

# CENTRAL PARK SCHOOL FOR CHILDREN



## Central Park School for Children Staff & Family Handbook 2025-26

**Like all of us, this handbook is a working draft, always in progress.**

*CPSC does not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, height, weight, physical or mental ability, genetic information, political affiliation, veteran status, military obligations, or marital status.*

### **Letter from CPSC Executive Director, Arlie Harris**

Dear CPSC Community,

We are honored to partner together for the 2025-26 school year. This year let's join together prioritizing joy for learning, igniting your child's passions, and nurturing each child's wholeness. This is our founding charter's ambitious purpose and our mission for All Children to Thrive.

Through our Child-Centered Project Based approach, we will recognize and include the uniqueness of each child. Through a joy for learning through high standards, integrated arts, outdoor learning, social emotional learning, we are designed for every learner and we value family partnership. We will empower their passions to build not just knowledge and understanding but a love for learning.

What we know from research as well as real life experience is that learning is social, learning is practical, learning is developmental, and learners learn in a variety of ways. Our CPSC children are amazing and deserve an education that centers who they are as unique learners.

We are looking forward to our journey together to ensure all children thrive.

In Community,  
Arlie Harris  
Executive Director, CPSC  
[Arlie@cpsfc.org](mailto:Arlie@cpsfc.org)

## **Letter from CPSC Board of Trustees Chairperson, Chanel Carrell**

Dear Central Park School for Children Parents, Students, and Staff,

The Central Park School for Children Board of Trustees would like to extend a warm welcome to the 2025-26 school year!

The start of a new school year is always an exciting time, often filled with a mix of emotions and feelings. Please know this is entirely normal, and the school administration feels the same way about the first day, so you are certainly not alone.

Our mission, "All Children Thrive," guides everything we do. It begins with prioritizing social connection and fostering an open-minded, growth mindset approach to learning. We are dedicated to valuing each person's unique identity, talents, and needs through our project based learning approach to knowledge acquisition.

As the Board of Trustees, we are responsible for the academic, operational, and financial success of the school. This includes establishing policies, ensuring compliance with charter terms, and providing oversight for programs and services. We base our decisions on current research regarding how children learn and what is best for them, a practice we will continue to uphold. We see ourselves as one vital part of the school community; you, our students and staff, make up the other essential parts. The ecosystem we call CPSC thrives on balance, and we work together to benefit the entire school environment.

CPSC Board meetings are always open to the public, and we warmly invite you to attend these monthly gatherings. You can find our meeting schedule on the school's website at [cpsfc.org/who-we-are/board-of-trustees/](https://cpsfc.org/who-we-are/board-of-trustees/). Please note that in the interest of time, we maintain a tight agenda. Board policy allows families and staff to speak at meetings with an invitation from the Executive Director (Arlie) or the Board Chair (Chanel Carrell).

We also encourage you to refer to the school handbook often as a resource. It's designed to orient you to the norms and expectations for the upcoming school year and provides detailed, helpful information.

The majority of the Board's work happens at the committee level, and we warmly invite our families and staff to serve on these board committees. When family and staff members join committees, their contributions are heard and valued, which directly improve the quality of our students' educational experiences.

Wishing you all – students, families, and staff – a school year full of the joy of learning!

Sincerely,

Chanel Carrell  
CPSC Board Chair  
and The Central Park School for Children Board of Trustees  
[chanel@cpsfc.org](mailto:chanel@cpsfc.org)

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## **PART 1 - Mission and Child-Centered Goals for Children**

### **MISSION – All Children Thrive**

At Central Park School for Children, we are committed to the principle that all children deserve to thrive. Our educational approach is child-centered, nurturing the whole child to thrive with confidence, curiosity, and creativity while treasuring their uniqueness. Our curriculum focuses on our Goals for Children and academic Learning that is nationally and state aligned; Our pedagogy engages children with a hands-on, project-based approach, outdoor learning, integrated arts, and mindfulness and restorative practices.

Our priority every day is to recognize and honor what is special and unique in each child. Staff, family, students, and community members are partners, and we are best when we work together to be amazed by every child. We strive to make students lifelong learners, guided by their curiosity, imagination, confidence and passion.

We work together to light the fire that is every child's promise and potential. We emphasize fairness, equity, love, kindness and respect as we work to create an environment where all voices are included and heard, and where each person's differences, ideas and sense of wonder are valued.

CPSC does not look or feel like other public schools. Relationships are at the core of our charter. Everyone at CPSC, students and adults, is on a first-name basis. Our teachers visit with each of their students individually before the school year starts. We actively teach respect for one another and appreciation for individual differences.

### **Our Child-Centered Goals for Children**

We believe the ultimate goal of education is for each child to become a lifelong learner—forever with wonder and joy. We create that with real-world educational goals that put their needs at the center:

- Each child feels honored and nurtured, and valued for their uniqueness, and expresses understanding of, curiosity about, and respect for the richness of their diverse community.
- Children's project work and explorations demonstrate their inherent curiosity and imaginations and their understanding of their world and the world around them.
- Children demonstrate their capacity for kindness, empathy, generosity, and honesty.
- Children demonstrate their ability to explore, understand, and change the world through learned content and skills in math, language arts, scientific method, social studies, critical thinking, problem solving, and community service projects.
- Children learn and express themselves through play, art, music, dance, drama, and creative writing.
- Children learn to cherish and protect the world through engagement in outdoor learning including gardening, games, imaginative play, and exploration of the natural world.

## PART 2 - Instructional Program

We believe that people of all ages do their best, most productive work when they are inspired, when they feel connected to the objective and get help if they need it to succeed. We believe this applies to adults as well as children. We hope you will feel inspired by our outrageous ambition to have children thrive. In planning our program, we have been guided by the best research available to craft our curriculum, our pedagogy and our philosophy. And all of this is through the lens of our belief that all children deserve to be cherished with an opportunity to thrive. We hope you will feel enthusiastic about joining us as we pursue this outrageous ambition.

### **Staff Responsibilities**

All staff should commit to our curriculum, pedagogies, philosophy and values. We will provide professional development in these areas. If you need additional help to feel comfortable with these methods, ask our Curriculum Coordinator/Lead of the Teacher Learning Center or your School Director. We want you and the children you work with to be successful.

Project-Based Learning (PBL) is more than just a teaching method. It is a revitalization of education for students so that they can develop intellectually and emotionally. By using real-world scenarios, challenges, and problems, students gain useful knowledge and skills that increase during their designated project periods. The goal of using complex questions or problems is to develop and enhance student learning by encouraging critical thinking, problem-solving, teamwork, and self-management.

Arts Integration Teachers incorporate a range of art forms into standard lessons, providing students with different learning styles, languages, or cultures with more ways to communicate what they know, beyond paper and pencil or keyboard and screen. Academic standards are vertically aligned to move students through the grades but throw art into the mix, and the classroom lights up with sparks of imagination. It also makes teaching and learning more fun for educators and students alike, allowing educators to take standard curriculum and infuse it with creativity, inspiration, and innovation.

