



Integrative education  
for children with Autism  
[www.AStepUpAcademy.org](http://www.AStepUpAcademy.org)

# Family Handbook

Updated November 23rd, 2021

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# Section 1: About A Step Up Academy

## **Mission**

A Step Up Academy prepares students to become engaged participants in society by developing innovative academic, social, emotional, and behavioral programming as well as impactful community partnerships.

## **History**

A Step Up Academy (ASUA) was founded and licensed by the Pennsylvania Department of Education in 2013 as a private, non-sectarian, co-educational school for children with Autism. Fulfilling ASUA's initial goal, the Jenkintown Campus was licensed for Kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> Grade in 2013 and was expanded to include Preschool through 4<sup>th</sup> Grade the following year. After developing an inclusion partnership with The Meadowbrook School, ASUA opened a second location in 2017. ASUA's Preschool moved to the Meadowbrook Campus and the Learning Center was established. In 2019, ASUA developed another inclusion partnership, this time with The Center School in Abington. ASUA leased space and licensed the Annex Location in 2019 to include Kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> Grade.

## **Philosophy and Focus**

ASUA's focus is to serve the growing population of young children and adolescents on the autism spectrum that have significant developmental delays, speech and language difficulties, and behaviors that are associated with the diagnosis. Using evidence-based practices with a strong focus on targeting the fundamental areas of communication, ASUA works with students, their families, school districts, and communities to teach the skills necessary with the goal of allowing children to be in the least-restrictive setting with the highest level of inclusion possible.

ASUA's teaching philosophy offers a unique balance of individualized instruction, small group learning, community-based instruction, and inclusion. ASUA's experienced educators implement research-based interventions that support academic, social, and behavioral progress. They seek out each child's optimal learning path by discovering strengths and interests in order to increase each individual child's engagement in the learning process. Expanding upon this commitment, ASUA also works to expand understanding of neurodiversity in the community through development of a variety of relationships including partnerships, community programming, and community outreach.

In order to create and sustain an open and collaborative environment, ASUA employs a highly-skilled and passionate community of administrators, teachers, instructional assistants, and related service providers. This group is committed to advancing the mission of the school by seeking out ways to maximize potential and achieve the

success of students and the organization as a whole. ASUA employees demonstrate a deep level of care, respect, and dedication to continued growth and learning and take personal initiative and desire to work as a team. Their commitment to honesty, positivity, motivation, and professionalism helps to create a warm and welcoming environment for everyone.

ASUA's comprehensive approach to creating a successful learning environment is achieved through the collaboration of all stakeholders including students, families, educators, and members of the community.

## **Head of School Welcome**

ASUA is a community of students, families, and professionals who work as a collaborative team with a common goal of providing the children we serve with an individualized program to help them meet their goals of growth, independence, and inclusion now and in the future. Teams work best when all members of the team are familiar with the structure and policies that make the day-to-day processes run as smoothly as possible. The goal of this Parent Handbook is to provide as much information as possible to our families in that effort.

As Head of School of A Step Up Academy, I want to personally thank all the parents and caregivers who partner with us on this educational journey. We are a place of kindness and creativity grounded in research-based programming. The ASUA administration and staff recognize the importance of our role in that process and we are honored to have been invited by our students' parents to come alongside them on this journey.

## **Department Head Welcomes**

### *Director of Educational Programming*

I consider myself lucky to have been part of the team of professionals that helped to start ASUA and I have been in awe watching the growth we have had. Over the past 8 years, I have worked with students and families who were with us for just a short period of time and those that have been with us since we opened. I can say without a doubt that having a strong relationship with each family is essential to each student's success. These strong relationships help to create a bridge between home and school so that each student can reach their full potential across all settings.

As the Director of Educational Programming, I have the pleasure of supporting the all staff in implementing educational programming and instruction on IEP goals. I play an active role in the IEP process and enjoy working with families to develop comprehensive and individualized educational programming for each student. More importantly, I enjoy watching the progress each student makes. Whether it is a big or small milestone, I am always there cheering them on!

I would like to welcome new families to the ASUA community and look forward to continued partnership with our current families.

### *Director of Clinical Programming*

It has been my sincerest pleasure to have been a part of the ASUA team over the past 6 years. I have enjoyed watching our school grow and am looking forward to our next steps. The love and energy are contagious at ASUA, you feel it as soon as you step into our doors. We are here to learn and grow from each other, staff, students, and parents alike. I am honored to be a part of a program that thrives on collaboration and teamwork.

As the Director of Clinical Programming, I get to see teamwork at its best! I oversee the implementation of student's behavior plans and programming, as well as related services delivery. Our staff collaborate on IEP programming on every level, from behavior, to OT, to Speech, PT, vision services, counseling, and to the classroom. We are constantly looking at how to address our students' needs from each aspect and then come together to move forward learning new skills. None of this happens however, without our students! They are the one's putting in the hard work and teaching us as educators how to meet and guide them. Our students are the heart of our school and inspire us to always keep doing better! Let's not forget, you the families! Your support and collaboration between home and school is what allows the growth to go to the next level. So, thank you for sharing your amazing children with us and welcome to A Step Up Academy!

### *Director of Development and Advancement*

From the moment I walked in the door, I fell in love with ASUA and knew it was where I needed to be. Seeing your children accomplish what they do every day, makes me want to work even harder to receive the funding that will support all that they do.

As the Director of Development and Advancement, I am continuing to build a robust fundraising program that not only includes receiving grant funding for necessary equipment, programming, and scholarships but also creating community-oriented events that students and family members can attend. I am excited to be a part of ASUA's continuing growth and look forward to working with you!

### *Director of Business Operations*

It's been a privilege to serve ASUA throughout it's remarkable growth. I am so proud of our success and achievements but that's not what gets me out of bed and to work each morning. Instead, it's the students - your children.



It's an honor to see their progress and hard work. I have seen leaps in communication, remarkable reductions in behaviors that inhibit learning, inclusion, and community involvement, and incredible social success. So many students that come our way were underserved in prior schools and find success here.

And we can't take credit for all of that. Your commitment as parents and families to your children is heartwarming and I am so grateful that we can be collaborative partners together in this process. Welcome to ASUA or, in some cases, welcome to another great year. I look forward to it!

## **Important Contacts**

ASUA Reception: 215-885-1075  
ASUA Fax: 215-885-1076

Mailing Address:  
PO Box 643  
Jenkintown, PA 19046

Jenkintown Campus - Lower School  
520 Meetinghouse Road  
Jenkintown, PA 19046

Annex Campus - Upper School  
2450 Hamilton Avenue  
Abington, PA 19001

Founder and Chair of the Board of Directors  
Karen Misher  
Karen@ASStepUpAcademy.org

Head of School  
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Director of Development and Advancement

Trish Corvo

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## Section 2: Purpose of this Handbook

This Handbook includes a summary of important policies, guidelines, and practices. All parents and guardians (herein referred to as parents) have a responsibility to understand and comply with the information in the Family Handbook.

Notwithstanding any provision of this handbook, in a situation where a federal, state, or local law is more restrictive than what is stated in this handbook, ASUA will comply with the law.

No one other than the Head of School and the members of the ASUA Board of Directors has any authority to alter or modify any of the policies, provisions, or statements in the Family Handbook or to make any agreement that is inconsistent with the policies contained herein. This handbook is a guide and should not be construed as a contract or an offer to enter into a contract. This handbook supersedes all previous handbooks, policies and practices, which are in any way inconsistent with the contents of this handbook. ASUA reserves the right to add, change, or delete policies and procedures as it deems appropriate and at any time. ASUA reserves the right to interpret the content of this handbook and individual situations on a case-by-case basis.

The parent understands that it is their responsibility to read and comply with the policies in this handbook and any revisions made to it. By signing the confirmation page at the end of this document, a copy of which will be provided to the Head of School, the parent is confirming that they have received a copy of the Family Handbook and will continue to be familiar with it and any future updates.

# Section 3: Standards of Conduct and Family Responsibilities

## **Community Standards**

ASUA strives for an active and ongoing partnership between home and school settings which allows each partner to focus on the best interests of each student. This partnership is built on mutual respect, trust, and open communication. In creating this partnership, it is important that all constituents trust one another's perspective and work towards understanding in a manner that is respectful and responsive. In times of difference or conflict, each partner is expected to seek resolution in a calm, respectful, and professional manner based on the belief that all parties are seeking the best for the student.

A healthy and constructive home-school partnership is built and maintained by these four values:

### *Understanding*

- Support ASUA's mission, vision, and values
- Adhere to ASUA's policies
- Recognize that ASUA is a not-for-profit business whose ability to provide exceptional educational services relies on financial stability

### *Communicating*

- Stay informed about school events by reading all communications including, but not limited to: student communication binders, mail, email, newsletters, fliers
- Stay connected with your child's teacher to maximize learning, development, and generalization
- Commit to using our communication methods to their fullest potential - What did your child eat for breakfast? How might this have an effect on learning that day?

### *Participating*

- Engage fully in the home-school relationship by assisting at home, integrating your home team into your child's educational program, and attending school progress meetings
- Join the wider school community at events, support groups, workshops, and fundraisers in ways that work for your family

### *Supporting*

- Nurture respectful, collaborative relationships within the school community
- Believe that all teachers, administrators, and others at the school seek to help each child flourish
- Make use of ASUA's resources to become informed, active members of the community

## **Parent & Guardian Roles and Responsibilities**

Parents are integral to student success. ASUA maintains an open and collaborative environment and encourages parents to be a consistent participant in their child's school program. The following are guidelines for parent roles and responsibilities as they relate to ASUA and their child's school programming.

Families participate as equal team members of the Individualized Educational Program (IEP) process and guide the process of tailoring the programming to each child's strengths, needs, and the family's priorities. Attendance at regular student update and IEP meetings is essential. Parents are encouraged to make use of ASUA's Open-Door Policy to ensure their familiarity with their child's daily programming and help to facilitate generalization between school and home.

Communication is a hallmark of ASUA's programming. Parents are asked to provide timely and cooperative communication via phone and email with all school personnel. They are also asked to check daily communication logs and respond when appropriate.

Although it varies on a case-to-case basis, the relationship between the parent and the home school district is primarily the responsibility of the parent. From time to time, ASUA may need information or to be in contact with a school district representative, but this will always occur with the parent's permission. The parent is responsible for providing specific district contact information. Examples of this may include contact for billing, records, health, or other purposes.

Parents are expected to read and adhere to all policies outlined in this handbook, maintain a safe environment for their child, ensure their child's attendance in accordance with the policies in this handbook, maintain confidentiality, and keep family information current.

## **Confidentiality**

ASUA and its employees must maintain the confidentiality of all trade secrets and other confidential information of ASUA, its students, parents and other family members, customers, suppliers, or joint venture parties that are entrusted to them, except when disclosure is legally mandated or expressly authorized by ASUA. For this purpose, "confidential information" includes any proprietary or other non-public information of ASUA, its students, parents, and other family members that, if disclosed to persons not authorized to receive it, would be harmful to the relevant individual, entity, or organization or detrimental to ASUA's interests. Release of any confidential information will be made only by written consent of the relevant individual, parent or legal guardian, entity, or organization with explicit notice of who is allowed to receive the information and the scope of information to be delivered.

Everyone in the school building, including but not limited to staff, parents, family members, contractors, and people conducting evaluations or observations, should refrain from speaking about a student in the vicinity of the student or where they may be overheard by others, including other students. All conversations regarding personal, identifiable, medical, or school-related student information should be completed in a private and confidential manner. This includes but is not limited to refraining from student-specific conversations at arrival and dismissal, in the hallway or classroom, during virtual meetings or classes, etc.

As referenced in the Relationships with ASUA Employees Outside of School section of this handbook, employees and family members should refrain from discussing school-related topics in the home and home-related topics in school.

## **Permissions**

Parents agree to allow the Student's name, photograph, voice, image, and information to be used by ASUA, and those acting with ASUA's permission, for use in the ASUA's publications, promotional materials, website, and social media accounts, without compensation and without prior notice. The parent will allow the student to be interviewed by the media on campus or at School-related events.

The parent also consents to the recording and distribution or livestreaming of the Student's voice, image, and video in instruction or presentations as may be deemed appropriate and in ASUA's discretion.

If a parent does not want the Student's voice and image recorded during distance learning, ASUA is relying on the parent to take steps with their computer or the spacing of the child to the computer to block the Student's image from being recorded. If the parent does not want the Student's voice to be recorded, the School would similarly ask that they instruct their child not to verbally participate and advise the teacher of such instruction.

There may be times when teachers are having one-to-one video conferencing or digital communications with students and the School is relying on parents to monitor these from their end as they are in the best position to do so. Please let the Head of School know if there are any concerns about any interaction.

If parents wish revoke this permission, written notification must be submitted to the Business Office within thirty days of the execution of the Enrollment Contract.

The parent releases and holds ASUA harmless from any liability stemming from the use of the Student's name, photograph, voice, video, image, or information.

ASUA prohibits screenshots, photos, audio/video recordings and distribution of any virtual educational experiences. This is in order to protect privacy, prevent cyberbullying and reduce distribution of content from virtual educational experiences. Parents,

guardians, and other household members who normally are not privy to day-to-day classroom activities, agree to respect and keep confidential any personal or private information inadvertently discovered about other students due to their proximity to virtual education. Parents and students must be mindful of anything in the background during virtual programs and activities and ASUA is not responsible for any content shared during those sessions.

