

## PARENT-STUDENT HANDBOOK



### OUR MISSION

Our mission is to fulfill the vision of The Basic School by Dr. Ernest L. Boyer. At United Community School, everyone UNITES to promote learning; teachers are empowered to meet the individual needs of learners; and parents are partners.

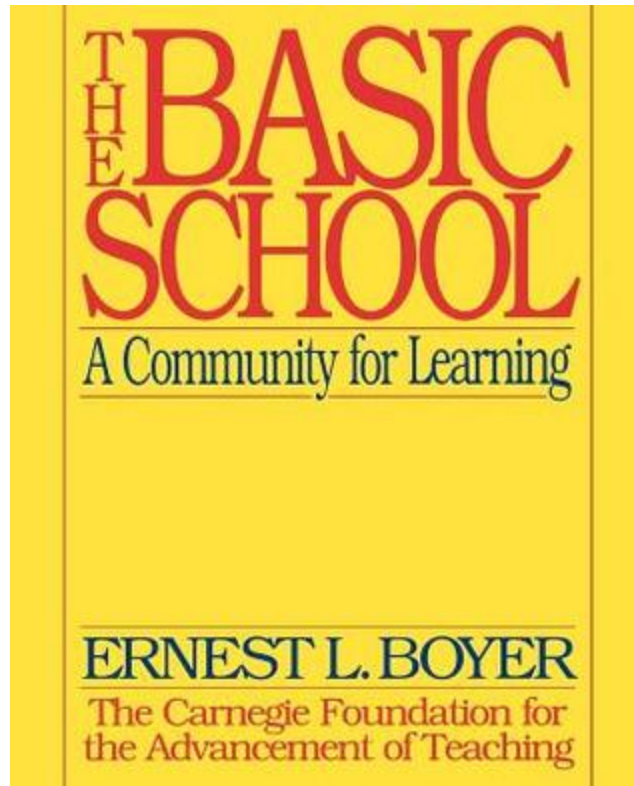
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## I. EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM



At its core, United Community School reflects fundamental principles established by researcher and educator Dr. Ernest Boyer, the late President of The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Learning. His groundbreaking work through “The Basic School” outlines a comprehensive plan for elementary schooling and informs everything we do. As reflected in the Basic School model, we believe an effective school connects:

- people to create community;
- classrooms and resources to enrich the learning climate; and
- learning to life to build character.

The most distinctive feature of the Basic School is its curriculum. In the Basic School, the curriculum is organized around eight integrative themes called core commonalities. The core commonalities are:

1. The Life Cycle
2. The Use of Symbols
3. Membership in Groups
4. A Sense of Time and Space
5. Response to the Aesthetic
6. Connections to Nature
7. Producing and Consuming
8. Living with Purpose

These eight commonalities, based on shared human experiences, integrate traditional subjects and help students relate what they learn to life.

## II. ADMINISTRATIVE AND OPERATIONAL INFORMATION

### A. REGISTRATION/ADMISSION

All students who submit a registration for admission to United Community School prior to the annual enrollment deadline will be admitted, unless the number of applicants for a grade level exceeds the number of openings at that grade level. If the number of applicants exceeds the number of openings, a lottery will be held to determine admission, and a wait list will be created. The lottery is held in the second semester of each year, and families are notified immediately as to their admission or wait-list status. When your child is admitted into UCS, he/she has a permanent slot in subsequent years as long as he/she is continuously enrolled.

See the “United Community School Admission FAQ,” available on the school website, for a detailed description of the registration and admission process.

#### **Age Requirements**

Entering kindergartners must be 5 years old on or before August 31 of the year in which they enter. Valid birth certificates are required as proof of age.

#### **NC Residential Requirements**

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, Division of Charter Schools, mandates that applications from out-of-state residents are not eligible for admission unless proof of North Carolina residency can be provided prior to January 31.

#### **Nondiscrimination**

United Community School will not discriminate against any student on the basis of ethnicity, national origin, gender, or disability, and the school will not limit admission to students on the basis of intellectual ability, measures of achievement or aptitude, athletic ability, disability, race, creed, gender, national origin, religion or ancestry.

#### **Immunization/Physical Examination Requirements**

Kindergartners must have completed their immunizations and must have a physical examination by the first day of the school year. A health assessment form for the child is sent to newly admitted kindergarten students and is also available at the school and on the school website. Students who do not have both the immunizations and examination completed by the thirtieth calendar day after the first day of school will be suspended from school until they have met this requirement unless we receive a religious or medical exemption form, both of which are available on our website.

Every child must be immunized against diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, poliomyelitis, red measles and rubella and against any other disease that is determined by the Commission is in the interest of the public health. UCS will make sure that students, upon enrollment, are immunized. Parents will be notified that students who are not immunized will be required to receive the required immunization at the age required by the Commission. Children who have not received required immunizations by the specified age will not be admitted to school until doing so, unless the child is exempted by North Carolina law.

### B. MEDICATION & CRISIS HEALTH PLANS

Without proper medical authorization, students shall not transport prescription or non-prescription medication to or from school or have medication in their possession at any time without meeting conditions prescribed by the UCS Board of Directors.

Designated school employees may administer prescription medications to students upon receipt of a UCS Authorization to Administer Medication form completed and signed by both a physician and parent/guardian. Prescription medicines used at the school must be in the original container labeled with the student's name, drug name and dosage information, and the physician's name. Medication will be kept in the medication safe at the front desk. Parents are responsible for supplying and retrieving the medication. For safety reasons, the school will not accept telephoned permission requests.

As parent/guardian, you may pick up the Authorization to Administer Prescription Medication form (requires physician signature). We cannot accept any medications at the front desk unless they are accompanied by the authorization form. The school retains the right to reject the request for administration of medicine.

You need not annually renew medication authorization forms unless medication or dosage changes.

We encourage and welcome the opportunity to review Student Emergency Medical Plans with parents and will keep them on file for students with such medical needs (i.e. diabetes, severe allergic reactions, seizures, etc.). Please contact an administrator for an appointment. The Student Emergency Medical Plan form is on our website under "Our School" > "Forms and Documents".

#### **Procedures for Emergency Health Care Plan Development:**

1. Parents of a student with a life-threatening allergy to a food must provide an administrator with documentation from a licensed healthcare provider describing the specific allergic condition of the child.
2. Staff should work with the parents to develop an emergency healthcare plan for use in the event of an allergic reaction by the identified student. The development and implementation of such healthcare plans shall be carried out in a supportive manner that protects student confidentiality.
3. Administrators should make reasonable efforts to assure that all school staff who have substantial direct contact with an identified student are made aware of the student's emergency healthcare plan and are trained to recognize the symptoms of and respond to an allergic reaction.
4. Should an identified student be suspected of having an allergic reaction, all staff who have been trained to perform first aid or a life saving technique are authorized to provide treatment according to the student's emergency healthcare plan. Staff must also call 911 and contact the student's parent.

#### **C. SCHOOL DAY AND YEAR-ROUND CALENDAR**

The school hours for elementary students are 7:50 am - 2:45 pm Monday through Friday. The carpool line will begin at approximately 7:25 a.m. and end no later than 7:50 a.m.

Our year-round school calendar is divided into four quarters. Three of the quarters conclude with a two-week recession (Fall, Winter and Spring Break). No students will report to school during the second week of the recession, unless to attend child care. This break will give students time with their families and will give them time to rejuvenate for the upcoming quarter.