Outdoor Learning - Research shows that engaging with the natural environment provides opportunities to improve academic achievement and social emotional intelligence for students. It also improves symptoms of ADHD. As with Arts Integration, bringing any and all subject matter outside increases the joy of learning, reduces social emotional problems, increases communication and lesson retention.

### Social Emotional Learning

We believe that all children must first honor their own dignity—respect themselves. This guiding value is at the center of what we call social emotional learning. - Research shows a strong relationship between SEL and academic learning, non-academic learning and life-long learning and success. We do this every day through strategies employed in our day-to-day learning: Peaceful Schools learning, our Mindful Schools activities, our Social Justice integrated projects, and our Service Learning partnerships.

### Engaging the whole child

The Whole Child approach to education is, at its core, an effort to change the conversation about teaching and learning from a focus on narrowly defined academic achievement to one that promotes each child's long-term development and success. The Whole Child approach has become widely embraced by educators in many countries, and it is part of the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction curriculum.

Whole Child learning is integrated in all we do. Our classes engage the whole child with hands-on, project-based instruction. We integrate across learning areas. In our classrooms, social studies connects with literacy, math integrates with science, music and outdoor learning connect with math, and art connects with social studies.

We believe children's whole bodies must be integrated into their learning. That means daily opportunities to move, feel, build with their hands, speak, create relationships, play with numbers and shapes, and read. Each day includes play time outside, singing, creating art, making meaning, and finding joy and confidence with numbers, letters and writing.

**Our CPSC Staff commits to:**

- Provide a safe and supportive environment, and promote being brave
- Act with fairness, encouraging each child to explore, analyze, challenge and develop all of their capabilities and gifts — intellectual, artistic, cultural, physical, ethical and social
- Empower each child to experience the joy of learning
- Teach each child to be proactive, self-directed, and to take responsibility for their learning
- Teach our children to set goals and to measure success, inspiring each child to realize they can choose to learn anything
- Encourage our children to develop healthy habits of eating and exercise
- Communicate regularly about the progress of each child.
- Be a part of a community that values diversity, fairness and standing up for and cooperating with each other
- Respect others bodies, property, and our world, and value others perspectives
- Resolve conflict peacefully
- Understand failure is an opportunity for curiosity and growth
- Demonstrate, at a minimum, a year of academic growth for each year of instruction
- Take regular field trips to develop courage and curiosity in new environments and look for learning opportunities in new places.
- Participate in socials, work days and workshops for families so we work, play and learn together.

**Our CPSC Parents and Caregivers commit to:**

- Read to (or with) our children for at least 30 minutes every day
- Limit television viewing to appropriate children's programming for as little time as possible -- certainly no more than eight hours a week
- Ensure that your child gets a good night's sleep—6-12-year-olds need nine to 12 hours of sleep each night, and 13–18-year-olds need eight to 10 hours
- Attend school meetings and functions, including work days and socials, and all scheduled parent-teacher conferences so we can work, play and learn together.
- Provide our children with nutritious food (no sodas or candy please) in reusable containers
- Support Central Park's work ethic, which includes all children cleaning up after themselves and each other
- Support Central Park's commitment to learning and practicing sound environmental methods
- Provide appropriate work/play clothes and shoes—Central Park School children get very messy and play outside in *all* weather
- Teach our child to respect themselves, others and the world
- Address concerns immediately and directly with people involved
- Monitor and support healthy internet use

## **PART 3 - Measuring What Matters In Ways that Matter**

Our children's knowledge needs to be displayed and shared. When our children share their knowledge, they are empowered to inspire others, ignite their curiosity and build empathy. Here are some of our practices to measure what matters, in ways that matter.

### **Narratives and Milestones**

Extensive research has shown that grades decrease students' interest in learning, reduce their interest in challenging tasks, and reduce the quality of their thinking. Narratives about our children's lives, however, are a tool to help learning. To write effective narratives, our teachers must really look, notice and honor our students. Our narratives assess a student's individual progress rather than comparing them with other students. In both our Elementary and Middle School we have Milestones for each child that include measuring growth and mastery of N.C. standards and CPSC standards. Milestones are shared with families in the second and fourth quarters. In our upper Elementary and Middle School, students receive regular reports on their assessments, including percentages of how their mastery is progressing. Both Narratives and Milestones measure what they need to succeed and thrive in life. We also work to translate our assessments for our students as they prepare for high school, so they can take full advantage of all the best and most advanced classes possible.

Evaluation of student work is provided through many forms including rubrics outlining learning targets, percentages of completion and accuracy, and scoring based upon clear standards and learning outcomes. Teachers maintain portfolios on each child that contain samples of student work from each quarter as well as observational charts, behavior checklists and incidental notes the teacher makes during the quarter. Teachers will give students regular, constructive written and oral feedback on their creations and accomplishments that will allow students to enrich their understanding of what is being learned.

### **Exhibitions and Public Project Shares**

We understand that saying, making and doing something as you are learning is preferable to filling in a bubble sheet on a standardized test. Learning is a process, and the work that occurs before, during and after each project is all a real-world learning experience. Our exhibitions, project shares and other culminating events are integrated with each child's goals and learning plans. Project shares are powerful tools for engaging parents in their child's education, helping parents understand what their child knows and doesn't know. Anyone who has been to an exhibit or project share will tell you: Project shares promote growth rather than stop it, as tests do. And project shares encourage and challenge students to be creative, collaborative, better communicators, and go deeper in their learning.

Although the school will administer the standardized tests required by the NC Department of Public Instruction, the results of this testing will not be used in assessing the growth of a student or the student's readiness to move to the next grade level. We do not teach to the test, practice the test or emphasize the importance of the tests. Standardized testing is not part of our program except for state-mandated End-of-Grade testing in May for 3rd through 8th graders and BOG test by 3rd graders in August. On those tests, we are consistently among the highest-performing schools in the city and state.

**Parent-teacher conferences** at the end of the first and third quarters will allow for questions to be answered, work samples and portfolio to be shared, and goals and plans to be generated and reviewed. Conferences may be requested at the end of the second and fourth quarter or at any time throughout the year. In the Elementary School, at times, the student may be invited to participate in the conference. In the Middle School, students lead the conferences and are required to attend. The fourth quarter checklist will be e-mailed to parents unless the parent or teacher wishes to schedule a conference at that time. Parent-teacher conferences in elementary and student-led conferences in middle school serve three purposes: (1) share student evidence of student growth, progress and challenges (2) strengthen the trusting relationship between home and school and (3) set clear individualized goals for the quarter ahead.



## **PART 4 - School Culture**

### **Kindness and Consideration for All**

All staff, students, and families agree to talk to each other in a respectful manner. Everyone should show kindness and consideration for all in our community. Our entire community, staff, families and students should follow reasonable directions given by all staff, teachers (including substitutes, assistants, and student teachers), bus drivers, and all other authorized personnel.

