

Arts Academy Charter Middle School

Student and Parent Handbook

Karl J. Eisenhart
Executive Director

Jamie Hill
Principal



Phone Number
610-351-0234



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WELCOME

to another great year at Arts Academy!

A new year brings new opportunities to sharpen our artistic focus, amplify student voices, and build a vibrant community where every individual is heard and celebrated.

I began my career as a math teacher at the Lehigh Valley Charter High School for the Arts, focusing on building strong student relationships, making math accessible, and helping students find their confidence. My career then took me away from the Valley, leading outdoor education and school administration in Nevada and Rhode Island, where I learned the true value of creative self-expression as both a therapeutic tool and a personal anchor. I returned to the Valley specifically to lead AACMS because I deeply believe in our mission of blending world-class arts with rigorous academics.

As we enter this new school year, my goal is to deepen our focus in both the classroom and the studio while amplifying student voice. We want AACMS to be a place where your unique perspectives shape our community, and where your dedication prepares you for whatever personal and professional goals you choose to pursue. I am honored to partner with you on this journey.



Jamie Hill, M.Ed.
Principal

Vision

The Arts Academy Charter Middle School is the signature model of success in providing arts-focused education that enriches the lives of students and inspires them to greater academic and artistic achievement.



Mission

The Arts Academy Charter Middle School provides opportunities for students to explore their artistic passions and talents in a supportive, challenging and rigorous academic and artistic environment

Key Contacts



Arts Academy Charter Middle School

1610 E. Emmaus Avenue

Allentown, PA 18103

Telephone: 610-351-0234 Fax: 610-351-0307

Website: www.aacms.org

Main Office: mainoffice@aacms.org

Facebook: Arts Academy Charter Middle School

Instagram: @artsacademycms

Executive Director: Karl Eisenhart

keisenhart@aacms.org **ext. 506**

Principal: Jamie Hill

jhill@aacms.org **ext. 508**

Director of Special Programs: Clarissa Leinbach

cleinbach@aacms.org **ext. 518**

Dean of Students: Jesse Garin

jgarin@aacms.org **ext. 516**

Director of Educational Support Services: Christa Greagori

cgreagori@aacms.org **ext. 501**

Guidance Counselor: Acadia Holbert

aholbert@aacms.org **ext. 514**

Nurse: Rachel Armellino

rarmellino@aacms.org **ext. 517**

Business Manager/Registrar: Amy Reid

areid@aacms.org **ext. 512**

Food Services Director: Susan Ott

sott@aacms.org **ext. 504**

Main Office Administrative Assistant/Transportation/Enrollment: Angelin Deleon

adeleon@aacms.org **ext. 511**

Board of Directors

Scott Kiefer **President**

Susan Harlan **Vice President**

Deborah Nand **Treasurer**

Board Members:

Susan Asp

Jennifer Gross

Michael Judkins

Anu Sachdev

Nicole Wolf

All visitors, including parents/guardians, must enter through the front door of the building, sign in, and receive a visitor's pass. Parents/Guardians who wish to meet with faculty or staff must make an appointment. AACMS reserves the right to refuse entry to any visitors who would disrupt the learning environment.

Communication

Connecting with AACMS

Effective communication between home and school is the foundation of student success at AACMS. To ensure your child's safety, keep daily operations running smoothly, and address your questions quickly, we rely on a strong partnership with our families.

Communicating with Faculty & Staff

If you have questions or concerns about a school policy or interaction, please follow these steps to resolve it as quickly as possible. We ask that all communications remain clear, courteous, and professional so they can be addressed effectively.

For in-class or grading concerns, reach out to the staff member directly via email using the format:

[First Initial][Last Name] @aacms.org
(e.g., jsmith@aacms.org).

Teacher names can be found in the Staff Directory.

For other concerns, call the main office or email the Dean of Student or Principal. Your call or email will be returned as soon as possible.

For all emergencies, please call the main office.

Attendance Calls

Please call the office when your child is home sick. If your child is marked absent, you may receive an automated phone call.

If you receive this call but your child should be at school, please call the Main Office immediately so we can verify their location. Often, this is due to a simple human error.



Updating Your Contact Info & Address Changes

To ensure student safety and uninterrupted busing, parents and guardians should notify the school immediately of any updates to phone numbers, email addresses, home addresses, or emergency contacts.

Please send general contact updates directly to mainoffice@aacms.org.

If your family is moving or has recently moved, please follow this process to update your student's records and adjust their bus route:

- Parents must officially complete change of address paperwork through the AACMS office.
- Parents must submit official proof of your new address to the school.
- Once your paperwork and proof are processed, the AACMS Transportation Coordinator will notify your local school district to update your child's busing.

Please Note: This process must be handled through our office rather than your school district. School districts require lead time to adjust bus routes, so please submit your changes as early as possible to avoid any transportation delays.