#### D. STUDENT ATTENDANCE

The Compulsory Attendance Law (NC General Statute 115C-378) states that students under sixteen must attend school regularly while school is in session. The school will report unlawful absences to proper authorities.

When a student misses class or parts of class, he or she does not have the benefit of discussions, demonstrations, experiments, or instruction, all of which have a tremendous bearing on learning and grades. Repeated absence defeats the purpose of school and jeopardizes the student's progress and chances of promotion. It is the responsibility of the family (parent and child) to make sure the student attends school unless the child must be absent for one of the reasons listed below:

1. **Illness or injury**, which prevents the student from physically attending school
2. **Quarantine**, when ordered by the local health officer or by the State Board of Health
3. **Death** in the Immediate Family
4. **Medical or Dental Appointment**, though we strongly encourage parents to minimize the impact on student learning by scheduling such appointments before or after school, during quarterly breaks, etc.
5. **Court or Administrative Proceedings**, when the absence results from the attendance of a student at the proceedings of a court or an administrative tribunal if the student is a party to the action or under subpoena as a witness
6. **Parent deployment activities**, when a student whose parent or legal guardian is an active duty member of the uniformed services and has been called to duty for, is on leave from, or immediately returned from deployment to a combat zone or combat support posting for the purpose of visiting said parent or legal guardian. ( G.S. 115c-407.5Article V (E) )
7. **Religious Observance**, when the tenets of a religion to which a student or his/her parent adheres require or suggest observance of a religious event. The approval of such absences is within the discretion of the Board of Directors of the school, but approval should be granted unless the religious observance or the cumulative effect of religious observance is of such duration as to interfere with the education of the student.

To receive an excused absence or tardy for one of the seven circumstances listed above, the student must submit to the front desk either a doctor/dentist excuse note or a parent/guardian signed, written excuse. Alternatively the parent/guardian can email an excuse note to their teacher or **office@UCSnc.org** within two days of the absence. We advise parents to cc the student's teacher on these emails. Without these forms of notification, the absence/tardy will be reported as

unexcused. Students are responsible for checking in with teachers and making up any missed work after an absence.

- 8. Educational Opportunity**, when it is demonstrated that the purpose of the absence is to take advantage of a valid educational opportunity, such as travel experiences that enrich learning. Approval for such an absence must be granted by the director or designee **at least 3 days prior to the first day of absence. Administrators will not grant approval for educational opportunity leaves during the first 20 days of school.** You can obtain an Education Opportunity Authorization Form from the UCS Website or the front desk.

All other absences are unexcused. 10 or more excessive absences may result in failing classes/grade level. Please remember to work with teachers and administrators when you have extenuating circumstances.

## E. FAMILY TRIPS

Student absences for family trips must receive prior approval from administrators. To obtain this approval, the parent must complete an Educational Opportunity form **at least 3 days prior to the first day of absence** (See #8 in "ATTENDANCE" above). Students may receive approval for a maximum of 5 excused days per year for family travel that includes documented educational opportunity as long as the student is not already struggling with coursework. The student is responsible for obtaining and completing all class work missed.

We encourage families to use school holidays and breaks for all but the most unavoidable travel plans when classes are in session. UCS discourages multiple family trips during the school year because such absences greatly impact children's learning, especially in middle and high school when students may struggle to catch up upon their return to class. For that reason, administrators may opt not to grant approval for travel requests when the student struggles academically or has a history of excessive absences and/or tardy arrivals.

**Administrators will not grant approval for educational opportunity leaves during any standardized testing period or during the preparation time leading up to such periods.**

**Administrators will also not grant approval for educational opportunity leaves during the first 20 days of school.**

## F. INCLEMENT WEATHER, EMERGENCY CLOSINGS, MAKE-UP DAYS

The primary concern when inclement weather strikes is the safety of students, parents, and staff. **In the event of inclement weather, parents should check the UCS website and Facebook page for information regarding closings.** If you don't hear or see an announcement of a UCS delay or cancellation, you should assume school is scheduled as normal. Please know that we will make every attempt to communicate delays/cancellations as early as possible. Unfortunately, there will be instances where our timeline does not match yours. As always, do what is best/safest for your family. **We prioritize instructional and human resources at UCS, therefore we may not budget funds for parent text/phone notification systems. We realize that this may not be ideal for your family but we hope that the stellar education we provide for your children balances the frustration with our system.**



In many cases, UCS will be subject to the same weather-related and other emergency situations as the Mecklenburg County and/or Charlotte Mecklenburg School systems (CMS).

In some cases, school may be canceled after students arrive. This decision will be posted on the school website. Make a plan well in advance concerning how you will handle pick-up for your child if school is dismissed early. Make sure your child knows your “emergency bad weather plan” before inclement weather arrives!

If school days missed due to inclement weather must be “made-up”, the School Director, at his/her sole discretion, may schedule the “make-up” school days on any given Saturday(s) or during the first week of the Fall or Spring breaks.

**As always, no matter what delay/cancellation plans we make for school, we ask you to make the safest decision for your family. Conditions can vary greatly and your family's safety is our top priority. We trust you to do what is best for your family.**

## G. DRESS CODE

Students must attend school in clothes and shoes that meet the following dress code standards:

Students must wear or bring closed-toe shoes every day with no exceptions, as well as clothes appropriate for the many messy activities in which they participate. Students should keep an extra change of clothes at school for emergencies. Please make sure these items are clearly marked with your child’s name.

The following apparel violates dress code:

- Shirts with spaghetti straps/halter tops/tube tops
- Apparel that depicts inappropriate content for students
- Shirts that expose any part of the abdomen
- Low-cut or revealing shirts or tops
- Shorts, skirts, or dresses that are not finger-tip length with arms extended
- Pants or shorts worn low enough to expose undergarments

Please understand that the list above is not comprehensive. We cannot anticipate every fashion choice our students may make and thus reserve our prerogative to identify other clothing, jewelry, or accessories that disrupt the learning environment.

Students will immediately respond to the request of any staff member who identifies a dress code violation. If the student cannot adjust his or her outfit appropriately or lacks alternative clothing to meet the request, a staff member will provide appropriate clothing from the school clothes closet. We ask that parents help us enforce the dress code by discussing acceptable standards of dress, both in its impact on self-esteem and the messages it sends about respect for others. Administrators will conference with the parents/guardians of students who develop a history of dress code violations. Repeated violations are cause for suspension.

Students should keep a labeled, extra change of clothes in their backpacks for emergencies.

A student will maintain personal attire and grooming standards that promote safety, health, and acceptable standards of social conduct, and are not disruptive to the educational environment. This will include student clothing that poses a disruption to classes or other school activities, including but not limited to gang-related articles of clothing and clothing containing inappropriate language.

## H. LUNCH AND PEANUT-FREE SCHOOL

Students will bring a bag lunch (or order hot lunch), as well as a water bottle and snacks as needed.

UCS is a peanut-free school. In some instances, there may be a child with a certain allergy to a particular substance. Due to serious illness or life/death situations, we may need to restrict the substance from a particular classroom. We should request that parents show compassion, understanding and flexibility if this is the case for their child's class.

Due to no cafeteria, students eat lunch in the classrooms with the teachers.

## I. PLAYGROUND SAFETY

Our playground has lots of great elements to allow children to have fun, as well as derive many sensory benefits. While we want our children to have fun, we need to be constantly alert to make sure our students are using the equipment safely and properly. On most days, there are two classes at a time on the playground, which means around 48 kids are outside, playing together. If you are interested in volunteering on-campus, consider volunteering during a class' recess time to increase the amount of supervision on the playground. The UCS staff handbook contains explicit guidelines for ensuring the safety of all children while on our playground. Remember, it is important for all UCS students to wear appropriate play shoes or tennis shoes to school every day.

