

Pathfinder Educational Center and Off-Site Programs Parent / Guardian & Student Handbook 2025-26

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St. Joseph County ISD
Building Better Futures for Children and Communities



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St. Joseph County ISD (St. Joseph County Intermediate School District) does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, genetic information, or any other legally protected status in its employment decisions or the provision of services. The following individuals have been designated to handle inquiries regarding the nondiscrimination policies: Kelli Dechnik, Assistant Superintendent of Finance, Operations, & HR, St. Joseph County ISD, 62445 Shimmel Road, Centreville, MI 49032, Phone: 269-467-5400; Fax: 269-467-4309

This handbook is meant to provide common knowledge for use in maintaining smooth school operation. It is not all-inclusive, nor is it to be considered final in any way. It is designed to be used in conjunction with the St. Joseph County ISD Board of Education Policies, and provision of a Free and Appropriate Education for each student.

Introduction

This handbook was developed to answer many of the commonly asked questions you may have during the school year and to provide specific information about certain Board policies and procedures. Please keep the handbook available for frequent reference.

This handbook summarizes many official policies and administrative guidelines of the Board of Education and the District. To the extent that the handbook is ambiguous or conflicts with these policies and guidelines, the policies and guidelines will control. This handbook does not equate to an irrevocable contractual commitment to the student, but only reflects the current status of the Board's policies and the School's rules. If any of the policies or administrative guidelines referenced herein are revised, the language in the most current policy or administrative guidelines prevails.

Additional information can be found in The Pathfinder Center's most recent Annual Report which is on the St. Joseph County ISD website:

- Go to Pathfinder Educational Center ([https://St. Joseph County Intermediate School District .org/programs/pathfinder-educational-center/](https://St.JosephCountyIntermediateSchoolDistrict.org/programs/pathfinder-educational-center/))
- Click on Pathfinder Resources (in left-hand column)
- Click on Annual Education Report

If you would like a printed copy of our Annual Report, please contact the Pathfinder Educational Center Office.

We are continually appreciative of all you do in support of your child and are looking forward to working with you to make the school year a success!

If you have a question or concern about your child's educational program, you are urged to contact the staff person most directly involved. When a question arises, it is generally advisable to first make contact with your child's classroom teacher. If a resolution is not reached, the Principal should be contacted next. If there is still no resolution, the parent/guardian should contact the following (in this preferred order):

- St. Joseph County ISD Director of Special Education
- St. Joseph County ISD Superintendent
- St. Joseph County ISD Board of Education

If you have any questions that are not addressed in this handbook, you are encouraged to contact the Pathfinder Educational Center Principal.

Daily Schedule

The Pathfinder Educational Center office is open from 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Student hours are as follows, based on the dates outlined on the St. Joseph County ISD Calendar:

	<u>School Hours for Full Day</u>	<u>School Hours for Half-Days</u>
Pathfinder Educational Center	8:15 a.m. - 2:45 p.m.	8:15-11:15 a.m.
Three Rivers Elementary Program	7:50 a.m. - 2:20 p.m.	7:50-10:50 a.m.
Sturgis Jr./Sr. High School Program	7:35 a.m. - 2:05 p.m.	7:35-10:35 a.m.
Sturgis Central Commons	7:45 a.m. - 2:15 p.m.	7:45-10:45 a.m.
Young Adult Transition Center(YATC)	7:40 a.m. - 2:10 p.m.	7:40-10:40 a.m.

Students will not be allowed to leave school prior to dismissal time without a written note signed by the parent/guardian, a phone call from the parent/guardian, or the parent/guardian coming to the school office to request the release, unless an alternative plan has been developed with that student, their guardians (if applicable), and the student's IEP team. No student will be released to a person other than a custodial parent/guardian without written permission signed by the custodial parent/guardian. Students must be signed out at the main office at each site.

Breakfast & Lunch Service

The following agreements are in place to provide food service:

- Pathfinder Building Site contracts with Centreville Public Schools
- Sturgis Central Commons and Sturgis MS/ HS Classroom with Sturgis Public Schools
- Three Rivers Elementary Classroom with Three Rivers Public Schools
- The Young Adult Transition Center contracts with Three Rivers Community Schools

Lunch menus are available and sent home monthly.

Student Attendance

Daily School attendance is required for students in all St. Joseph County ISD programs, except those exempted by provisions of State Law, during the days and hours that the school is in session or during the attendance sessions to which he/she has been assigned.

If a child / young adult is going to be absent from any campus on a day of expected school attendance the parent/guardian must contact the Pathfinder Educational Center's Main Office to officially report the absence and the reason why their student will not be in attendance that day.

Please note that official reporting of your student's absence from school must be reported to the Pathfinder Main Office 269-467-5454. If your student is absent from school and the main office has not received communication about the absence from the parent/guardian directly, you will be contacted by the executive administrative assistant in the main office to verify the absence and reason for the absence.

Per St. Joseph County ISD policy, excused absences include:

- illness (when frequent or prolonged absences occur, a written statement from a physician may be requested to consider excused)
- recovery from accident
- required court attendance
- professional appointments
- death in the family
- observation or celebration of a bona fide religious holiday
- such other good cause as may be acceptable to the St. Joseph County ISD Superintendent

Reasons other than the above list of factors shall be considered unexcused absences. If there are excessive unexcused absences, parents will be notified as follows:

- After 5 absences – Letter of concern from the Principal and request for a meeting.
- After 10 absences – 2nd Letter of concern from the Principal.