Life at AACMS

School Day Essentials

The school day begins at **7:45 a.m.** and ends at **2:00 p.m.**

Students may enter the building beginning at 7:30.

Breakfast is served from 7:30-7:45 in the cafeteria each day.

Lockers

All students will be assigned lockers. It is always the responsibility of the student(s) to keep the locker clean. Lockers are school property entrusted to students for use and care; *students should have no expectation of privacy in their lockers.* AACMS is not responsible for lost or stolen items out of lockers.

1. Students in grades 6 and 7 must bring in a lock to be used on their assigned locker.
 - Students will not be allowed to use a locker without a lock.
2. Students MAY NOT use lockers that are not assigned to them.
3. AACMS is not responsible for the content of a student's locker (i.e., lost or stolen items)
4. Lockers may be inspected at any time throughout the school year at the discretion of the administrator in charge without permission from or notification of parents.
5. Materials found in locker searches may be used in disciplinary proceedings against the student.

Being prepared is the first step to a great day! Students must bring required books and supplies to class daily.

Belongings

We encourage students to practice independence by taking responsibility for their belongings. When a student occasionally forgets an item, allowing them to experience the natural consequences helps build valuable life skills and keeps our classrooms free from interruptions.

If belongings are lost at school, students can check the Lost and Found in the cafeteria. Please note that unclaimed items are donated to local charities at the end of each marking period.

AACMS is not responsible for lost or stolen items.



If a student frequently forgets their materials, we'll reach out to parents to partner and protect their academic progress.

All students at AACMS are eligible to get breakfast and lunch *for free* every school day. We participate in the National School Lunch Program, thus providing students with nutritious meals at no cost to families.

Daily Meals



If students choose not to eat the school's free lunch, they may pack their own lunch.

The following are not permitted in the school/lunchroom: fast food, meal delivery services such as DoorDash or Grubhub, food that requires heating, soda, energy drinks, or other caffeinated beverages.

The Code of Conduct applies during all school lunches, including cell phone use.

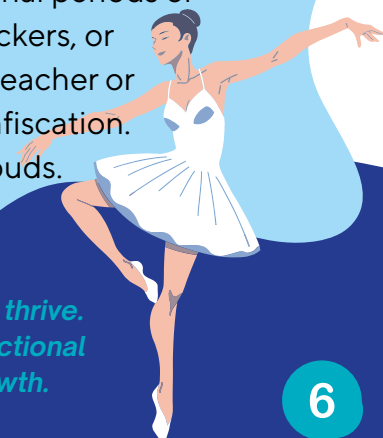
Clubs & Trips

AACMS offers a vibrant student life with field trips throughout the year and a wide variety of after-school clubs, including Dance Team, Yearbook, D&D, and Student Council. If students want to start a brand-new club, they just need a group of 5 or more peers and a teacher supervisor. For all off-campus trips, detailed permission slips will be sent home prior to the event. Standard school rules apply at all times during clubs and field trips.

Cell Phones & Headphones

- **All phones must be silenced and “off body” (e.g., placed in backpacks, lockers, or designated classroom areas) from the start of the school day until the final dismissal.** If a student refuses to put their phone away or hand it in to a teacher then administration will become involved.
- **Students are not permitted to use their cell phones during instructional periods, lunch, recess, or transition times.**
- We understand the need for communication. In case of an emergency or if you need to reach your child, please contact the Main Office and we will ensure your message is delivered promptly.
- If a student needs to contact a parent or guardian, they may do so from the Main Office or Nurse’s Office.
- Students are not permitted to use headphone/earbuds during instructional periods or transition times and shall remain “off body” (e.g., placed in backpacks, lockers, or designated classroom areas) unless provided explicit permission by the teacher or granted by a 504 or IEP. Refusal to remove headphones will result in confiscation.
- AACMS is not responsible for lost or stolen phones, headphones, or earbuds.

Thank you for partnering with us to maintain an environment where our students can thrive. By adhering to this policy, you help us minimize distractions, protect valuable instructional time, and keep the focus right where it belongs—on your child's learning and growth.





Arts & Academics

Nurturing Talent, Upholding Excellence

At Arts Academy Charter Middle School, we balance rigorous academic courses with 60 to 130 minutes of daily artistic instruction. We believe this unique approach helps students grow into organized, resilient, and compassionate adults.

The Arts

AACMS offers instruction in six artistic disciplines, with classes designed and led by passionate teachers who are also experienced performers and artists.

Dance
Instrumental Music
Creative Writing
Theater
Visual Arts
Vocal Music

AACMS students perform and exhibit their talents and skills throughout the school year. Each artistic discipline hosts at least one major student showcase each year, many offering two or more events annually.

Selecting an appropriate arts focus is a critical part of the application and enrollment process for new students. Major change requests after enrollment should be submitted to the school counselor and will require a rea audition.