## J. BIRTHDAYS

Parents may send invitations to school for distribution when all class members or all boys/all girls are invited. Birthdays may be celebrated at school during lunch time only. You must notify your teacher if you would like to do something for your child's birthday a week in advance (read-aloud, pizza, healthy snack, etc.). We prefer parents offer healthy snacks for the class. Homemade food items are not allowed. All food items must be unopened, store bought items. We do not have birthday parties at school. Please do not plan to open presents at school or send treat bags. Please check with the lead teacher regarding food allergies. For ideas, check out [www.snacksafely.com/snack-guide](http://www.snacksafely.com/snack-guide).

## K. CARPOOL

We strive to be good neighbors and aim our carpool flow and policies at minimizing our impact on the community that serves as our home. Each year we work with the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department to identify and address areas of concern and provide direction to our carpoolers. For more information on carpool, please visit the school Website.

## L. FIELD TRIPS AND OTHER OFF-CAMPUS TRAVEL

Parents must sign a permission form in order for their student to attend all off-campus trips. Newsletters and other teacher communications will announce field trips and other off-campus events, and we encourage you to visit the master calendar on the website frequently to stay abreast of new developments.

UCS buses provide the bulk of transportation for field trips unless we determine a specific need for chartered buses. A licensed bus driver will drive for all field trips. Teachers are prohibited from transporting students during the instructional day.

## M. VISITORS AND VOLUNTEERS

We welcome visitors/volunteers to United Community School. All visitors/volunteers must check in at the front desk and notify the administrative assistant of the purpose of the visit. Visitors and volunteers will be asked to sign in on the computer kiosk. All visitors/volunteers should wear a Visitor Badge/Tag.

Student visitors are only allowed to visit during the lunch period and this visit must be pre-approved by the classroom teacher.

UCS screens volunteers who will work with children to ensure the safety of our students. The screening includes completion of an online volunteer registration form and a criminal background check. Volunteer screening may also include interviews by appropriate UCS staff and reference checks.

## N. PARENT COLLABORATION & INVOLVEMENT

Our mission is to UNITE with parents as partners to promote student learning. Parents establish the foundation for educational achievement when they show an interest in their child's education and establish high standards and expectations. Research shows that student performance is likely to improve if parents are meaningfully involved in their child's schooling. Parents are especially encouraged to volunteer and to share experiences and expertise that fit within the broad goals of the school. Parents interested in volunteer opportunities at our school are required to attend one of our volunteer training sessions prior to service. Volunteering will not begin each year until approximately the second month of school when the classroom teachers have had a chance to establish routines and procedures within the class community.

In The Basic School, a vital partnership is created between the home and school with parents viewed as the child's first and most important teachers. We have many opportunities in the school. A great way for parents to volunteer is to join a committee such as Fundraising, Book Fair, Field Day, etc. Parents can also volunteer by assisting in elective classes, athletic programs, service learning projects, and after school programs, chaperoning field trips, serving at off-campus events such as school festivals, and reading with or tutoring students. Parents may serve in classrooms at the teachers' request by facilitating small groups and managing learning stations. They may regularly pair with students, serving as reading buddies, especially for students who need the extra attention to improve chances of meeting grade level expectations. Parents may also volunteer by attending classroom events or sharing career information.

Throughout the year, we will host parent workshops. One purpose of parent workshops is to offer parents strategies and skills to assist their children with academics.

All on-site volunteers are required to pass a background check, complete the Volunteer Training steps on the school website, then submit the volunteer verification form to [erika@ucsnc.org](mailto:erika@ucsnc.org).

Volunteers who prefer to work from home or off-campus, email us and we will connect you with the right person! If you are interested in volunteering in another way that is not listed, please email us.

## O. COMMUNICATION TO PARENTS

To serve our students and parents, we must strive to maintain good communication. Therefore, every classroom teacher will communicate with parents on a weekly basis. Communication may include weekly newsletters, blogs, webpages, etc. The School Director will communicate with families on a regular basis.

We will also send mass emails on a regular basis. Parents and staff should check email frequently and notify us of any changes to their email address. We will provide additional support to parents who do not have access to email. Please make sure to check your spam folder if you are not receiving email communication.

Information will be available regularly on our website at [www.UCSnc.org](http://www.UCSnc.org). Social media, primarily Facebook, will be used to keep our parents and community up-to-date with school information. Parents should contact teachers via email to set up an appointment to discuss your child so you can receive the full attention that you deserve.

Parents' first point of contact with any issues will always be the teacher or staff member who is closest to the particular situation. Parents should refrain from calling teachers at home as they need to spend time with their own families in the evenings. If you need to reach your child's teacher(s), please contact them at school or via email to arrange a time to set up an appointment to discuss your child so you can receive the full attention that you deserve.

Our school has an extensive website and we invite you to visit it regularly for information regarding our school: [www.UCSnc.org](http://www.UCSnc.org). **Parents, it is critical that you have daily contact with our communication system. If you are having difficulty getting connected, PLEASE come to the school and let us assist you.**

## P. PARENT TEACHER ORGANIZATION

We have many opportunities for parents to participate in committee work that improves and enriches our total school program for our students.

## Q. THE MORNING BUZZ

Active participation in the Morning Buzz is open to all parents. We meet from 8:00 - 8:45 a.m. on the second Friday of every month during the school year, unless otherwise noted. These informal sessions provide an opportunity for parents and administrators to socialize, discuss goals, share ideas and concerns, and form and reinforce bonds across the whole school community.

### III. ACADEMIC INFORMATION

#### A. CLASS ASSIGNMENTS

The School Directors and teachers work carefully to create balanced class lists each year. We have an amazing group of teachers who work together so that all of our children get the benefit of many teachers. In our view, teacher requests alter the harmony and teamwork that make our staff so effective. For that reason, we do not accept teacher requests.

Our students typically loop at UCS, which means that they remain with the same class and same teachers (when in the best interest of the students) for multiple years, beginning in Kindergarten through 8th grade.

#### B. HOMEWORK

United Community School greatly values the time a child spends at home with family. For that reason, our teachers make highly purposeful and intentional choices when assigning homework. We prefer that students have time to complete homework that reflects their best work. If your student needs an extra night occasionally to complete an assignment, please feel free to communicate that need to the teacher. If your child is struggling with homework, again, please share this information with your teacher so that adjustments can be made. Every student is expected to read at home daily. Teachers will provide students with weekly homework at the beginning of the week, and set the due date for the end of the week.

#### C. GIFTED EDUCATION

UCS believes that the needs of identified gifted students can be met in the regular classroom by implementing best practices which include opportunities for critical thinking and problem-solving. If a student is enrolled at UCS and comes with a gifted identification, we will service the student in the regular classroom. We believe that the instruction typically reserved for academically gifted students is best for all students (project-based learning, inquiry-based learning, literature circles, critical thinking, problem-solving, etc.) Gifted students may take these experiences to a different level within the classroom, and research suggests that they benefit from modeling for and teaching peers.

United Community School believes that every child can and will succeed in ways that reflect his or her own aptitudes and interests. We believe that all children learn to their greatest potential through an inclusive classroom model. This model works for gifted children and all other children under the following conditions:

- Students are appropriately grouped in clusters.
- Teachers match their instructional strategies to the specific learning needs of the students.
- Students receive an appropriately individualized curriculum to meet their needs.

