park to pick up children. Because of the danger, we will not release children to any car or bus that is double-parked.

BUS CARRIER GUIDELINES

Please follow these guidelines to ensure proper documentation & appropriate actions.

- **Arrive at the bus stop 10 minutes before your child's pick-up time.** If the bus does not arrive at the scheduled time, please wait another 15 minutes just in case the bus is running late.
- If the bus does not arrive after waiting 15 minutes, call the Bus Company to see why there is a delay. You do not need to call the school.
- Send a note or email the school office, office@pucs.org, with any problems so we have written documentation of bus problems.
- Abstain from talking with the bus driver or company about changing the bus route order or bus stops. This must be handled through the PUCS office that will contact your school district (except for Penn Hills & Woodland Hills School District)

EMERGENCY SCHOOL CLOSINGS AND DELAYS

Snow Days

We will not simply follow the Pittsburgh Public Schools schedule. Many of our students come from districts other than the Pittsburgh Public School system. We may be closed even if Pittsburgh Public is not closed. We may also be open if Pittsburgh Public is closed.

BUSING FOR YOUR CHILD WILL FOLLOW YOUR DISTRICTS SCHEDULE.

For example, if Penn Hills has a 2 hour delay your busing will have a 2 hour delay, even if PUCS does not.

For information on PUCS closings tune in to:

- WTAE TV Channel Four, thepittsburghchannel.com
- WPXI TV Channel Eleven, PCNC, wpxi.com & pittsburgh.com
- KDKA TV Channel Two, and KDKA Radio

Any decision regarding school closing will be posted on these stations as soon as possible. Please do not call PUCS staff members.

School Delays

- All school delay decisions are made by the school districts and will affect your child(ren)'s transportation. If your school district is delayed, your transportation will be delayed. Please listen and/or watch for your local school district decision.
- If your school district is delayed, 1/2-day kindergarten students may stay all day.
- If inclement weather is a concern to you, feel free to make a decision to keep your child(ren) home or transport them yourself. If you decide to transport your child(ren) or keep them home, please contact the bus company and the school to inform them of your plans.

Early Dismissals

The decision for an early dismissal is made by the school districts. If we are notified of an early dismissal by a school district, we will try to reach you by calling the numbers listed on your emergency form. Let us know if you will be at a different number on any day that inclement weather is predicted. If we cannot reach you, we will leave a message. Child(ren) will be sent to their regular drop-off place.

EMERGENCY CONTINGENCY PLAN

We recommend that all families have a contingency plan for their child(ren)'s after school accommodations. Cars break down, there are unexpected traffic jams, meetings run late, etc. Please review a plan with your child in the event that they arrive at the bus stop or home before you do, or if they arrive at an "after school care program" that is closed. Identify trusted adults around your home that can take care of your child(ren) should the need arise.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Activity Fee-There is a yearly \$120.00 activity fee, per student, that is added to your tuition in June, July, and August. This money is used for field trips, special supplies, and other classroom events.

Backpack Mail- Backpack mail is limited to school business only. All materials must fit in a child's backpack. No large boxes or packages.

Birthdays- Each teacher will communicate to the parents the way their class will handle recognition of birthdays.

Building Information- The school is located at 809 Center Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15212. We are grateful for God's continued provision of this building we call home for our growing school. Building use is restricted to regular school hours and specially scheduled meetings. At no time are children permitted in school areas without adult supervision, or in rooms not scheduled for use. It is the responsibility of the parents to prepare the building during the summer months.

Bus Conduct- Please see next section on DISCIPLINARY PHILOSOPHY AND GUIDELINES for details.

Cell Phones- Cell phones are to be turned off before entering the school building and kept in a backpack or bag during the entire school day. Students may not make or receive calls or text messages **after 8:30am or before 3:10pm** and must be out of the school building and off the front sidewalk before making calls. If students need to make emergency calls during the school day, they are to use the school office phone only. If a staff member hears or sees a cell phone in school, on field trips or other instructional activities, in the hallways or bathrooms, teachers or administrators will confiscate the cell phone and it will be returned to a parent.

Communication- If a parent or guardian is concerned about a problem, it is best for all parties involved if the following guidelines are observed:

- Talk with the staff member closest to the problem (teacher or teacher aide). Please do not call the teacher or staff member at home. Call the office and leave a short message in his/her voice mail. Your call will be returned promptly.
- If you are not able to satisfactorily resolve your concern, request a conference with the teacher and education director.

Computers: Computers at school for education purposed only and are to be used at the discretion of the teachers. Students are never to check personal email or be on any social networking sites.

Disciplinary Philosophy and Guidelines- Please see next section on DISCIPLINARY PHILOSOPHY AND GUIDELINES for details.