In cases where absences are due to an extended or chronic illness or health condition, modifications may be made to the notification schedule. Each case will be judged individually before a letter of concern is sent.

Tardy Arrival / Early Departure

If your student is going to be arriving to school late, please call the Pathfinder Office by 9:00 a.m. so we can ensure your child has a lunch ordered for them and the office is aware of their tardy arrival. If your child is routinely transported to school via the St. Joseph County Intermediate School District Transportation please also notify the Transportation Department.

Students arriving within 90 minutes from the start of the school day will be marked tardy. Students arriving later than 90 minutes after that start of the school day will be marked absent for the morning attendance. Likewise, if students are picked up from school any earlier than 90 minutes before their scheduled dismissal they will be marked absent for the afternoon attendance.

Emergency Information and Authorization Form

It is important that the student's Emergency Information and Authorization Form is up-to-date with accurate contact information for the parent/guardian and emergency contacts. Every student must have an Emergency Information and Authorization Form completed and signed by their parent/guardian annually in order to participate in any school activity outside of curriculum related activities required for FAPE. This may include but is not limited to Community-Based Activities, field trips, spectator trips, athletic and other extra-curricular activities, and co-curricular activities.

The Emergency Information and Authorization Form is provided at the time of enrollment and at the beginning of each school year.

Injury or Illness

In case of an accident or emergency illness during the school day, every attempt will be made to notify parents/guardians or, when necessary, the provided emergency contacts during the emergency. If the parents/guardians can be reached in time, the nursing staff may recommend follow-up care. If the emergency requires immediate care or action, the school nurse or other school personnel will make arrangements for the student to receive medical attention at the nearest medical facility.

Students with any of the symptoms listed below will be assessed by a School Nurse, and parents/guardians will be notified to pick up the student:

- fever of 99° or higher (under the arm) or 100° or higher (temporal) vomiting
- diarrhea (two or more liquid stools)
- persistent coughing
- undiagnosed rash
- untreated infection
- eye drainage (possible symptom of pink eye)
- symptoms suspicious for strep throat
- abdominal pain (that continues longer than two hours or is occurring with fever or other symptoms)
- skin sores (weeping sores on an open area that cannot be covered with a waterproof dressing)
- communicable disease (influenza, Covid-19)

Students cannot be kept in school or transported home on the bus when exhibiting these symptoms. **It is expected that students will be kept at home until symptoms are absent for 24 hours without medication.** This helps protect other high-risk students from infection and contagious diseases, and to ensure that our students will be healthy.

A child should remain home on any day that they have these symptoms:

- shows evidence of a fresh cold
- has had a fever within the last 24 hours
- has a rash
- has had diarrhea within the last 24 hours
- has sore and/or discharging ears or eyes
- shows signs of fatigue
- has persistent coughing
- has symptoms of a contagious illness

Communicable Diseases

Casual-Contact Diseases

Because a school has a high concentration of people, it is necessary to take specific measures when the health or safety of the group is at risk. It is the responsibility of parents/guardians to notify the School Nurse (269-467-5482) if their child has an infectious/communicable disease. A student's name and diagnosis will not be shared with other parents, but a general letter might be sent home to all parents regarding symptoms, exclusion from school, etc.

The school's professional staff has the authority to remove or isolate a student who has been ill or has been exposed to a communicable disease. According to the State of Michigan Public Health Codes, the local Health Department will be notified of the occurrence of reportable communicable diseases.

Specific diseases include: diphtheria, scarlet fever, strep infections, whooping cough, mumps, measles, rubella, and other conditions indicated by the Local and State Health Departments. Any exclusion from school will be at the direction of the local and/or State Health Departments.

Please notify Pathfinder's Main Office or Principal ASAP if your child has been diagnosed with a contagious illness.

Non-Casual-Contact Diseases

In the case of non-casual-contact communicable diseases, the school still has the obligation to protect the safety of the staff and students. In these cases, the person in question will have his/her status reviewed by the nursing staff and superintendent, with input from the County Health Department, to ensure that the rights of the person affected and those in contact with that person are respected. The school will seek to keep students and staff persons in school unless there is definitive evidence to warrant exclusion.

Non-casual-contact communicable diseases include: sexually transmitted diseases, AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome), HIV (Human-Immunodeficiency), HAV, HBV, HCV (Hepatitis A,B,C), and other diseases that may be specified by the State Board of Health.

As required by Federal law, parents/guardians will be requested to have their child's blood checked for HIV, HBV, HCV and other bloodborne pathogens when the child has bled at school and students or staff members have been exposed to the blood. Any testing is subject to laws protecting confidentiality.

Head Lice Guidelines (Pediculosis)

A student who shows evidence of active head lice infestation will be excluded from school. A parent/guardian will be notified by phone, if possible. If a parent/guardian cannot be reached, a note will be sent home with the student.

It is a parent's responsibility to treat the student for head lice promptly. The student may return to school after proper treatment, and if, after an examination (head check), the school finds no evidence of active head lice. A parent must return the completed Proof of Treatment Form.

Parents will be notified and the student will be excluded if an active infestation persists. It is strongly recommended that parents inspect the student's head daily for up to three weeks after treatment and continue to comb/pick out nits.

Routine inspections of all students may occur at the beginning of the school year, if there are suspected cases, or if an outbreak occurs in the school setting. Classmates and other close contacts to a case will also be examined, as will any student who exhibits symptoms (i.e., scratching) of head lice. Parents/ Guardians will be notified as necessary.