We aim to meet the instructional needs of gifted students in a regular classroom setting by creating a learning environment that allows these students to develop their abilities and interests fully without losing their sense of membership as part of the class.

At UCS, we are concerned with the whole child, including each student's cognitive, social, emotional and physical development. We believe that a balanced educational program will assist children in becoming happy, well balanced, and successful individuals. Although a child might excel in one of these areas, we are committed to a well-rounded plan for each child that includes goals in all areas.

#### D. UNITS OF STUDY

Parents may visit the school website for an overview of the units of study for each grade level.

#### E. SPECIAL AREA & ARTS EDUCATION

“Specials” Classes: Students attend music, physical education, and art with our Specialists each week. Additional specials classes may be added to the school year. 5th through 8th grade students will participate in choice specials each quarter, where they will be able to sign up for specials of their choices. [Visit the website for this information.](#)

#### F. REPORT CARDS

We use the results of the variety of ongoing assessments to determine where students are on the journey to mastery of content for their grade level. Our report cards include meaningful and authentic information, detailing a student's academic growth and development. Report cards are issued at the end of every quarter. A grading scale will be included on each report card.

We will send home progress reports in the middle of every quarter to provide a snapshot of student work habits and progress in each core subject.

#### G. CONFERENCES

The following Parent-Teacher conferences are mandatory. Parents are expected to make every effort to attend:

- Covenant Conference: August (Before School Starts)
- Parent-Teacher Conference – October (Fall Break)
- Teacher-Requested Conferences

If you wish to meet with a school teacher at other times during the school year, please schedule time during the teacher's planning period or after school, so as not to disrupt the instructional environment.

If your child's teacher reaches out to you for a parent-teacher conference, please know your attendance is important and vital to the success of your child at UCS.

#### H. ASSESSMENTS AND TESTING

UCS conducts the student assessments required by the State Board of Education. End of Grade (EOG) testing is one important factor in determining how much a child has progressed during the year. It is imperative that each child be in attendance for these formal assessments. Third grade

students will participate in the EOG pretest (BOG) in the beginning of the school year. Again, it is imperative that each child be present. 3rd-8th grade students will also participate in NC Check-In Testing three times per year (fall, winter, and spring).

While we acknowledge standardized test-taking as a component of our balanced assessment program, we do not teach to the test. Rather, we engage the students in meaningful hands-on experiences linked directly to the curriculum all year long, and then throughout the year before the EOG tests, teachers teach students test-taking strategies and skills in order to promote their best performance on this particular mode of assessment. All in all, our assessment program is about balance; parents and students can expect to see a variety of assessments utilized with specific feedback given to maximize the learning potential of each individual student.

In addition to standardized tests administered at the beginning, middle, and end of each school year, most assessments will be authentic, ongoing, and teacher-created. The results of ongoing assessments help teachers measure their own effectiveness. They can reflect on the instructional strategies used, revise those strategies, and reteach or enrich effectively. All data collected from our various assessment tools will be used to inform instruction. Instruction will be constantly changing as the needs of our students change, as evidenced by the data. As teachers reflect on instructional effectiveness, the curriculum will be revised and improved.

## I. STATE PROFICIENCY GUIDELINES

Students scoring below state proficiency guidelines during gateway years receive remedial interventions and/or are retained in the same grade. If a student with a disability is being considered for retention, the School Director makes the decision in consultation with the Student Services Team. If the student is making satisfactory progress toward the achievement of the educational goals in the IEP, the student can be promoted. If the student is retained, the student's IEP will include a notation indicating the reason for retention and changes in the IEP.

(1) Students in the third grade shall be retained if the student fails to demonstrate reading proficiency by reading at or above the third grade level as demonstrated by the results of the State-approved standardized test of reading comprehension administered to third grade students. The charter school shall provide reading interventions to retained students to remediate reading deficiency, which may include 90 minutes of daily, uninterrupted, evidence-based reading instruction, accelerated reading classes, transition classes containing third and fourth grade students, and summer reading camps.

Students may be exempt from mandatory retention in third grade for good cause but shall continue to receive instructional supports and services and reading interventions appropriate for their age and reading level. Good cause exemptions shall be limited to the following:

Limited English Proficient students with less than two years of instruction in an English as a Second Language program.

Students with disabilities, as defined in G.S. 115C-106.3(1), whose individualized education program indicates the use of alternative assessments and reading interventions.

Students who demonstrate reading proficiency appropriate for third grade students on an alternative assessment of reading comprehension. The charter school shall notify the State Board of Education of the alternative assessment used to demonstrate reading proficiency.

Students who demonstrate, through a student reading portfolio, reading proficiency appropriate for third grade students.

Students who have (i) received reading intervention and (ii) previously been retained more than once in kindergarten, first, second, or third grades."

#### UCS Promotion Criteria

Students in each grade level that meet grade level expectations in reading and math will be recommended for promotion to the next grade level. Students who do not meet math and/or reading grade level expectations and have made insufficient progress during the school year will be considered for retention. Retention may be protested by parents but the School Director holds the right to retain a student.

UCS will serve students in grades K-8.



## IV. CODE OF CONDUCT

### A. COMMITMENT TO CHARACTER

The fourth principle of the Basic School is “commitment to character”. Our teachers weave this principle throughout the curriculum, which consists of seven core virtues (honesty, respect, responsibility, compassion, self-discipline, perseverance, and giving). Teachers plan thematic units and choose literature that incorporates the core virtues to further instill these values in students. Teachers commit to exemplifying these virtues, through word and deed, because students also learn by example. Students will be empowered to problem solve and apply the seven virtues when certain situations arise within their peer groups and with others.

We believe that students learn about character from their role models, curriculum, and through the opportunity for service learning activities. UCS teachers include character education activities in their lesson plans. Classroom discipline emphasizes talking out problems and conflict avoidance.

#### **As members in our school community, students pledge to:**

- Be responsible for their actions
- Always do their best as individuals and as a part of a team
- Respect the uniqueness and gifts of others
- Practice kindness and consideration
- To exhibit honesty in all situations (not lie, cheat, steal, etc.)

### B. BEHAVIOR PHILOSOPHY

United Community School applies positive discipline. We believe that our first responsibility in regard to student behavior is to create a classroom that is engaging to the students and to individualize instruction that challenges students appropriately. We anticipate that this first step helps avoid many potential discipline issues.

Furthermore, we disagree with extrinsic reward systems and do not employ these systems (classroom behavior clip charts, Friday treat boxes, etc.) at our school. We focus on nurturing intrinsic motivation within our students with the expectation that by equipping them with such coping mechanisms, our students will be fully prepared for the challenges they will face as college students and young adults in the workforce.

UCS also believes in holding students to high standards and expectations. Students will strive to meet those higher standards when challenged to do so.

### C. GENERAL RULES OF CONDUCT

We expect UCS students to be respectful and considerate to other students, UCS staff, and UCS visitors. We further expect that UCS students will respect the property of UCS and of other students and staff. No student shall in any way bully or exhibit inappropriate or disrespectful

behavior toward other students, staff or any other person. Prohibited bullying can take many forms and can include any of the following:

- Physical bullying, such as hitting, kicking, pushing, pulling hair, scratching, and tripping;
- Verbal bullying, such as teasing, name-calling, starting rumors, taunting and threatening;
- Emotional bullying, such as rejecting, excluding, defaming, humiliating, isolating, and ostracizing;
- Sexual bullying, such as exhibitionism, propositioning, and sexual touching;
- Cyber-bullying, which is defined as using technology to intimidate, embarrass, stalk, or coerce; and
- Discrimination, such as harassment of a person based on race, color, gender, religion or ethnic origin.