## **Notice of Non-Discrimination**

ASUA does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, creed, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, ancestry, age, physical or mental handicap/disability, citizenship, genetic information or any other characteristic protected by law in its programs, activities, or admissions practices.

Discrimination of any type toward a student, applicant, employee, or family will not be tolerated. If parents or students have any questions or concerns about any type of discrimination in the school, they are encouraged to bring these issues to the attention of the Head of School and/or the Director of Business Operations. Parents and students may raise concerns and make reports without fear of reprisal. Any form of retaliation for filing a complaint of discrimination will not be tolerated by ASUA.

## **Non-Solicitation**

Solicitation, distribution, and posting of materials on school property by any parent or student is subject to the approval of the Head of School. The sole exceptions to this policy are school, charitable, and community events supported and approved by ASUA.

## **Drug and Alcohol Policy**

### *General*

Students are prohibited from possessing, using, selling or purchasing any alcoholic beverages or other mind-altering substances (including synthetic salts or other substances), or possessing drug paraphernalia on or near School property or at School-related activities. "Mind-altering" substances include any type of substance ingested, snorted, smoked or inserted into one's body that may impact the individual in some way. Such substances include, without limitation, alcohol, legal or illegal substances (including medical marijuana pursuant to a prescription or physician certification), over the counter salts, spices, vapors, incense, or other similar items. Off-premises possession, use, sale or purchase of mind-altering substances and off-premise alcohol abuse is also prohibited.

This policy does not prohibit the proper use of medication under the direction of a physician, although the use of medical marijuana is prohibited in all circumstances. However, the misuse or abuse of such drugs is prohibited. Parents of students who are taking prescription or nonprescription drugs must notify a member of the Senior Team of this fact when they report to School.

### *Consequences*

In addition to determining the appropriate disciplinary action pursuant to the ASUA's policies, ASUA reserves the right to impose the following additional or different requirements as appropriate for the circumstances, such as determination of possible legal action and/or required professional counseling approved by the Head of School.

## **Weapons**

Firearms, guns, explosives, knives and other weapons are prohibited on campus, including in all buildings and on driveways, streets, sidewalks or walkways, parking lots, parking garages, or other parking areas. Guns are also prohibited from being in locked vehicles or trunks while parked or driving on campus. Employees, students, parents and visitors shall not interfere with normal activities, occupancy, or use of any building or portion of the campus by exhibiting, using, or threatening to exhibit or use a firearm, gun, explosive, knife or other weapon.

## **Threats**

ASUA takes all threats seriously, even when students make comments in jest, on the Internet, by text, or away from school toward or about another student, employee, or the School. Students are prohibited from bringing any type of weapon to school or school-sponsored events, including knives, guns (all types), fireworks, etc. This prohibition includes, without limitation, pocket knives (even those that are part of a key chain), firecrackers, bang snaps, matches, lighters, smoke bombs, stink bombs, or any type of explosive device. Any such item may be confiscated and, if appropriate, turned over to law enforcement. Any pictorial depictions of weapons, or verbal or written comments that the administration determines in its discretion appear to be threatening in nature, or any behavior that is threatening, will result in disciplinary consequences.

All members of our community are required to immediately report any comment, posting, text, or other form of communication or information that they receive or learn about that reflects that someone has made a threat toward or about another student, an



employee, or the School. If there is any communication or behavior that concerns you, report it to a member of the Senior Team.

Threats of violence or acts of violence by a student, employee, parent, or other individual may be reported to law enforcement and any other authorities the School deems appropriate. ASUA will cooperate with investigations by authorities, and the School may also conduct its own investigation. With respect to such threats or acts by students, the School may report such threats or acts of violence to future schools, camps, athletic programs, and other organizations in which the student participates. The student's transcript or file may also note the threat or act. In determining whether to report such threats or acts of violence, the School may consider, among other factors, the gravity and nature of the threat or act of violence, academic or work performance, other information available to the school (i.e. access to weapons, mental health information, family situation, etc.), and/or the outcome of any investigations.

A copy of any Orders of Protection or Restraining Orders which reference the ASUA worksite must be given to the Head of School or another member of the Administration.

## **Nut-Free School**

ASUA is strictly nut-free. No products containing peanuts or tree nuts are allowed in any ASUA campus. Violations of this policy put employees and students with allergies in danger. Families may contact a member of the Administration to determine whether an item is safe to bring into the school environment.

## **Accommodations**

We understand that there may be circumstances in which a parent may request that the School provide an adjustment or accommodation for a student's medical needs or physical, mental, or learning disability. As the range of requests has grown over the years, the School believes that it is appropriate at this time to outline the ASUA's policy and general guidelines for addressing such requests.

### *General Policy*

In general, it is ASUA's policy to provide accommodations or adjustments for a student's minor needs in circumstances in which the administration determines, in its sole discretion, that doing so is within the reasonable ability of the School and/or its staff and will not result in a significant disruption to the staff's ability to instruct other students, to classroom or school order and discipline, will not pose a threat of harm to the safety of other students or employees, will not require a fundamental change to our educational

environment or mission, and will not impose responsibilities on school employees for which they are not trained. We also ask parents to realize that, given the size of our school and our available resources, we may not be able to provide all requested accommodations. To the extent we agree to provide accommodations, we may require a sharing of responsibility for the accommodation.

### *Request and Documentation*

For any type of accommodation (including administration of medication at school), the parent must contact the Head of School to discuss the need. The Head of School will then advise the parent of the type of medical documentation needed, which generally will state the student's diagnosis, how the condition limits the student, the recommended accommodations, and the length of time that the accommodation(s) will be needed.

### *Release for Communications with Physician:*

Sometimes, the documentation received from the physician may raise questions or be unclear as to the recommendations. For that reason, the parent(s) must sign a Release of Information form which permits the School to contact the medical professional, when necessary. In addition, if there is any cost associated with the physician's cooperation (i.e., to answer a set of questions submitted, etc.), the parent must agree to bear the cost of such process.

### *Assessment of Request*

Once the parent's request and medical documentation has been received by the School, appropriate persons within the administration will meet with the parents to clarify information and to discuss whether the School will be able to implement the accommodation requested. In some cases, the parent may be asked to provide (at the parent's cost) any special equipment needed, training for the school's staff, or other associated matters. In addition, the School may advise the parent that the School will allow a particular accommodation, but the full responsibility for doing so will rest with the parent. For example, if the student needs to be tested or have certain types of medicines administered during the day that the School believes are beyond the scope of the School's responsibility, the School may allow the parent to make arrangements to visit the campus for the purpose of testing and administering.

### *Limitations on Requests*

Please understand that ASUA is not a medical facility and does not have the personnel, training, or equipment to handle certain types of medical procedures best left to the student, parent, or physician. Examples of accommodations made for students include appropriate classroom locations, extended time on tests, use of computers, and/or dispensing medication.

If you believe that you have been treated in a manner not in accordance with this policy, please notify the School immediately, by speaking to the Head of School or Director of Business Operations. You are encouraged to utilize this procedure without fear of reprisal.

This policy extends to all aspects of our educational practices with regard to disability accommodations.

## **Health Information Sharing**

Parents and students agree, as a condition of continued enrollment, to consent to the release of any of the student's health related information, including information relating to drug treatment, testing, medical and mental health records, to employees or agents of the school, as determined by the Head of School or their designee, to meet the medical or safety needs of the student and the community or the legal responsibilities of the school.

ASUA will maintain appropriate administrative, technical, and physical safeguards to protect the security of all health-related information within its care or custody. While it is the obligation of the School to safeguard student medical information, we must also balance matters of privacy and confidentiality with safeguarding the interests and well-being of our students and our community. Thus, parents, guardians, and students consent to allow employees and agents of the school, who have a need to know, to receive and/or share medical, psychological, and or IEP information necessary to serve the best interests of the student and/or community. In the event of a disclosure required by law, every effort will be made to notify the student and/or parents/guardians in advance.

## **Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)**

"Under the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), public schools are required to provide each child with a disability with a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment, at no cost to the child's parents... FAPE is an individualized educational program that is designed to meet the child's unique needs

and from which the child receives educational benefit, and prepares them for further education, employment, and independent living.”

(<https://www.wrightslaw.com/info/fape.index.htm>) As a private institution, ASUA does not provide FAPE. However, ASUA may be contracted by a school district or charter school to provide services that allow the district or charter school to meet the standards of FAPE.

## **Mandated Reporting**

School teachers and other personnel are mandatory reporters under the Pennsylvania child abuse reporting laws. Please understand that we must take our obligations seriously and if we assess that a situation requires it, we will make a report to child abuse authorities of situations that we reasonably suspect constitute abuse, neglect, or abandonment. Depending on the circumstances, we may not be able to communicate with parents about the report until authorized by child abuse authorities to do so. We ask for your understanding as we do our best to protect the children under our care.

Students and parents should further be aware that the School will cooperate with governmental authorities and provide requested information, which may include but is not limited to recordings, such as of virtual classes, and surveillance video.

According to Child Protective Services Law, the term “child abuse” shall mean intentionally, knowingly or recklessly doing any of the following:

- Causing bodily injury to a child through any recent act or failure to act.
- Fabricating, feigning, or intentionally exaggerating or inducing a medical symptom or disease which results in a potentially harmful medical evaluation or treatment to the child through any recent act.
- Causing or substantially contributing to serious mental injury to a child through any act or failure to act or a series of such acts or failures to act.
- Causing sexual abuse or exploitation of a child through any act or failure to act.
- Creating a reasonable likelihood of bodily injury to a child through any recent act or failure to act.
- Creating a likelihood of sexual abuse or exploitation of a child through any recent act or failure to act.
- Causing serious physical neglect of a child.
- This applies to an individual 14 years of age or older who makes a specific disclosure to the mandated reporter that the individual has committed student abuse.

Employees may complete reports without the knowledge of the ASUA Administration. Our mandate covers all educational environments, including but not limited to: in school, on a virtual platform, in the child’s home, or in public.

## **Changes to Vital Information**

Parents are required to complete emergency contact and health forms upon enrollment and annually, no later than seven days before the commencement of the school term. Students may be denied access to school if the appropriate emergency information is not on file.

Changes to vital family information should be communicated to the school in a timely fashion. This may include, but is not limited to: contact information, emergency contact information, release permissions, and medical information. Changes are requested via email.

Any information regarding parental divorce, separation, exact terms of legal custody, and specific information regarding educational and financial decisions must be on file with ASUA. It is the parent's responsibility to ensure that the necessary notice and documentation is provided to the Head of School in a timely fashion. Without legal documentation to state otherwise, ASUA will communicate and share documents with both parents. All documents will remain confidential and any necessary details may be made available to ASUA employees on a need to know basis.

## **Family Matters**

ASUA requires that all parents (married, unmarried, divorced, or separated) cooperate with one another in the best interests of their child's education at the School. Failure of parents to cooperate with one another in such a manner may lead to dismissal of their child(ren) from the School or non-renewal of enrollment for future academic years. The school may at any time require parents to seek a court order pertaining to any school matter as a condition of continued enrollment.

If your family has a court order in place including, but not limited to, a divorce decree that includes custodial arrangements, a custody order, or a restraining order, you must provide the school with a complete and official file-stamped copy of the court order. We require parents and guardians to abide by any court order applicable to your child(ren). If a situation arises in which the custody or possession of a child is in question, a school representative will call 911 to request an officer arrive at the school to resolve the dispute.

If a School employee or trustee is required to testify, provide information for, or otherwise participate in a legal dispute or proceeding to which the school is not a party, the School shall be entitled to recover from, at the school's discretion, either or both parents, the School's attorneys' fees and costs incurred with such legal proceeding. This includes, but is not limited to, the cost of legal counsel as well as costs incurred by

the School such as those associated with collecting documents and hiring substitute teachers or staff.

## **Parent/Family Cooperation**

As stated elsewhere, ASUA believes that a positive and constructive working relationship between the School and family members (defined as parent, student, or other person associated with the student) is essential to the fulfillment of the School's educational purpose and responsibilities to its students. If the parent's or other family member's behavior, communications, or interactions on or off campus (including during school-sponsored events) is disruptive, intimidating, discriminatory, overly aggressive, or reflects a loss of confidence or disagreement with the School's policies, methods of instruction, or discipline, or otherwise interferes with the School's safety procedures, responsibilities, or accomplishment of its educational purpose or program, the School reserves the right to dismiss the family or family member from the community. In addition, ASUA reserves the right to place restrictions on parents' or other family members' involvement or activity at School, on School property, or at School-related events for reasons that the School deems appropriate.

## **Social Media and Social Networking**

### *General*

ASUA recognizes the importance of social media outlets. ASUA-related information should only be shared from official ASUA accounts. In accordance with Pennsylvania law, families are asked to refrain from posting pictures from school or other ASUA events on personal pages that contain other students and/or staff without express consent from all parties involved.

ASUA discourages employees from connecting with families on social media and prohibits connection with students. Parents and guardians may connect with employees on LinkedIn, as it provides a connection in a professional manner.

ASUA reserves the right to respond to defamatory social media posts at the time or through legal action.

### *Student Use of Social Media*

Social media encompasses a broad array of online activity including social networks/media such as Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp, Snapchat, blogs, and other similar online or Internet communications. Because this form of

communication is vast and growing, we feel it is important to communicate the School's position regarding a student's use of social media or networking.