Support Services

AACMS uses a broad set of evidence-based practices to support our students' academic and behavioral needs. This includes standards-aligned, culturally responsive, high-quality core instruction, universal screenings, data-based decision-making, tiered services and supports, parental engagement, and Response to Intervention (RTI).

Any student who fails a core academic class for the school year must complete course recovery over the summer at the family's expense.



Stay up to date on assignments and assessments with our online learning management system, Schoology. Login information can be requested from the school counselor.

Excellence

Grades are one of the many ways we measure your child's learning, growth, and mastery of the curriculum.

To keep you clearly informed of their academic progress, we use the following standard grading scale:

A = 90% – 100%

Excellent: The student demonstrates an outstanding, deep understanding of the material.

B = 80% – 89%

Very Good: The student shows strong, consistent work and high-level understanding.

C = 70% – 79%

Satisfactory: The student meets the necessary grade-level standards and expectations.

F = 69% & below

Needs Improvement: The student has not yet mastered the essential skills and requires extra support.

A Note on Student Progress: We are fully invested in your child's success! If you notice your student's grade dipping or if they are struggling to understand a concept, please don't wait. Reach out to their teacher right away so we can team up and provide the extra help they need to stay on track.

Academic Honesty & Integrity

At AACMS, we believe that artistry and academics both require the same core ingredient: authenticity. Academic integrity means doing your own work, sharing your unique voice, and being honest in everything from daily homework to final exams.



When students take pride in their own learning and respect others' intellectual property, they build a community of trust. Cheating, copying, or passing off someone else's work as your own undermines personal growth, including the use of AI-generated text, images, or ideas. By upholding high standards of honesty, our students learn to value their own hard work, build genuine resilience, and create a community where everyone's achievements are celebrated with pride.

Respect and Responsibility

Students are expected to respect and care for all school property. Families will be held financially responsible for any lost, stolen, or damaged materials beyond normal wear and tear. This includes all daily or long-term loaned equipment, such as textbooks, Chromebooks, instruments, props, and supplies, as well as permanent fixtures such as fountains or sinks. Additionally, any act of graffiti, defacement, or destruction of school property, including stickers, will result in disciplinary action, required financial restitution, and/or notification to the police.

Ovations

Ovations courses are fast-paced and academically rigorous, designed for students who are ready to take on extra responsibility and challenge themselves academically.

Because space in these classes is limited, entry is based on the qualifications below. Students must meet specific grade, testing, and teacher requirements listed below. Applicants are then entered into a pool, and open seats are filled as they become available.

Subject* & Grade	Required Grades: previous year average	Teacher Recommendations	Testing Requirements
ELA Grades 7 & 8	A in ELA B in Ovations course	Previous year ELA	Proficient or Advanced on previous year's ELA PSSA
Math Grades 7 & 8	A in Math or B in Ovations course	Previous year Math	Prof. or Adv. on previous year's Math PSSA
Science Grades 7 & 8	A in Science or B in Ovations course	Previous year Science	None

** Due to scheduling and assessment restraints, Social Studies Ovations are not offered.*

AACMS Support Network

Health Services and Academic Guidance

School Nurse

Our school nurse is available throughout the day to help students who become ill or require medical assistance. Our health room policies:

Nurse Visits During the Day

Teacher Pass Required: Students must obtain a pass from their teacher before visiting the nurse.

No Between-Class Visits: To maintain hallway safety and accountability, students may not visit the nurse between class periods.

Screenings: Hearing, vision, height, weight, BMI, and Scoliosis screenings are done annually, and all results may be obtained from the health room.

Illness & Dismissal Procedures

If your child is too sick to stay at school, the nurse will coordinate their dismissal:

Official Evaluation: Students experiencing an illness must be evaluated by the school nurse to receive dismissal consent.

Parent Contact: The school nurse (or a designated staff member) will contact parents directly to arrange for pick-up. All medical dismissals must go through the nurse's office. *Students may not call or text a parent from their personal cell phone to request a pickup due to illness.* Violating this rule is considered a cellphone violation and may result in disciplinary action.



Medication

To ensure student safety, parents **may not** send any medication (over-the-counter or prescription) to school with their child. If your child requires medication during school hours, please follow these guidelines:

Authorization: A physician and a parent must sign an Authorization for Medication form (available from the Nurse or Main Office) before any medication can be given at school.

Packaging: All medicines, including over-the-counter items like cough drops and allergy pills, must be brought in their original container.

Labeling: The container must clearly display the student's name, medication name, dosage, and administration time. All medications will be securely stored and administered in the Health Room.

Student Wellbeing

At AACMS, we are committed to protecting the health, safety, and welfare of our community by fostering an inclusive, supportive environment. To maintain this standard, students are expected to adhere to our **anti-bullying policy**, which requires treating peers with respect, actively including those who are left out, helping those in need, and immediately reporting any instances of bullying or cyberbullying to trusted adults at home and at school.