Bed Bugs Guidelines

If a suspected bed bug is found on a student or a student's belongings, the following procedures should be followed:

- The student will be discreetly removed from the classroom and a school nurse or a qualified individual will examine the student's clothing and other belongings. Any bugs found will be removed and collected for identification.
- If a confirmed bed bug was found on a student, then the school principal or nurse will contact the student's parents or guardian to inform them of the bed bug presence on their child and provide resources to the home such as a bed bug inspection form and other informational materials from <http://www.michigan.gov/bedbugs>. Student belongings will also be bagged and sent home in this event.
- When necessary, the school nurse will check other students in the affected class / classrooms and the principal and / or nurse will notify parents / guardians and provide informational resources
- Students may not be excluded from school due to bed bugs unless repeated requests and efforts have been made to remedy an infestation without success..

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Pathfinder Principal or School Nurse.

Medications

Medications should be given outside of school hours whenever possible. According to Michigan law and St. Joseph County ISD Board Policy, school staff may not dispense medication of any kind, including non-prescription drugs such as Tylenol, without written consent from the parent and written doctor's authorization. Parents / Guardians must bring all medication, including non-prescription medication, to the school office in the pharmacy-labeled container and file a written statement of authorization or it must be sent to the school via the bus driver. Medication **may not** be transported by students and **may not** be in backpacks, clothes, etc. Student medication containers will be kept in a locked, secure area not accessible to students or non-authorized staff.

Students may not take prescribed medication or over-the-counter medication on school property without **written** authorization from both the student's doctor and parent. The doctor's authorization must include the name of the medication, dosage, and schedule. Authorization forms are available from the school office.

Medication must be taken in the presence of two staff members or a certified nurse and recorded in a medication log. Students are not allowed to bring any medication to school to self-administer. Medications of this sort will be taken from the student if they are found. The school will not be responsible for situations that arise from students bringing medication to school to be self-administered. All medications received by the school will be counted and the count recorded.

Students who routinely receive medication at school will not be administered the medication on half-days (unless special arrangements are made with the school nurse).

Transportation Services

Transportation services are available to and from school at no cost to parents / guardians, and are provided by the St. Joseph County ISD. Students are to follow the same behavioral expectations on transportation as in school. Discipline for infractions that occur during student's transport to or from school will be determined by the cooperative efforts of the St. Joseph County ISD Transportation Supervisor and the Pathfinder Educational Center Principal.

Parents/Guardians will be notified of student pickup and drop-off schedules by the Transportation Coordinator. Routes are arranged in the most efficient way possible, based on the residences of the children that ride each bus. If your child's residence changes, please contact the Pathfinder Educational Center at 269-467-5454 immediately.

No elementary age student will be dropped off at their home/daycare provider without a responsible person visible to the bus driver.

Please contact our Transportation Coordinator, Shannon Harmon, at 269-816-1667 **any time** your child will not be attending school, have a tardy arrival, or if you have questions/concerns about your child's transportation services.

Personal Property at School

Each classroom teacher will decide the appropriate equipment/property students may bring to school. Items such as toys, records, radios, magazines, cameras, etc. can be educationally relevant. In turn, these items may also interrupt the learning process. Please check with your child's teacher before allowing your child to bring items of this nature to school. The school and ISD will not be responsible for replacing any personal property items that may be lost or damaged when on school property or during transportation.

Student Use of Cell Phones and Electronic Communication Devices

St. Joseph County ISD Board of Education Policy #5209:

Students may use cell phones or other electronic devices while at school, so long as they do so safely, responsibly, and respectfully, and comply with all other school rules while using the devices.

Students are personally and solely responsible for the security of their cell phones and other electronic devices. The District is not responsible for theft, loss, or damage of any cell phone or other electronic device.

Students may not use cell phones or other electronic devices while they are in locker rooms, restrooms, or any other area in which others may have a reasonable expectation of privacy.

Taking, disseminating, transferring, or sharing obscene, pornographic, lewd, or otherwise illegal photographs, video, audio, or other similar data, whether by electronic data transfer or otherwise (including via cell phone or other electronic device), may constitute a crime under state or federal law. A student engaged in any of these activities at school, at a school event, or on school-provided transportation, may be subject to discipline pursuant to this Policy and the student code of conduct. A student engaged in any of these activities outside of school may be disciplined if the student's activities substantially disrupt or negatively affect the school environment.

The Superintendent, building principals, and teachers are authorized to develop building-level and classroom rules for students' use of cell phones and other electronic devices. Those rules must be clearly communicated to students. A student who violates the rules or this Policy are subject to corrective or disciplinary action, consistent with Policy and the student code of conduct.

School administrators and teachers may confiscate a student's cell phone or other electronic device if the student's use or possession of a cell phone or electronic device violates this Policy, the student code of conduct, or any applicable building or classroom rule. The building principal or designee may require a meeting with the student's parent/guardian to discuss the rule violation before returning the cell phone or electronic device.