#### *Use at School or a School-Related Event*

We do not permit students to access social media and/or social networking sites while on School property or at a School-related event. Even if students are able to access such sites on School property or at a School-related event, parents and students should understand that those activities are in violation of School policy and may result in disciplinary action.

#### *Use Away from School Property*

It is not our goal to regulate a student's personal online activities when not on ASUA property or at a School-related event. Please understand, however, that certain activities might impact a student's relationships with other students or school employees or School rights that we do reserve the right to regulate. All parents and students should ensure that they are familiar with School's conduct policies to avoid any online communications that might violate those policies.

For example, parents and students should ensure that online activities do not violate a School policy regarding bullying or harassment, or other similar policies pertaining to how students interact with each other. If students post or say something online that makes another student feel uncomfortable, that activity may result in an investigation and possible discipline.

Students should also be aware that teachers and administrators may periodically check such sites and may determine that off campus behavior violates the School conduct code by making disparaging or negative comments about the School, administration, or faculty members in a manner that is disruptive to the School's educational mission or activities.

Students should not "follow" or be "friends" with any faculty member or other adult member of our community (other than the student's parent) on any of these social networking sites. Any violation of this prohibition must be reported to the Administration immediately.

In addition, postings on social networking or other Internet sites of students engaging in inappropriate behavior (such as drinking, smoking, sexual actions, etc.) is prohibited.

Students are not permitted to use the School's name, logo, trademark, or service mark in online activities without the permission of the School. Students are not permitted to create websites or social networking profiles to rate teachers, discuss aspects of the School, or otherwise disclose information online that the School would find offensive or inappropriate if posted in the School's newspaper. Finally, students are not permitted to disclose any confidential information of the School, employees, students, parents, or activities online.

### *Online Identity*

Individuals are responsible for any of their online activity conducted with a School email address, and/or which can be traced back to the School's domain, and/or which uses School assets.

What is published on such personal online sites should never be attributed to the School and should not appear to be endorsed by or originated from the School.

### *School's Right to Inspect*

The School reserves the right to inspect all electronic data and usage occurring over the School's network or on School property without prior notice. ASUA also reserves the right to assess information in the public domain on the Internet and to discipline students for any violation of these guidelines.

## **Directory**

ASUA provides a Parent Directory which contains contact information for families who choose to participate. This directory is not to be forwarded or otherwise shared outside of the ASUA context and should be considered confidential. This directory should not be used for the purposes of solicitation.

## **Lunch and Snack**

Students are provided a half hour lunch break and a once-a-day snack. Families are asked to send a nutritional, peanut- and tree nut-free lunch and snack each day.

In order to create a safe environment for students and employees, ASUA has a strict policy of being a peanut- and tree nut-free school. All items packed in lunches and provided as a snack may not contain peanuts or tree nuts. Please read labels carefully to determine they are completely peanut and nut free. Products containing peanuts and tree nuts are a severe danger to students and employees with allergies and ASUA



reserves the right to dispose of any products that contain these allergens. If a student is exposed to peanuts or tree nuts prior to coming to school for the day, they should thoroughly wash their hands before entering the building.

Families should plan to pack food that does not need to be heated but ASUA will allow for exceptions where dietary restrictions and feeding programs are present. If a student doesn't have a snack, ASUA will provide one for the student but asks that parents kindly assist in replenishing a variety of snacks. Students should also bring a refillable water bottle to use throughout the day and are encouraged to bring reusable silverware. ASUA occasionally holds special events, provides snacks, or plans for cooking to occur in the classroom. When a student has an allergy or dietary restriction, ASUA will make accommodations to ensure the products are safe for all students.

Food reinforcement may be used with prior parent permission and in accordance with specific behavior plans. When a plan uses food reinforcement, the family should also provide an adequate amount of the food.

If your family is struggling to provide healthy food options for lunch and snack, you are encouraged to contact ASUA to see how the school may be of assistance.

## **Personal Items**

ASUA classrooms get outside as much as possible. With this in mind, families are asked to dress their children in a weather-appropriate manner. Families may choose to provide labeled boots or other seasonal items that may be kept at school. Additionally, families should provide at least one complete set of labeled, season-appropriate, clothes to change into should the need arise. If a student is not toilet trained, ASUA asks that the family provide a minimum of three complete sets of clothing. If a student does not have a change of clothes when needed, proper items may be loaned. If your student is loaned clothing, ASUA asks that you wash and return it in a timely fashion.

With the exception of devices used for communication, ASUA asks that students do not bring electronic devices to school, with the exception of cell phones, which must be kept in a locker or backpack. ASUA is not responsible for the loss, theft, or damage of any devices.

Similarly, and with the exception of toys used for reinforcement purposes, ASUA asks that students do not bring toys to school. ASUA is not responsible for the loss, theft, or damage of any toys. All toys provided must be consistent with the policies in this Handbook, including but not limited to the Weapons-, Violence-, and Bully-Free School policy.

ASUA has a lost and found operated by the receptionist. Families may contact the receptionist should they wish to determine if a lost item is there.

## Dress Guidelines

ASUA students should always reflect a clean, modest, and appropriate dress. The following are guidelines to choosing appropriate dress for your student:

- Clothing options that are weather appropriate that do not contain negative, inappropriate, distracting, violent, and/or distressing messages or symbols
- Skirts and dresses with leggings or tights that are at least as long as the student's arm length
- Closed-toed shoes and sandals that are weather appropriate
- Bathing suits that are one-piece

If a student is representing ASUA at another location, the student is expected to dress in accordance with the dress code at the location in question. For example, ASUA students attending the Germantown Academy inclusion setting must follow Germantown Academy's dress code. Families are responsible for obtaining information regarding the participating school's dress code.

ASUA recognizes that students may get messy throughout the day. Though we try to minimize stains and damage to clothing, it is occasionally unavoidable. ASUA is not responsible for the damage of any clothing.

## Visitors

All visitors are required to sign in and receive a badge at the reception desk upon entering the building. When signing in, all visitors will be asked to provide a valid form of identification. For visitors from outside agencies, school districts, or that are otherwise not associated with the family, written permission for the visitation will need to be provided in advance from the parents. For visitors who wish to observe or interact with a student for any reason, clearances will need to be provided to ASUA at least two weeks in advance of the visit. Information regarding obtaining these clearances can be provided from the Director of Business Operations.

Maintaining an un-disrupted classroom environment is paramount. ASUA reserves the right to determine whether and to what level an observation may occur. This could include, but is not limited to, observing from the door versus inside the classroom. To this effect, ASUA does not allow more than one visitor at any given time to a classroom, unless otherwise pre-approved by ASUA. Though ASUA values its Open-Door Policy (described in the Communication section of this document), families must understand that, should a parent visitation under the Open-Door Policy conflict with a previously-scheduled observation, they may be asked to return at a later date or time. Visits are to be no longer than one hour in length per day.

To ensure privacy and confidentiality, visitors must only conduct observations of the student they were scheduled to see. Communication regarding other students is unacceptable. Similarly, no imagery (still or video) or audio should be recorded during an observation. Should a visitor violate these policies, they may be asked to leave the premises and future visitation rights may be revoked.

All visitors should refrain from disrupting the classroom or related service environment.

## **Volunteering**

Families may volunteer at ASUA with approval from the Head of School. They must provide background and medical clearances to ASUA at least two weeks in advance of the start of their volunteering. Information regarding obtaining these clearances can be provided from the Director of Business Operations.

Maintaining an undisturbed classroom environment is paramount. ASUA reserves the right to determine and alter the frequency or duration of a volunteer opportunity or to cancel it outright. Student behaviors may occur while the family member is volunteering and, while the behavior is ongoing, the volunteer will be asked to leave the room.

To ensure privacy and confidentiality, volunteers are only able to participate in activities for which they have received approval. No imagery (still or video) should be taken during the volunteer opportunity. Should a volunteer violate these policies, they may be asked to leave the premises and future visitation rights may be revoked.

## **Before & After School Arrangements**

ASUA does not provide before and after school arrangements.

## **Section 4: Admissions and Enrollment**

### **Admissions Procedures**

Admissions are on a rolling basis and applications are accepted at any point of the year. We encourage families to apply during the school year for maximum efficiency and ability to conduct school visits. Please keep in mind that our office is closed for certain periods of time in accordance with our Academic Calendar and, while we do conduct tours during our Summer Extended School Year Program, it does not provide a sufficient picture of our regular academic year programming.

Our application process begins with a tour. On this tour, prospective families are able to gather information about our programming as well as gain valuable information about the admissions process. After the application materials are received, school and home visits will be scheduled. Admissions decisions are usually made within two weeks of completing all of the admissions criteria. A Step Up Academy, in its sole discretion, reserves the right to admit or decline an applicant. If a child is accepted to the school but there is not sufficient space available, the child will be placed on a waiting list.

All interested families must fulfill the following:

- Come for a Parent Tour
- Complete an application
- Pay the non-refundable registration fee of \$35 payable by check or money order
- Submit all current and recent IEP's, evaluations, reports, and any other documents that would be relevant to the decision of a placement at A Step Up Academy.
- Schedule and complete a current school observation, a ½ day visit to A Step Up Academy, and a home visit, if deemed necessary by our admissions directors

### **Recommendation of Services**

ASUA's goal for each student is to achieve maximal success by providing an individualized program based on the student's needs. As the student progresses, ages, and/or obtains updated evaluation and reevaluation assessments, these needs shift. In order to make recommendations for programming, services, or placement at ASUA, we carefully review documents and data, and talk with parents, specialists, and school staff. If the parent refuses or is unable to procure funding for recommended services, the student may be denied admission, re-enrollment, or continued placement.

### **Enrollment Types**

There are three main ways a student typically comes to ASUA: private placement, placement via the child's home district, or through settlement with the child's home school district, charter school, or prior school. ASUA does not discriminate in regards to

enrollment type. All tuition fees and access to Family Assistance or Scholarship funding are the same across all enrollment types.

ASUA's roles and responsibilities may change between enrollment types.

In private pay situations, ASUA works directly with the family for everything regarding their student. Students who attend ASUA through this method are not receiving their educational programming as a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE).

In situations where the student is placed on a Notice of Recommended Educational Placement (NOREP) through their District, ASUA will work directly with the Local Education Agency (LEA) and the family. Students who attend ASUA through NOREP are receiving an education through ASUA, but their school district remains responsible for ensuring that the students are receiving FAPE.

In situations where a settlement is in place, ASUA works directly with the parent and, where necessary, may have contact with the School District, Charter School, or prior school, as subject to the settlement agreement. Occasionally, ASUA is not privy to the terms and conditions of settlement agreements and requires that families provide information regarding payment of tuition invoices and contact at the district/school, where appropriate. The families and their legal counsel are responsible for understanding the terms and conditions of their settlement agreements. Students who attend ASUA through this method are not receiving their educational programming as a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE).

## **Prerequisites for Admission**

Prior to acceptance and enrollment, ASUA must receive any and all relevant evaluations, re-evaluations, Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), and other supporting documents. For students with toileting issues, or who are not potty trained, a 1:1 will be required, but this does not impact eligibility for admission. While ASUA focuses heavily on behavior intervention, ASUA reserves the right to deny or revoke admission and/or enrollment to any student who demonstrates behaviors which place themselves, other students, or staff at risk.

## **Re-Enrollment**

After initial admission and enrollment, yearly re-enrollment is completed when the enrollment contract is signed by the family and finalized by the Head of School. If the contract and/or any other related documents are not received in a timely manner, a spot in the program may not be retained for the student.

## **End of Enrollment**

ASUA works closely with families to attempt to overcome any issues that may arise regarding continued enrollment. Families should familiarize themselves thoroughly with the terms of their enrollment contract. If terms of this contract are broken, and/or if the student's account is delinquent or in default, ASUA may suspend or dismiss the student. Upon finalization of the enrollment contract, the undersigned are legally bound to all terms and conditions within. This includes but is not limited to liability for tuition and fees upon early withdrawal or dismissal.

If a student reaches an age or grade level which is not supported at ASUA, they will be unable to continue enrollment with ASUA.

## **School Closure or Modifications Due to a Force Majeure Event**

Should events beyond the control of the School, including, but not limited to, any fire, act of God, hurricane, tornado, flood, extreme inclement weather, explosion, war or armed conflict, governmental action, act of terrorism, risk of infectious disease, epidemic, pandemic, shortage or disruption of necessary utilities, or any other event beyond the School's control, occur, the School has the discretion to close the School and/or modify its curriculum, schedules, length of school day, length of school year, and/or means of learning and teaching methods, including, without limitation, converting to distance learning or a hybrid model. Parents may be required to sign a waiver of liability in order for the Student to participate in on-campus instruction depending on the status of any force majeure event. The parent's financial obligations under their Enrollment Contract remain in full force and effect and the School shall not be liable for any such failure or delay in its performance. Should the School close, the School's duties and obligations under the Enrollment Contract shall be suspended immediately without notice until the School, in its sole and reasonable discretion, may safely reopen. If the School cannot reopen due to a force majeure event under this Paragraph, the School is under no obligation to refund any portion of tuition paid.

## **Placements & Assignments**

Classroom placements, building placements, and staff assignments are subject to change at any time. The student's team makes a determination of placement based on what is best for the individual student and takes into account staffing availability and classroom dynamic. While ASUA tries to minimize change during the year, placements, building placements, and staff assignments may change at any time and for any reason.