### **First Name Basis**

The success of each child at the Central Park School is built on a trusting, open and involved relationship between students, parents and school personnel. To emphasize this partnership, we encourage both adults and children to address each other on a first name basis within our community. We have found that this simple informality of address contributes to a close and special bond between students, families and school employees. It reminds us, with every interaction, that we are a community, working together as equally respected individuals, to foster and delight in the development and learning of our children.

### **Field Trips**

**Real World Learning.** As teachers, a field trip is one of the best tools that we can use to provide every student with real-world experiences. ...

**Access.** Students are able to access tools and environments that are not available at school. ...

- Socio-emotional Growth. ...
- Academic Impact.

### **Planned Learning Absences**

Central Park School for Children believes learning with your family outside of school is a dynamic part of each child's learning and growth. Our learning is not confined to the inside of our classrooms' four walls. To this end, a family's Planned Learning Absences (Educational Absences) are intended to be used for educational trips and special learning opportunities that align with our CPSC Goals for Children.

The steps for requesting a Planned Educational Leave are as follows:

- At least two weeks in advance of the date of the trip, complete our Educational Leave Form.
- It must be filled out with the dates and destination of the trip. Include a brief description of the nature of your trip that includes the learning activities taking place. Teachers can help families design learning activities for each trip. Then develop a plan with the teacher for independent study during the absence that includes how the learning will be shared. After the plan has been developed, sign the form and provide a copy to the School Director for attendance purposes.
- When the student returns from the trip, the work should be handed in to the teacher.
- Remote/Virtual Learning is not an option for planned learning absences

### **Homework**

Learning occurs throughout a student's day—in the classroom, on the playground, and at home. Research provides strong evidence that limited homework benefits student achievement. Our homework policy encourages meaningful, age-appropriate activities that connect schoolwork with "real life", while allowing plenty of time for extracurricular activities and leisure.

We ask ALL families to read together for 30 minutes each day. Research shows that children who read daily with an adult become better readers, writers, and overall learners!

Other activities vary by class and grade level. Examples might include:

- collecting and recording information for project work
- reviewing math or reading skills using games, computer programs, or materials from our curriculum
- completing daily reading assignments (free-choice reading, book club, newspaper)
- cooking, shopping, reading maps, and other everyday activities that use reading, writing and math

At the Middle School level, homework will be assigned more regularly. Most assignments will take 30 minutes or less to complete. In addition, students are expected to read for a minimum of 30 minutes a day. If at any time the recommended homework becomes stressful, parents should reach out to teachers for modifications.

Research consulted for CPSC Homework Policy includes:

- From ASCD: [The Case For and Against Homework](#) by Robert J. Marzano and Debra J. Pickering
- From NCTM: [Homework: What the Research Says](#) Brief
- [Homework Practices that Support Students with Disabilities](#)

## **Peaceful Schools / Restorative Practices / Responsive Classroom / Mindfulness**

*"Intelligence plus character — that's the goal of true education." Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*

At CPSC we believe our students' social-emotional development is as vital as their academic growth. Our Peaceful Schools Program, Restorative Practices, Responsive Classroom and Mindfulness approach guide our entire community's growth as caring citizens and engaged learners who seek a more just and humane world. **Peaceful Schools** is guided by the following principles:

- Embodying our values: Our learning environment and our actions are shaped by our core values and beliefs: Respect, Non-violence, Empathy, Generosity, Honesty, and Responsibility.
- Common Language: When we all agree to discuss, understand and solve problems using predictable, respectful and agreed-upon methods, we foster community-wide equity.
- Discovery over Time: Individual growth evolves over time and at varied rates through interactions with our community and environment and is not dependent on a static, prescribed timeline.
- Inclusion: Acting with care and responsibility challenges us to value everyone's intrinsic gifts.
- Creativity: When given the freedom and responsibility to express ourselves creatively, our capacity to be fully human blossoms.
- Collaboration: Cooperating and learning from others builds both individual strength and communal trust.
- Role Modeling: Teachers, staff, families and students model positive and effective communication, empathetic problem solving and decision-making strategies in our daily actions and activities.

## **Peaceful Schools**

Peaceful Schools is a multifaceted program that forms the basis for many CPSC policies and practices:

- School-wide norms such as dismissal, drop off, natural consequences, discipline policy and support
- Expectations and guidelines for All School Recess that include commonly agreed upon rules and problem solving strategies
- Developing classroom community through morning meetings, classroom jobs, Responsive Classroom strategies, cooperative games, counseling support and coaching
- Conflict resolution strategies (Active Listening, Talk It Out) for all members of the school community
- Restorative Practices to create healing, increased accountability and responsibility.
- Special programs (Art, PE, Music, Dance,, Yoga) that support self-regulation and embody our core values
- Role-modeling of expected behaviors and problem solving strategies at all-school meetings
- Service Learning

- Book Clubs and other media discussion groups
- Direct instruction on character traits and values through read-alouds
- Classroom projects focusing on Peaceful Schools program values

### **Restorative Practices Principles**

The following principles reflect the values and concepts for implementing restorative practices.

- Acknowledges that relationships are central to building community.
- Builds systems that address misbehavior and harm in a way that strengthens relationships.
- Focuses on the harm done rather than only on rule-breaking.
- Give voice to the person harmed.
- Engages in collaborative problem solving.
- Empowers change and growth
- Enhances Responsibility.

80% of Restorative Practices should be proactive and preventative.

### **Responsive Classroom**

The Responsive Classroom (RC) Approach is a research and evidence based approach to elementary education that builds a sense of belonging, significance and fun. The RC approach leads to heightened teacher effectiveness, student achievement and school climate. RC is based on the belief that children learn best when strengthening both academic and social emotional skills. Check out [www.responsiveclassroom.org](http://www.responsiveclassroom.org) for more information.

### **Mindfulness**

Students, staff and families carry so much on their shoulders. Meeting academic and social expectations, and simply growing up and developing a sense of self and belonging can be tough. The pressures in today's educational environment reach far beyond these basics. Our world is moving and changing faster than ever.

Mindfulness is a response that addresses the overall health and sustainability of learning environments and supports the well-being of every student, staff and member of the school community.

## **PART 5 - Other CPSC values**

### **Names and Pronouns**

Transgender students have the right to be addressed by a name and pronouns that correspond to their gender identities. If requested by the students, staff should address them by the name and pronouns they prefer. This does not prohibit inadvertent slips or honest mistakes, but does apply to intentional or persistent refusal to respect a student's gender identity, which should be considered an act of discrimination. Transgender students are not required to obtain a legal name or gender change or to change their official records. Read the entire policy in Appendix 3.

### **Dress Code**

Students are to wear clothing of their choice that is comfortable, able to get messy and good for outdoor play and learning. Shoes you can run and play in are best. Flip flops may be dangerous so sturdier shoes are recommended.

The primary responsibility for a student's attire resides with the student and parents or guardians. The school is responsible for seeing that student attire does not interfere with the health or safety of any student, and that student attire does not contribute to a hostile or intimidating atmosphere or is a distraction for any student.