Student Dress Code

Students will be expected to follow these guidelines:

- Clothing should always be neat and clean.
- Clothing that displays drugs, alcohol, or tobacco products, or obscene or offensive language or images will not be allowed.
- See-through clothing materials will not be allowed.
- Midriffs must be covered at all times.
- No coats, hats, hoods, bandannas or sunglasses will be allowed during the school day.
- No baggy or intentionally torn pants should be worn. Pants are to remain around the waist. If pants tend to be loose and slip lower, a waist belt or suspenders must be used.
- Skirts, dresses, and shorts must extend a thumb-length beyond the end of the longest fingertip when the arm is straight at the wearer's side.
- Dress must reflect modesty: no low cut shirts or dresses, tube tops, tank tops, muscle shirts, half shorts, short shorts, bare-back/halter tops, visible underwear, short skirts, or short dresses.
- Footwear with a substantial sole is required (e.g. soft-soled slippers or flip-flops are inappropriate). Students in wheelchairs are exempt, with approval from the Principal.
- Dress should be appropriate for the weather and for playground activities.

Student Code of Conduct

General program and school rules/guidelines for student behavior are intended to maintain a safe environment that supports effective learning. It is the expectation that all students will respond positively to reasonable staff requests. Focus in school will be on:

- self-respect
- respect for others – to include no bullying
- respect for school property, and
- appropriate behavior that allows everyone an equal opportunity to learn

The Principal and/or Teacher have the authority to employ appropriate consequences for unacceptable student conduct in school, on school property, on school transportation, at school activities or events, or for any conduct that substantially disrupts school operations.

School Resource Officer

The ISD and Pathfinder Educational Center and Offsites benefit from a strong relationship with our county Sheriff's Office and have budgeted with a grant for a dedicated School Resource Officer (SRO) on staff, when available. The primary goal of the SROs is to mentor and build relationships with students and staff. The SRO is acquainted with all our campuses and is a welcome resource to the students and staff while ensuring a safe and secure environment.

Harassment and Bullying

Harassment or bullying of students is prohibited and will not be tolerated. This section applies to inappropriate conduct by students as well as any other person in the school environment, including employees, Board members, parents, guests, contractors, vendors, visitors, and volunteers. It is the policy of the District to provide a safe and nurturing educational environment for all of its students. This policy applies to all activities on school property and school transportation and to all school sponsored activities whether on or off school property.

Harassment is defined as inappropriate conduct that is repeated enough, or serious enough, to negatively impact a student's educational, physical or emotional wellbeing. This would include harassment based on any of the legally protected characteristics, such as sex, race, color, national origin, religion, height, weight, marital status or disability. This policy, however, is not limited to these legal categories and includes any harassment that would negatively impact students.

Harassment through any means, including electronically transmitted methods (e.g., internet, telephone or cell phone, personal digital assistant (PDA), computer or wireless hand-held device), may be subject to District disciplinary procedures. Such behavior is considered harassment whether it takes place on or off school property, at any school-sponsored function, or in a school vehicle if it is considered to substantially disrupt the school environment.

Any student that believes s/he has been/or is the victim of harassment should immediately report the situation to the teacher, the principal, the ISD Director of Special Education, or the ISD Superintendent.

In addition, if you would like to make a confidential report of an incident or to have a tip to share about an incident, you can use the State of Michigan's reporting site called OK2Say. Any information here is confidential, but will be routed to the State of Michigan and school authorities.

Finally, some types of harassment, including harassment based on race, color, national origin, sex (including sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, pregnancy, and pregnancy related conditions) and disabilities triggers certain civil rights protections pursuant to federal Civil Rights Act, Title IX of the Education Amendments, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. The St. Joseph County ISD's policies and procedures related to this type of harassment can be found at St. Joseph County Intermediate School District .org. To report this type of harassment or for additional questions, please contact:

Pam Panozzo Jones - 504 Coordinator
Kelli Dechnik - Title IX Coordinator

Positive Behavior Supports

It is the responsibility of teachers, assistant teachers, related service providers and administrators of Pathfinder Educational Center and Off-Site Programs to model and encourage appropriate behaviors, educate students in understanding why certain behaviors are inappropriate, and support students in developing skills that promote increasingly positive choices and behaviors. School-wide rules and pro-active procedures enable teachers and administrators to ensure consistency and fairness for all. It is the goal to provide the most positive and least restrictive procedures appropriate for all students. Positive supports vary greatly but typically can include individualized supports, verbal praise and encouragement, point and level system, token economy, rewards, special activities or privileges, etc.

Challenging Student Behavior

Students with disabilities may exhibit inappropriate behaviors from time to time. Pathfinder / St. Joseph County Intermediate School District employees in our center based programs understand that ALL behavior is communication. On occasion, a student may engage in behaviors that present a danger to him or herself or others. In these situations, staff are trained to utilize specific procedures that support the student/s and safety for all.

Pathfinder and off-site behavioral intervention practices require the use of the least restrictive method(s) to address behavior issues whenever possible. Staff and administration are trained in the UKERU and Crisis Prevention Institute (CPI) methods. These models include training in verbal and nonverbal communication, managing and de-escalating conflict by converting/diverting aggression, building an environment focused on comfort versus control, and recognizing traumatic experiences of individuals who receive services for developmental, behavioral and mental health needs. In addition, the physical techniques of UKERU involve a system of blocking pads and actions to protect the student and school personnel during behavioral episodes of physical aggression.

It is the responsibility of staff to encourage appropriate behavior by giving students consistent, positive feedback and reinforcement. When inappropriate behavior occurs, a variety of informal techniques can be used to assist the student. In cases of chronic or severe behavior, a meeting with support staff, classroom staff and parents/guardian may be arranged to determine the necessary interventions. Behavior management techniques may include restrictive measures, but this must be addressed through the development of formal behavior intervention plan (BIP) and/or emergency intervention plan that include parent/guardian notification.