## Section 5: Programming and Academics

### **Individual Support for Multiple Learning Pathways**

ASUA provides support to a student body with a diverse set of needs. In the development of maximally beneficial learning environments for this diverse population, we have developed a dual band program. This program allows the time, space, and flexibility to meet each child where they are, learn their strengths, and develop programming that builds upon these strengths to reach success.

We have created two bands (i.e. classrooms) based on levels of support. All student programming, in both bands, includes support for academics, behavior, social engagement opportunities, as well as highly specialized related services which can include speech, occupational, and music therapies as well as vision support and orientation and mobility.

<b>Teal Band</b>	<b>Grey Band</b>
Key components of this band include:  Small class sizes (maximum of 6 students) with a 1:1 student to staff classroom ratio. Students in this class require consistent staff support throughout the school day to support attention to tasks, elopement, safety, ongoing toileting issues, medical issues, prevention of elopement, etc.	Key components of this band include:  Class structure that promotes individual and small-group learning with a small class size. Students in this classroom do not require 1:1 support. This classroom will have a maximum of 8 students with a minimum of 3 staff members when the class is at full capacity.

#### *Literacy Block*

ASUA utilizes several research-based reading programs which have been carefully reviewed and selected to support student reading level needs, communication methods, and learning styles. Each teacher specializes in a specific reading program and students are matched with a reading program based on a variety of data including formal and informal assessments and observations.

In addition, students participate in a daily reading block where guided reading and other supplemental reading activities are used to support decoding, vocabulary-building, and comprehension skills.

#### *Community-Based Instruction*

Building on the interests and needs of each student, ASUA provides frequent opportunities for community-based instruction using school-owned vehicles. These opportunities help to generalize skills learned in the classroom and increase independence by giving students the practice they need in the social and technical aspects of community activities. Trips may include grocery shopping, eating in restaurants, and going to the laundromat. These trips offer practice of individual skills needed by each student or group of students.

### *Measuring Success*

ASUA's programming is based upon Pennsylvania State Standards and focuses on each student's strengths, needs, and family priorities. Families participate as team members in the development of their student's Individualized Educational Program (IEP) and receive frequent communication regarding the progress being made towards IEP goals. These goals are tracked through careful data collection and monitoring procedures to ensure success. In addition to the regular communication of data sheets, anecdotal notes from the day, and session notes from all related services, family and home team members participate in Student Update meetings in 8- to 10-week intervals. These meetings ensure that the school and home teams are working together to keep abreast of student progress and needs in all settings. Parents are encouraged to further their participation by making use of our open-door policy, which allows them to observe their child at any time they wish.

## **Extended School Year**

Summer programming is often a critical component of our students' individualized educational plans. ASUA offers a carefully designed Summer programming.

### *Camp Ascend*

Camp Ascend is our ESY program in which we partner with the Abington Friends Summer Enrichment Program (AFSEP). This camp is available for students grades Preschool through 4<sup>th</sup>. Designed to maximize time for inclusion with peers at AFSEP, ASUA students have a 1:1 assistant and attend camp activities, instructional and free swim, lunch, and recess, all while continuing to access a high level of individualized service. Your child's level of inclusion is based on their specific needs, their IEP goals, and their school year programming. Similarly, the academic component of this program aims to maintain the skills mastered during the year. Speech & Language and Occupational therapies continue through the 6-week program.

### *Passport Program*

The Passport Program, for students in grades 5 through 8, is designed around a weekly theme and focuses on community-based project learning with an emphasis on using a diverse set of technologies to accomplish goals. Students will take trips into the community to conduct their own research into the week's theme. At the end of the week,



the students will present a project based on their research. Students will handle all aspects of their meal preparation including planning, purchasing, and assembling their lunches and snacks. Themes will include food and nutrition, media and technology, science exploration, community service, and play/leisure skill-building. Speech & Language and Occupational therapies continue through the 6-week program and, where possible, will be provided on a push-in basis to maximize the generalization of skills across settings.

## **Inclusion**

### *Our Vision of an Inclusive World*

ASUA was founded on the idea of creating an environment for students with autism to access the highly individualized and attentive programming they need while also creating frequent and meaningful opportunities for inclusion with typically developing peers. This strong focus on inclusion is critical in achieving our mission of preparing our students to become engaged participants in society.

### *Our Inclusion Model*

ASUA's dynamic inclusion model succeeds through the strength of our partnerships with other local schools and institutions. It provides unprecedented flexibility in offering inclusion opportunities that are facilitated by ASUA's seasoned and trained staff. Each student participates in inclusion which is individualized to their specific learning path.

To make all inclusion opportunities meaningful, effective, and mutually beneficial, ASUA's trained staff provides guidance and instruction to inclusion peers. These peers establish a strong foundation of leadership skills and character education while also demonstrating increased compassion for diversity and difference.

### *Inclusion in a General Education classroom:*

ASUA's students may visit other partner programs with ASUA supports. Visits may include participating in special area classes, lunch and recess, or special interest projects. Students may also regularly attend full-day inclusion programming at partner schools, while still maintaining enrollment with ASUA.

ASUA's support in an inclusion setting is also offered as a stand-alone service for students enrolled in other programs.

### *Reverse inclusion:*

In a reverse inclusive setting, inclusion peers join ASUA's students on ASUA's campus and may assist in special projects or participate in special area classes. ASUA staff facilitate and plan these meaningful activities.

## Daily schedule

ASUA follows the typical school day schedule which includes, reading, math, science, social studies, along with other specialized programming. Students have social opportunities with their peers during group times, recess, and lunch. Below is an example of a daily schedule.

### Example Daily Schedule

8:30-9:00	Student Arrival/ Fine Motor/Sensory Activities Maintenance
9:00-9:30	Sensory Room/Morning Check-In/Hygiene
9:30-10:00	Instructional Time
10:00-10:30	Instructional Time
10:30-11:00	Snack/Read Aloud
11:00-11:30	Instructional Time
11:30-12:00	Speech Group/OT Group
12:00-12:30	Lunch
12:30-1:00	Recess
1:00-1:30	Instructional Time
1:30-2:00	Social Skills/Music
2:00-2:30	Group Instruction
2:30-3:00	Pack-Up/Dismissal

## Technology in the Classroom

ASUA provides a variety of technology for student and staff use in the classroom. Students are assigned personal iPads loaded with educational apps and small laptops or Chromebooks are available for school work, as needed. Each classroom is equipped with a Promethean Panel, which enhances student learning with its interactive display.

## Assessments and Evaluations

It is best practice that students in the special education school setting receive evaluations every two years. In the course of our work with fully enrolled students, ASUA provides Speech & Language and Occupational Therapy evaluations at no cost,

with ASUA employees. ASUA contracts to provide school psychology evaluations where the cost may be billed to parents or, where appropriate, the student's home school district.

## **Related Services**

### *Behavior*

Using a team approach and with a focus on generalizing skills across multiple environments, ASUA takes a holistic approach to positive behavior support. Integration of positive behavior support plans, combined with robust data collection and analysis, is a core component of each student's school programming. Students participate in developmentally and age-appropriate social skills groups which target topics like communication, hygiene, and emotional regulation.

Students with autism often present with significant communication delays and behavioral challenges that require a high level of service, training, and comprehensive instruction. ASUA staff members are highly-trained to successfully target and manage these challenges using a diverse set of tools. This toolkit includes, but is not limited to, use of the principles of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA), Crisis Prevention Intervention (CPI), and a variety of assessment tools and curricula.

### *Related Services & Therapeutic Enrichment*

Students at ASUA often require highly specialized related services. With this in mind, our program incorporates an intensive level of social skills as well as individual and group speech & language, occupational, and music therapies each week. Additional therapies above and beyond those provided in the base tuition can be added to the programming for students who demonstrate the need.

### *Integrated Approach*

At ASUA, related services do not stand alone. In addition to pull-out, individual services, students may receive push-in sessions in the school setting or in the community so they have the opportunity to learn and practice these skills in real-life settings. Consultations between the related service providers, classroom teachers, behavior team, and family occur regularly for each student. Service providers may also co-treat to maximize and promote the generalization of skills across settings. Data is sent home after each related service session.

### *Occupational Therapy*

Occupational Therapy addresses specific areas of gross and fine motor need, executive functioning, organization, and sensory processing which supports academic achievement and the child's ability to learn and socialize. ASUA's Occupational Therapy

team develops a sensory diet for each student and oversees its implementation throughout the day.

### *Speech & Language Therapy*

Speech & Language Therapy assists students in building skills in areas of communication, social engagement, feeding, and expressive, receptive, and pragmatic language. ASUA's Speech & Language Pathologists also oversee Augmentative and Assistive Communication (AAC) devices and work with the student's team to promote effective implementation across settings.

### *Music Therapy and Adaptive Music Lessons*

Music Therapy targets a variety of physical, emotional, cognitive, and social needs through the use of instruments, melodies, reciprocal interaction, and song. Each classroom enjoys a weekly group session and students are able to access individual music therapy as an additional service. Adaptive music lessons can also be provided for an additional fee. Our Music Therapists often develop and plan programs for our family events throughout the year.

### *Assistive Technology*

Assistive Technology is any item, piece of equipment, or product system that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capacities of individuals with autism. Assistive Technology extends beyond the iPads sometimes used for communication and can include visual schedules, pencil grips, raised line paper, and more. Our Assistive Technology Specialist works closely with classroom and related service staff members to expand the repertoire of strategies and resources available to each student with the goal of increasing the student's independence and meaningful participation in life activities.

### *Social Skills*

Social skills encompasses verbal and non-verbal behaviors and interactions between two or more individuals. These skills can include taking turns, participating in reciprocal conversations, perspective-taking, following social norms regarding hygiene, and making and keeping friends. Unlike their typical peers, students with autism struggle with learning incidentally and have difficulty with picking up on verbal and non-verbal social cues. They require direct and explicit instruction and practice to acquire these skills. ASUA's social skills curriculum includes social stories, video modeling, and peer groups. A core component of ASUA programming is providing opportunities for skills to be generalized in the natural environment whenever possible.

## **Therapeutic Enrichment**

In addition to the regular therapies provided, ASUA is proud to partner with other local providers and agencies to further support student progress with other therapeutic enrichment programming. This may include dog therapy, dance & movement, yoga & mindfulness, and more.

## **Instructional Control**

The first step after admitting a new student is to pair and gain instructional and behavioral control. This process ensures that the student has the necessary prerequisite and foundational skills that will allow them to benefit from the classroom environment. This process can take time and may include being able to sit at a table, attend to task, tolerate being in a room with other sounds and students, etc.

If instructional and/or behavioral control is lost at any point during a student's tenure, the team will adjust demands until control is gained once again. In these situations, the IEP team determines a plan to reintroduce non-preferred activities. Access to school trips, community outings, length of school day, and inclusion may be limited or altered during periods where instructional and/or behavioral control impacts their safety or the safety of others. When loss of behavioral control interferes with dismissal, the student may not be dismissed until they have calmed down and are able to leave the building and get in the vehicle safely.

## **Standardized Testing**

ASUA is obligated to provide Pennsylvania Alternate System of Assessments (PASA) testing to students who are placed with us on NOREP. This testing is administered by ASUA employees or the district and is video recorded.

## **Transition Planning**

A student is eligible for transition planning at the age of fourteen (14) or in the year in which they will turn fourteen (14). Transition planning includes a coordinated series of services and activities that support the student in the areas of post-secondary education, employment, and independent living. ASUA's Transition Specialist assists in this planning alongside the student, family, and IEP team.

In 2020, ASUA was fortunate to receive a grant from the Eagles Autism Foundation to build a Practical Assessment Exploration System (PAES) lab to help support transition planning. The PAES lab includes skill practice, exploration, and teaching, which connects to community-based instruction and employment opportunities. Students who successfully complete PAES assessments know where their strengths are, have developed work-related problem solving skills, and understand what careers may interest them. This gives them a jump start on being competitive in the real world.

## **Section 6: Daily Procedures**

### **School hours and Academic Calendar**

An Academic Calendar is distributed for the following school year prior to the last day of the current school year. School hours and days of attendance are outlined in this calendar and may vary by location. Families should refer to the Academic Calendar for their location for specific information related to their child. Though ASUA tries to keep changes to the Academic Calendar to a minimum, ASUA reserves the right to change the calendar as needed. Changes will be communicated with families in a timely manner.

### **Attendance and Punctuality**

Students are expected to be on time and at school for all regularly-scheduled school days. Should a student arrive after the arrival window outlined in the next section, they will be considered late. If a family member thinks their student will be late, absent, or leaving early, they are asked to either call the main school number or email in order to relay this information and, where applicable, the time they expect to arrive at or leave school. If emailing, families are asked to direct the email to the student's teacher and cc the Director of Educational Programming. If ASUA has not received information regarding a student's absence prior to 9:00 am, ASUA will call the student's emergency contacts to get more information.

When a student is going to be absent ASUA asks that the family provide information regarding the absence. This could include, but is not limited to:

- Illness, communicable or otherwise
- The student simply needs a day off from school
- There is a planned vacation
- The student is being seen by a medical professional or is receiving outside services

Absences may be excused for illness up to three days or medical appointments and/or other professional outside services with proper documentation. Deaths in the immediate family may also be excused if communicated in writing to the student's teacher.