### **Gender Identity Inclusion**

CPSC strives to foster an educational environment that is safe and free from discrimination for all students, regardless of sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

### **Behavior Rubric**

To manage behavioral expectations in a way that aligns with our Peaceful Schools and Responsive Classrooms beliefs, we have implemented the CPSC CARES behavior matrix (see [Appendix 1](#)) as well as [Appendix 10: Discipline Chart](#). Students are expected to know and practice acceptable behaviors throughout their school day. Parents are encouraged to review expectations with their children and to support the school in providing a physically and emotionally safe learning environment for all students.

### **Student Discipline**

Our school-wide discipline plan is based on the Peaceful Schools program, Restorative Practices and the Responsive Classroom approach. Respect, empathy, and non-violent conflict resolution are taught and modeled every day, throughout our school community. Disruptive, disrespectful, or bullying behaviors will not be tolerated. We take a growth mindset approach to discipline. We believe that children and adolescents are going to make mistakes, that they do not benefit from a zero tolerance, punishment-based approach, and that they possess the capacity for growth and understanding as they move through these mistakes.

See [Appendix 2: Talk it Out/Peer-to-Peer Meeting](#) and [Appendix 10: Discipline Chart](#) for more information about these strategies.

### **Playground Rules**

CPSC students enjoy recess at city parks including Old North Durham Park (the big field behind the elementary campus) and at times Durham's Central Park. Because we share the parks with neighbors and other parties, it is important that the playground rules described below be followed for the sake of order and safety. Please remind your child(ren) to:

- stay out of the large bushes lining the perimeter of the park;
- play in "teacher monitored" zone areas—teachers will clarify these areas;
- leave untouched any inappropriate items found on the playground and tell a teacher about them immediately;

- treat the playground and the outside environment with care and respect.

## Recess

Our vibrant downtown location is part of what makes Central Park School for Children so special and unique. Our vision is that our students will be good neighbors and help our downtown location thrive. We want our students to stay safe and make good choices while experiencing more freedom and autonomy outside. Recess is a forty-minute period in Elementary School with all students and a thirty-minute period in Middle School when two grade levels of students are playing outside together. Only during extreme inclement weather does Recess move inside.

The objectives of Recess are to:

- use unstructured time in productive, creative, imaginative, and purposeful ways
- form multi-age bonds, build friendships and a sense of community
- enjoy physical activity and fresh air
- interact with nature and play creatively with natural materials
- problem solve with respect to social interactions and physical materials

Students are expected to:

- treat others with care
- respect others, their bodies, feelings and creations
- be respectful to the environment
- agree to the rules of the game before you play
- have fun and be safe

Rules:

- School Cell Phone policy is in effect
- Do not cross the street without permission from an adult
- No rough play
- If staff members ask for something to stop because it feels unsafe to them, students are expected to listen and stop the activity.
- Items that come from home are expected to be shared with everyone or they should not come to school.
- Sports games need to stay fun for everyone
- Football games are to be two hand touch

## Recess Attire

We believe that play, including outdoor play, is an essential part of learning. Recess is a time to run, jump, play, breathe the fresh air and enjoy a break from classroom activities in ways that are positive for all students. In order to feel that they may enjoy, explore and learn during outdoor activities at school, students should wear or have at school appropriate clothes/shoes to **play outside in all weather**. Drizzle, mud, snowflakes, etc. are opportunities for children to learn more about the natural world.

Please note: CPSC students will have outdoor recess in most weather. We strongly encourage that clothing / shoes worn to school are appropriate for rain, mud, cold and the heat. Parents are encouraged to send in extra clothing to be kept at school for their children, so that they are always prepared for all kinds of learning...even when it gets a little messy. Rain boots may be kept at school if needed.

*"For children, play is serious learning!" — Fred Rogers, Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood*

## Students Stay Outside at Recess

After exiting the school building for Recess, children are expected to remain outside until the recess period is over. Bathroom and water breaks should occur before students exit the building. A child will need a teacher's permission to re-enter the building. Permission is typically reserved for emergencies.

## **PART 6 - Student Support Services**

Our student wellbeing and our partnership together as a CPSC family drives our student success. Below are the ways we support every child.

### **Emergency Contact Info**

It is critical that the school be able to reach you in case of emergency. If your contact information changes, please contact Student Services, 919-682-1200 ext. 595. This allows us to update our database for all staff members who may need to access this information.

### **Health Forms**

Good health is crucial to learning. Before the first day of school, all new students (or returning students with changes since the original form was filed) must submit a health form, signed by a physician, that identifies any health issues important for the school to know about and certifies that your child has all appropriate immunizations. North Carolina state law requires that documentation of immunization be provided to the school within 30 days of a student's first day of school. Parents who do not wish to have their child immunized based on religious beliefs, or advice from their doctor that immunization poses a risk to their student's health, must submit their request for a waiver in writing, including their physician's statement. This can be submitted to the teacher or the front office.

### **Medication at School/Medical Critical Response Forms**

We strive to work with you and your child's pediatrician and other medical health professionals to keep your child healthy. To assist with our school practices, we will do all we can with our school nurse and care team. Please read the entire policy in Appendix 21.

### **Lunch / Nutrition / Allergies**

Students eat a snack and lunch at school each day. Please send nutritious foods to fuel your child's work and play—sandwiches, fruits, vegetables, milk or fruit juices—rather than sweets. Please send food ready to eat, with appropriate cutlery, in containers your child can open and close. Teachers should not be expected to peel or cut. Microwaves are not available for student use.

### **School Lunch & Milk for Purchase**

All students can pre-order school lunches. Free and Reduced pricing is available for families that qualify. Lunch must be ordered online using our online ordering system. Milk can also be purchased and must be pre-ordered for the year. Parents may choose 1% unflavored milk or fat free chocolate milk for their student. Please see our school website for complete info about [lunch, milk, how to pre-order, and how to apply](#) for Free & Reduced pricing. If you have questions please contact the Nutrition Coordinator at [nutrition@cpsfc.org](mailto:nutrition@cpsfc.org) or (919) 682-1200 x 251.

### **Classroom Treats & Allergies**

Parents who wish to bring food for the whole classroom should always arrange this first with the teacher. This is especially important for the safety of students with food allergies.

### **Extended Learning : Before- and After-School Care**

For families who need child care outside of school hours, CPSC provides a safe and nurturing environment that is a natural extension of our school day. Please see our school website for more details about [Before-School](#) care, [After-School](#) care, and the separate [After-School Clubs](#) program. Families who qualify for free & reduced price lunch are offered a discount on After-School care and free Before-School care. This does not include breakfast.

### **Intersession and Summer Camps**

CPSC offers week-long and single-day camps during breaks from school. Camps are led by our After-School Program staff and are a natural extension of our school program. Please see our school website for Extended Learning Camp information, and watch our weekly announcements for info about each quarter's offerings.