Emergency Seclusion and Restraint

“Emergency seclusion” is defined in MCL 380.1307h(e) as “a last resort emergency safety intervention involving seclusion that is necessitated by an ongoing emergency situation and that provides an opportunity for the pupil to regain self-control while maintaining the safety of the pupil and others.”

“Emergency physical restraint” is defined in MCL 380.1307h(d) as “a last resort emergency safety intervention involving physical restraint that is necessitated by an ongoing emergency situation and that provides an opportunity for the pupil to regain self-control while maintaining the safety of the pupil and others.”

In an emergency where a student’s behavior poses an imminent risk to the student’s safety or the safety of others, school personnel shall:

- A. call key identified personnel for help from within the school building either immediately at the onset of an emergency situation or as soon as it is safe to do so.
- B. continually observe the pupil in emergency seclusion or restraint for indications of physical distress and seek medical assistance if there is a concern.
- C. document observations.

Emergency seclusion should not be used any longer than necessary to allow a pupil to regain control of his/her behavior to the point that the emergency situation necessitating the use of emergency seclusion is ended and generally be no longer than:

- A. 15 minutes for an elementary school pupil
- B. 20 minutes for a middle school or high school pupil

Emergency physical restraint should not be used any longer than necessary to allow a pupil to regain control of his or her behavior to the point that the emergency situation necessitating the use of emergency physical restraint is ended and generally no longer than 10 minutes.

If an emergency seclusion lasts longer than 15 minutes for an elementary school pupil or 20 minutes for a middle school or high school pupil or if an emergency restraint lasts longer than 10 minutes for any pupil, all of the following are required:

- A. additional or different support (which may include a change of staff, introducing a nurse or specialist, or additional key identified personnel); and
- B. documentation to explain the extension beyond the time limit.

Documentation and Reporting – Each use of seclusion or physical restraint, and the reason for each use, shall be:

- A. documented in writing and reported in writing or orally to the school building administration and the pupil’s parent or guardian immediately; and
- B. documented in a written report for each use of seclusion and /or restraint (including multiple uses within a given day) with this written report provided to the parent or guardian within the earlier of 1 school day or 7 calendar days.

Debrief – After any use of seclusion and/or physical restraint, school personnel must make reasonable efforts to schedule and hold a debrief to consult with the parent or guardian, or with the parent or guardian and the pupil, as appropriate, regarding the situation and the determination of future actions.

Recurring Behavior - If a pupil exhibits a pattern of behavior that poses a substantial risk of creating an emergency situation in the future that could result in the use of emergency seclusion or emergency physical restraint, school personnel will reach out to the student and guardians to create and/or revise the student's functional behavior assessment and Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP).

STUDENT DISCIPLINE CODE

It is the responsibility of school personnel and administrators to provide a safe and orderly learning environment. History has shown that certain student actions can undermine the sense of a "safe" and "orderly" environment for students and staff alike. The Pathfinder and Offsites Student Discipline Code address possible student misconduct scenarios that may subject a student to a disciplinary response. Discipline is within the discretion of the School's staff and administration. Any determined disciplinary action can only be imposed after school personnel and administration provide the student notice and an opportunity to respond to the allegations and review the facts and/or special circumstances of the situation, including by considering the student's age, discipline history, disability status, seriousness of the conduct, whether the conduct posed a safety risk, and whether restorative practices or less interventions would appropriately address the conduct.

Elopement from School Property

In the event that a student leaves the school property in an unauthorized manner, the local police department and the parent/guardian will be notified unless an alternative plan has been developed with that student, their guardians (if applicable), and the student's IEP team.

Significant Destruction of School/ Personal Property

If a student does intentional damage to or loses school property, the student or his/her parents/guardian may be required to pay for all or some portion of the cost for replacement or damage. Hours of community service, a drop in the level system, and/or an out of school suspension may result.

Verbally threatening a staff member/student/person/school facility

Verbal threats, bomb threats (or similar type threats), or verbal assault may result in a drop in the level system, charges being filed, suspension, or expulsion (up to permanent expulsion). Verbal assault is a communicated intent to inflict physical or other harm on another person, with a present intent and ability to act on the threat. Verbal threat is the intent to communicate an intent to cause physical or other harm.

Physically assaulting a staff member/student/person

Physical assault is defined as "intentionally causing or attempting to cause physical harm to another through force or violence." Assault at school against a District employee, volunteer, or contractor which may or may not cause injury may result in charges being filed and subject the student to a drop in the level system, suspension from school or possible permanent expulsion (up to permanent expulsion). Assault at school against another student may result in charges being filed and subject the student to a drop in the level system, suspension from school, or possible expulsion.

Weapons, Arson and Criminal Sexual Conduct

All Michigan school districts are required to consider expelling students who possess a dangerous weapon, commit arson, or engage in criminal sexual conduct in a school building or on school grounds or against another student. State law defines "dangerous weapon" as a firearm, dirk, dagger, stiletto, iron bar, knife with a blade over 3 inches in length, pocket knife opened by a mechanical device, and brass knuckles.

St. Joseph County Intermediate School District also prohibits look-alike weapons, knives with blades under 3 inches, airsoft or bb guns, or any other object that is readily capable of causing death or serious bodily injury.

The term “criminal sexual conduct” is defined under Michigan law as various levels of sexual penetration, sexual conduct, and assault with intent to commit sexual conduct.