#### D. DISCIPLINE AND LEVELS OF OFFENSES

The UCS Board of Directors has adopted a student behavior policy that includes parameters for discipline. The policy is not intended to set forth a rigid scale of discipline for students involved in bullying incidents or other inappropriate behavior, because it is not feasible to define all possible circumstances and actions in advance. Discipline is determined on a case by case basis, subject to certain parameters. This section will define certain levels of offense to provide general guidance as to the level of discipline that can be expected. For purposes of the student behavior policy, the level of offense will be determined by a School Director.

##### **Ø LEVEL ONE OFFENSES**

- Open defiance of a teacher's request
- Intentional or repeated disruption of class
- Repeatedly refusing to complete assignments
- Use of inappropriate language not including profanities or slurs
- Lying to a teacher or staff member
- Violation of dress code (includes inappropriate signage/logos/words on face masks)
- Violation of the Technology Use Agreement
- Destruction of School Property (repairable damages)
- Unauthorized or inappropriate use of any electronic device while on school property not associated with the educational process during normal school hours
- Inappropriate public displays of affection

**Discipline for Level One Offenses** will generally be handled by the classroom teacher, but can also result in Lunch Detention and In-School Suspension.

**When a Level One Offense is exhibited, the following steps may be taken. Each day starts a new cycle:**

- First warning = The teacher conferences with students discreetly in the classroom.
- Second warning = The teacher conferences with the student privately in the hallway. Teacher communicates with the parent before the end of the day.
- Third warning = Leadership team is called for support. Students will receive lunch detention. Leader contacts the parent. Students will return to class when finished with

leadership.

- Fourth warning = Moves to level two offense and removed from classroom remainder of day.

#### **Ø LEVEL TWO OFFENSES**

- Committing repeated Level One offenses
- Failure to comply with other assigned consequences
- Use of profanity, inappropriate language, and/or an obscene gesture
- Willfully leaving the classroom or school grounds without permission
- First offense of stealing or possessing stolen property
- Cheating, plagiarism, and/or forgery; forgery includes signing tests, permission forms, notes to teachers, emails to teachers, etc
- Taking unauthorized or inappropriate photos or videos of another individual
- Bullying/harassment
- Inappropriately throwing objects in the classroom or on school grounds
- Lower level physical contact such as pushing, bumping, lightly kicking.

**Discipline Level Two Offenses** should be reported to a School Leader. Discipline will be determined by a Leader in consultation with the classroom teacher. Discipline may range from lunch detention up to out of school suspension from school for one to three days.

**When a Level Two Offense is exhibited, the following steps may be taken. These offenses are documented and recorded.**

- First time = Conference with behavior team or leader. Reflection sheet is completed and sent home for parent signature.
- Second time = Leadership/behavior team is called for support. Students will not return to class that day. Teachers will communicate with students before the end of the day with leaders. Parents will receive a phone call or email.
- Third time = Immediately sent to leaders. Students receive an added day of suspension. Parents must attend a re-entry meeting before the student returns to the classroom. (Teacher attends)

#### **Ø LEVEL THREE OFFENSES**

- Committing a combination of or repeated Class I and/or Class II offenses
- Possessing and/or using tobacco/nicotine, alcohol, and illegal drugs on school property or at a school-sponsored event including the use or possession of electronic cigarettes or paraphernalia.
- Discussion of sales or use of prohibited substances.
- Repeated stealing or possessing stolen property
- Threatening to physically harm or attack another student, staff member or adult on or off school property or at a school-sponsored event
- Physical contact that results in injury or escalation.
- Physically striking a staff member or adult.
- Possessing, handling, transferring or bringing a weapon or ammunition (including a toy weapon; example – toy gun, toy knife) on school property or at a school-sponsored event
- Knowingly withholding information that can directly endanger the school community.
- Creating or encouraging other students to join in a disturbance, so as to cause the disruption of normal school operations

- Touching or conduct perceived as sexual or inappropriate in nature or which is deemed offensive to that person
- Possession and/or distribution of pornography
- Damage/destruction/vandalism/arson of or trespassing of or on school property
- Possession or use of explosives, fireworks, sparklers, smoke/stink bombs on school grounds or at a school sponsored event
- Any conduct committed off-campus that (a) if committed on campus would constitute a Class III offense and (b) has a reasonable relationship to school operations
- Hazing
- Bomb threat/hoax, false alarms
- Cyber threats on social media
- Writing about, or depicting in artwork, violent or threatening actions.
- Spitting on another student, staff, or visitor while on campus or school-sponsored events.
- Verbal or written expression of slurs targeting specific groups such as race, gender, sexual orientation, etc. (includes drawings, statements, gestures, hand gestures and jokes, etc).

Any student (K-8) who communicates threats in person, in writing, through a drawing or art work, texts or social media (& other electronic means) may go through a threat assessment process and investigation in order to determine the level of the threat and the appropriate discipline procedures and student supervision plan for returning to school. Part of the plan may include, but is not limited to: backpack searches, removing the right to bring a backpack to school, etc.

**Discipline Level Three Offenses** shall be reported to a School Leader. Discipline will be determined by a Director in consultation with the classroom teacher. Discipline may range from Suspension or possible disciplinary hearing for repeated and/or severe behavior, which could include but would not be limited to a Long-Term Suspension, Exclusion, or Restitution.

**When a Level Three Offense is exhibited, the following steps may be taken. These offenses are documented and recorded.**

- First time = Leadership team is called for support. Students will not return to class that day. Teachers will communicate with students before the end of the day with leaders. An appropriate consequence will be given.
- Second time = Immediately sent to leaders. Students receive an added day of suspension. Parents must attend a re-entry meeting before the student returns to the classroom. (Teacher attends)
- Third time = Immediately sent to leaders and long term suspension can be given. Parents must attend meetings with leaders and teachers before and after suspension.

### **Students with Disabilities**

UCS policies and procedures for discipline of students (including students with disabilities) shall be consistent with state and federal laws and regulations. Additional plans of support such as behavioral intervention plans may also be followed for students with disabilities. The UCS student discipline policy sets parameters for addressing inappropriate student behavior. Nothing in the policy is intended to nor does it in any way impose any additional liabilities, requirements or obligations on the Board or the school beyond those liabilities, requirements and obligations imposed by applicable law.

## **Suspension Policy for Field Trips**

If a student is suspended for a Level Two or Level Three offense up to one month before a field trip, he/she may lose the opportunity to attend the trip. It is up to the discretion of the Leadership Team as to whether the student may attend a field trip if he or she has been suspended. Field trip payments for students who lose field trip privileges due to behavior related incidents may not be refunded.

## **Detention**

If a student receives lunch detention, they will report to the designated room during their lunch block. During lunch detention, students will be permitted to eat their lunch and then will be expected to complete a Behavior Reflection form. Talking will not be permitted during detention. They may be asked to do a writing assignment to reflect on the incident that led to the detention.

## **E. RIGHT TO REQUEST A HEARING**

Every student is entitled to a hearing. If the student or parent/guardian desires a formal hearing to contest a disciplinary decision, the student or the parent/guardian must notify a School Leader in writing within three school days following receipt of notice of suspension. The notice of appeal shall state the issue(s) for the appeal, including concerns regarding the level of suspension, if any. The student shall not return to school unless and until the appeal is resolved in his/her favor. In appropriate cases, the Leader is authorized to waive this rule and allow a student to return to school while an appeal is pending.

