

## PARENT-STUDENT HANDBOOK



### OUR MISSION

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

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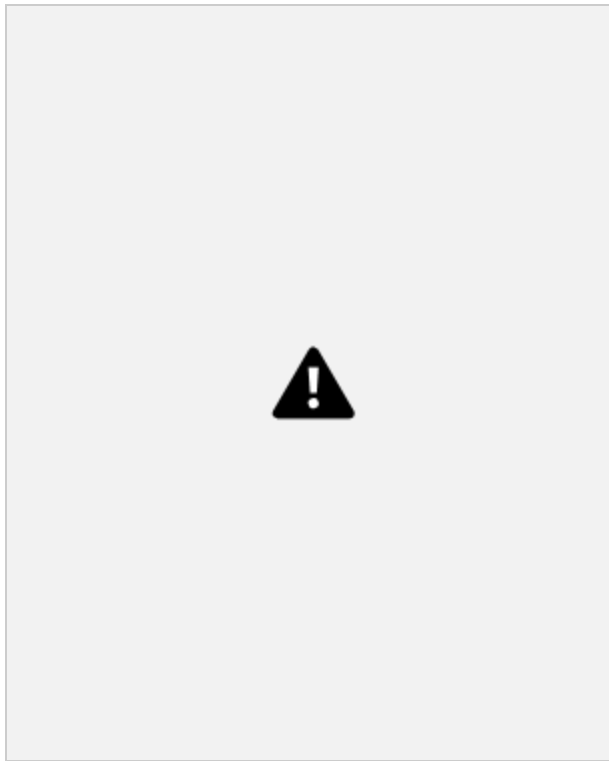
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## I. EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM



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

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

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

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

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

## **II. ADMINISTRATIVE AND OPERATIONAL INFORMATION**

### **A. REGISTRATION/ADMISSION**

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

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

#### **Age Requirements**

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

#### **NC Residential Requirements**

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

#### **Nondiscrimination**

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

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

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

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

### **B. MEDICATION & CRISIS HEALTH PLANS**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### D. STUDENT ATTENDANCE

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

## E. FAMILY TRIPS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## G. DRESS CODE

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

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

The following apparel violates dress code:

- Shirts with spaghetti straps
- Halter tops
- Shirts that expose any part of the abdomen
- Low-cut or revealing shirts or tops
- Shorts, skirts, or dresses that are not finger-tip length with arms extended
- Hats
- Pants or shorts worn low enough to expose undergarments

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

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

Administrators will conference with the parents/guardians of students who develop a history of dress code violations. Repeated violations are cause for suspension.

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

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

## H. LUNCH AND PEANUT-FREE SCHOOL

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

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

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

## I. PLAYGROUND SAFETY

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

## J. BIRTHDAYS

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

## K. CARPOOL

We strive to be good neighbors and aim our carpool flow and policies at minimizing our impact on the community that serves as our home. Each year we work with the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police

Department to identify and address areas of concern and provide direction to our carpoolers. For more information on carpool, please visit the school Website.

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

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

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

#### M. VISITORS AND VOLUNTEERS

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

Student visitors are only allowed to visit during the lunch period and this visit must be pre-approved by the classroom teacher. Visiting students may not attend classes with friends.

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

#### N. PARENT COLLABORATION & INVOLVEMENT

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

In The Basic School, a vital partnership is created between the home and school with parents viewed as the child's first and most important teachers. We need and expect your help in educating our students. Parents will be expected to complete 36 volunteer hours over the course of the school year. A great way for parents to earn hours is to join a committee such as Fundraising, Book Fair, Field Day, etc. Parents can also earn hours by assisting in elective classes, athletic programs, service learning projects, and after school programs, chaperoning field trips, serving at off-campus events such as school festivals, and reading with or tutoring students. We anticipate using the Junior Achievement program which solicits community volunteers to teach hands-on and engaging social studies units. Parents may serve in classrooms at the teachers'

request by facilitating small groups and managing learning stations. They may regularly pair with students, serving as reading buddies, especially for students who need the extra attention to improve chances of meeting grade level expectations.