To support students through social, emotional, or academic challenges, AACMS offers comprehensive **guidance and counseling** services by appointment, providing assistance with everything from educational planning and study habits to personal, school, or attendance concerns. Furthermore, in alignment with federal, state, and local efforts, AACMS promotes **mental health and safety** through a dedicated suicide prevention policy that focuses on education, intervention, and crisis resources. Details can be found in Board Policy 2.16 on the AACMS website.

Student Assistance Program (SAP)

If your child is facing emotional, behavioral, or medical challenges that hinder their learning, we are here to help. The Student Assistance Program (SAP) is a supportive team designed to identify students who are experiencing barriers to success, including mental health challenges or involvement with alcohol and other drugs.

Through close collaboration with parents and school counselors, the SAP team helps connect families with appropriate community-based agencies for professional evaluation and treatment.

How the SAP Process Works

The SAP process is completely confidential, private, and governed by state and federal laws. Here is what you can expect:

1. The Referral: Anyone can request help. Teachers, staff, students, or parents can submit a referral.
2. Parent Notification: A parent or guardian is promptly notified by phone upon referral.
3. Information Gathering: The SAP team collects behavioral and academic observation forms from the student's teachers to better understand their needs.
4. Team Review & Next Steps: The SAP team reviews the data together and assigns a team member to follow up with the family. If needed, a permission slip will be sent home to get parental consent for a professional mental health or drug and alcohol assessment.

How to Make a Referral

Making a referral is quick, easy, and completely confidential. You can submit a request in two ways:

- In-Person: Drop a physical form into any of the clearly marked SAP referral boxes located on each floor of the school.
- Online: Complete an electronic SAP referral form directly on the AACMS website.

Questions or Concerns? Please reach out to our **SAP Coordinator**, Clarissa Kauffman-Leinbach, at cleinbach@aacms.org. We are here to partner with you to ensure your child has the support they need.



SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

At AACMS, we are dedicated to ensuring that every child receives an education tailored to their unique needs. To qualify for Special Education Services, a student must meet the eligibility criteria for one or more physical or mental disabilities as defined by Pennsylvania State Regulations.

For additional information about our special education programs, identification procedures, or your parental rights, please contact our **Director of Educational Support Services**, Christa Greagori, cgreagori@aacms.org. We are here to support your family every step of the way!



Attendance Matters

Every Day Counts!

Daily, on-time attendance is critical for classroom success and central to the collaborative spirit of AACMS. In accordance with the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, parents/guardians are legally responsible for ensuring their children (ages 6–18) attend school daily. To maintain a safe environment and fulfill our legal obligations, we ask for your cooperation with the attendance tracking procedures outlined below.

Absences

On days when your child will be absent, please call the school before 8:30 am at **610-351-0234 ext. 1** or send a note to **attendance@aacms.org** to inform us. Include your child's first and last name, their grade, and the reason for their absence.

Parents/Guardians may receive an automated phone call informing them that their student is not in school.

Within 3 days of your child's return to school, a written note that includes your child's name, date(s) of absence, and reason for that absence must be submitted to the office.

Without this note, your child's absence will remain "unexcused". If your child was seen by a doctor, submit the doctor's note within 3 days of their return.

Late to School?

AACMS proudly welcomes students from more than 15 school districts. Because many of our families travel long distances, we understand that traffic or weather can cause occasional delays.

Students must be at school by 7:45 AM.

Anyone arriving after this time is considered tardy.

Tardy students must report directly to the Main Office to sign in with a note to have the tardiness excused.

If a student arrives late on a school district bus, they will receive a late bus pass. *This is always excused, and the student is never penalized.*

Families are allowed 7 excused tardy notes per school year. Any tardies beyond these 7 will be marked as unexcused unless accompanied by a medical note.

Early Dismissal

If your child must leave school early, please send a note to the office stating their first and last name, grade level, the date, the dismissal time, and the reason, along with your phone number. Please come to the main office, with a photo ID, when you arrive. Students will be called out of class at that time. To avoid disrupting afternoon dismissal, students must be picked up **NO LATER THAN 1:30 p.m.**

If your child visits a doctor, dentist, or other medical professional during school hours, they must submit an official medical note to the Main Office to be excused.

Students *absent* from school are not permitted to attend *any* extracurricular activities or school functions on the day of their absence.

Unexcused Absences

To promote regular attendance, AACMS utilizes a progressive intervention system for unexcused absences in compliance with PA law.

Truancy is defined as 3 unexcused absences. After a student's third unexcused absence a warning letter will be emailed home and Student Attendance Improvement Plan (SAIP) meeting will be scheduled. Habitual truancy is defined as 6 unexcused absences. After a student's sixth unexcused absence you will receive an email and phone call to address the SAIP. If a student continues to have unexcused absences a referral to Child & Youth Services will be made by a school official.