## **F. NO HEARING REQUESTED**

If a hearing is not requested within the allotted time, the Leader shall provide the student/parent/guardian written notice of his decision whether to allow the student to remain in school. The decision of the Leader shall be final.

## **G. SUSPENSION OF AN EXCEPTIONAL CHILD**

In the event that a child with special needs exhibits behavior which, if the child were not a child with special needs, could result in the suspension or expulsion of the child from school for a period of more than ten school days or for consecutive periods that total more than ten school days, the school shall require a multidisciplinary team promptly to review the evaluation already completed for the child and conduct any additional evaluations necessary to determine if the behavior is caused by the child's special needs including:

- 1) Whether the child is presently receiving appropriate education.

If the review establishes no such relationship, the school may initiate its normal disciplinary procedures, but must continue to provide those services that the school-based committee finds are necessary to prevent the student from regressing educationally during the suspension. If the review does establish such a relationship, the school may not initiate its normal disciplinary procedures. The findings should be used in determining an appropriate program.

Notwithstanding the provisions of G.S. 115C-391, the policies and procedures for the discipline of students with disabilities shall be consistent with federal laws and regulations (G.S. 115C-391(g)).

UCS will comply with the specific discipline provisions of exceptional children as stated in IDEA 2004. The school is subject to and shall comply with Article 9 of Chapter 115C of the General Statutes and The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvements Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1400, et seq., (2004), as amended.

## H. EXPULSION

Upon recommendation of the Director, the UCS Board of Directors may expel any student whose continued presence in school constitutes a clear threat to the safety of other students or school staff. Prior to the expulsion of any student, the Board of Directors shall conduct a hearing to determine whether the student's continued presence in school constitutes a clear threat to the safety of other students or school staff. The student shall be given reasonable notice of the recommendation in accordance with G.S. 115C-390.8(a) and (b), as well as reasonable notice of the time and place of the scheduled hearing. (Based on G.S. 115C-390.11).

**H1:** Our policy includes discipline processes for students with disabilities and complies with [Article 27 of Chapter 115C of the General Statutes](#) or see *Addendum A*.

## I. UCS NETWORK AND INTERNET USE

Our school offers student access to our computer network for academic purposes. We expect students to make responsible use of this service in compliance with our guidelines and policies.

Computers and information technology are viewed as critical learning tools at UCS. As such, our school policy requires that students strive to be responsible digital citizens who:

- Observe all tech lab rules and procedures
- Ensure proper use of all equipment
- Seek to minimize wear and tear on school technology equipment by using it gently and properly storing items in their assigned places
- Do not change computer settings without the permission of a staff network administrator

Access to the network is both a privilege and a responsibility. Students who misuse this access will lose the privilege. Violation of this policy may be considered a cause for in-school suspension and includes (but are not limited to):

Using technology without adult supervision

Downloading unauthorized files from the internet to any computer in the school

Obtaining and/or using another student's or staff member's user ID and/or password

Moving or otherwise altering files or their locations that are not the student's personal files

Adding, deleting, or changing the settings of any application housed on the individual computers (other than the student's own laptop) or on the network drives.

The UCS Technology Agreement will be sent home the first week of school. Please refer to this document for more details and information.

## J. CELL PHONES AND OTHER ELECTRONIC DEVICES

These devices are NOT to be in the possession of students during the school day OR while participating in off-campus field trips or other community-based instruction. Exceptions for other devices will be made only with explicit permission from a School Leader. Students must store unapproved electronic devices in designated classroom locations for the entirety of the school day. Failure to do so will result in the equipment being confiscated for the day. A parent will need to retrieve the item from the teacher or School Leader.

#### K. CAMERAS, VIDEO EQUIPMENT, ETC.

1. Students will not video, photograph or record any student or teacher without their knowledge and consent (performances and sporting events are exempt from this policy as long as students follow any instructions given at the beginning of the event - like no flash photography, Chromebook cameras or videotaping.)

2. Students will not video or photograph anything in a bathroom or changing room.

Failure to follow these rules may result in technology restrictions or suspension.

If students need an exception to these rules for a special purpose or project, please see a school leader.

#### L. WEAPONS AND DANGEROUS INSTRUMENTS

No student or parent shall knowingly possess, handle, or transmit on school property any weapon as defined by North Carolina law. Violation of this rule results in immediate suspension while an investigation takes place and may result in long term suspension or expulsion. The possession of weapons by students or parents on school property or at any school function is prohibited. In addition to school consequences, such actions will be reported to local law enforcement.

As required by the federal Gun Free Schools Act, 20 U.S.C. § 7151, a student who is determined to have brought or been in possession of a firearm or destructive device on school property, or to a school-sponsored event off of school property will be subject to suspension for 365 calendar days. A school leader is authorized to suspend for 365 days any student believed to have violated board policies regarding weapons. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the Leader may modify, in writing, the required 365-day suspension for an individual student on a case-by-case basis. The Leader shall not impose a 365-day suspension if the Leader determines that the student took or received the firearm or destructive device from another person at school or found the firearm or destructive device at school, provided that the student delivered or reported the firearm or destructive device as soon as practicable to a law enforcement officer or a school employee and had no intent to use such firearm or destructive device in a harmful or threatening way.

#### M. PROHIBITED SUBSTANCES

The possession, use, sale, exchange, or distribution of any prohibited substance on educational property will not be tolerated. "Prohibited Substances" include, but are not limited to, the following: tobacco products, vapes, alcoholic beverages, illegal drugs and controlled substances or over-the-counter pharmaceuticals. In addition to school consequences, such actions will be

reported to local law enforcement and may be required to be reported to the Department of Motor Vehicles.

## N. REPORTS TO LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

Pursuant to state law, the administrators are required to report the following acts to law enforcement: “assault involving serious personal injury, sexual assault, sexual offense, rape, kidnapping, indecent liberties with a minor, assault involving the use of a weapon, possession of a firearm in violation of the law, possession of a weapon in violation of the law or possession of a controlled substance in violation of the law.” N.C.G.S. § 115C-288 (g).

## O. REPORTS TO DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

Pursuant to state law, school personnel are required to report any suspected cases of child abuse or neglect to the Department of Social Services.

**PER NCDHHS:** PART 1. REPORTS TO THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES: CHILD ABUSE, NEGLECT, AND DEPENDENCY Any person or institution who has cause to suspect that a juvenile who is under the age of 18 and is not married, emancipated, or a member of the U.S. Armed Forces, is abused, neglected, or dependent must make a report to the county department of social services (DSS). G.S. 7B-301.

1. *Who must make a report?* North Carolina law requires any person with cause to suspect that a juvenile under 18 is abused, neglected, or dependent to make a report. This is called universal mandated reporting. Some states require only certain professionals to make reports, but in North Carolina the duty to report extends to everyone.

2. *When must a report to DSS be made under these laws?* A report must be made when a person has cause to suspect that a juvenile under the age of 18 is an abused juvenile, a neglected juvenile, or a dependent juvenile, as those terms are defined in G.S. 7B101.

## P. PERSONAL PROPERTY

A student will only bring or possess objects that have an educational purpose and will not distract from teaching or learning without permission from their Classroom Teacher and/or a Leader. Students are prohibited from selling food or other items on campus.

