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Family and Student Handbook 2009-2010

Dear Families and Students:

On behalf of the Board of Trustees of COMMUNITY Charter School, the faculty, and our staff, we are pleased to welcome you to the 2009-2010 school year. Because communication between school and home is crucial to the success of our students, we want this handbook to help each of you to understand the way that COMMUNITY Charter School functions and the ways that we can effectively communicate with one another.

We created this handbook to answer as many of your questions as possible and to help you to become involved in positive ways. We have many volunteer opportunities at COMMUNITY Charter School, and we welcome your participation. The Parent Teacher Organization is an active organization and we encourage you to become involved with other families through activities of the PTO.

We strongly support the idea that our school operates as a partnership between the faculty, staff, families and students. We know that we can create a strong school community when we all work together!

We look forward to a most successful year as we work together to support your child.

Carol A. Smith
Principal

James Bordonaro
Director

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MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of COMMUNITY Charter School is to improve student learning and achievement and to meet or exceed the New York State Learning Standards. We will increase learning opportunities for all students through individualized learning plans, hands-on service-based learning, and an asset-driven resiliency-based learning culture. Teachers will use a combination of teacher-directed instruction and project-based curriculum in order to take full advantage of practices based on current educational research. Performance-based accountability will be based in a mix of traditional testing and portfolio evaluation. Parents, teachers, students, extended families, volunteers, business leaders, community-based organizations, block clubs, and other leaders will work together to develop the assets and resiliency of each student.

DESCRIPTION OF COMMUNITY CHARTER SCHOOL

COMMUNITY Charter School serves students in Kindergarten through Grade 6.

Families will choose to participate in COMMUNITY Charter School because:

- We support student success through the use of Individual Learning Plans, direct instruction, project-based learning, and instructional technology.
- We offer a rigorous academic program and expect each of our students to succeed in all of the New York State Learning Standards.
- Based on information from families and from the result of student testing, we will develop an Individual Learning Plan for each student.
- We also offer instruction and practice in life skills such as personal motivation to achieve, caring for other people, taking responsibility for age-appropriate tasks, peaceful conflict resolution, decision-making and self-control.
- **We have extended both the school day and the school year. Our school day will run from 8 a.m. until 3:30 p.m. During the 2009-2010 school year, we will have 193 instructional days. The first day of instruction is on August 24, 2009. The last day is June 25, 2010. Choosing our school demonstrates your agreement with this calendar and your assurance to send your child to school from August 24, 2009 – June 25, 2010.**

COMMUNITY CHARTER SCHOOL GOALS

COMMUNITY Charter School will:

- Offer a curriculum of core knowledge and skills taught in an interactive way.
- Provide hands-on experiences that connect academic learning to life situations.
- Develop the practice of industry, honesty, citizenship, courage, loyalty, thrift and civility.
- Foster an understanding for our region and the way this community relates to the global community.
- Require the practice of art, music, motion and fitness.
- Provide extended time for academic tasks in both the school day and the school year.
- Develop an “in-house” program of prevention and discipline that will avoid suspension whenever possible.
- Regularly assess student progress and promptly intervene to overcome deficiency or to provide greater challenge.
- Expect the Administration, teachers and other members of the staff to be available to students and parents as needed.
- Create opportunities for parent involvement in all aspects of the school program.
- Recruit staff members who are creative, enthusiastic and competent, and committed to the mission of the School; provide the staff with ongoing training, evaluation and opportunities for advancement.
- Provide a safe and adequate facility supplied for academic work and instructional technology.
- Remain open to the community: invite participation and seek assistance in the growth and development of the School.

ATTENDANCE

Student attendance every day is vital to a student’s success. We trust that families will work to make certain that students arrive on time and remain at school all day. See the attendance policy attached.

BREAKFAST AND LUNCH

- Breakfast is a free program and is served according to a class schedule during the hours of 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.
- Students may either bring their own lunches from home or purchase lunches at School. Our lunch menu will be linked with the Buffalo Public Schools.
- Lunch times begin at approximately 11:00 a.m. and end at approximately 12:20 p.m.

BUS CONDUCT

To ride the bus to and from school is a privilege. We expect the same good conduct from our students as they ride our buses as we expect from them while they attend School. Students should be quiet and respectful of the driver, bus aide and of one another during the bus ride. The health and safety of all the riders and the driver depend on the good behavior and cooperation of our students. Students who violate the following bus rules can lose their bus privileges and/or can be suspended or expelled from school.