A student who possesses a dangerous or other weapon, commits arson, or commits criminal sexual conduct is subject to a drop in the level system, suspension, or permanent expulsion.

Drugs, Narcotics and Alcohol

Evidence of use, possession or delivery of alcohol, narcotics, stimulants, hallucinogens, depressants, or marijuana (including vaporized THC) may result in charges being filed, and subject the student to a drop in the level system, suspension, or expulsion (up to permanently).

St. Joseph County Intermediate School District prohibits the sale, possession, distribution, dispensation, or use of tobacco products (including chewing tobacco), electronic cigarettes, vaporizers, and all electronic nicotine delivery systems on property owned or operated by the District and at any District-related event.

Pathfinder Center is concerned about any student who suffers from alcohol or drug addiction and will attempt to facilitate the process by which s/he receives help through programs and services available in the community. Students and their parents should contact the school principal whenever such help is needed for resources. **Nothing in this paragraph, however, may be construed to limit Pathfinder’s ability to discipline a student for conduct described above.**

Bullying & Harassment

Bullying and harassment, as defined earlier in this Handbook, are prohibited. A student who commits bullying or harassment is subject to a drop in the level system, suspension, or expulsion (up to permanently).

Search and Seizure

Search of a student and his/her possessions, including vehicles, may be conducted at any time the student is under the jurisdiction of the Board of Education if there is a reasonable suspicion that the student is in violation of law or school rules. All searches may be conducted with or without a student’s consent. School officials may search a student’s locker, chromebook, or other school property assigned to the student at any time, with or without cause and with or without notice. Students have no expectation of privacy in their lockers or in any property belonging to St. Joseph County Intermediate School District.

Video Surveillance

A video surveillance camera is installed on St. Joseph County ISD buses and in classrooms and public or common areas at the Pathfinder Building and Off-Site Programs.

Due Process

Due process is defined in the Federal and State Constitutions to require adequate notice of the charges pending against a student, and an opportunity to be heard and to refute the charges. The school will notify the student and parent/guardian who has been suspended ten days or less oral, or written notice of the charges and, if the student denies the charges, a chance to explain his or her side of the story. This informal “notice and opportunity to be heard” can be granted within minutes of alleged misconduct by the person making the suspension.

Procedures for Students with Disabilities

Pathfinder and St. Joseph County Intermediate School District will ensure that disciplinary consequences, including removals, suspensions, and expulsions, are imposed consistent with the procedural and substantive requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. Before changing a student’s placement for disciplinary purposes, Pathfinder and St. Joseph County Intermediate School District will convene a manifestation determination review to consider the relationship between the student’s disability and misconduct.

Law Enforcement Referral

Pathfinder and St. Joseph County Intermediate School District staff and or administration reserve the right to contact law enforcement at any time to report possible criminal conduct.

Emergency Closings and Delays

In case of severe weather (snow, ice, fog, etc.) or other district-related issues (plumbing, electricity, etc.), school closing announcements will be aired on local radio and TV stations. We also send out a notice via our School Messenger System or phone calls from transportation personnel.

Sometimes it is necessary to send students home after they have arrived at school due to severe weather or other events. Every effort is made to alert the parent/guardian of this situation via the School Messenger System. No child is discharged without some contact having been made with individuals indicated on the student’s enrollment card.

Please make sure to notify the Pathfinder Office as soon as possible if you have a change in phone number or address, so that you can complete the necessary paperwork and we can update the contact information in our emergency system.

Visitors

The involvement of our students’ family members, guardians, and support providers is essential to our learning community and our students’ success. We welcome parents/guardians to visit/observe their children at school when necessary, but also work diligently to respect and maintain the continuity and integrity of instructional time and the learning environment for our students ‘

If a parent/guardian wishes to observe their child at school, they must contact the principal at least 24 school hours in advance of the desired visitation time. The principal will inform the classroom teacher to inform them of the request and confirm that the day and time requested is suitable for the learning environment and student / classroom schedule. The principal will then confirm with the parent / guardian or suggest another possible date and time for the visit. Meeting requests with classroom and related services staff members need to be arranged during non-student hours or other predetermined and agreed-upon times. Visits need to be limited to a reasonable amount of time and agreed upon by the principal.

All visitors must sign in at the main office, introduce themselves, and put on a visitor badge so others in the building know they are a visitor and the check-in process has been followed. All visitors will be expected to abide by the same code of conduct as indicated for students in this manual which includes self-respect, respect for others, respect for privacy and property, and appropriate behavior that allows everyone an equal opportunity to learn.

Volunteers

We welcome volunteers in our learning communities. If you or a family member are interested in volunteering or please call the school office, principal, or your child's teacher . A volunteer form must be filled out 2 weeks prior to the date of volunteering and the background screening process must be passed before an individual can begin volunteer work with the students.

Fire Drills, Lockdown Drills, and Tornado Drills

Pathfinder Educational Center and Off-Site Programs will schedule emergency drills as required by State Law as follows:

- 5 fire drills each school year
- 2 tornado drills each school year
- 3 lockdown drills each school year

Specific instructions on how to proceed will be provided to students by their teachers who will be responsible for safe, prompt, and orderly evacuation of the building.