Planned Absences

Applications for educational trips, vacations, and/or auditions must be submitted at least **10 days prior** to the time requested off. Applications can be found at the Main Office or the school's website and will be reviewed by the principal or designee and returned to you. Students are responsible for coordinating for any classwork or homework they miss during an absence.

✓ Truancy

A student is considered truant after three unexcused absences. At this time, the school may schedule a School Attendance Improvement Plan (SAIP) meeting with the family to identify root causes and collaborate on a plan to improve attendance. Continued unexcused absences may lead to CPS or Truancy reports being filed.

For full details on the school's complete truancy policy, please refer to Attendance Procedure and Board Policy 2.4.2 available on the AACMS website.

Late to Class

Students must arrive to class on time.

Teachers will mark classroom attendance at the start of the period. If a student arrives late to class without a pass, they will be marked as tardy or unexcused. AACMS administration maintains daily reports on student tardiness and class attendance.

Consistent tardiness will result in detentions and further disciplinary actions.



Types of Absences

Excused Absences (Cumulative) include pre-approved family vacations and any absence allowed under the PA School Code, provided a written excuse is submitted within three school days of the student's return.

Unexcused Absences (Cumulative) are any absence missing a written excuse after three days, or any absence due to illness without a doctor's note after a student has reached 10 parent-verified absences.

Non-cumulative Absences do not count toward the student limit. These absences include doctor-verified illnesses (submitted within three days), a death in the family (from the date of death until two days post-funeral), required court appearances, religious holidays, and school-sponsored events.

Transportation

From Doorsteps to Desks

Bussing

Students may only ride a bus if it is assigned to them by their school district.

AAMCS does not assign buses. **No student is permitted to ride a bus from any other school district, regardless of parental consent.** If a student's transportation at the end of the school day must be altered, the main office must receive written notification, either by note or email.

The Code of Conduct remains in effect while on a bus to and from school.

AACMS has the right to suspend a student from the bus for misbehavior. Repeated infractions, or those that exceed Level III or IV in the Code of Conduct, may result in removal from the bus entirely. In this case, the parents/guardians must provide alternate transportation for their child.



The back parking lot is for AACMS staff only.

Please do not park in the back parking lot without prior permission from the Principal or Executive Director.



7:30 a.m.
School
Doors
Open

7:45 a.m.
Homeroom/
Classes
Begin

2:00 p.m.
Classes
Dismiss

after 2:30 p.m.
Only supervised
activities
allowed

Students are not allowed to re-enter the building after dismissal.

Car Transport

Morning Arrival

All cars should pull into the circular driveway, where students can safely walk to the main entrance. To help keep our traffic flowing smoothly and safely for all families, drivers are asked to please remain inside their vehicles and proceed carefully through the loop.

Afternoon Dismissal

All cars *must* pull into the side lot and park as directed to wait for the students' dismissal. Cars may not enter the bus channel in front of the school during dismissal. **Please do not park on Emmaus Ave. or in neighboring lots.** Students will not be dismissed to walk off school property.



Bus Behavior: Expectations

Riding the school bus is a privilege and an extension of the school day. To ensure every student has a safe, comfortable, and smooth ride, AACMS students are expected to abide by the following:

- **Be Early and Orderly:** Arrive at your bus stop 5 minutes before your scheduled pickup time. Wait safely on the sidewalk or shoulder, off the road, and respect neighboring properties.
- **Board with Care:** Wait until the bus comes to a complete stop and the doors open before stepping forward. Board in a single-file line without pushing or crowding.
- **Stay Safely Seated:** Go directly to your seat (your assigned seat, if applicable) and remain seated, facing forward, for the entire ride. Keep the aisle clear of backpacks, feet, and other objects.
- **Keep Inside the Bus:** Keep your hands, head, and all personal belongings inside the bus windows at all times. *Throwing items inside the bus or out the windows is strictly prohibited.*
- **Use Courteous Language:** Talk quietly with your seatmates. Loud yelling, screaming, or sudden noises can distract the driver and create a safety hazard. The use of rude or profane language may result in school consequences.
- **Tech & Media Courtesy:** If you listen to music, watch videos, or play games on your own device, you must use headphones. Keep all content school-appropriate, and *do not take photos or videos of other students or distract the driver.*
- **Respect the Driver:** The bus driver is the ultimate authority on the bus. Follow their directions immediately and respectfully.
- **Keep It Clean:** Do not eat or drink on the bus. Take all trash, papers, and personal items with you when you exit.
- **Choose Kindness:** Treat your fellow riders how you would like to be treated. Use respectful language, and do not engage in bullying, teasing, or horseplay.