## Q. CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

Corporal punishment is prohibited at UCS and shall not be used in any circumstances to maintain discipline. Discipline shall be maintained without the use of corporal punishment, which is prohibited in the school. However, staff is authorized by state law to “use reasonable force in the exercise of lawful authority to restrain or correct pupils and maintain order.” N.C.G.S. § 115C-390.3 and 391.1.

## V. FEDERAL COMPLIANCE

### A. ASBESTOS INSPECTIONS



In compliance with the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act (AHERA), in the summer of 2014, we performed an inspection of our school building for asbestos-containing building materials. No asbestos-containing materials were found during the inspection. A complete inspection is performed by a licensed inspector every 3 years and these inspections are reviewed by an accredited management planner who recommends actions we should take at our school. A copy of the inspection findings and the asbestos management plan is on file in the administrative offices of our school and everyone is welcome to view these during normal school hours.

## B. FERPA NOTICE FOR DIRECTORY INFORMATION

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), a Federal law, requires that UCS, with certain exceptions, obtain a parent's written consent prior to the disclosure of personally identifiable information from a child's education records. However, UCS may disclose appropriately designated "directory information" without written consent, unless the parent has advised UCS to the contrary. The primary purpose of directory information is to allow UCS to include this type of information from a student's education records in certain school publications or activities. Examples include:

- a playbill, showing your student's role in a drama production
- a yearbook
- a graduation program
- a sports program

Directory information, which is information that is generally not considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if released, can also be disclosed to outside organizations without a parent's prior written consent. Examples of outside organizations are companies that take school photographs or publish yearbooks.

Each year, parents may choose to instruct us not to disclose directory information from your child's education records without your prior written consent. To provide us that instruction, you must notify UCS in writing by the Monday before school begins in August. UCS has designated the following information as directory information:

- Student's name
- Address
- Telephone listing
- Email address
- Photograph
- Dates of attendance
- Grade level
- Participation in officially recognized activities and sports

## C. NOTICE OF FERPA RIGHTS

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) affords parents and students over 18 years

of age ("eligible students") certain rights with respect to the student's education records. These rights are:

2. The right to inspect and review the student's education records within 45 days of the day the School receives a request for access.

Parents or eligible students should submit to a member of the UCS administrative team a written request that identifies the record(s) they wish to inspect. The School official will make arrangements for access and notify the parent or eligible student of the time and place where the records may be inspected.

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

Parents or eligible students who wish to ask the School to amend a record should notify a member of the administrative team in writing, clearly identifying the part of the record they want changed, and specifying why it should be changed. If the School decides not to amend the record as requested by the parent or eligible student, the School will notify the parent or eligible student of the decision and advise them of their right to a hearing regarding the request for amendment. Additional information regarding the hearing procedures will be provided to the parent or eligible student when notified of the right to a hearing.

4. The right to privacy of personally identifiable information in the student's education records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent.

One exception, which permits disclosure without consent, is disclosure to school officials with legitimate educational interests. A school official is a person employed by the School as an administrator, supervisor, instructor, or support staff member (including health or medical staff and law enforcement unit personnel); a person serving on the School Board; a person or company with whom the School has outsourced services or functions it would otherwise use its own employees to perform (such as an attorney, auditor, medical consultant, or therapist); a parent or student serving on an official committee, such as a disciplinary or grievance committee; or a parent, student, or other volunteer assisting another school official in performing his or her tasks.

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

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

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

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

Washington, DC 20202-8520

Notice of Rights under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973

The following rights are granted by Federal law to students with disabilities. The intent of the law is to keep you, the parent, fully informed concerning decisions about your child and to inform you of your rights.

You have a right:

- to have your child take part in, and receive benefits from, public education programs or activities without discrimination based on his/her disability;
- to have the school advise you of your rights under Federal law;
- to receive notice with respect to the identification and evaluation of your child and the determination as to whether your child is a qualified individual requiring accommodations necessary to provide access to educational programs and activities;
- to have your child receive a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment;
- to have your child receive services and be educated in facilities comparable to those provided to non-disabled students;
- to have evaluation, educational, and placement decisions made based on a variety of information sources, and by persons who know your child and who are knowledgeable about the evaluation data and placement options;
- to have your child be given an equal opportunity to participate in nonacademic and extracurricular activities offered by UCS;
- to have the opportunity to review relevant educational records under the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA);
- to request a hearing before an impartial hearing officer by notifying the school director should you disagree with the decisions reached by school for accommodations for access to educational programming and/or facilities;

You also have a right to file a complaint with the Office for Civil Rights:

Washington DC (Metro)  
Office of Civil Rights  
U.S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20202-1475  
Telephone: 202-453-6020  
FAX: 202-453-6021; TDD: 877-521-2172  
Email: OCR.DC@ed.gov

The designated Section 504 Coordinator for UCS is:  
Mr. Gavin Talbert  
1406 Suther Road  
Charlotte, NC 28213  
Phone: (980) 819-0555  
Email: gtalbert@ucsnc.org  
Notice of Rights under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973

## D. UNITED COMMUNITY SCHOOL'S TITLE 1 PARENT AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT POLICY

Decades of research have shown that when schools work together with families to support learning, children are inclined to succeed, not just in school but throughout life. United Community School believes that learning can best take place when there is shared effort, interest, and commitment among students, parents, extended family members, community members and staff. The goal of this parent and family engagement policy is to support in a more consistent and effective manner those things already in practice as well as to generate new ways of strengthening the partnership between school and home. UCS encourages parents to become involved in the design and implementation of the Title I program and activities in order to help students learn the state's rigorous curriculum and meet state and local achievement standards.

On August 16, 2023, the North Carolina General Assembly ratified N.C. Sess. Law. 2023-106, commonly known as the "Parents' Bill of Rights." The law enumerates the rights of parents to participate in and direct the education of their children. It also requires public school units, including charter schools, to adopt numerous policies implementing its provisions. In addition to the above parents' rights, the UCS board adopted this [Parents' Bill of Rights](#).

### A. DEFINITION OF PARENT AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

For the purposes of this policy, the term "parent and family engagement" means the participation of parents, guardians, and other family members in regular, two-way, meaningful communication involving student learning and other school activities, including ensuring the following:

- Parents and family members play a vital role in supporting their child's learning.
- Parents and family members are encouraged to be actively involved in their child's education at school.

- Parents are full partners in their child’s education and parents and family members are included, as appropriate, in decision making and on The School Improvement Team to assist in the education of their child.
- United Community School hosts events to support parent and family engagement in the Title I programs.

## B. PURPOSE AND OPERATION OF TITLE I PROGRAM

The Title I program is a federally supported program that offers assistance to educationally and economically disadvantaged children to help ensure they receive an equitable, high-quality, well-rounded education and meet the school’s challenging academic standards. The Title I program delivers instructional activities and supportive services to all students over and above those provided by the regular school program.

## C. ANNUAL MEETING AND PROGRAM EVALUATION

Each year, school officials must invite parents to a meeting to explain parental rights, discuss the programs and activities to be provided with Title I funds, and solicit input on the Title I program and this policy. In addition, school officials must provide parents and family members a meaningful opportunity annually to evaluate the content and effectiveness of the Title I programs and the parent and family engagement policies and plans. Information collected from these proceedings will be used to revise Title I programs and parent and family engagement plans.

United Community School will hold an Annual Title I meeting each year to inform parents of the requirements of Title I and the school’s participation as well as parents’ rights to be involved.