### **Student Assistance Team**

In accordance with our mission, Central Park School for Children seeks to support each child's growth and value them as a unique member of our community. When any adult is concerned about a child's progress as a learner or about their participation in our school community, we address that concern together as a Student Assistance Team (SAT).

Teachers, staff, or parents can request an initial SAT meeting. The team includes a child's parents, teacher(s), our learning specialist, and our Elementary or Middle School Director. We work together to support a student facing either academic or behavioral challenges, after initial steps to support the child in the classroom and at home have not been fully successful.

Together we gather our knowledge about the student's strengths and struggles, and collaboratively create effective support structures. Our goal is to help students meet their particular challenges with the greatest levels of success.

### **Exceptional Children's Education Services**

All children are entitled to a Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) as outlined by state and federal law. CPSC supports children with disabilities through either an IEP (Individualized Education Plan) or a 504 Plan. Our Exceptional Children staff assist students with special learning needs, speech and/or occupational therapy needs. If your student enrolls at CPSC with an active plan, services will be provided upon entry. If you haven't been contacted yet, please contact our K-8 Exceptional Children's Director, Amy McMullen at 919-682-1200 ext. 530 or [amy@cpsfc.org](mailto:amy@cpsfc.org) to learn more about how to start the transfer of your child's Individualized Education Plans or IEP. If you believe your child has a disability, please speak with his or her teacher about a Student Assistance Team referral.

### **Counseling Services**

The school counselor plays a vital role in supporting students, teachers and families within the Central Park School community through whole class instruction, small group work and individual counseling. A child may be referred to the counselor by her/himself, by a teacher and/or by a parent. If you have a concern about your child's social or emotional well-being, please contact the counselor. Discussions with the school counselor are confidential. In the event that a teacher refers a child for group or individual counseling, the counselor will contact the parents prior to meeting with the child.

### **Supporting Immigrant Families and Students**

CPSC embraces the diversity of our students and families and the rich language and cultural assets they bring to our school and strongly supports and encourages the participation of all parents and families in our school. All CPSC students have the right to enroll, attend, and receive all school services without discrimination regardless of the immigration status of the child or of the child's family members. No school staff will take any steps that would deny students access to education based on their immigration status. CPSC personnel will not inquire about a student's immigration status or require students or their families to supply a Social Security number at initial registration or at any other time. Additional actions staff will take are included in the Employee Handbook's [Appendix 4: Steps for All Staff to Protect our Immigrant Students and Families](#). Read more in [Appendix 19](#). Please contact Nidia Ramirez at [Nidia@cpsfc.org](mailto:Nidia@cpsfc.org) and 919-682-1200 ext 125 for assistance in arranging parents' language assistance services.

### **Supporting Student Accessibility in Lower School (724 Foster Street)**

All common areas of our campus - bathrooms, big rooms, outside, front office, specials classes (art, media, music, spanish), etc. are accessible via the first floor. Only 2nd and 3rd grade classes are located on the



second floor. If at any time, a 2nd or 3rd grader is not able to access stairs, we would preemptively relocate that classroom downstairs for the year, or subsequent years, as needed to accommodate the student's needs.

## **PART 7 - Our Shared Community: Parents as Partners**

Parents/caregivers are our children's first and forever teachers. We are a better school when parents/caregivers take part in the decision-making about their children and our school.

### **Student/Family/Teacher Introductions**

Before the start of every school year, ever since our school was founded, CPSC teachers visit with each student and their parent/caretaker. We believe the relationships between teacher, student and family are so important that we value making time for introductions before the first day of school.

The visit is a one-on-one time for your child and the teacher to get to know one another. Your teacher is hoping to learn something special about and from your child, which is a first step in connecting classroom lessons with your child's interests and backgrounds. Since this is a special time for your teacher to visit with your child please feel free to contact your child's teacher for a conference if you need to share more information.

The Introduction most frequently occurs at your home, but we respect that you may be more comfortable at a park, the school or another public space. Visits are not evaluations of your home (so resist the urge to clean!), but hope to offer a relaxed setting for you and your child. There is no expectation that you serve the teacher any food – remember they are generally visiting several families in one day.

### **Volunteering**

We believe this is one of the most essential ways to help All Children Thrive. Family involvement is a cornerstone of our charter and mission, and volunteering gives families a deeper sense of connection with our community of learners. By enrolling your child at CPSC, your family is making a commitment to spend at least four hours per month participating in school-related projects. CPSC appreciates your time and energy and welcomes your ideas. Parents, siblings, grandparents, aunts and uncles and caregivers are encouraged to volunteer weekly or quarterly in any of the following ways:

*Bringing in library books ~ Sharpening pencils at home ~ Scholastic book orders ~ Chaperoning or organizing field trips ~ Photography ~ Making memory books ~ Saturday work days ~ Cooking ~ Gardening ~ Pet care/sitting ~ Classroom celebrations ~ Mystery reader ~ Donating supplies & materials ~ Laundry ~ Reshelving library books ~ Food bank helpers ~ Parent Forum greeters ~ Spanish translators ~ Wall displays of project work or school-wide information ~ Morning or afternoon car line ~ Playground supervision ~ Lunch duty ~ Weekly Folder/Bubble Stuffer ~ Reading with individual students ~ Reading with small groups of students ~ Guiding a small math group ~ Checking sight words ~ What's your idea?*

### **Background Checks**

We require a background check for all of our chaperones and drivers each school year. We also require background checks of other school volunteers as well. The process is to complete the form online shared via our school's communications in the initial weeks of school. Our business office processes these and any questions regarding background checks should be directed to the school's Executive Director. The school covers the cost of background checks during the first 6 weeks of school, after that it is the responsibility of the volunteer, chaperone, or driver.

### **Weekly Engaging and Informative Communication**

Our regular Classroom and Grade-Level Team newsletters will keep you informed and up to date. They provide a way for you to have conversations with your child. They familiarize you with our approach to learning, and they provide opportunities to communicate directly with teachers.

### **Parent Events, Trainings and Workshops**

Every quarter we host Parent/Caregiver Trainings and Workshops that all are encouraged to attend. Parenting is demanding work, and these events are intended to make parenting more joyful.

### **Our School Committees, PTA and School Board**

At the start of each year we recruit family members to join CPSC School Committees, including PTA, Strawberry Parents, Room Parents, and Equity Committee. Our school board of trustees also has a variety of committees that invite parents to bring their passions and skills to help us govern our school.

Our simple belief is that when children and families do things together, learn together, and build community together, All Children Thrive.

### **Parent Teacher Group Mission Statement**

The CPSC Parent Teacher Group is committed to growing a community of partners to build a diverse, child-centered school where ALL children succeed.

### **CPSC Parent Teacher Group Focus Areas:**

- Create community for all to feel included, valued, and empowered through cohesive planning, communication, and outreach
- Empower families to contribute by matching staff needs to parent resources in a way that honors each family's talents, preferences, availability, and ability to contribute
- Support CPSC's development efforts by coordinating with the Development Committee to tap into parent and partner resources and network

### **Class Parents**

Each classroom or middle school CREW will have one class parent to help parents become involved in the classroom in the most constructive manner and to facilitate class communication. In addition, each class will have a Strawberry Parent who will coordinate the class booth/activity for the annual Strawberry Festival held in May.