Parents may earn hours by attending classroom events such as Donuts with Dad, Muffins with Mom, or sharing career information. Attending parent workshops earns parents volunteer hours as well. One purpose of parent workshops is to offer parents strategies and skills to assist their children with homework. Another purpose for parent workshops is to help them understand the Basic School principles and how they are implemented at UCS. Our school will have a designated area that contains a bulletin board with resources such as homework tips, helpful websites and contact information for tutors.

All on-site volunteers are required to pass a background check, attend Volunteer Training or watch the online Volunteer Training video on the school website, and complete the Volunteer Consent Form, then submit it to the front office prior to volunteering. Your child's teacher will reach out to you for specific volunteering opportunities.

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

## O. COMMUNICATION TO PARENTS

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

We will also send mass emails on a regular basis. Parents and staff should check email frequently and notify us of any changes to their email address. We will provide additional support to parents who do not have access to email.

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

Parents' first point of contact with any issues will always be the teacher or staff member who is closest to the particular situation. Parents should refrain from calling teachers at home as they need to spend time with their own families in the evenings.

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

If you need to reach your child's teacher(s), please contact them at school or via email to arrange a time to set up an appointment to discuss your child so you can receive the full attention that you deserve. Your first point of contact with any issues will always be the teacher or staff member who

is closest to the particular situation. Please refrain from calling teachers at home as they need to spend time with their own families in the evenings and weekends.

## P. PARENT COMMITTEES

We have many opportunities for parents to participate in committee work that improves and enriches our total school program for our students. Please note the parent volunteer opportunities at your open house session, and visit the website or refer to teacher newsletters for additional parent committee opportunities.

## Q. THE MORNING BUZZ - PARENT COMMITTEE

Active participation in this committee is open to all parents. We meet from 7:30 a.m. to 8:30 a.m. on the first Friday of every month during the school year, unless otherwise noted. These informal sessions provide an opportunity for parents and administrators to socialize, discuss goals, share ideas and concerns, and form and reinforce bonds across the whole school community.

### **III. ACADEMIC INFORMATION**

#### **A. CLASS ASSIGNMENTS**

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

Our students loop at UCS, which means that they remain with the same class and same teachers (when possible) for up to three years, beginning in Kindergarten through 7th grade. Although we cannot control all variables (i.e. teacher moving away, maternity leave), we do our best to keep these loops intact.

#### **B. HOMEWORK**

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

#### **C. GIFTED EDUCATION**

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

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

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

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

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

#### D. UNITS OF STUDY

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

#### E. SPECIAL AREA & ARTS EDUCATION

Elementary "Specials" Classes: Students attend music, physical education, and art with our Specialists each week. Additional specials classes may be added to the school year. Visit the website for this information.

#### F. REPORT CARDS

We do not give traditional letter grades in grades K-7. Letter grades begin in 8th grade. We do, however, use the results of the variety of ongoing assessments to determine where students are on the journey to mastery of content for their grade level. Our report cards include meaningful and authentic information, detailing a student's academic growth and development. Report cards are issued at the end of every quarter.

#### G. CONFERENCES

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

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

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

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

#### H. ASSESSMENTS AND TESTING

UCS conducts the student assessments required by the State Board of Education. End of Grade (EOG) testing is one important factor in determining how much a child has progressed during the year. It is imperative that each child be in attendance for these formal assessments. Third grade students will participate in the EOG pretest (B.O.G.) in the beginning of the school year. Again, it is imperative that each child be present.



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

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

## I. STATE PROFICIENCY GUIDELINES

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

## **IV. CODE OF CONDUCT**

### **A. COMMITMENT TO CHARACTER**

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

We believe that students learn about character from their role models, curriculum, and through the opportunity for service learning activities. Therefore, every elementary class will participate in community outreach programs such as visiting area nursing homes, assisted living residences, etc.

UCS teachers include character education activities in their lesson plans. Classroom discipline emphasizes talking out problems and conflict avoidance.

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

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

### **B. BEHAVIOR PHILOSOPHY**

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

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

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

### **C. GENERAL RULES OF CONDUCT**

We expect UCS students to be respectful and considerate to other students, UCS staff, and UCS

visitors. We further expect that UCS students will respect the property of UCS and of other students and staff. No student shall in any way bully or exhibit inappropriate or disrespectful behavior toward other students, staff or any other person. Prohibited bullying can take many forms and can include any of the following:

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

#### **D. DISCIPLINE AND LEVELS OF OFFENSES**

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

##### **Ø LEVEL ONE OFFENSES**

Level One Offenses are relatively minor incidents of bullying or similar actions, such as open defiance of a teacher's request, intentional or repeated disruption of class, use of inappropriate or obscene language, lying to a teacher or staff member, or an isolated, minor incident of verbal bullying.