Dress Code- Students should take pride in their appearance. It is desirable that each student dress modestly and in the best possible manner. Due to health and safety requirements, footwear must be worn at all times. Middle School students may be asked to wear tee shirts and shorts for gym class. **All students must wear athletic shoes on their scheduled physical education day.**

Fire Alarm Drills- Each year, we have several fire alarm drills. There are maps located in each room and students practice the procedure so that everyone exits the building quickly and safely.

First Aid and CPR Certification- All of our teachers have been First Aid and CPR certified by the American Red Cross.

Fundraisers- In order to secure funds for our scholarship program; the school community has two fund-raisers each year, one in the fall and in the spring.

Keys- There will be a \$25.00 deposit to borrow a key from the school office. Deposit will be returned upon return of key.

Medications- the office staff administer all medications. Please consider not bringing medicines that are not a necessity. PUCS does keep a limited supply of Tylenol, ibuprofen, calamine lotion, Pepto-Bismol tablets, etc. for occasional use.

Please fill out a Prescription Medication Release form for any medicine sent to school, whether given on a temporary basis or for duration of the school year
All prescription medication (including inhalers) —whether given on a temporary basis or for duration of the school year-- must be in the original container with the doctor's instruction label attached, placed in a zip-lock bag, labeled with the student's name, all instructions/notations included, and given to the Office staff upon arrival at school.

Money and Valuables-PUCS is not responsible for any money or valuables brought to school by a student. If money is required for a particular event, parents will be notified. Otherwise, students are cautioned against bringing any money or valuables to school.

Office Hours- The PUCS office is open from 8:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. Monday through Friday during the school year. The office staff has revised hours during the summer. The education director's and office administrator's voice mail is checked regularly.

All school celebration - Each autumn, the school hosts a gathering, offering families, board members and the staff a chance to meet and greet one another as the new school year begins.

Prohibited items- Students are prohibited from bringing radios, trading cards, Ipods, Gameboys, or any electronic device to school except with a teacher's permission for an educational purpose. If brought to school, the items will be held in the office or by the teacher and returned at the end of the day. Please see **DISCIPLINARY PHILOSOPHY & GUIDELINES** regarding weapons & drugs.

Publicity -

- All signs to support or publicize any event must be approved by the education director before display.
- All copying to publicize PUCS fund-raising events should be arranged through the office.
- Announcements or flyers to be included in the PUCS Post must be submitted by Friday at 12:00 p.m. for the education director's approval.
- Students and parents may not sell items or advertise at PUCS for fund-raisers for non-PUCS sponsored groups.

Safety- Students are not permitted to leave the building unless a designated adult accompanies them.

SCRIP Program-Individual Tuition Reduction Program- Scrip means "substitute money". When you purchase scrip, you are purchasing gift certificates that are used just like cash. We are partnering with Great Lake Scrip Center, www.glscrip.com. However much your family chooses to participate in the program goes directly towards YOUR family's tuition costs. For more information, please see **Pittsburgh Urban Christian School Individual Tuition Reduction Program** handout.

Telephones- The office and classroom phones are not to be used by the students except with the permission from the PUCS staff or in the event of an emergency. If a student is sick and needs to call home, he/she must go to the office where office personnel can contact the parent(s) or guardian(s). Unless it is an emergency, parents cannot talk to the students by phone while they are in school.

ACADEMIC POLICY GUIDELINES

The staff at Pittsburgh Urban Christian School makes every effort to determine the educational level and needs of students prior to admission.

STEP A: Classroom teachers will outline expectations pertaining to homework and classroom requirements for academics.

*All new students at PUCS are accepted on a 9-week probationary period. If a student is not able to meet PUCS academic requirements, the education director and classroom teacher will meet with the parents to discuss the actions that need to be taken.

STEP B: When a student's classroom performance does not meet expectations, there will be daily consequences. Possibilities include missed recess, work requiring, parent signature, or weekly progress reports.

STEP C: If daily consequences are not effective, the teacher will determine whether this is a motivational issue or a lack of cognitive ability. Parents will be involved in this discussion.

Cognitive issue: The teacher will assess the student's progress to determine what modifications to the student's educational program are possible at Pittsburgh Urban Christian School. This could include, but not be limited to, modified expectations, tutoring, testing, a consideration for possible retention next year, or recommendation for placement at another school if necessary modifications are not possible with Pittsburgh Urban Christian School. If retention is being considered, deficiencies should be noted in 3 or more academic areas. Parents will be notified by the February conference if retention is being considered. Parents will be officially notified by May 1 of the firm intention to retain the student. If the student is retained, they will be considered on Academic Probation for the first 9 weeks of the new school year. The goal of this policy is to best serve the needs of the entire PUCS community, including all students and staff.