CPSC is committed to building strong partnerships among parents, teachers, students and the larger community. Class parents meet regularly with their teachers and work with them throughout the year to clarify classroom needs, address goals, and help organize and encourage the participation of other parents in classroom and school activities. If you are interested in being a class parent or the Strawberry Parent, please speak with your child's teacher, who will let you know of next steps.

### **Parent-Teacher Communication**

The Central Park School for Children encourages and expects parents to be vital supporters of their children's school experiences and to communicate with teachers about issues affecting their children. Open, honest communication is in everyone's best interest as we all have the same goal — the positive growth and learning of our children. If you have a concern about your child's experience at school, *please approach your child's teacher first.*

Please note that during school hours, a teacher's phone calls are routinely sent to voicemail. We will interrupt teachers during their instructional day only in case of emergency.

### **Scheduling an Appointment**

Our Parents/Caregivers are welcome to visit CPSC and partner in your child's education. Your presence makes us a better school for all children. As we increase parent engagement we also want to increase safety and security for all of our students, families and students. Please go to the front office when you visit CPSC for a visitor's pass.

If you have a concern or question when you arrive at the front office that requires a meeting, our office manager will help you schedule an appointment with the right staff member.

We encourage you to volunteer and visit your child's classroom. Teachers and staff are very busy during the school day so please schedule your volunteer time or visit with them ahead of time. Teacher conferences also need to be scheduled ahead.

### **Parent-Teacher Conferences**

Parent-teacher conferences may be scheduled at any time during the year by the parent or the teacher. You may, of course, communicate very brief messages to your child's teacher without an appointment before or after school, but please schedule a conference for communications that will require more than a few seconds. Please do not try to communicate an important message while the teacher is on duty, which includes drop-off and pick-up.

Parent-teacher conferences are scheduled after the first and third quarters. Additional conferences are available upon request. (See Reporting Student Progress, section 2.4). Our [Academic Calendar](#) (on our website) includes two days at the beginning of each intersession break for these quarterly conferences. Teachers will contact parents to schedule conferences during those days. Parent-teacher conferences are one of the most important commitments you make to your students' school life. We look forward to sharing our insights with you and learning how to make school more meaningful for your family.

### **Parent/Guardian's Expectations and Role in Supporting Positive Behavior and Healthy Relationships**

Your role as parent/guardian makes you the most important teacher in your child's life. Our children observe and then imitate the behavioral responses that are used by the significant adults in their environment. Parents who are respectful and kind to others, especially their own children, are likely to see that same behavior develop in their children.

Our children absorb a great deal by daily observation, but we encourage you to discuss ways to show respect, build trust, show empathy, manage anger, and practice forgiveness as these skills will help your child build successful relationships.

### **Addressing Concerns**

CPSC is committed to addressing concerns and conflicts in a peaceful, constructive way. Solving problems together is an opportunity to build understanding and to strengthen our partnership. We recognize, however, that conflict is difficult and uncomfortable.

As a school, we use our [Talk it Out/Peer to Peer Meeting](#) for resolving conflicts. Both sides take turns explaining how they see the problem, actively listening to the other person, and restating what the other person said. We encourage them to come to an understanding and work out a solution together. Our students learn and use these same strategies.

The first step is to talk with the people directly involved. Often, this means talking with your child's teacher. We encourage you to address concerns early, as small misunderstandings can grow into bigger problems. Sharing perspectives helps us all grow and learn. It's often helpful to take notes, and to follow up face-to-face meetings

with a written note or email to the person or people you met with. “Putting it in writing” helps clarify what you heard and what you said. It is also a record of your efforts to talk it out.

If you are not comfortable with that first step—whether you are hesitant to start that conversation, or you feel you were not heard—you can ask for help. Our school counselor or other members of the school community can support you through the process.

If the issue still cannot be resolved, please request a meeting with the Elementary or Middle School Director. Bring your written notes from the conversations you’ve had with those directly involved, along with any follow-up communications you’ve sent or received. Issues that remain unresolved even after meeting with the School Director may be appealed further:

### **Addressing Concerns Further: Grievance Policy**

CPSC’s Community Grievance Policy ([see Appendix 6](#)) exists for problems that cannot, even after a good faith effort, be resolved through our Addressing Concerns process (Talk it Out) in Section 3.3. The policy outlines the steps our school’s Board will take, together with the Executive Director, to address complaints quickly and thoroughly. In addition to Appendix 5 to this Handbook, copies of the policy are also available in the front office.

Before the Grievance process can begin, you must be able to show you’ve tried at least three times to meet and “Talk It Out” with those directly involved and with the Elementary or Middle School Director and then if still not resolved take it to the Executive Director. Concerns that cannot be resolved at the School or Board level can be appealed to the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction.

### **Sleep**

School-aged children need 10 to 12 hours of sleep at night in order to function at their best during the day. Even mild sleep deprivation can have a significant toll on a young child during the day. In addition, behavioral problems are often related to sleep deprivation. Please make sure your child gets adequate sleep.

## PART 8 - Giving

Gifts to Central Park School for Children bridge the gap between the actual cost of operating our school and the money provided from the state and local government. As a tuition-free, public charter school, CPSC receives almost 25% less government funding than traditional public schools. Without the support of families and community, we cannot sustain our program.

The Central Park School for Children Foundation (CPSCF) is a legally separate 501(c)(3) that exists for the purpose of ensuring a strong and focused priority is given to the Central Park School for Children's facility and programmatic needs and nurturing relationships within the CPSC community, Durham, and beyond. The Foundation oversees all aspects of fundraising, asset management, and alumni relations for the school. All fundraisers, drives, events, etc. in which money or items are being collected to benefit CPSC must be approved by the Foundation. The CPSCF coordinates two large fundraisers each year in addition to capital campaigns and other fundraising activities as needed. We need every member of our CPSC community to participate in these efforts which are described below.

The Sunshine Fund is CPSC's annual fund drive that begins in the fall of each year. Gifts to The Sunshine Fund have an immediate impact on our students by providing them with smaller class sizes, instructional resources, child centered facilities, enhanced project-based curriculum, a low student to teacher ratio, enriching experiences including field trips, extracurricular activities, and much more. All CPSC families will be invited (and reminded) to participate. Whether your gift is \$10 or \$100,000, your support of this affects our ability to receive additional funding. The Annual Fund is not only about dollars raised; it is also about a commitment and belief in our philosophy and mission. Since corporations and foundations are most likely to award grants to communities who can demonstrate a high level of support from their constituents, high participation in the Sunshine Fund increases our chances of receiving external funds to support our amazing programs. All of our CPSC Board members give annually. CPSC's fiscal year runs from July 1 to June 30; however, you may want to consider contributing by December 31 to take advantage of current calendar year tax benefits.