In the event of excessive student absences, ASUA may request a meeting with the family to determine the cause and plan for remediating the situation. ASUA may be subject, based on Pennsylvania State Law and agreements with other agencies, to report excessive absences. Absences more than ten days may result in student dis-enrollment.

## **Arrival and Dismissal**

The arrival window begins ten minutes prior to the beginning of the school day and ends ten minutes after. If a child arrives after the end of the arrival window, they will be considered late. ASUA will not admit a student prior to the beginning of the arrival window.

The dismissal window begins ten minutes prior to the end of the school day and ends ten minutes after. If a child is not picked up prior to the end of the dismissal window, ASUA will call the student's emergency contacts to get more information.

Families are asked to follow the policies outlined in the Attendance and Punctuality section of this handbook regarding communicating absences, latenesses, and times when a student needs to leave early. If there is a pattern of lateness at arrival or dismissal, ASUA may request a meeting with the family to determine the cause and plan for remediating the situation.

Some car line procedures vary by location. Information specific to your student will be provided separately. Parents are responsible for obtaining this information and providing it to transportation providers for their student. ASUA helps to facilitate transportation, where necessary, but is not responsible for such transportation.

For all locations, families and students are asked to remain in their car and in the car line during the arrival and dismissal period. An ASUA staff member will come to the car and assist the student. Students should not exit the car until a staff member has arrived. If a student arrives after the arrival or dismissal period, the family member must park and walk the student to the door, where they will need to sign in with the receptionist.

## **Inclement Weather and School Closing Procedures**

The Head of School monitors weather conditions closely and makes the final determination regarding delayed start times, early dismissals, and school closures. In addition to weather conditions, the Head of School may also make a determination to delay, dismiss early, or close school for any incident listed under the Force Majeure section of this handbook. All decisions are final and non-negotiable. The Head of School may also choose to implement virtual learning for any or all of a school closure and, when a closure extends beyond five consecutive school days, may implement the Extended School Closure Plan.

In the event of delay, early dismissal, or school closure, ASUA will release a text alert to notify families and staff. Families are responsible for maintaining current information in regards to phone numbers for text alerts. As many phone numbers may be submitted as a family would like.

## Transportation

ASUA does not provide transportation services to and from school but will assist, when possible, families in receiving transportation services from their home school districts.

When a student is being transported by their school districts, the parents must provide, or ensure that their transportation company or school district provides, the following to ASUA prior to the beginning of the service:

- Written permission to release their student to the drivers of the company or school district providing transportation
- Contact information for the company or school district's transportation office
- Information regarding the company, vehicle type, driver, and aide

If the parent becomes aware of any changes to the information listed above, they should notify the Head of School as soon as possible to ensure a safe and efficient arrival and dismissal process.

To ensure safety of all students, ASUA follows the protocol below for all transportation:

- ASUA reserves the right to check identification from any driver, at any time, prior to releasing a student.
- An ASUA employee will check identification and confirm permissions to release students to any first-time driver, parent or otherwise, prior to releasing a student. Employees of verified transportation companies or school districts will need to provide valid company identification as well as a driver's license.
- If an individual does not have identification or refuses to provide valid identification, ASUA will not release the student to that individual and emergency contacts will be notified so that alternate transportation arrangements may be made.
- ASUA employees will assist the student to the car and ensure that the seat belt has been properly fastened.
- If a student is exhibiting a behavior that would interfere with the safety of the vehicle, ASUA will not release the student until they have fully de-escalated. If the student does not de-escalate in a reasonable amount of time, emergency contacts will be notified so that alternate transportation arrangements may be made.
- If ASUA has any safety concerns regarding the vehicle, driver, or aide, ASUA reserves the right to refuse student release and the emergency contacts will be notified so that alternate transportation arrangements may be made.
- ASUA and its employees are mandated reporters. If a situation should arise that prompts notification of Child Protective Services or other law enforcement agencies, ASUA will take immediate action as outlined in the Mandated Reporter section of this handbook.



## **Student Release & Permissions**

Prior to the start of the school year, families must submit the Contact and Consent form which provides information regarding personal and medical information for the student, emergency contacts, text alert information, to whom we may release the child, transportation company and contact, photo and video permissions, and trip permissions.

In order for ASUA to release confidential student information, ASUA will need written consent from the parent/guardian with explicit information pertaining to whom the records may be sent, how they can be sent, and what records may be included. When a student is placed with ASUA on NOREP, ASUA operates as an agent of the School District or Charter School and a release of confidential information is not required.

# Section 7: Communication & Relationships

## **Open-Door Policy**

One of ASUA's unique programming features is our Open-Door Policy for families. The reason behind this policy is that ASUA embraces home and school collaboration. We want families and school staff to work together to build and support student success. This helps to ensure the family's familiarity with their child's daily programming and helps facilitate generalization between school and home.

Equally as important is maintaining the culture of the classroom and the comfort, safety, and privacy of all of our students. While visitors are well-intended, our students have significant sensitivities to changes in routine and visitors often have an effect on our students individually and an impact on the day as a whole.

To maintain the balance between open collaboration and maintaining the culture of our classrooms, the following guidelines are being shared for any family member taking advantage of the Open-Door Policy at ASUA:

1. Parents are invited to stop by their child's classroom without notice.
2. Parent visits are limited in length to no more than one hour each day. ASUA does not currently have a limit on the number of daily visits per week, but retains the right to amend as needed.
3. ASUA does not allow more than one visitor at any given time to a classroom, unless otherwise pre-approved by ASUA. Though ASUA values its Open-Door Policy, families must understand that, should a parent visitation under the Open-Door Policy conflict with a previously scheduled observation, they may be asked to return at a later date or time.
4. Much time and effort goes into the plan and schedule for each student each day and ASUA provides many opportunities through IEP meetings and Student Update Meetings, as well as other informal meetings, for parents and staff to talk about each student with parents. During Open-Door parent visits, parents are limited to the role of observer in the classroom. It is to be expected that parents may have questions or comments during their visit; however, ASUA staff will not be able to talk with parents before, during, or immediately after Open-Door visits. Parents are encouraged to take notes and to schedule a follow up meeting to discuss their child's programming at a later date.
5. Respecting the dignity and protecting the privacy of our students is very important. Please note that ASUA staff is not permitted to engage in discussion or respond to questions/comments about other students with anyone who is not an immediate family member of the student being discussed.

6. While this would be a very last and undesirable option, ASUA maintains the right to remove or refuse classroom visits to any parent or family member who does not follow the guidelines or for whom their classroom visits are disruptive to the ASUA program and culture.

## **Daily Communication**

Students at ASUA may have difficulty communicating aspects of their day when they go home. In addition, many aspects of their daily learning are not tangible items which can be brought home. To ensure regular communication between school and home, ASUA strives to share daily and weekly communication with the family. This includes anecdotal notes, data on progress toward IEP goals, session notes, information on which services were provided in a given day, and also provides an opportunity for the family to respond and share information regarding what is going on at home. The collaborative sharing of information helps to promote generalization of skills across settings.

## **Collaboration with Home Teams**

In addition to participating in the Daily Communication, home teams are encouraged to participate in Student Update and IEP meetings. They may also schedule times to observe the child in the school setting. This open collaboration allows the team to keep abreast of student progress and needs in all settings.

## **Student Update and IEP Meetings**

IEP meetings are held annually, at a minimum. At IEP meetings, the child's team reviews progress from the past year, determines goals for the upcoming year, and identifies services, accommodations, and modifications to support daily programming.

Student Update Meetings are held every 8 to 10 weeks and provide an opportunity for the team to discuss student progress and ensure that each portion of the team is keeping abreast of student progress and needs in all settings. Meetings may occur in person or through a virtual platform.

## **Progress Reporting**

Families receive Progress Reports every trimester. The Progress Report summarizes progress on individual IEP goals. The Progress Report provides critical data regarding student achievement and allows the team to react and, where necessary, make changes to provide a maximally beneficial program.

## **Homework**

Each teacher determines if homework is appropriate for a student based on their programming and needs. Parents are encouraged to provide input to their child's teacher on whether or not they would like homework to be provided. Homework can be provided nightly or in a weekly packet.

## **Relationships with ASUA Employees Outside of School**

ASUA recognizes that we employ a highly talented staff and that these staff members may seek employment in the field outside of ASUA. Likewise, the ASUA staff may be a convenient source of babysitting, tutoring, or home team assistance for the students and families of ASUA. While working in the home setting, the individual is not working as an ASUA employee. Thus, ASUA is not responsible for the quality of this work or the social and financial interactions of such services. Employees are not covered under ASUA policies, insurance, or other coverages when working outside of the ASUA setting. Parents agree to defend, indemnify, and hold harmless ASUA for any and all claims, suits, judgements, and demands whatsoever, arising out of or caused or claimed to have been caused in whole or in part by the acts or omissions of the parties involved.

All after-school and away from campus contact with students (including transporting students in a staff member's vehicle, babysitting, going to dinner, etc.) must first be cleared, in writing, with the Head of School in each specific instance. An exception to this is when employees interact with students outside of School as a result of the employee having children who also attend the School. In cases where the employee is offering services (such as babysitting, transport, etc.), the parents must submit a properly completed "Release" form, which can be requested from the Director of Business Operations.

These services may not take place on an ASUA campus. When it relates to any school-related function, employees and families are bound to the provisions of confidentiality and conduct outlined in the ASUA's handbooks. Employees and family members should refrain from discussing ASUA in the home setting and vice versa. If families find themselves in uncomfortable situations where they feel the provisions of school-related confidentiality and/or conduct have been violated, they should contact a school Administrator.

## **Parent Involvement**

ASUA has a variety of opportunities for parent involvement including, but not limited to the Advisory Board and the Parent Association. Interested parents should contact the Head of School for more information.

## School Events

ASUA may hold a variety of events on or off campus throughout the year to celebrate holidays or to hold fundraising and community-building events. These events may be scheduled during the school day or after school and on weekends. Families are encouraged to participate and will receive information about each event. Where appropriate, such as for fundraisers and some community events, families are encouraged to invite family members and friends to participate.

Classrooms may participate in cooking and preparing food or creating decorations for these events. Where the event happens during the school day, classrooms may assist in the set-up and break down of the event. Where travel may be required, ASUA will transport students in the school van or via recognized outside contracted transportation services, with prior permission from the family. These events are seen as opportunities for social engagement, gross and fine motor work, and ways to practice real-life skills in context.

## Student Birthdays

Families are welcome to send in school-appropriate cupcakes, cakes, cookies, or other snack items in the event of a birthday. All snacks should be in accordance with ASUA's nut-free policy. Classroom teachers will determine a time in the daily schedule where the snacks can be handed out and the birthday can be celebrated. ASUA is unable to accommodate birthday parties, special events, outside vendors and/or performers, and trips. If families wish to schedule birthday parties and events outside of school, ASUA teachers and staff may assist in dispersing invitations.

## Diversity and Equity

ASUA established a formal Diversity & Equity (D&E) program in the summer of 2020. The Diversity and Equity (Co)Specialists conduct staff training, create materials and programming, and ensure that ASUA's programs match the diversity demonstrated in our student and staff populations. There are monthly D&E Committee meetings, which are open to all, and we welcome submissions to the [D&E Suggestion Form](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSf1HHVZdc_Vp3gJo810VtuZNqagfoaxTAR_kYFFbSE8imthOg/viewform) (https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSf1HHVZdc\_Vp3gJo810VtuZNqagfoaxTAR\_kYFFbSE8imthOg/viewform).

In accordance with our mission, ASUA is an agent of change. With that, we may discuss sensitive topics through D&E programming. We encourage active participation in these discussions and value all beliefs, opinions, and voices. Staff involvement is critical to the success of these discussions and, when applicable, note that ASUA would notify the parents before talking to a student about sensitive topics.

We welcome all individuals and we strive to create and maintain a warm, accessible environment for all. It is important that all members of the ASUA community ensure the

proper use of pronouns, names, and any other information provided regarding personal identity for all members of our community.

## **Religious and Cultural Observances**

ASUA values the diversity of our students and families and strongly believes that this diversity has a positive impact on our school community. ASUA will work collaboratively with each individual or family to support the observation of religious and/or cultural holidays, dress, worship practices, dietary needs, etc.

## **Name and Identity**

ASUA values the diversity of our students and families and strongly believes that this diversity has a positive impact on our school community. ASUA commits to empowering individuals through the usage of their chosen name, pronouns, titles, and any other personal identifier in school and on all school files, documents, bulletin boards, and anywhere these identifiers are used. ASUA strives for inclusive and non-gendered signage in the building.

## **Student/Adult Interaction and Communication**

Our students and adults (teachers, administrators, staff members, parents, and visitors) are expected to interact with each other in a professional and respectful manner based on mutual respect and trust with an understanding of appropriate boundaries between adults and students. Although our adults can and should be friendly with the students, becoming too friendly with each other sometimes results in confusion and anxiety.

If a student or the student's parents become aware of any adult's communications or actions toward one or more students that seems unusual, overly friendly, or otherwise inappropriate, such information should immediately be reported to a member of the Senior Team.