Revised 8/19/02

DISCIPLINE PHILOSOPHY

Pittsburgh Urban Christian School (PUCS) believes that the discipline of oneself and learning go hand in hand to build character. A student can best develop during the education process when the student is in an environment that encourages discipline and growth of character.

PUCS also believes God has given a mandate to parents to “Train children in the right way and when old they will not stray.” (Proverbs 22:6) PUCS works with the parents, guardians and the church to fulfill this mandate.

The goal in discipline is self-discipline, consistently making good choices according to the expectations at school, at home, at church, etc. The policies and procedures are implemented to help students and staff work with each other in a controlled and pleasant environment.

PUCS’ expectations for students’ behavior:

- Always be prepared to learn.
- Always show respect for every person in attitude, action and speech.
- Always follow directions of staff members.
- Always behave in a safe and orderly manner.

This would include the following, among other things:

- 1- Be quiet and pay attention when others are speaking.
- 2- Keep hands, feet and objects to oneself.
- 3- Be mindful of others’ belongings and school property.
- 4- Maintain appropriately modest dress at all times.
- 5- Abstain from physical threats or fighting.
- 6- Abstain from vulgar language, name-calling, teasing or cursing.
- 7- Abstain from physical contact to express affection, i.e., kissing or hugging.
- 8- Abstain from sexual talk, innuendoes or harassment.

A student who is found with illegal drugs or firearms will immediately be expelled from the Pittsburgh Urban Christian School.

All staff members are responsible for insuring that the school’s disciplinary guidelines are followed in all school contexts including but not limited to the playground, hallway, office, bus lines, library, field trips, chapel or gym.

DISCIPLINE GUIDELINES

The staff of Pittsburgh Urban Christian School will take the following steps to insure an orderly school environment.

Step A: Each teacher will review the discipline code as it applies in his or her classroom. Teachers will use professional judgment about the situation when students choose to disobey the school rules and a parent or guardian may be contacted via a note home or phone call.

Step B: If the inappropriate behavior continues, the student will be sent to the office.

1- A student may miss recess and a discipline appropriate to the situation will be administered.

2- A written description of the infraction will be sent home requiring a parent's signature.

Step C: If the inappropriate behavior continues, after step B, the education director will call the parent in for a conference to implement disciplinary actions at home. The student may also receive a 1-2 day suspension from school.

Step D: If the previous steps are unsuccessful in encouraging appropriate student behavior, the education director may proceed with any of the following options:

1- Request that parents have child tested or give permission for the student to be tested at PUCS by a given date via resources provided by the Allegheny Intermediate Unit to determine if there are physiological causes for the student's misbehavior.

2- Request that parents pursue counseling or some other emotional support for the student and provide PUCS access to the designated counselor so that staff, parents and counselor can agree on strategies for helping the child make better choices.

3- Notify parents that their student is officially on probation and needs to show improvement within two weeks in order to remain a student at PUCS.

A parent or guardian's failure to cooperate with any of the requests in Step D will result in the dismissal of the student in question. Once the school determines that a student can no longer attend PUCS, parents will be notified in writing and may need to attend a face-to-face conference with the education director and a board member.

If further investigation into a situation or event is required, the parent(s) must fully cooperate in any discipline measure implemented and must not withhold any information from the Board, or the student and family will be expelled from the school. We reserve the right to dismiss any student whose behavior is inadmissible to PUCS.

MIDDLE SCHOOL ISSUES

- Lockers and bins are school property and on loan to each student. Lockers and bins will be checked on a regular basis.
- School officials may search your backpack or purse if they have a reasonable suspicion that you are breaking the law or violating a school rule.

BUS CONDUCT POLICY

PUCS students who ride the bus represent the school and need to model the behavior that we encourage at the school. Each student who rides the bus must comply with school and bus driver expectations while waiting for or riding the bus to and from school.

The safety of students during their transportation to and from school is a responsibility shared by parents and guardians, bus drivers and PUCS staff members. Students who choose not to comply with these expectations will be subject to disciplinary action.

A child whose misbehavior is reported by the bus driver to the school will be disciplined accordingly. A report will be completed by the bus driver and given to PUCS personnel who will meet with the student. A parent or guardian will also be asked to review the report with their student and return it to school with their signature. If inappropriate behavior continues, a parent or guardian will be contacted and the student may be suspended from the bus.

The following are the transportation expectations for safety and conduct of students:

- 1- Board the bus safely and quickly with courtesy to the driver and other students.

- 2- Be seated promptly and stay in that seat at all times, talking softly with others, using appropriate language.

- 3- Follow the bus driver's instructions at all times while on the bus.

- 4- Abstain from distracting the bus driver by throwing objects, shouting or other distractive actions or communications. Games such as "Lights Out", "Hot Hands" and "Keep Away" are not appropriate.