Curriculum

Pathfinder Educational Center's curriculum was created in cooperation with multiple center-based programs throughout the state of Michigan. The curriculum project was supported and funded through the Michigan Association of Administrators of Special Education (MAASE) and its sub group, Supervisors of Low Incidence Programs (SLIP). There are 3 levels of the Unique Learning System (ULS) Curriculum: Functional Independence, Participation, and Supported Independence. Many of our students are taught the ULS curriculum, which is aligned to the Essential Elements and Range of Complexity of Common Core State Standards. Students in classrooms specific for students with Emotional Impairments are provided a general education curriculum while also provided customized learning paths for each student and their individual learning strengths and project based learning activities

Parents have the right to review any instructional materials being used in their child's classroom and the school. They also may observe instruction in any class, particularly those dealing with instruction in health and sex education. Any parent/guardian who wishes to review materials or observe instruction must contact the Principal and classroom teacher at least 24 school hours prior to desired observation date and time, as per the Visitors guidelines in this manual. Parents' rights to review teaching materials and instructional activities are subject to reasonable restrictions and limits.

Field Trips and Community Outings

Field trips are co-curricular and extracurricular activities that advance the educational and social and emotional goals for our students. Parent / Guardian permission will be required for each planned outing away from school property their child participates in. Communications and permission slips for planned field trips will be shared from each child's classroom teacher.

Community Based Instruction (CBI) is also considered part of our students' curriculum and involves academic activities that are held off school grounds. Parents must provide consent for the CBI activities each school year via the parent contract provided at the start of each new school year. .

Notification and communications related to all trips away from school property will be provided through routine school communications and /or individual classroom teachers.

Physical Education and Sports

Pathfinder Educational Center promotes student physical activity and participation as appropriate for each student's ability. This is done in several ways such as physical education classes, swim classes, fitness program, and team sports (such as basketball, bowling, polyhockey, soccer, etc.). Students are expected to take part in our swimming program unless there is a written Doctor's Medical Excuse on record. Please provide a swimsuit for your child, if possible. If your child doesn't have a swimsuit available, one will be provided. Students will be asked to bring in towels.

On the first day of physical education you will need to send the following items with your child:

- Tennis shoes
- A comb or brush
- Deodorant

Pool Closing Procedures

In the event that a student has a bowel-movement accident or is sick in the pool, the pool will be shut down for the remainder of the day. Dependent on the type of accident, the pool will be either shocked with chlorine or drained. Parents of the student will be notified and a prevention plan may be considered to address the accident and to determine ways to avoid its reoccurrence if accidents are frequently occurring. If the student has a bowel-movement in the pool more than once, an exclusionary decision may be made for a specified amount of time, for the safety of all students.

Extended School Year (ESY)

Students at Pathfinder may receive Extended School Year services, which typically occur during summer break. ESY is focused on keeping skills students have gained in place and minimize any backwards slide in skills during the summer break. Eligibility and needs determination for ESY participation will be discussed by each student's IEP team annually. Eligibility for ESY is based on each individual child's academic and/or social-emotional needs as demonstrated by historical data and student growth patterns. Parents / Guardians can choose to have their child not participate even if they are determined eligible in their IEP by the IEP Team Member as ESY is not required.

Student Assessment and Progress Reports

Pathfinder Educational Center students participate in the MI-Access and M-STEP assessments. MI-Access is Michigan's alternate assessment system, designed for students with cognitive impairments who's Individualized Educational Program (IEP) Team has determined that M-STEP assessments, even with accommodations, are not appropriate. MI-Access satisfies the Federal *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) as reauthorized in 2004 and the *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) Act of 2001 that require all students with disabilities to be assessed at the state level.

In addition to state assessments, progress reports on students' individual goals and objectives are completed throughout the year at the end of each academic quarter. These reports are available at mid-semester conferences, can be sent home with students, and/or mailed to the home address of the parent/guardian.

If you have questions about your child's progress at any time during the school year, please contact your child's teacher and arrange a meeting with them. If you still have concerns after meeting with the teacher, please contact your child's Principal.

Homebound/Hospitalized Instruction

In accordance with the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) Rule R.340.1746, Homebound and Hospitalized services are provided under the following guidelines:

- Homebound services will be initiated within 5 school days after verification, by a licensed physician, of a medical impairment which requires the student to be confined to the home. Such verification shall indicate the anticipated duration of the required confinement.
- Hospital services will be provided for students who cannot attend school because of hospitalization for a physical or medical impairment. These services will be initiated when determined medically feasible.

If you have questions, please contact your child's Pathfinder Educational Center Principal.

Limited English Proficiency

Limited English Proficiency (LEP) should not be a barrier to equal participation in the instructional or extra-curricular programs of Pathfinder Educational Center and Off-Site Programs. Students who have been identified as having limited English proficiency will be provided additional support and instruction to assist them in gaining English proficiency and in accessing the educational and extra-curricular programs available to the student.

Student Records/FERPA Rights

The St. Joseph County ISD is responsible for maintaining records of all students attending school at Pathfinder Educational Center and Off-Site Programs. The student records include both directory and confidential information. The school may disclose some student information to other parties without written consent when the information is designated as "directory information". The Board has designated a student's name, address, dates of attendance, date of graduation, and/or awards received for inclusion in school or Parent Teacher Organization directories as student "directory information".

A parent/guardian or adult student may provide consent when it is required, unless stipulated otherwise by court order, for the inspection and/or release of a student's educational records or for the release of "directory information." Parents and adult students may refuse to allow Pathfinder Educational Center to disclose any or all "directory information" by giving written notification to Pathfinder within ten (10) days after receiving the public notice of this policy. If the student is under the guardianship of an institution, the Principal will appoint a person who has no conflicting interest to provide such written consent. Pathfinder Educational Center may disclose "directory information" on former students without student or parental consent.