Further, students and their parents should promptly notify a member of the Senior Team if they believe an employee has engaged in any of the following prohibited behaviors or similar activities (regardless of the age of the student):

- Initiating or continuing communications with students for a non-school matter, including oral or written communications; telephone calls; electronic communications (emails, texts); social media communications, etc.
- Touching students or their clothing in non-professional ways or inappropriate places, or touching a student with aggression or in frustration;
- Making comments that are too personal (about a student's clothing, hair, personal habits, etc.);
- Giving gifts to a student or exchanging cards and letters;
- Inviting a student into their home;

- Taking students off school property other than for approved field trips and school activities;
- Flirting or asking a student on a date;
- Excessive attention shown toward a particular student or students or call or referring to students by pet names or inappropriate nicknames;
- Visiting a student in their home or another location;
- Socializing or spending time with students (including but not limited to activities such as going out for meals, movies, shopping, traveling and recreational activities) outside of class or school-sponsored events;
- Asking students to sit on a teacher's lap;
- Telling secrets or telling the student not to tell something that's a secret;
- Swearing, making inappropriate sexual, racial/or ethnic comments;
- Inviting students to visit the employee's social networking profile or become a "friend" or "follower" on a social network;
- Telling off-color or other inappropriate jokes or stories, or showing pornography to students;
- Providing students with alcohol or other mind-altering substances; or
- Vaping, smoking, or drinking with students

## Harassment/Bullying

All students who attend in ASUA have diagnosed disabilities that can present in challenging ways. This could include, but is not limited to, behaviors such as inappropriate comments and touching, calling names, attempts at physical aggression, refusal etc. The School is dedicated to fostering an environment that promotes kindness, acceptance, and embraces differences among individuals and focuses on education and supportive services that address challenging social behaviors, such as those mentioned above, but reserves the right to identify particular instances of such behavior as Harassment and/or Bullying.

The School will not tolerate any type of harassment or bullying by a student, employee, or any third party (including vendors, contractors, donors, volunteers, parents, and visitors). Students should be aware that their off campus behavior is also covered under this policy, regardless of when and where the conduct occurred or who was affected by the student's inappropriate behavior. Harassment is broadly defined to include unreasonable conduct or behavior that is personally offensive or threatening, impairs morale, or interferes with the educational environment of students and includes, but is not limited to, slurs, jokes, comments, teasing, and other offensive conduct relating to race, religion, color, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, national origin, citizenship, or disability. Harassment also includes sexual harassment.

Examples of sexual harassment include, but are not limited to:

- Demanding sexual favors
- Requests for pictures of a sexual nature
- Taking, sending, or posting images of a sexual nature without consent
- Spreading lies or information about another individual's sexual activity
- Coercing sexual activity by threat of punishment or offer of reward
- Obscene or sexually suggestive graffiti
- Displaying or sending pornographic pictures or objects
- Offensive touching, pinching, grabbing, kissing or hugging
- Restraining someone's movement in a sexual way
- Sexual or lewd jokes, remarks, leering, whistling, brushing against the body, or other suggestive or insulting gestures or comments about another's body
- Intimidating or suggestive remarks about an individual's sexual orientation, whether actual or implied

Examples of other forms of harassment based on race, religion, color, national origin, citizenship, or disability include, but are not limited to:

- Offensive, intimidating, or inappropriate comments, postings, or conduct relating to race, ethnicity, or color (using racial slurs, racial or ethnic jokes, comments, name calling based on race or ethnicity, etc.)
- Offensive, intimidating, or inappropriate comments, postings, or conduct teasing or joking about another person's disability, failure to speak clearly, religious background, clothing, or beliefs, or similar behaviors.

Bullying includes a variety of behaviors, but all involve a person or group trying to take advantage of the power they have to hurt or reject someone else. These behaviors can be carried out, physically (hitting, kicking, pushing), verbally (calling names, taunting, teasing, threatening, ridiculing, spreading rumors, etc.), electronically, sometimes called "cyber-bullying" (posting defamatory remarks or photos, sending threatening emails, creating fake profiles, taking over an account and posting as someone else), or through relational aggression (harming or threatening to harm relationships or acceptance, friendship, or group inclusion) or emotional aggression (teasing, threatening, intimidating others).

In explaining the concepts to their child, parents should stress that ASUA needs to know whenever anyone at ASUA makes the child feel uncomfortable. In that regard, parents should remind their child that it is not nice or permitted to call other students by mean names or to tease them in ways that are hurtful. It is also not nice or permitted to grab or touch another student's "private parts," to pull up or down another child's clothing, to



look up a dress or skirt, or to intentionally open the door on a student who is using the bathroom.

Bullying or harassment can occur through any type of communications method, including face-to-face communications, phone, text, email, postings on social media (Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, etc.), camera phones, or other forms of technology. The communications can be direct or indirect, such as through friends or others. Any type of offensive conduct, whether on or off campus, on a school bus, or at a school-related event, can create an uncomfortable School environment.

It is the responsibility of all members of the community to ensure that their words, actions, and interactions with others always reflect the intent to promote respect and trust. Attempts to justify behavior as a “prank” or “joke” do not change its harassing or bullying nature if the object of the joke or prank is not a willing participant. Whatever the basis for the harassment or bullying, it is prohibited.

All concerns relating to harassment or bullying should be reported immediately to a member of the Senior Team. We also expect that anyone, whether student, faculty, staff or family member who witnesses, or has knowledge of an incident of bullying or harassment, will report the incident to a member of the Senior Team.

When the School administration becomes aware of harassment or bullying, the situation will be promptly investigated. Any student found to have violated this policy will be subject to disciplinary action, including dismissal from school for serious violations, even in the case of a single expression, act, or gesture. Conduct need not meet the legal definition of harassment or bullying to violate the School’s expectations for appropriate behavior and be actionable. No adverse action will be taken against any person who makes a good faith report of harassment or bullying. Retaliation in any form against anyone for making a complaint under this policy or for participating in an investigation is strictly prohibited. Any retaliation should also be reported pursuant to this policy and is itself a cause for disciplinary action.

## **Inspection**

ASUA, in the sole discretion of its administration, may inspect and conduct a search of any place or item on School campus or at a School-related event including, but not limited to, a student’s locker, purse, book bag, backpack, vehicle, computer, or personal electronic devices. Students may also be required to empty pockets and remove outer layers of clothing for inspection. Inspections and searches may be conducted on a routine or random basis or as deemed necessary. Students must provide any passwords or other access required to inspect such places or items upon request by a

school administrator. Inspection of electronic devices includes laptops, phones, cameras, and any other electronics, including the contents of same (texts, emails, photos, images, address books, etc. whether such message or information was sent over the school's system or any personal account such as Yahoo, AOL, Gmail, etc.). Further, the parents authorize the School to seize and permanently retain property disclosed by an inspection or search which is considered potentially harmful, dangerous, illegal, or inappropriate, or the possession of which is a violation of the School's rules, community standards, and/or local, state, or federal law.

## **Investigation**

Students are expected to cooperate in investigations, if able. Students are expected to be honest, but honesty is not necessarily a mitigating factor and students' own statements may be used against them. Failure to cooperate with an investigation may be cause for disciplinary action.

If a student refuses to participate or cooperate at any stage of an investigation, or is unable to do so for whatever reason, including without limitation, pending criminal charges, the school reserves the right to take action, including proceeding without a statement from the student, or to require the student to withdraw from school.

## **On and Off Campus Behavior**

The School does not seek to unnecessarily involve itself in a student's off-campus behavior. However, the School reserves the right to take action with respect to off-campus behavior when it deems necessary, including, without limitation, when that off-campus behavior impacts the student's ability to continue at School, impacts other students' or employees' ability to be comfortable at School, compromises the welfare of other students, or damages the reputation of the School.

The policies and standards apply at all times a student is enrolled in the School, including when a student is on campus or in the immediate vicinity of campus; any time a student is participating in or attending a School-sponsored event on or off campus; any time a student is officially representing the School; any time a student is traveling on behalf of the School.

In addition, the School regards any behavior prejudicial to the best interests of the School, its students, and its employees whether at School or elsewhere, as sufficient grounds for a disciplinary response.

The School's rules, policies, and standards provide general guidelines for the expected behavior. The rules, policies, and standards outlined below and elsewhere in this Handbook should not be read as an all-inclusive description of the School's standards, which are based on honesty, respect, trust, and safety. Any behavior that constitutes a breach of these School values may result in disciplinary action. Students are expected to comply with School standards and rules at all times, and they are also encouraged to discuss with their fellow students, teachers or administration any issues or infractions of School standards and rules toward the purpose of caring for one another in a spirit of kindness and of what is best for each person in the School community.

## **Smoking/Vaping/Tobacco Products**

School policy expressly forbids students from smoking, vaping, juuling, or using tobacco products, as well as possessing such products (as well as oils or liquids associated with the same), at any time in or on School property, school vehicles, adjacent properties, or School-sponsored trips. All cigarettes (including electronic), vaping devices, smokeless tobacco, lighters, matches, etc. or other devices similar to cigarettes, lighters, matches, etc. brought on campus by students will be confiscated. Discipline will be imposed based on the circumstances existing at the time and may include suspension, probation, or expulsion. Depending on the circumstances existing at the time, a violation of this policy may also be a violation of the School's Drugs and Alcohol Policy and reportable to law enforcement.

## **Safe-2-Say Something Help Hotline**

All members of the ASUA community are able to call the Safe-2-Say Something Helpline, a youth violence prevention program run by the Attorney General, confidentially if they or another member of the community are in danger at 1-844-SAF-2SAY (1-844-723-2729). The online tip submission resource can be accessed at [www.safe2saypa.org](http://www.safe2saypa.org).

## **Right to Involve Government Agencies**

ASUA has a duty to report certain situations to The Department of Children and Youth Services and/or law enforcement. The School also may contact and/or cooperate with law enforcement personnel or other governmental agencies if the School, in its sole discretion, believes it is warranted in a particular situation. The School may assess

disciplinary consequences for student conduct, even if a criminal investigation or other legal action is ongoing.

## **Surveillance and Monitoring**

The School may conduct monitoring to help ensure employee and student safety and security, including video surveillance of non-private areas to identify safety concerns, maintain security, detect theft and misconduct, and discourage and prevent acts of harassment and violence.

In the case where ASUA is a tenant, the Landlord may also conduct surveillance and monitoring of non-private areas to identify safety concerns, maintain security, detect theft and misconduct, and discourage and prevent acts of harassment and violence. ASUA has no control over these systems and attendance at School implies consent.

## Section 8: Health, Safety, and Facilities

### **General Health, Safety, and Security**

ASUA strives to maintain a safe and healthy school environment for everyone. Families are asked to be upfront about any symptoms they or their child have related to communicable illness, travel they may have had to areas with outbreaks or pandemics, and they must be willing to submit to temperature checks at any time. If a family member becomes aware of any health or safety issues, they must report the issue to a member of the Administration.

ASUA maintains All-Hazards plans for each location that delineates policies and procedures related to health, safety, and security concerns.

In the event of an emergency, families should notify the appropriate emergency personnel by dialing 911.

### **Wellness**

To help ASUA with minimizing the spread of illness, please review the guidelines below:

#### *Fever*

If your child has a fever at night, they must not attend school the next morning. Please wait 24 hours after the fever breaks before sending your child back to school. This means that your child has not been given any fever reducing medicine for 24 hours and the fever has not returned during that time.

ASUA considers 99.0 and above as a fever.

#### *Upset Stomach*

Vomiting: If your child vomits during the night, they should not attend school the next day.

Diarrhea: If your child has diarrhea during the night, they should not attend school the next day.

Constipation: If your child requires the use of laxative due to constipation, please give the laxative to your child when they return from school so that when the laxative begins to work they are in their home in the event it results in an accident, cramping, or loose bowels.

Please wait 24 hours after a child vomits or has diarrhea before sending your child back to school. This means that your child has not been given any medicine for 24 hours and the vomiting and diarrhea has not returned during that time.

#### *Cold/Virus*

If symptoms are persistent and/or severe (e.g., persistent cough, consistent sneezing, or severe runny nose with thick mucus that will consistently interrupt their work or rest time), please keep your child at home so they may rest and recover and to reduce the spread to other students and staff.

### *Strep Throat*

A strep infection requires a doctor's visit and medication. Strep can lead to a more serious illness if not properly treated. Your child must be on antibiotic medication at least 24 hours before returning to school.

### *Pink Eye/Conjunctivitis*

Pink eye/conjunctivitis requires a doctor's visit and medication and is highly contagious. Your child must be on medication at least 24 hours before returning to school.

### *Other Communicable Illnesses*

In the case of other illnesses/conditions (lice, bed bugs, whooping cough, measles, etc.), please let ASUA administration know of the condition. Please be sure that students do not return to school until the illness is completely managed. See below for more details related to Communicable Diseases.

### *When a Child Becomes Ill at School*

If a child becomes ill at school, a parent/guardian will be contacted and will be expected to pick up the child as soon as possible. The student's emergency contacts will be called if the parents are unavailable.

If a child is sent home from school due to fever, diarrhea, or vomiting, the child should not return to school the following day as the 24 hour "wellness window" will not have passed.

ASUA regularly provides CPR/First Aid training to staff.

## **Student Illnesses and Communicable Diseases**

The School has a responsibility to provide a safe and healthy environment for employees, parents, students, and visitors. In the case of global or local threats of a communicable disease, ASUA will take all reasonable measures that may be necessary to protect the safety and health of members of the School community. These may include implementing infection control guidelines designed to stop or slow the spread of infectious diseases. ASUA will apply guidance from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and its affiliate, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), state and local health departments, and World Health Organization (WHO), and other agencies and resources as appropriate. Each communicable disease is unique. The School's response depends on public health guidance for the specific communicable disease, the nature and stage of the disease, whether mitigation methods are or can be used, and public health guidance on the risk and exposure.