Note: Standard school disciplinary procedures apply to bus behavior. Violations of these expectations may result in school consequences, including the temporary or permanent loss of bus-riding privileges.

We understand that many students travel long distances to school and enjoy having comfort items for the commute. However, to maintain a focused learning environment, personal items like **blankets, pillows, and toys are not permitted inside the school building**. We kindly ask that these items be left at home or kept tucked away in lockers. Comfort items left out during the school day may be confiscated by staff and held until dismissal.

Campus Safety

Weather and Emergency Procedures



School Closings/Delays Announcements regarding school closings due to inclement weather or other emergencies will be posted on social media and reported on WFMZ television and online broadcast, as well as through our text message alert system (Caller Id #956-64).

Scenario & Transport Type	What Happens & What to Expect
If AACMS Announces a Closing	* Virtual Learning: Students complete work for each class online independently.
If Your Local School District Announces a Closing <i>When a district announces a delay or closure and AACMS is open, students who do not come to school are required to make up any missed assignments or assessments.</i>	* No Busing: Your child's bus transportation will not run, even if AACMS is open. * Parent Decision: If AACMS remains open, it is up to the parent to provide alternative transportation to school. * Virtual Learning: If AACMS is also closed, students complete work for each class online independently.
If AACMS Announces a 2-Hour Delay	* Delayed Pickup: Your child's bus will pick them up approximately two hours later than the normally scheduled time IF your district is also delayed. If your district is closed or on a regular schedule, it is up to the parent to provide alternative transportation to school.
If Your Local School District Announces a 2-Hour Delay	* Delayed Pickup: Your child's bus will pick them up approximately two hours later than the normally scheduled time. This applies even if AACMS is operating on a regular schedule.
If Your Local School District Announces an Early Dismissal	* Early Departure: Your child's bus will leave school early at a time set by your local school district. Buses may arrive at AACMS earlier or later than scheduled depending on the driver. AACMS will do its best to share updated departure times via the website and email alerts.
If Your Child Travels via Car (Parent Pick-up)	* Follow AACMS Schedule: Please follow the specific closing, delay, or early dismissal schedule announced by AACMS. * Delay Drop-off: On a 2-hour delay schedule, AACMS doors open to students at 9:25 AM.



How to Navigate Virtual Days

Stay connected and keep learning from home with these simple guidelines:

- Log in to Schoology to view assignments for each of your scheduled classes.
- Please submit any digital assignments online. Any physical, manual work can be brought to school on the next regular class day.
- To help pace your day, we suggest dedicating roughly 30 minutes to each class.
- Independent practice is always available and can be completed as desired to sharpen your skills!
- Students with limited internet access will be provided paper copies of work upon request.

Emergency Preparedness

Safety First :

In compliance with PA School Code, AACMS regularly practices fire, weather, and security drills so students and staff know exactly how to respond calmly and safely.

Family Communication:

In the event of an emergency dismissal, schedule change, or critical update, the school will immediately send alerts via school email and text. Please keep your contact information up to date in the student information system. **During an active emergency, please do not call the school.** Phone lines must remain open so administrators can communicate with emergency services. The school will push out updates to you via text and email as quickly as possible.

Emergency Evacuation:

If the students must evacuate the premises, a command center will be set up at another location. Information will be shared via the emergency phone system. Be sure to subscribe so you receive any emergency instructions, should the need arise.

Student Pick-Up Policy:

During an off-site reunification, students will only be released to individuals listed on their approved emergency contact/pick-up list. No student may leave campus without approval from a school administrator.

Student Code of Conduct

Quick Reference

At AACMS, we want to ensure a safe, positive, and creative learning environment for everyone. Our Code of Conduct helps us do that by using progressive discipline, meaning that **consequences may become more serious if a behavior continues**. School rules are broken down into four levels of infractions. The Dean of Students and administrative team members review and investigate all behavior issues. They will look at how the behavior affected the learning environment and school community to decide on the fairest and most appropriate consequence. The consequences listed here serve as a general guide. Administration handles situations on a case-by-case basis.

Level 1 Infractions: Classroom-Managed Behaviors

Level 1 behaviors are minor disruptions that are usually handled directly by the teacher within the classroom.

Common Tier 1 Behaviors Include:

- Being late to school or class
- Dress code violations
- Eating/Drinking outside the lunchroom
- Failure to meet classroom expectations or refusal to participate



How They Are Handled: Teachers resolve these situations right away in the classroom. Staff will redirect students using positive reinforcement (encouraging good choices) and affective language (helping students understand how their actions affect others) to get them back on track.

Consequences: Repeat offenses may result in detention or administrative referral

Detentions

Staff and faculty at AACMS hold the right to assign after-school or Saturday detentions for inappropriate/disruptive behavior. Parents will always receive at least a 24-hour notice prior to a scheduled detention. **Please note that families are entirely responsible for arranging transportation, as the school does not provide rides for after-school or Saturday sessions.** It is critical that students attend their assigned detentions and are picked up promptly afterward, as failing to attend without proper documentation or failing to pick up your child on time may result in further administrative action.

