

# A to Z University Family Handbook

Thank you for enrolling your child in our 21st Century Community Learning Centers after school program. This program is intended to increase student success by providing a range of fun, hands-on educational and enrichment experiences that support what children learn during the school day.

In both school and after school programs, children benefit most when their families and staff communicate regularly, and build a positive, trusting relationship. We hope that this Family Handbook will help build understanding and expectations between the staff and you.

A to Z University activities increase learning time and create greater learning opportunities for the students. Because funding for this program is provided by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, these activities are intended as academic enrichment and youth development activities. This is **not a childcare, daycare, or drop-in program**. It is important for families to understand this distinction. If you are looking for a childcare program, we will be happy to provide you with references.

## Program Registration

Registration for all A to Z University programs is required for each session. At this time, you will select new classes for your child. We strongly recommend you select classes that will help your child in the academic areas where they are having the most difficulties. Please note that **only one schedule change** will be allowed per session.

## Behavior

We ask the cooperation of family members at home to reinforce behavior. At each Campus we want to provide a safe environment that promotes appropriate social interactions. In order to do that we have developed the following behavior rules. On the Signature Page we ask that you acknowledge and accept these guidelines.

Students in the A to Z University 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center program must possess basic ADL (activities of daily living) skills, including the ability to toilet themselves. The program does not provide one-on-one care for students, and is intended to provide academic enrichment, not child care services.

Immediate removal from the program will occur if a student exhibits physical behavior that risks the safety of his/herself or another University student or staff member. The following actions may be taken if a child fails to comply with program rules.

- For the first incident a verbal warning will be given to the students and parent/guardian will be notified.
- Second disruptive incident will result in a meeting with the parent and a one day program suspension.
- Third disruptive incident will result in a meeting with the parent and a suspension from the program for a designated number of days (at the discretion of the staff).
- If there is a fourth disruptive incident, the student will be removed from the program with parent/guardian notification. At a meeting with the family and staff a decision will be made as to whether the student can return for subsequent sessions.

## Bullying Policy

As part of our behavior policy, we have also developed a Bullying Policy that is applicable to our after school programs. This policy sets clear guidelines regarding bullying, with established consequences for bullying behavior. A copy of this policy is available from each site coordinator for you to review.

## Absences

If a child is in school, but will be absent from the program, we must receive notification by 12:00 noon. If possible, we ask that a note be sent to us the day before.

## Financial Responsibility

Because we hire staff according to the number of children registered at each site, it is imperative your child attend for the entire session you registered for. There are no refunds once the program starts, and the registration fee is non-refundable. If your child leaves the program during the session, you will be billed and are financially responsible for the remainder of the session fees.

## Attendance

If you enroll your child in our after school program, it is with the understanding that they will attend on a regular basis. If a child's attendance is irregular, we will consider giving the space to another child who is prepared to attend consistently, and therefore, will likely get more out of it. Specific guidelines are as follows:

- Students must attend a minimum of two days per week.
- Students must attend the days they are scheduled for. Funding is based on consistent attendance. If student attendance falls below 80%, h/she may be dismissed.
- Students are not to be dismissed early from the program. Students must stay in their assigned activities until either 4:15 or 5:30 pm (or after 5:45 pm at the Salemwood School).

## Student Pick Up

Departure time is either 4:15 or 5:30 pm. Because this is **not a drop-in program**, students are required to stay until their scheduled departure time. When a student leaves early it is disruptive to the class they are participating in, and your child loses valuable academic enrichment. Please inform the staff in writing ahead of time if your child has to leave early because of an occasional appointment. Students at the Salemwood campus will be involved in activities until 5:45 pm. You may pick up between 5:45 and 6:00 pm at the Salemwood.

In addition, students **must be** picked up on time. Our policy is as follows.

- After 5 minutes you will be charged \$1.00 for each minute you are late. After 10 minutes you will be charged \$2.00 for each minute you are late.
- After 10 minutes your emergency contacts will be notified.
- If after 60 minutes the student has not been picked up the police and Department of Children and Families will be contacted.
- Late fees must be paid before a child can return.
- Employees will use the school clocks for reference.

If family members are late 3 times or more in a single session your child will be suspended for one day. If family members are late more than 5 times in a single session your child will be terminated.

In addition to being picked up on time, children will only be released to people listed on your registration form. If you wish to add someone to your list, this must be sent to PCSM's office in writing. Individuals picking up a child must present a photo ID. With written parental consent, children may walk home from the program. We will agree to this arrangement if we feel the child is ready to make his/her own way home from the program.

## ConnectEd

In some cases, we will need to reach families during the school day. This may be because of snow emergencies or other issues that arise suddenly. In these cases, we will use the automated ConnectEd system to contact you. These messages will come through the number you have given your child's school. Therefore, if inclement weather is predicted, we ask you to check your voice mail so we may notify you if our program needs to close early.

## Academic Support

All A to Z University sites provide time for homework. However, this time is to provide homework help, not complete homework every day. During homework time we will work with students on their most difficult assignments first so we can be assured those will be worked on. However, we cannot guarantee homework will be completed.

## Recording-Keeping Requirements

In order for our schools to offer 21st Century Community Learning Centers after school programs, we must meet school department, state, and federal record-keeping requirements; including information about the characteristics of students in the program and an assessment of students by teachers and after school program staff. These assessments are not part of your child's school record and are privileged and confidential. They will be used to help individualize the after school program to better meet the needs of individual students and to evaluate the programs effectiveness.