Response may include, without limitation, a determination that no risk exists or that no action is required, immunization programs may be put into place, mandatory health screening may be implemented, mitigation steps may be needed such as a student refraining from some activities, utilizing bandages or other barriers, enhanced housekeeping, cancellation of field trips, a medical exam and release, and being sent home from school. Depending on the event, the School may require parents to disclose upcoming travel plans and to self-quarantine their child upon return. School closure may be necessary or the School may need to modify its curriculum, schedules, length of the school year, and/or means of learning and teaching methods. During certain communicable disease events, threat levels may change rapidly and the School may need to modify various measures as additional information becomes available.

Examples of communicable diseases include seasonal influenza, tuberculosis, measles, chicken pox, mumps, scarlet fever, hepatitis A, C, and D, meningitis, antibiotic-resistant staph, Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), H1N1 Flu, Swine Flu, Avian Flu, Ebola, and novel coronavirus - COVID-19. Lice, ringworm, pinworms, impetigo, pink eye, strep infection, hand, foot and mouth disease, mononucleosis, and other similar childhood illnesses are covered by this policy. We recognize that some diseases may not be infectious under certain circumstances.

ASUA relies on parents as the first step in preventing infection in the school environment. ASUA counts on parents to use good judgment in protecting the school community. A sick child should not be in school but should remain at home in an environment where proper care may be given. A student who presents at school with symptoms of an illness and/or is unable to participate in the day's activities will be removed from the classroom and the parents, or an emergency contact if the parents cannot be reached, will be contacted. Students must be picked up within the hour of the School's request that the child be sent home due to illness. Teachers will be informed of the student's dismissal for illness. To prevent the spread of infection through direct contamination (coughing, sneezing, talking, sharing articles, etc.) students must be asymptomatic without the aid of medications before returning to School. In other words, students must have no fever, vomiting, etc. for 24 hours prior to their return to School.

If an outbreak or suspected outbreak of any vaccine preventable disease occurs, any student who for whatever reason is not immunized may be excluded from school and all school-related activities.

Parents that have a "reasonable basis" for believing that their student has a communicable disease when they show or feel signs or illness, such as coughing, sneezing, fever, joint aches, have an overall ill feeling, or when they know that they have been exposed to someone with a known communicable disease or suspected communicable disease should contact their health provider. For the health and safety

of the School community, parents should report to a member of the Senior Team if their child has a confirmed communicable disease that poses a risk to others in the School community. The Department of Health shall be notified when a student is sent home because of a communicable disease. In case of student absence due to the reportable communicable disease, a release card from the Department of Health or a letter from the family physician indicating that the Department of Health regulations have been fulfilled must be presented when the student returns to school (indicating that the student is no longer infectious).

The School will generally not identify an infected student to School employees or other students or their parents, although public health guidance will dictate the School's communications. It may be necessary to alert others in the community who were in certain areas or at certain times that exposure could have occurred. The School will disclose sensitive medical information of students no further than is necessary to ensure the health and safety of our employees, students, parents, and visitors in a manner consistent with applicable law. The School will comply with all federal and state laws in regard to confidentiality and privacy requirements.

Parents and students are reminded that anyone who takes deliberate action which endangers the health or safety of the school community, including coming to the School campus with a dangerous viral infection, will face disciplinary action, up to and including expulsion.

## **Medical Records and Immunizations**

Families are required to submit information regarding medical records and immunizations. As a non-public, private school licensed by the Department of Education, ASUA is required to obtain and retain information regarding student medical records and immunizations. If this information is not on file and updated in a timely fashion, the student may be excluded from attending school until such a time that the paperwork is provided. ASUA is assigned a nurse from the Abington School District, the district in which ASUA is located, to oversee and verify the completion of this information. If additional information is required, the nurse will provide forms to ASUA to provide to families or contact families directly for necessary paperwork.

## **In-School Administered Medication**

ASUA requests Permission to Administer Medical Aid at the beginning of the school year. This includes the administration of first aid, CPR, and/or over-the-counter medication such as acetaminophen and ibuprofen. A staff member will confirm with the parents or emergency contract prior to administering this type of over-the-counter medication. For prescription medications, a prescription from the child's doctor is required to be on file at ASUA prior to administration. The medicine must be provided in



its original container, labeled with the student's name, name of medicine, dose and time to be given, and doctor's name (if prescribed). In cases where this is a daily medication, ASUA will not contact the parent or family prior to administration; however, we maintain a record of the time and date of all medications administered.

Medication should be transported to school in a safe manner where the child cannot gain access to the medication. Medication should never be transported in the student's backpack. For families who transport their child to school, the driver can give the medication to the person in charge of arrival. In the event that a child is transported via district transportation, the medication should be given to the driver and the driver can give the medication to the person in charge of arrival.

## **Emergency Planning and Threat Assessment**

ASUA maintains All-Hazards plans for each location that delineates policies and procedures related to health, safety, and security concerns. The All-Hazards plan outlines what procedures occur for fire and other drills, lockdown, active shooter, and all other emergencies. These plans were made in coordination with the Abington Emergency Management and Planning Department. ASUA regularly reviews all emergency procedures and facilities with the Abington Emergency Management and Planning Department and provides training to our staff. Each ASUA location is outfitted with a CLASS button which, when activated, immediately notifies the relevant emergency services in the event that ASUA is in an active shooter situation.

In the event of an emergency, ASUA may be in contact with families via the mobile text alert, phone, and/or email as soon as it is safe to do so. In accordance with the All-Hazards plan, each location is outfitted with an emergency backpack filled with emergency supplies and the contact and consent forms for all students and employees of ASUA. Equivalent information is also brought on all field trips and outings.

## **Injury and Behavior Reporting**

Basic first aid kits are available in each classroom, sensory room, and in the office. Should a student receive a bite or a scratch from another student that breaks the skin, it is recommended that the student seek medical attention. If the injury is serious, the parent will be called. In the event that a parent is unable to pick the child up in a reasonable amount of time, or if the injury requires immediate attention, an ambulance will be called. ASUA will not transport any injured individuals in school-owned or personal vehicles.

In the event of a student behavior which results in any of the following:

- Injury to the student, another student, or employee
- Hold or restraint
- Property destruction

- Elopement from the building and/or from school property

the staff member who witnessed the behavior must notify their supervisor and the Director of Clinical Programming immediately. All necessary forms must be completed as soon as possible but no later than the end of the work day. The parent will also be notified via email, phone, or through the usual means of daily communication. Any behaviors that do not result in injury and are typical of the student will be documented on the student's data sheets and do not require a Behavior Incident form.

When behaviors impede the safety of the student, the safety of others, result in property destruction, or are sustained for such a period of time that becomes untenable for ASUA staff to maintain, ASUA may call the parents to collect the student. In regards to transportation, if a student is exhibiting a behavior that would interfere with the safety of those in the vehicle, ASUA will not release the student until they have fully de-escalated. If the student does not de-escalate, or if it seems likely that they will not be de-escalated in time for dismissal, emergency contacts will be notified so that alternate transportation arrangements may be made.

## **Student Accident Insurance Policy**

ASUA holds a Student Accident Policy. For more information regarding the current policy and how to initiate the claims process for an injury received in school, please contact the Director of Business Operations.

## **Health Screenings**

The nurse assigned to ASUA through the Abington School District provides health screenings at intervals throughout the school year. These screenings include hearing checks, sight checks, weight, and height.

## **Toileting and Dressing Protocol**

All restrooms in ASUA facilities will be single-occupancy, non-gendered restrooms. Students who have independence in toileting are encouraged to do so without staff presence in the bathroom. This includes, where applicable, walking to and returning from the bathroom unassisted. Students who do not demonstrate independence with toileting or have significant needs in regards to toileting will require a 1:1. This aide will assist them in the restroom. In accordance with ASUA's policies, staff members should not be alone with a student in the restroom and are required to have another staff member present or nearby (within sight).

If a child's clothes get soiled or contaminated, they will be changed and assistance will be provided as needed. Families should ensure that there are enough clothes on hand in the event that a student needs to be changed multiple times per day.

## **Facility Use**

ASUA strives to provide a clean, safe, and presentable school environment. There are inspection and reporting procedures in place to ensure that issues are discovered and remedied in a timely manner.

The buildings in which ASUA resides are leased property and we are subject to the terms and conditions held within those leases. This may include limitations on playground equipment, facilities usage, restrictions on when the facilities may be used, and how the facilities may be used. ASUA facilities, equipment, and materials should not be used outside of school hours or outside of a scheduled school event, without prior consent from the Head of School. For specific questions regarding ASUA facilities, please reach out to the Head of School or Director of Business Operations.

## **School Vehicles**

ASUA owns school vehicles for the purpose of transporting students and staff to and from community outings and field trips. ASUA insures the vehicle, completes regular maintenance, and has a verification process in place for the installation of drivers on the school's insurance policy. Only verified drivers are allowed to drive the vehicles. School vehicles are not able to be used for transportation to and from student homes.

The number of passengers for a given trip is limited to the number of seats, seat belts, and safety equipment such as car seats appropriate to the age and size of students being transported. When the group of students and employees exceeds the vehicle's capacity, other arrangements should be made. ASUA may choose to use a recognized outside contracted transportation service, such as a bus. When contracting with an outside transportation service, the service provider will supply the driver of the vehicle. ASUA will send permission slips home to gain consent from the parents.

## **Classroom Pets**

Classroom pets must be approved by the Head of School and are the sole responsibility of the staff in the classroom where the pet is located. Prior to a new pet being introduced and at the beginning of each year where students may change classrooms, the classroom staff must obtain approval from all parents in the classroom and determine if any students or staff have allergies to the pet. If allergies are present, it is the classroom staff's responsibility to find another safe and appropriate placement for the pet, whether it be in another classroom or outside the school setting. Classroom pets, their safety and cleanliness, are governed by the Employee Handbook.

## **Medical Marijuana**

Medical marijuana is not allowed to be stored on school property. If a student requires medical marijuana, it must be administered by a parent or a legal caregiver, per a

procedure of approval with the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Staff are not allowed to be caregivers or administer medical marijuana. The parent shall coordinate with the Head of School to determine a time and private place in which the medical marijuana may be administered. Below is additional information from the Pennsylvania Department of Health:

“The Pennsylvania Departments of Health and Education support the administration of medical marijuana under a Safe Harbor Letter to students with serious medical conditions and the maintenance of a safe environment for other students while on school property. The below guidance provides information to school administrators to assist them in developing policies for the administration of medical marijuana on school property.

#### *Recommended Guidance*

A parent, legal guardian or caregiver may administer medical marijuana to their child/student on school premises provided that the parent, legal guardian or caregiver: (1) provides the school principal with a copy of the Safe Harbor Letter; and (2) notifies the school principal, in advance, of each instance in which the parent or caregiver will administer the medical marijuana to the child/student. The school principal shall provide notification to the school nurse in each instance a parent or caregiver will be administering medical marijuana to the child/student as well. The parent/caregiver shall follow all school protocols applicable to visitors to the school during the school day. A parent, legal guardian or caregiver shall bring to the school and administer the medical marijuana to their child/student without creating a distraction, and shall promptly remove any excess medical marijuana and related materials from the school premises after the administration of medical marijuana is complete. The school shall provide a secure and private location for the parent/legal guardian/caregiver to administer the medical marijuana to the student. Students themselves shall not be permitted to possess any form of medical marijuana at any time on school property or during any school activities on school property.

#### *Expiration*

The recommended guidance will remain in effect until the Pennsylvania Department of Education promulgates regulations regarding the possession and use of medical marijuana in the commonwealth's schools.”

(<https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/programs/Medical%20Marijuana/Pages/School.aspx>)

## **Counseling**

ASUA contracts for counseling services as needed and provides a quiet space where they will not be disturbed for the counseling to occur. Counseling services are provided for a fee and may be provided on a short- or long-term basis. Recommendations for counseling may come from a member of the IEP team, or by parent request.

Students and parents should be aware that conversations with counselors will not be treated as confidential. The counselor will remind the student of the non-confidential nature of the communication and, in appropriate circumstances, will encourage the student to communicate with the student's parents or other adults regarding the circumstances disclosed. The counselor may also directly inform the parent and/or administration of sensitive communications to find ways to help the student and/or family.

## **Section 9: ASUA in the Community**

### **Partnerships**

ASUA's commitment to building a strong community that celebrates diversity is at the forefront of our mission and long-term goals. Our partnerships with local institutions give us unique and exciting access to inclusion, community enrichment, special events, and more. Inclusion opportunities are varied at ASUA including reverse inclusion and inclusion in partner school programs. Each opportunity is highly individualized for each student's learning path. ASUA's partnership opportunities can also be provided as stand alone services in other academic settings.

### **Community Engagement**

With the number of individuals being diagnosed with autism continuing to grow year after year, ASUA looks to be a part of a larger movement of people who support the world of autism. With that, we have adopted the phrase "ASUA prepares our students for the community and prepares the community for our students." That means our mission extends beyond our four walls and into the community where we can make the most impact. ASUA provides a variety of community services. These may include monthly parent support groups with a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and Weekend Workshops aimed at sharing current and innovative information with families, community members, and professionals, community service projects, as well as regular participation in public events like 5K runs and events where we can invite the public to our campus.