- Students should arrive at their bus stop **10** minutes prior to their scheduled pick up time each morning.
- Students must wait for the bus in an orderly manner, especially where groups wait together at one location. Students must not run, chase, push or hit while they wait for the bus. Students must not argue about who boards the bus first.
- Students must board the bus and sit down immediately. Students must not stand up or leave their seats during the bus ride. Students must remain seated for their own safety and for the safety of other riders.
- Students should use a “school” tone of voice in conversation during the bus ride.
- Students must follow any and all verbal requests from the bus driver or bus aide and must not argue or talk back. If students have concerns about a bus rule, they should ask an adult about the rule: their classroom teacher, the principal or their parent or guardian.
- Students must not use rude, disrespectful or inappropriate language during the bus ride.
- Students must keep their hands and feet out of the aisle and to themselves at all times.
- Students must not have any food or beverages open or eaten on the bus, including gum or candy.

COMMUNICATION FROM HOME TO SCHOOL

We view the families of our students as trusted partners in the education of all our children. Because we know that families have different information about students than we have at school, we value the honest input from families about their students. We also value timely conversations in which we need to intervene or provide additional support. Additional information will always be welcome and may prevent misunderstandings about our students needs. Families should contact the School in such situations:

- With questions about academic projects and progress, please contact the appropriate classroom teacher
- With questions about behavior or discipline issues, please contact the teacher or Director/Principal.
- With messages for students during the school day, please contact the Main Office staff. In an attempt to not interrupt instructional time, no call will be sent to a classroom between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. Please feel free to leave a message with the Main Office and the teacher will return your call during his or her planning time or after school.
- With questions or concerns about the welfare of the student or the situation of the family, please contact your child's teacher and either the Principal in the Main Office or LaVerne Ampadu in the Family Resource Center if you need further assistance.
- With health-related issues, please contact the School Nurse.

COMMUNICATION FROM SCHOOL TO HOME

Our school calendar appears at the end of this handbook. As necessary, we will send home updated calendar information. Families may always call the Office at 833-5967 if they have any questions about scheduled events at school.

During the school year, COMMUNITY Charter School will host a series of meetings for parents to discuss the challenges of raising children and the needs of our students for academic and personal success. At the same time, we welcome parents to contact the Main Office, classroom teachers or our Family Resource Center whenever they feel the need to ask for information or to discuss the needs of individual students.

COMPUTERS

Each classroom has a group of instructional computers and each teacher has an administrative computer.

Students may use the computers with their teacher's permission under the supervision of another adult and/or their teacher. COMMUNITY Charter School has made a commitment to the use of computer technology for instructional purposes and expects that each student will have instruction about the use of computers, as well as the opportunity to use a computer as a tool for individual learning. Computers can be used to practice developing skills, write journals and stories, complete lab reports, create content-related projects, research academic topics and communicate with others.

Due to the increasing complexity of the Internet and the easy access that students could have to inappropriate materials, both students and parents/guardians must read and follow the Acceptable Use of Computers Policy (below) at COMMUNITY Charter School.

Acceptable Use Policy

Our computer equipment is limited and will be difficult to replace. If any keyboard, mouse or monitor is damaged, then we will not have the resources immediately to replace the equipment. Please respect all our equipment; help to keep equipment in good running order and report any missing parts, breakages or theft of equipment to an adult in the school building.

Only educational games and programs should be used on the school's computers. Teachers should approve all games and programs before their use in our classrooms.

Our e-mail system should be used only for the purposes of academic and school activities. COMMUNITY Charter expects that this e-mail system will facilitate communication among students, families and teachers. Appropriate language must be used at all times on our e-mail system.

The Internet provides many excellent resources for individual learning and for research. Unfortunately, it also provides many sites that promote inappropriate materials. COMMUNITY Charter School does not condone the access to any such sites. Please report to an adult immediately if you discover inappropriate materials on our computers or if you see someone access such materials. Students who access inappropriate materials at COMMUNITY Charter School may face suspension or expulsion from school. Pirated software is illegal. Do not use or install illegal software on any of COMMUNITY Charter School's computers. Do not attempt to copy software for personal use at other locations.

CONDUCT AND COMMUNITY STANDARDS

Students and their families have chosen to attend COMMUNITY Charter School. This School was founded on the premise that we, as a school will maintain high academic standards; that learning will be project and skills-based. In order for our learning community to be successful, we believe that COMMUNITY Charter School shall be centered on the principles of mutual respect and dignity and partnerships between families and the school are essential.

DAILY SCHEDULE

The school building will open at 7:00 a.m. Families who wish to drop off their children between 7:00 a.m. and 8:00 a.m., should enter the building by the gymnasium.

The instructional day begins at 8:00 a.m. and ends at 3:30 p.m. During each day, our students will face a full schedule of academic and related activities, including Music, Physical Education and Art, which are offered throughout the week. Each grade will also have a designated lunch period.

EVALUATION OF STUDENTS

Students at COMMUNITY Charter School are evaluated daily by their teachers. Report cards are sent home every 10 weeks and Progress Reports are sent home between each marking period.