After School Detention:

2:00 PM – 3:00 PM

Saturday Detention:

9:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Level 2 Infractions: Repeated or Elevated Behaviors

Tier 2 infractions include more significant disruptions or Tier 1 behaviors that have become ongoing issues despite previous redirection.

Common Tier 2 Behaviors Include:

- Continued classroom misconduct & defiance, including cell phone use (see *below*)
- Failing to follow rules or adult requests in the cafeteria, hallway, lavatory (including congregating), or during arrival/dismissal and on the school bus.
- Repeated Dress Code Violations
- School Activity Misconduct
- Unauthorized Items

How They Are Handled: Level 2 infractions are referred to administration. Consequences operate on a progressive scale, typically starting with detention or intervention for a first offense, and increasing in severity for repeated infractions. All consequences are subject to administrative discretion based on the incident, and accumulating 3 or more Tier 2 infractions may result in school suspension.

Tier 3 Infractions: Serious Misconduct

Tier 3 infractions involve serious violations that directly compromise the safety, integrity, or well-being of the school community.

Common Tier 3 Behaviors Include:

- Safety & Security Violations
- Bullying, Threats & Disrespect: This includes verbal, emotional, physical, or online bullying and harassment.
- Dishonesty & Theft
- Property Damage
- Vape, Tobacco, Nicotine products
- Insubordination & Tech Violations

How They Are Handled: Because of the serious nature of these offenses, Tier 3 behaviors are immediately referred to school administration. Consequences include detention and/or suspension (typically ranging from 1–5 days depending on the severity of the offense). All consequences are subject to administrative discretion, and certain infractions (such as fighting, theft, or false fire alarms) may also result in separate involvement by law enforcement.

Cell Phones & Headphones

To maintain a focused and distraction-free learning environment, AACMS requires all students' cell phones to be silenced and stored away in backpacks, lockers, or designated classroom areas **from the start of the school day until final dismissal**. Phones are strictly prohibited during all instructional periods, lunch, recess, and transition times, and any refusal to store a device properly will result in administrative involvement. Parents can contact the Main Office at any time to deliver urgent messages, and students may likewise use the office or nurse phone to reach a parent or guardian during the day. *Repeated cell phone violations will escalate the infraction level. Similarly, students are not permitted to use headphone/earbuds during instructional periods or transition times and shall remain "off body" (e.g., placed in backpacks, lockers, or designated classroom areas) unless provided explicit permission by the teacher or grater in 504 or IEP. Refusal to remove headphones will result in confiscation.*

AACMS is not responsible for lost or stolen phones, headphones, or earbuds.

Tier 4 Infractions: Severe & Expellable Offenses

Tier 4 infractions involve the most serious offenses that threaten the safety of the school environment, violate state laws, or represent a persistent refusal to follow school policy.

Common Tier 4 Behaviors Include:

- Weapons Possession
- Assault of a School Employee
- Alcohol & Drug Violations
- Terroristic Threats
- Excessive Tier 3 Infractions

*Students who are suspended must attend a reinstatement meeting **with a parent or guardian present** prior to returning to class.*

How They Are Handled: Due to the extreme severity of these violations, Tier 4 behaviors result in an immediate suspension of up to 10 school days and a possible recommendation to the Board of Directors for an expulsion hearing. All consequences are subject to administrative discretion. Because these offenses violate the law, law enforcement will be involved, and any legal actions taken by police are entirely separate from school disciplinary consequences.

Bullying

At AACMS, fostering a safe, supportive, and inclusive environment is essential to unlocking our students' artistic and academic potential. To ensure every student feels valued and respected, we uphold four core community rules that guide our daily interactions and empower our students to stand up for one another. Together, we commit to these standards:

- We will not engage in bullying behavior. This includes any intentional, repeated, or cruel actions meant to hurt, frighten, or exclude someone else through verbal, physical, or online means.
- We will actively try to help students who are being mistreated.
- We will make a conscious effort to include peers who may feel left out.
- If we witness bullying or exclusion, we will immediately tell an adult at school and an adult at home.

Safe 2 Say

Safe2Say Something is a secure, 24-hour anonymous reporting system designed to help parents and students report the signs of severe bullying, depression, social isolation, reckless behavior, or threats of self-harm. While AACMS always encourages students to speak first to a trusted adult at school, this state-mandated tool offers an alternative way to protect those who may be at risk of harming themselves or others. Confidential tips can be submitted anytime via the Safe2Say app, online at **safe2saypa.org**, or by calling **1-844-SAF2SAY**.