The Strawberry Festival, our "berry special day for children," is always the first Saturday in May and is carried out almost entirely by CPSC volunteers. The Festival provides wonderful entertainment and food for our own families and for the larger community. All proceeds from the Festival are committed to improving learning at CPSC. In order to coordinate such a large and important event, all members of the CPSC community are asked to help prepare for the Festival and to work at the Festival itself. Festival work is divided into shifts; each family should plan to work at least two shifts, one in their child's classroom booth if they have one and one in a general capacity. Parents of siblings at CPSC can work one shift in each classroom booth. Two shifts from each family make it a busy but not overwhelming day for anyone. We thank you in advance for your contributions of time and talent to the Festival. This exciting and vital event cannot happen without everyone's committed involvement.

Other fundraising opportunities occur throughout the school year on an as needed basis. Parents who wish to learn more or make additional gifts to CPSC and their child's education may do so by contacting John Heffernan, Executive Director, Central Park School for Children Foundation - [john@cpsfc.org](mailto:john@cpsfc.org).

## PART 9 - Governance

CPSC is a non-profit organization. As a non-profit, CPSC is governed by the Board of Trustees. In accordance with the bylaws, the Board of Trustees has between three and twelve members. The Board ensures that the school is achieving its mission, creates and follows board policies, oversees the strategic plan for the school, and approves and tracks the annual budget. The Board is also responsible for the hiring and evaluation of the Executive Director. The Board approves all hires and terminations of school employees based on the Executive Director's recommendations. The Board usually meets on the third Wednesday of each month with the specific meeting dates available on CPSC's website. All board meetings are open to the public and the agenda for each meeting is posted on the School website three days in advance of all regularly scheduled meetings.

Responsibility for the overall well-being of the Central Park School for Children and attainment of the goals outlined in our Charter resides with the Board of Trustees. These responsibilities include:

- ensuring that our focus remains on the children,
- that our educational goals are clear, and that there are appropriate means for measuring our progress;
- ensuring the financial stability of the school and its adherence to legal mandates; and
- ensuring the safety and appropriateness of our learning facility.

Other Board responsibilities include setting policy and addressing any other issues the Board deems important to the development and maintenance of excellence at CPSC. Board member information is on our [website](#).

The Board hires the Executive Director who, in turn, has responsibility for carrying out Board policies. The Executive Director oversees the daily operations of the school, including hiring and supervising staff, and is charged with meeting goals relating to student learning and development. In addition, the Executive Director is primarily responsible for communication between the school, our parents and the larger community. The School Executive Director is employed at the pleasure of the Board of Trustees of the CPSC and reports directly to them. All other staff and faculty report to the Executive Director and/or Principal. Any hiring decision or employment agreement must be approved by the Board of Trustees.

### Guidelines for Participation in CPSC Board Meetings

Full Board and Standing Committee meetings are open to the public. Parents, staff and other community members are welcome to attend.

The work of the Board happens at Committee meetings and the full Board meetings are for reviewing committee recommendations. We recommend those wishing to have input to Board matters, do so through the Committees. Concerns and Grievances should be handled as described in [Section 06](#) of the Family Handbook.

- Anyone who wishes to put something on the agenda of a full board meeting or to speak at a full board meeting should speak with the President no later than noon on Friday before the meeting.
- Anyone who wishes to put something on the agenda of a Committee meeting should speak with the Committee Chair.
- For full board meetings, the Board President sends board agenda and supporting documents to board and Recording Secretary in advance of the meeting and will post the materials on the school website.
- For meetings of Standing Committees, the Committee Chair sends the committee agenda and supporting documents to the committee members and the recording Secretary in advance of the meeting. The Secretary will post the materials.

- If materials are handed out at a meeting, a few copies will be made available for non-board members, as well.
- Board members may invite an attendee to speak if the Board member believes the Board may have missed something through our input systems.
- Minutes and final handouts will, once approved, be posted on the school website.

## PART 10 - School Hours, Visitors, and Calendar

[The school calendar for 2025-26 is linked here.](#)

School Hours and attendance Requirements for Teachers and staff:

For teachers and staff the regular school hours are 8AM – 4 PM

**Teachers should ALWAYS be in their classrooms no later than 8 AM.**

This is rarely negotiable. This requirement is for children's safety! It is also precious time to create a welcoming and magical space that assures a smooth beginning to their day.

A teacher who is not at school by 8 AM should speak with the School Director ASAP to discuss any problem with this requirement.

In addition to the regular staff hours, teachers commit to attending the following:

*(Unless they have been given a written excuse by their school director. Any tardiness in attendance should be discussed with the school director in advance.)*

- Staff Development days
- Teacher meetings, either in the calendar or called by the Executive Director
- At least 3 of the 4 planned Socials (see calendar). All staff families are welcome.
- 2 All School Work Days (see calendar). All staff families are welcome.
- Strawberry Festival (1st Saturday in May). All staff families are welcome.
- First quarter Open House or Back to School Night
- Quarterly community workshops presented by staff to encourage all to understand our philosophy, pedagogies and emphasis on our key values.

### School Hours – for Families

Children can arrive as early as 8:00 and go to their classrooms as early as 8:10. We also have additional options for before and after school care.

Because children cannot transport themselves to school, they cannot be held responsible for being tardy. If a child is tardy that child should never be punished or treated like they have done something wrong. The teacher should speak with the parent ASAP and explain the importance of these early school experiences, re-establishing connections and anticipating, understanding and making exciting choices for the rest of their day.

|  | Lower School (grades K-3) | Upper School (grades 4-8) |
|--|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| PAID before-school care begins<br>(scholarships are available!)  | 7:15 am                   | 7:15 am                   |
| FREE before-school care begins when<br>doors open  | 8:00-8:10 am              | 8:00-8:10 am              |
| Drop-off Car Line operates   | 8:10 - 8:30 am            | 8:10 - 8:30 am            |
| SCHOOL DAY BEGINS<br>Students should be in their classroom,<br>unpacked and ready to - start class at<br>that time! Students are always<br>learning... | 8:30 am                   | 8:30am                    |