FIRE DRILLS AND EMERGENCIES

During the school year, we will conduct a series of fire drills in order to practice rapid and safe evacuation of the school building. Students must be silent during the fire drills so that they can hear directions provided to them. During these drills, students must follow all instructions from their classrooms teachers. An evacuation map will be posted in each room of the building.

At least once during the school year, we will conduct a drill for “lock down” procedures. These procedures will be used if we need to protect our students and staff from potentially dangerous situations within and around the building. “Lock downs” involve the confinement of all students, staff and visitors in the building.

HOMEWORK

When homework is assigned, it will be appropriate for the individual learning level and style of the student. Students may have time during the school day to begin working on an assignment and to request assistance. Please check your child’s book bag and homework folder each night.

ILLEGAL SUBSTANCES/WEAPONS

COMMUNITY Charter School expects that no one will use or possess drugs, alcohol, any illegal substance or weapons on school property. Violators will be arrested and will face criminal charges. Students will be expelled from our school.

MEDICATION POLICY

State regulations require that ANY medication can only be dispensed under the following guidelines:

1. A written request from the physician which indicates the name of the medication, the dosage, the frequency, the time at which it is to be administered and the reason for the medication.
2. The medication must arrive at school in the prescribed labeled bottle by an adult and delivered to the Main Office.
3. The school nurse will dispense the medication.
4. At the end of the school year, a parent/guardian must pick up the medication.

DO NOT send any over-the-counter pain medication, cold medication, cough drops, inhalers, etc. to school with your child.

The Main Office will notify the parent or guardian in the event that appropriate personnel are not available to administer the medication.

Medication can only be dispensed under the conditions described above. These conditions will be followed strictly in all cases.

PARENT TEACHER ORGANIZATION

All meetings of the Parent Teacher Organization will be announced in advance and will be open to participation by all parents and guardians. The PTO will provide an additional method for communication among families and between families and the School. The PTO will also assist in fund-raising efforts for school projects. COMMUNITY Charter School welcomes all parents and guardians to volunteer. Please contact the classroom teacher or the Director of Family Resource Center for more information.

SAFETY

Members of the staff carefully oversee our students and students must also take responsibility for their actions so that everyone in the school remains safe. Students must follow behavior and safety guidelines at all times.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

COMMUNITY Charter School includes a close and caring group of students, teachers, staff members and families. We value all the relationships that we share with one another and strive to develop an atmosphere of trust, respect, support, understanding and empathy. We expect that everyone behave responsibly and with consideration for the feelings of other students, teachers and staff. As an integral part of the educational process, we expect everyone to take responsibility for their own behavior.

STUDENT / TEACHER / PARENT & FAMILY CONFERENCES

Conferences may be scheduled at any time by parents or teachers to discuss student difficulties or achievements. If at any time you would like a conference, please call the classroom teacher to schedule one.

STUDENTS WHO HAVE SPECIAL NEEDS

COMMUNITY Charter School provides a continuum of services in the context of a full inclusion program. We have two (2) full time certified Special Education teachers who work with classroom teachers to meet the needs of each student, as outlined in their Individual Education Plan (IEP's) or 504 Plan.

TEXTBOOKS

All textbooks will belong to COMMUNITY Charter and be loaned to our students for use during the school year. At the end of the school year, all books must be returned in excellent condition. Students should each have a backpack or book bag in order to safely carry books and materials between school and home each day.

TO WITHDRAW A STUDENT FROM SCHOOL

In the event that parents or guardians wish to withdraw their child from COMMUNITY Charter School, they must come to the Main Office and complete a Student Withdrawal Form before the child can be officially withdraw from classes at school.

WHEREABOUTS

At all times during the school day, students must at keep an adult informed of their whereabouts. No student may leave the supervision of an adult without clearly stating a destination and purpose.

The following rules govern the whereabouts of students during school days:

1. We expect that each student will remain in the school building or on the school grounds until he or she leaves on a designated school bus or is escorted by a parent or guardian.
2. We expect that each student will be in his or her assigned location at all times during the school day unless given specific permission by a staff member to go elsewhere.
3. Without specific written permission, students may not ride a different bus or ride in a car driven by anyone other than a parent or guardian.

EMERGENCY AND/OR WEATHER RELATED CHANGES

Transportation for our students is coordinated through Buffalo Public Schools. Generally, when Buffalo Public Schools close we do as well. Closing will be listed on WGRZ-TV (Channel 2), WIVB-TV (Channel 4) and WKBW-TV (Channel 7) and will also be announced on local radio stations. Additionally, you will receive a phone call from our OneCall Now Parent Broadcast System to inform you of closings and emergency information. Therefore, it is essential to keep your contact information up-to-date at all times. Please notify the Main Office of these changes.