Student Success Criteria

Keys to a Community of Respect

Dress Code

Dressing for school is a vital part of building a ready-to-learn mindset. Getting dressed for school is a powerful physical cue that separates personal time from learning time, signaling to the brain that sleep or weekend mode is over and it is time to focus. Because middle school is a critical time for identity building, dressing nicely gives students a sense of ownership over their appearance, which naturally boosts self-esteem and confidence. AACMS is a unique, creative academy, and dressing with care teaches students to respect their environment, helping them treat their education like a meaningful job they are proud to show up for each day. When clothing fits properly and aligns with school guidelines, students do not waste valuable mental energy adjusting their clothes throughout the day. Instead, they can keep their focus entirely on their classes and creative pursuits. AACMS compiled the following list of items to avoid to help students focus on learning.

Examples of inappropriate dress include, but are not limited to:

- Hats, hoods worn over the head, sunglasses, or other items that cover your face
- Articles of clothing that reference drugs, alcohol, tobacco/vaping, weapons, obscenities, sexual connotations, or that contain derogatory statements regarding gender, race, ethnicity, religion, or sexual orientation, including clothing or insignia depicting or related to violence, gangs, or hate.
- Pants and shirts that expose undergarments
- Pajama pants, blankets, and slippers
- Shirts must provide full torso coverage. Tops that are strapless, sleeveless with narrow straps, or reveal the midriff, back, or chest (including cropped, sheer, or mesh styles) are not permitted on campus.
- Excessively short, ripped, or torn garments
- Meta Glasses or other wearable recording devices

Footwear must always be on. and sneakers must be worn for PE.

Attire or costumes required for arts-related activities or for specific academic activities for safety purposes may be exempted from violation in proper contexts.



Student Computer Usage Guidelines

To ensure a safe, functional, and productive digital learning environment, all students must treat school technology with respect and integrity.

Device Care & Classroom Guidelines

- Treat all devices with care. Report any damage or technical issues to a teacher immediately.
- Chewing gum, food, and beverages must be kept away from all computer equipment.
- Students may not personalize computer settings, nor download or install any programs, games, backgrounds, or music.
- Students must save work to their student assigned OneDrive account. Saving directly to the computer's hard drive will result in work being permanently deleted.
- Personal devices (laptops, phones, tablets, etc.) are not permitted to access the AACMS network for security reasons.

Responsible Use

- Internet and multimedia equipment are strictly for teacher-assigned activities and classwork. Personal internet use is prohibited.
- Bypassing school internet filters using VPNs, software, utilities, or other means may result in behavioral consequences.
- Intentional access and the posting, forwarding, or displaying of materials that are abusive, obscene, threatening, discriminatory, harassing, or illegal is prohibited.
- Students must adhere to federal copyright laws. Sources should be cited with the author, publisher, and website used for any projects.

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

- AI tools should be used to assist, inspire, and enhance your learning, not to do the work.
- AI tools may only be used on assignments **when explicitly authorized by your teacher.**
- Unauthorized use of AI to generate essays, answers, or projects will be treated as plagiarism.

Digital Safety

- Never reveal full names, addresses, phone numbers, Social Security numbers, locations, or any other personal information online.
- Never agree to meet in person with anyone you have contacted or met online.
- If you accidentally access, share, or receive information that is dangerous, inappropriate, or makes you uncomfortable, notify a teacher or parent immediately.

Important Note: Using AACMS computers, networks, or internet services for any illegal activity or in violation of school rules will result in disciplinary action and a loss of technology privileges.

Acceptable Use of Technology and Internet Policy Guidelines can be found on the AACMS website. www.aacms.org.

Is it a fidget or is it a toy?

Fidgets are...

- Silent
- Help you focus
- Something you don't need to look at to use
- Often have a pattern to use, making it a mindless action
- Small enough to fit in one hand
- Contained, non-sticky, non-messy

Anything else is considered a toy. Please keep toys at home.

Resource: <https://www.johnson.k-state.edu/programs/home-family/agent-articles/fidgets-tool-or-toy-understanding-the-difference.html>

When can I use headphones or earbuds?

Headphones are allowed with...

- Special education documentation (ie IEP or 504)
- Explicit permission by the teacher



Otherwise, students are **not permitted to use headphone/earbuds** during instructional periods or transition times and shall remain “off body” (e.g., placed in backpacks, lockers, or designated classroom areas). It is recommended that students keep headphones/earbuds at home.

Resource: <https://www.theguardian.com/teacher-network/2018/mar/14/sound-how-listening-music-hinders-learning-lessons-research>

If your student is experiencing emotional dysregulation or struggling to focus in the classroom setting, please contact our guidance department to discuss a student support plan.

AACMS is committed to providing every student an equal opportunity to reach their full potential, free from discrimination based on race, identity, or disability. This inclusive support applies to all courses, activities, and arts, with reasonable accommodations provided to meet the unique needs of every learner.