Communication of event:

1. Parents will be notified at least 3 weeks prior to the event through teachers’ weekly emails.
2. Parents will be personally invited by the principal during the “Morning Buzz” parent group meeting the month prior.
3. The event will be posted on United Community School’s website calendar.
4. Event signs will be posted in the main office and posted on social media.
5. Parents who request a copy of the policy prior to the meeting will be emailed a copy to be reviewed ahead of time so they can come prepared to participate at least 1 day prior.
6. Parents who are unable to attend will have access to notes and/or a video in The Buzz.
7. Once our policy has been updated and approved by the board, it will be posted on the website for easy access.

## D. PARENT AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT EFFORTS

The board believes that the involvement of parents and family members in the design and implementation of the Title I program will increase the effectiveness of the program and contribute significantly to the success of the children. The Title I staff and all school personnel shall strive to conduct outreach to parents and family members and involve them in activities throughout the school year.

School leadership shall ensure that this parent and family engagement policy and plan is developed with, agreed upon with, and annually distributed to parents and family members of participating students.

In addition, school officials and Title I school personnel shall do the following:

1. Involve parents and family members in the joint development of the Title I program and school support and improvement plan and the process of school review and improvement by including parents on the School Improvement Team.

- Parents are notified at the start of the school year with an invitation for them to join our school improvement team.
- Notes are made available to committee members in case of an absence.
- Our School Improvement Plan and login information for NCStar is found on our website so parents can stay abreast of information and goals in the school setting.

2. Provide coordination, technical assistance and other support necessary to assist and build the capacity in planning and implementing effective parent and family engagement activities that are designed to improve student academic achievement and school performance;

- Most communication is electronic, but exceptions are made if needed for families without access to technology.
- Provide a curriculum event where parents can come to school to interact with the teachers and curriculum to learn how to support at home.
- Parents have access to teacher grade books through Thinkwave to monitor their students' grades and assignment completion.
- Notifying parents of and clearly posting on the School's website NC School Report Card Data
- Mandatory Quarter 1 conferences and optional conferences for Quarters 2-4.

3. Coordinate and integrate parent and family engagement strategies in the Title I program to the extent feasible and appropriate with parental engagement strategies established in other federal, state, and local laws and programs;

- Volunteering in their child's classroom.
- Volunteering in extracurricular activities
- Volunteering in in-school activities
- Promoting and Supporting homework at home

4. With the meaningful involvement of parents, conduct an annual evaluation of the content and effectiveness of the school parent and family engagement policy and program in improving the academic quality of the school and assisting students to meet the school's academic standards. This evaluation shall identify the following:

- barriers to greater participation by parents in activities authorized by this section (with particular attention to parents who are economically disadvantaged, are disabled, have limited English proficiency, have limited literacy or are of any racial or ethnic minority background);
- the needs of parents and family members to assist with the learning of their children, including engaging with school personnel and teachers, and;
- strategies to support successful school and family interactions.

The school will use these findings to design evidence-based strategies for more effective parental involvement, and revise, if necessary, the parent and family engagement policy.

- Collect parent attendance at meetings
- The school provides interpreters (as needed) for parent meetings,
- Conduct surveys after each parent planned program
- Schedule conferences and programs to meet the needs of parents' schedules.
- Translation of important documents

5. Provide parents with a description and explanation of the curriculum at use at the school, the forms of academic assessment used to measure student progress, and the achievement levels of challenging State academic standards by:

- Grade level curriculum standards are included in teachers' beginning of year grade level presentations and also posted on [NC DPI](#)
- Parents are provided links to released EOG information.
- Parents have access to the Thinkwave grading system to measure student progress in classwork and assessments.
- Parents are provided their child's NC Check In assessment reports and EOG score reports which demonstrate the state's achievement levels.

6. If requested by parents, the school will offer opportunities for regular meetings to formulate suggestions and the participation of parents, as appropriate, in making decisions that are related to the education of their children and respond to any suggestions as soon as practicably possible.

- Parents can attend monthly "Morning Buzz" meetings and afterwards have face to face time with administration for the purpose of feedback and suggestions.
- Parents may make suggestions during parent conferences.
- Parents can seek out a meeting with a Leader during their open office hours.

#### E. SHARED RESPONSIBILITIES FOR HIGH STUDENT ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

As a component of the parent and family engagement policy, the school shall jointly develop with parents a school-parent compact that outlines how parents, the entire school staff, and students will share the responsibility for improved student academic achievement and the means by which the school and parents will build and develop a partnership to help children achieve the State's high standards. The compact will:

1. Describe the school's responsibility to provide high-quality curriculum and instruction in a supportive and effective learning environment that enables the children to meet the challenging State standards, and the ways in which each parent will be responsible for supporting their children's learning.

- Our goal is to provide students with the skills needed to become literate and well-informed about themselves and the world around them.
- United Community School will be a disciplined place. Students will discover that life is a balance of freedom and constraints. Children will be taught to live within the limits of society.

- United Community School will be a caring place. It will offer a people-centered environment.
- United Community School will be a celebratory place. Opportunities will be provided for parents, teachers and students to meet regularly and affirm their common goals and celebrate their successes.
- Parents will examine and discuss items and work that are brought home each day with their child.
- Parents will attend school-sponsored programs and events when possible.
- Parents will volunteer in the classroom and school-wide activities when possible.
- Parents will support students with homework, positive behavior, and attending special events.

2. Address the importance of communication between teachers and parents on an ongoing Basis.

- a. Parent-teacher conferences are held throughout the school year.
- b. Written quarterly report cards are sent to parents regarding their children's progress. Parents have access to assignment completion and grades through Thinkwave. Parents are given weekly communication of what is covered in the upcoming week and notification of grade level activities/events.
- c. Reasonable access to staff, opportunities to volunteer and participate in their child's class.
  - Parents are given teachers' schedules, which indicate teacher availability for conferences.
  - Each school year, parents are given information and training on how to volunteer at school along with a background clearance form.

## F. BUILDING CAPACITY FOR INVOLVEMENT

To ensure effective involvement of parents and to support a partnership with the school, parents, and the community to improve student academic achievement, the school:

1. Shall provide assistance to parents in understanding such topics as the challenging State academic standards, State and local academic assessments, the requirements of Title I, and how to monitor a child's progress and work with educators to improve the achievement of their children. As a school we will:

- Provide parent training sessions during curriculum events on understanding state academic standards, state and local academic assessments, title I requirements, and ways parents can monitor student progress to help improve student achievement.
- Make sure parents have access to various ways of communicating with teachers and the school (email, telephone, Google Classroom, etc.)
- Encourage parents to sign up for Thinkwave in order to review and monitor their child's grades.

2. Shall provide materials and training to help parents to work with their children to improve their children's achievement, as appropriate, to foster parental involvement. Our school will:

- Provide parents with additional practice through homework assigned weekly.



- Conduct academic parent curriculum events focusing on literacy, math, and technology.

3. Shall educate teachers (K-8), teaching partners, special education teachers, specials teachers (art, music, PE), school administrators, and other staff, with the assistance of parents, on the value and utility of contributions of parents, on the art of how to reach out to, communicate with, and work with parents as equal partners, implement and coordinate parent programs, and build ties between parents and the school.

- This will be accomplished through crucial discussions, training, and parent-teacher meetings.

4. Shall ensure that information related to school and parent programs, meetings, and other activities is sent to parents in a format and, to the extent practicable, in a language the parents can understand. This will be accomplished by:

- Two-way communication (emails, telephone calls, conferences)
- Weekly teacher newsletters, flyers, social media posts, and website calendar
- Provided communications in a language that is understood best by the parent.