|   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| After this time, children cannot be called for early dismissal unless prior arrangements have been made | 2:45 pm  | 2:45 pm   |
| SCHOOL DAY ENDS<br>After-school activities begin  | 3:20 pm  | 3:30 pm   |
| Pick-up Car Line operates   | 3:20 -3:50 pm  | 3:30- 3:50 pm   |
| Child will be sent to after school and fees will apply if not picked up by                              | 3:50 pm  | 3:50 pm   |
| AFTER SCHOOL CLUBS end; late fees are charged if the child is not picked up soon afterward.             | 4:30 pm<br>4:35 pm LATE FEES begin   | 4:30 pm<br>4:35 pm LATE FEES begin  |
| AFTER-SCHOOL CARE ends; late fees are charged if child is not picked up by...                           | 6:00 pm<br>6:05 pm LATE FEES begin   | 6:00 pm<br>6:05 pm LATE FEES begin  |
| MONTHLY EARLY DISMISSAL DAYS:   | 12:30 pm school ends<br>Car Line 12:30 - 1 pm<br>2 pm LATE FEES begin                    | 12:30 pm school ends<br>Car Line 12:30 - 1 pm<br>2 pm LATE FEES begin                       |
| HALF-DAY:<br>(last day of each quarter)   | 12:30 am school ends<br>Car Line 12:30pm - 1:00pm<br>2 pm LATE FEES begin                | 12:30 pm school ends<br>Car Line 12:30 - 1 pm<br>2 pm LATE FEES begin                       |
| 2-HOUR DELAYED OPENING for inclement weather:   | No before-school care<br>10:00 am doors open<br>Car Line 10 - 10:30<br>TARDY after 10:30 | No before-school care<br>10:10 am doors open<br>Car Line 10:10 - 10:30<br>TARDY after 10:35 |
| FRONT OFFICE HOURS  | 8:00 am to 4:00 pm   | 8:00 am to 4:00 pm  |

### Dismissal

Our dismissal policies are designed to help our students and staff end the school day safely and efficiently. At the Elementary School, students are dismissed to AfterSchool at 3:05, Dismissal Rooms at 3:10). Bus and Car Riders are dismissed at 3:15pm.

At the Middle School, the end of the school day bell rings at 3:25. At that time, students go to their lockers, gather their belongings and head to their assigned dismissal room. Students who are going to a dismissal room should be in that room quickly and looking for their names to appear on the driveline. When listed, students should put up their chair and quickly exit through the front door. Students who have signed permission to walk should quickly exit through the front door and immediately leave campus. Socializing in front of the school is not allowed for safety and efficiency reasons.

### Visitors

We request that visitors schedule their visits and go directly to the main office to pick up an identification badge. Students from other schools, as well as out-of-town students, are permitted to come onto campus during school hours with prior approval from administration.

### Religious Holidays

CPSC recognizes the importance of religious beliefs for its students, parents and staff. While the school is sensitive to religious observances and uses elements of religion to explore diverse cultures and customs, it does not celebrate religious holidays. Children can always share special family traditions, whether religious or secular, with their classmates.

Though it may not always be possible, every effort is made to schedule school functions, including field trips, meetings, fundraising activities and workdays, on days other than major religious holidays. Please inform your teacher of any religious traditions that may impact your child's day at school.

### **School Calendar Development**

Our school calendar is an academic tool that supports student learning, quarterly parent-teacher conferences, and teachers' professional development. The development of the school calendar is a lengthy and thoughtful process spread over the first half of our school year.

1. *August:* Executive Director sets requirements for the school calendar, including national holidays, annual CPSC events, and priorities set by the NC General Assembly including the length of the school year.
2. *August:* Executive Director appoints a Calendar Committee of teachers, parents and administrators.
3. *September:* Calendar Committee gathers input from staff, parents, administrators, the School Leadership Team and School Council, and develops one or more draft calendars that meet the Executive Director's requirements.
4. *October:* Calendar Committee shares its recommendations with the school community and gathers feedback.
5. *November:* Executive Director reviews input from calendar committee and school community, and prepares a final calendar for presentation to the Board.
6. *December:* Board reviews and adopts the final calendar.

### **Inclement Weather / Changes in Opening or Dismissal Times**

In the event that inclement weather creates a transportation or other safety hazard for students, school will be canceled or delayed. In addition, certain emergencies may require students to be dismissed early.

Late Openings, School Closings, and Unscheduled Early Dismissals are announced:

- By phone system - based on the primary contact information in PowerSchool
- By e-mail - based on the primary contact information in PowerSchool
- By text message - based on the primary contact information in PowerSchool
- WRAL TV (by 7 am for late opening):

Since we have two buses, we will be open more often than regular public schools during inclement weather. We do not follow Durham Public Schools' closings. Parents must therefore use their own judgment (considering car capabilities, condition of route, and driving comfort) to decide when transportation is safe for them. Also remember that, if the weather looks iffy, you can always pick up your child early if you decide that is the safest choice for you and your family.

## **PART 11 - Admissions, Attendance & Absences**

### **Admissions**

Central Park School for Children is a charter public school that does not discriminate on the basis of gender, color, race, religion, national origin or disability. On an announced date in the spring of each year, usually the first Tuesday of March, children are admitted from applications via a lottery system, as there are generally more applications for a particular grade than there are available spaces. Children who are not admitted at that time are placed, in lottery order, on a waiting list for their grade. Priority is given to siblings of currently enrolled students; children and grandchildren of teachers, staff and Board members, students who have previously been enrolled at CPSC whose families move away for work or academic opportunity and then return; and graduates' siblings. Students must be at least five years old on or before August 31st of the year they start kindergarten. Admission is open to any student in North Carolina. CPSC has two lotteries, the first is for students who qualify for the National School Lunch Program. For more information, see the School's website.

### **Attendance**

It is important that parents and families send their children to school. It is required by law for all students under age 16 to attend school in North Carolina. If students are habitually late or absent, the appropriate school personnel will reach out to the family to support. The teacher plays a critical role in reporting absences and following up with the families. In certain cases, the school may seek the guidance of outside resources to support students' attendance at school.

### **Absences**

In order to best serve our students, they must be in attendance at school. We understand that sometimes they may be absent due to illness, trips, educational leave, and so on. We also have an obligation to ensure students are safe. This means we will follow up with families after several unexcused absences to see if support is needed for the family. Sometimes this also means reporting to state entities as well. [Attendance Quick Reference Document](#)

## PART 12 - Appendices

- [1: CPSC CARES Behavior Expectations](#)
- [2: Talk It Out/Peer-to-Peer Meeting/Restorative Circles](#)
- [3: Gender Identity Inclusion](#)
- [4: Internet Safety & Acceptable Use Policy](#)
- [5: Additional Internet Use Policies](#)
- [6: CPSC Community Grievance Policy](#)
- [7: Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act](#)
- [8: CPSC Volunteer Guidelines](#)
- [9: Donor Privacy & Gift Acceptance Policy](#)
- [10: Discipline Chart](#)
- [11: Planned Learning Absences \(Educational Absences\)](#)
- [12: NC Child Passenger Safety Law - G.S. 20-137.1](#)
- [13: HIV/AIDS School Policy](#)
- [14: CPSC Organizational Chart](#)
- [15: Board of Trustees, 2025-26](#)
- [16: Title IX Policies](#)
- [17: Non-Title IX Discrimination, Harassment, and Bullying Complaint Process](#)
- [18: Transportation and Parking](#)
- [19: Supporting Immigrant & Multilingual Families](#)
- [20: Additional Safety Policies](#)
- [21: Medication at School/Medical Critical Response Forms](#)
- [22: Dress Code](#)
- [23: Parents Bill of Rights - N.C.G.S. § 115C-76.20\(b\)\(3\)](#)
- [24: School Fees](#)