### **Outings and Field Trips**

Building on the interests and needs of each student, ASUA provides frequent opportunities for community-based instruction using school-owned vehicles or, when possible, by foot. These opportunities help to generalize skills learned in the classroom and increase independence by giving students the practice they need in the social and technical aspects of community activities. Trips may include grocery shopping, eating in restaurants, and going to the laundromat. These trips offer practice of individual skills needed by each student or group of students.

At the beginning of the year, families are asked to provide permission for community outings by foot and/or by van. For larger field trips, or those which use an outside vendor for transportation, an individual permission form will be provided.

## **Higher Education**

Our partnerships with local higher education institutions allow us to welcome field placement students, student teachers, and volunteers. We also accept student volunteers, students working on senior projects, and interns from local High Schools. Fostering these relationships allows ASUA to promote acceptance and understanding in our community while also inspiring young people to champion the cause of students with special needs.

## **Section 10: Finances and Agreements**

### **Contracts**

In order to finalize enrollment or re-enrollment, ASUA requires there to be a signed contract in accordance with contract fulfillment timelines. In most cases, the family is required to complete the Student Enrollment Contract. However, in certain cases such as when a student is placed on NOREP, the enrollment contract is completed by the student's home school district.

ASUA will not allow students who do not have a finalized enrollment contract on file to attend school. We also reserve the right to deny or delay admission if contracts are late. This is for the protection of ASUA as a private, not-for-profit institution. ASUA makes hiring decisions and incurs expenses which are uncertain in amount and impossible to prove on a student's behalf at the time of admission.

Upon submission of an enrollment contract, families should also provide detailed and accurate information regarding where invoices for tuition payments should be sent. This includes, but is not limited to contact name, institution (where applicable), email, mailing address, and phone number.

### **Tuition and Fees**

ASUA's tuition is provided on an à la carte basis and in accordance with the program recommendations made by ASUA and the IEP team. A current schedule of rates can be requested from the Business Office and may include base tuition, 1:1 instructional assistance, additional related services, etc. The tuition is payable in accordance with the payment plan outlined in the contract. Where no selection is made, ASUA will bill in accordance with Option A: 100% tuition due as of the date specified.

If additional services are deemed necessary by the IEP team during the course of the contract term, additional fees may apply and will be billed separately.

ASUA also has administrative fees such as late, returned check, and application fees. If payments are not received 15 days after the due date, ASUA may assess a \$100 late fee and may continue to assess a \$100 late fee for each month the account remains in delinquency.

In the event a check is returned, regardless of whether it is a tuition payment or otherwise, a \$35 fee will be assessed.

ASUA may occasionally ask families to pay additional fees to help defray the cost of field trips, community outings, and school events. If a family is experiencing financial hardship, these fees may be waived.



## **Refund and Reimbursement of Tuition**

Upon execution of the Student Enrollment Contract, the undersigned are liable for any and all tuition, fees, and charges. If the student is withdrawn or dismissed, for any reason whatsoever, be it voluntary, involuntary, for disciplinary, medical, academic, or for other reasons on or after this date, ASUA will sustain damages that are uncertain in amount and impossible to prove. The undersigned will be liable for the full annual tuition as liquidated damages.

The obligation to pay all tuition fees and other charges for the full school year, as set forth in the agreement, and will remain in full force and effect in the event of any unforeseeable school interruption or closing. ASUA's obligation under the enrollment contract is to provide educational and related services in the manner most appropriate under the current circumstances and could fluctuate between distance and in-person learning.

In the event of overpayment of a tuition balance, ASUA may refund the overpayment to the individual or institution from which the original payment came or credit that amount to future billing.

## **Scholarships and Tax Credit Funding**

ASUA is registered with the State of Pennsylvania to receive Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and Opportunity Scholarship Tax Credit (OSTC) funding. As a charitable organization, we are also able to accept scholarship funding from donors.

When these funds are available, they are provided to students with demonstrated need. We use a service called SSS where families submit an application to determine need. If you are interested in submitting an application, please contact the Head of School.

Scholarship, EITC, and OSTC funding are not guaranteed from year to year and are subject to the funds which ASUA receives. Receipt of funding one year does not guarantee funding the following year.

## **Invoicing and Payment Plans**

Invoicing is generated based on the selection made in the Student Enrollment Contract. Upon signing enrollment contracts, families should also provide the Director of Business Operations with detailed and accurate information regarding where invoices for tuition payments should be sent. This includes, but is not limited to contact name, institution (where applicable), email, mailing address, and phone number. On occasion, families will be asked to assist with follow up communication regarding payments from home school districts. Families are asked to comply with such requests in a timely fashion and, where necessary, to seek assistance from their legal counsel.

For students on a 10-month payment plan, a schedule will be provided. This schedule should be retained and allows the payer to check payments off as they are made. Payments will be due on the first of the month and will be subject to late fees if not paid by the 15th of the month. ASUA recommends working with your bank to set up automatic payment disbursement direct from your account in accordance with the tuition schedule.

## **Making Payments**

ASUA accepts payment of tuition and fees in the form of check(s) made out to A Step Up Academy and mailed to:

A Step Up Academy  
P.O. Box 643  
Jenkintown, PA 19046

As a small institution who is almost fully tuition driven, ASUA does not accept payment of student tuition and fees via credit card.

ASUA will accept ACH payments from home school districts or charter schools.

## **Non-Payment of Student Tuition and Fees**

In accordance with the Student Enrollment Contract, families and/or school districts must pay tuition and fees as a condition of enrollment. Failure to pay the student's tuition and fees in a timely fashion may result in certain actions being taken by the school, including but not limited to ASUA's refusal to allow the student to return to campus, participate in any afternoon programs or services, or other school-related activities. ASUA reserves the right to withhold any documents, reports, grades, or transcripts relating to the student if accounts are not paid in a timely fashion, to the extent permissible under applicable laws.

In the event of default, which is considered within 60 days of the due date, the undersigned on the Student Enrollment Contract will be liable for any and all fees related to collection, including collection agency fees, attorney's fees, and/or court costs. Furthermore, ASUA reserves the right to accelerate the total unpaid balance of tuition and fees under this agreement if the account is more than 90 days in arrears.

## **Other Disputes**

ASUA seeks to resolve all disputes through the IEP process, in a cordial and collaborative manner, prior to reaching a point where arbitration is sought.

ASUA is a provider of services that are sometimes contracted to provide a free appropriate public education by a school district and with the parent's agreement. If a

family is not satisfied with their child's IEP programming and is placed at ASUA via a NOREP, their dispute via IDEA is with the home district who has placed the child at ASUA.

# Section 11: Student Records

## **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) Notice**

“The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99) is a Federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. The law applies to all schools that receive funds under an applicable program of the U.S. Department of Education.

FERPA gives parents certain rights with respect to their children's education records. These rights transfer to the student when he or she reaches the age of 18 or attends a school beyond the high school level. Students to whom the rights have transferred are "eligible students."

- Parents or eligible students have the right to inspect and review the student's education records maintained by the school. Schools are not required to provide copies of records unless, for reasons such as great distance, it is impossible for parents or eligible students to review the records. Schools may charge a fee for copies.
- Parents or eligible students have the right to request that a school correct records which they believe to be inaccurate or misleading. If the school decides not to amend the record, the parent or eligible student then has the right to a formal hearing. After the hearing, if the school still decides not to amend the record, the parent or eligible student has the right to place a statement with the record setting forth his or her view about the contested information.
- Generally, schools must have written permission from the parent or eligible student in order to release any information from a student's education record. However, FERPA allows schools to disclose those records, without consent, to the following parties or under the following conditions (34 CFR § 99.31):
  - School officials with legitimate educational interest;
  - Other schools to which a student is transferring;
  - Specified officials for audit or evaluation purposes;
  - Appropriate parties in connection with financial aid to a student;
  - Organizations conducting certain studies for or on behalf of the school;
  - Accrediting organizations;
  - To comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena;
  - Appropriate officials in cases of health and safety emergencies; and
  - State and local authorities, within a juvenile justice system, pursuant to specific State law.

Schools may disclose, without consent, "directory" information such as a student's name, address, telephone number, date and place of birth, honors and awards, and dates of attendance. However, schools must tell parents and eligible students about directory information and allow parents and eligible students a reasonable amount of time to request that the school not disclose directory information about them. Schools

must notify parents and eligible students annually of their rights under FERPA. The actual means of notification (special letter, inclusion in a PTA bulletin, student handbook, or newspaper article) is left to the discretion of each school.

For additional information, you may call 1-800-USA-LEARN (1-800-872-5327) (voice). Individuals who use TDD may use the [Federal Relay Service](#).

Or you may contact us at the following address:

Family Policy Compliance Office

U.S. Department of Education

400 Maryland Avenue, SW

Washington, D.C. 20202-8520”

(<https://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpc/ferpa/index.html>)

## **Confidential Student Records**

ASUA is committed to the strict confidentiality of all students in accordance with internal policies and local, state, and federal law. Student files and records are kept in a secure and confidential manner in accordance with ASUA’s Dissemination, Retention, and Destruction Policy.

Families must provide consent prior to the release of confidential student information. In the event that ASUA receives a subpoena for student records, ASUA will provide notification to the family and will allow the family to get an injunction to stop the sharing of the records, but will comply with the request within the timelines of the subpoena if no injunction or response from the parent is received. Where students are placed at ASUA on NOREP, ASUA is obligated to provide records to the district upon request and in accordance with the current agreement, FERPA, and IDEA. For students placed via private pay or settlement, or for instances other than subpoena or school district representative, ASUA will provide a form for the family to complete which includes information regarding to whom the information may be released and what information is included in the release.

ASUA may release confidential information without prior consent in the event of an emergency which endangers the health and safety of the student or others, and only to the extent which is necessary. The parent will be notified as to what information was provided and to whom.

## **Retention of Student Records**

Student educational files, including IEPs, Assessments, Evaluations, and any other document that pertains to the education of the student prior to or during their time at

ASUA shall be retained for five (5) years after the student is no longer enrolled at ASUA.

Student financial files including copies of invoices, receipts, scholarship information, financial aid applications, and any other document pertaining to the tuition of a student shall be retained for seven (7) years after the student is no longer enrolled at ASUA.

## **Sharing Student Information**

ASUA makes reasonable efforts to ensure that both natural parents (or legal guardians) receive substantially the same information (transcripts, records, appointments, etc.). The School must rely upon the correctness and completeness of parental information when the student is enrolled. In situations of divorced or separated parents, if one parent believes that the other parent is not entitled to receive certain information, the parent wishing to restrict information provided by the School must provide the School with a court order that is still in effect that specifically restricts the other parent from receiving such information.

## Section 12: Institutional Advancement

### **ASUA's Fundraising Mission**

ASUA is a private, 501(c)3 non-profit educational institution serving children with autism and other related disabilities. As such, we are a charitable institution. We provide an intensive, well-rounded program which is almost entirely tuition-driven. In order to implement new programs, introduce new technology, and to provide scholarship and Family Assistance Funding, we need to fundraise.

With access to critical fundraising dollars, ASUA can award financial aid and scholarships to students so they can access our highly specialized autistic support programming and related services, and benefit from our inclusion partnerships regardless of their family's personal financial circumstances or agreement with their home district. Scholarship opportunities help open the door for many families, allowing students to fearlessly reach their potential while enhancing our ability to influence the educational experiences for children.

ASUA welcomes all its constituents to participate in fundraising efforts. From joining us at fundraising events, to soliciting donations from friends and family, everyone has an important role to play in advancing our fundraising mission.

### **Fundraising for Other Groups and Organizations**

ASUA **does not** directly raise funds for other organizations but may promote, at the sole discretion of the Head of School, events for other organizations. Generally, ASUA only promotes events which benefit our community directly or are in direct support of our mission.

ASUA **does** allow other individuals, groups, and organizations to fundraise for ASUA on our behalf, with prior approval from the Head of School and Director of Development and Advancement. All materials related to the fundraiser must be approved by the Head of School prior to disbursement. This could include, but is not limited to bake sales, donation drives, social media birthday fundraisers, etc.

### **Programmatic-Based Fundraising**

ASUA writes grant proposals and fundraises for enhancements for our programming. This could include new or updated technological resources, equipment, curricula and platforms which would be of benefit to our student population. We also fundraise for building improvements and vehicles, when necessary.

## **Item and food collections**

Throughout the year, ASUA holds item and food collections for donation to local charities. Information will be sent home regarding specific events and will contain lists of the specific items being collected at that time.



# Section 13: Acknowledgement

## **Form to Return**

This will acknowledge that I have received my copy of A Step Up Academy’s Family Handbook and that I have familiarized myself with its contents.

I understand that this Handbook represents the current policies, regulations, and procedures, and that any and all policies or practices can be changed or amended at any time by the School. The School retains the right to add, change or delete policies, regulations, and procedures at any time.

I understand that nothing in the Family Handbook creates or is intended to create a promise or representation of continued enrollment and that enrollment at the School is guided by the conditions set forth in the Enrollment Contract.

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PARENT/GUARDIAN SIGNATURE

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DATE

---

PARENT/GUARDIAN PRINTED NAME

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RELATIONSHIP