Discipline for Level One Offenses will generally be handled by the classroom teacher, and the discipline will generally be determined at the discretion of the teacher.

##### **Ø LEVEL TWO OFFENSES**

Level Two Offenses are more significant incidents of bullying or inappropriate behavior, such as physical bullying, sexual bullying, or repeated or severe incidents of verbal or emotional bullying.

Level Two Offenses should be reported to a School Director. Discipline will be determined by a Director in consultation with the classroom teacher. Discipline may range from temporary detention (or in-school suspension) to suspension from school for one to three days.

## **Ø LEVEL THREE OFFENSES**

Level Three Offenses are severe incidents or repeated incidents of bullying or inappropriate behavior.

Level Three Offenses shall be reported to a School Director. Discipline will be determined by a Director in consultation with the classroom teacher. Discipline may range from suspension from school for one day to expulsion.

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

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

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

### **F. NO HEARING REQUESTED**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## H. EXPULSION

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

## I. UCS NETWORK AND INTERNET USE

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

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

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

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

Using technology without adult supervision

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

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

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

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

## J. CELL PHONES AND OTHER ELECTRONIC DEVICES

These devices are NOT to be in the possession of students during the school day OR while participating in off-campus field trips or other community-based instruction. (E-readers, including Kindle, Nook, and iPad, represent an exception to this rule, when used in a manner that supports the instructional environment and furthers individual students' potential for learning. Parents must recognize that loss of or damage to these devices is possible.) Exceptions for other devices will

be made only with explicit permission from a School Director. Students must store unapproved electronic devices in a school bag for the entirety of the school day. Failure to do so will result in the equipment being confiscated for the day. On a second offense, a parent will need to retrieve the item. E-readers that are used in a manner inconsistent with the above expectations may also be confiscated and re-released at the end of the day or directly to a parent.

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

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

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

Failure to follow these rules may result in suspension or student may lose the privilege of bringing video/recording technology to school.

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

#### L. WEAPONS AND DANGEROUS INSTRUMENTS

No student shall knowingly possess, handle, or transmit on school property any weapon as defined by North Carolina law. Violation of this rule results in immediate suspension for at least the remainder of the school day.

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

The possession of weapons by students on school property or at any school function is prohibited. In addition to school consequences, such actions will be reported to local law enforcement.

#### M. PROHIBITED SUBSTANCES

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

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

#### N. REPORTS TO LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

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

#### O. REPORTS TO DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

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

#### P. PERSONAL PROPERTY

A student will only bring or possess objects that have an educational purpose and will not distract from teaching or learning. Students will sell items on campus only as part of an approved school activity. (All other items will be confiscated and returned to the parent at a mutually agreeable time, not to exceed one calendar week.)

#### Q. CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

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

## **V. FEDERAL COMPLIANCE**

### **A. ASBESTOS INSPECTIONS**

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

### **B. FERPA NOTICE FOR DIRECTORY INFORMATION**

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

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

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

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

- Student's name
- Address
- Telephone listing
- Email address
- Photograph
- Dates of attendance
- Grade level



- Participation in officially recognized activities and sports

## C. NOTICE OF FERPA RIGHTS

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) affords parents and students over 18 years of age ("eligible students") certain rights with respect to the student's education records. These rights are:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Family Policy Compliance Office  
U.S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20202-8520  
Notice of Rights under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973

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

You have a right:

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

- to have the opportunity to review relevant educational records under the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA);
- to request a hearing before an impartial hearing officer by notifying the school director should you disagree with the decisions reached by school for accommodations for access to educational programming and/or facilities;

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

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

The designated Section 504 Coordinator for UCS is:

Alley Schneider  
1406 Suther Road  
Charlotte, NC 28213  
Phone: (980) 819-0555  
Email: aschneider@UCSnc.org  
Notice of Rights under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973