Parents/adult students have the right to:

- inspect and review the student's educational records;
- request an amendment to the records if the parent or adult student believe the information to be inaccurate or misleading;
- limit the disclosure of personally-identifiable information defined as directory information upon written notice to the district;
- request a hearing if the district refuses to amend records believed by the parent to be misleading or inaccurate and to file a complaint with the Department of Education if the parent is dissatisfied with the results of the hearing;
- and obtain a copy of the Board's policy on student records.

Student Records and Directory Information

Student records are confidential. Parents of students, eligible students, and persons designated in accordance with St. Joseph County ISD Board of Education Policy #5309, may inspect and review the student's education records upon request. (This policy is available by going to the St. Joseph County ISD website: www.St. Joseph County Intermediate School District .org under 'Your ISD' > 'Board of Education' > 'Board Policy and Administrative Guidelines'.)

Protection of Pupil Rights

The Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA) affords parents certain rights regarding the conduct of surveys, collection and use of information for marketing purposes, and certain physical exams. These include the right to:

- Consent before students participate in a protected information survey.
- Receive notice and an opportunity to opt a student out of a protected information survey, any non-emergency physical exam or screening except for hearing, vision or scoliosis screenings, and activities involving collection, disclosure, or use of personal information for marketing purposes.
- Inspect, upon request and before administration or use: protected information surveys and marketing, sales or distribution instruments.

The Pathfinder Educational Center Principal will provide parents with notice of these specific activities and the opportunity to provide consent to participate or opt out. Parents will be provided an opportunity to review any pertinent surveys prior to the planned activity

Parent Involvement Plan

The St. Joseph County ISD Board of Education believes that durable and significant learning by a student is more likely to occur when there is an effective partnership between the school and the student's parents/guardians or other caregivers. Such a partnership means a mutual belief in and commitment to significant educational goals for a student, a plan for the means to accomplish those goals, cooperation on developing and implementing solutions to problems that may be encountered and continuing communication regarding the progress in accomplishing the goals.

The Board is committed to communicating with parents at a level and in a language they can understand. The Board through this policy directs the establishment of a parent involvement plan by which a school-parent partnership can be established and provided to the caregiver of each child in the district.

The following activities are included in the St. Joseph County ISD Parent Involvement Plan:

- regular home-school communication
- provision of a parent/student handbook
- parent support activities
- multiple opportunities for student progress reporting
- parent volunteer opportunities
- involvement in decision making about your student's educational needs
- participation in school functions or events
- mid-semester parent/guardian-teacher conferences or as needed conferences with all or part of your child's IEP Team, including the student's annual IEP meeting

Preparedness for Toxic and Asbestos Hazards

Pathfinder Educational Center is concerned for the safety of students and attempts to comply with all Federal and State Laws and Regulations to protect students from hazards that may result from industrial accidents beyond the control of school officials or from the presence of asbestos materials used in previous construction. A copy of the School District's *Preparedness for Toxic Hazard and Asbestos Hazard Policy* and asbestos management plan will be made available for inspection, upon request, by contacting the St. Joseph County Superintendent's Office at 269-467-5400.

IDEA Procedural Safeguards

Parents/Guardians are entitled to receive a copy of "Procedural Safeguards for Parents of Students with Disabilities" under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). These procedural safeguards outline your rights and responsibilities as a parent/guardian involved with special education and are given to you at least annually. If you would like a copy of this document or need assistance in understanding the provisions of IDEA please contact the Principal. Below is a link to the

Procedural Safeguards:

https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/Procedural_Safeguards_Notice_550307_7.pdf

St. Joseph County Intermediate School District Staffing Plan to address shortages

St. Joseph County Intermediate School District supports local district special education needs as part of a continuum of services. We are dedicated to ensuring our students receive a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). Educational shortages are a current reality and it is important to implement proactive strategies when unexpected openings occur to ensure our students receive FAPE. The following plan outlines steps that will be taken when shortages occur.

If a classroom teacher or service provider unexpectedly resigns, the ISD is committed to provide services immediately and effectively either through contract employment or otherwise. The following steps will be taken to ensure students continue to receive appropriate education.

- Consider if two similar classrooms can be combined to ensure a certified teacher oversees the program.
- Post for the vacant position, as needed, given above consideration.
- As needed, utilize certified subs that work in our district (floating subs, current staff with sub permits or third party hires) to meet short term needs, assigning the sub a mentor and contracting with certified teachers to support lesson planning and IEP oversight until the position can be filled.
- Utilize staff in other positions with needed certifications and endorsements to support, as practical.
- Notify the local education agency with jurisdiction over ensuring the student receives FAPE to work together on other continuum options if adequate staffing is not found.
- Notify families in the class impacted by the loss of a certified teacher of the steps taken to ensure effective services continue. Consider compensatory education needs due to the lack of a certified teacher.

The ISD will attempt to ensure that teachers and staff responsible for implementing all programs and services at the ISD's Pathfinder Program meet all state certification and endorsement requirements that pertain to those programs and services.

- The ISD will ensure postings for new openings meet state and federal certification and endorsement requirements. Qualified candidates will be solicited through a variety of avenues, including hiring websites, third party vendors, colleges, universities and Michigan Department of Education resources.
- When appropriate, the ISD will consider if two similar classrooms can be combined to ensure a certified teacher oversees a program.

- Knowing local schools and surrounding ISD's are struggling with the same shortages in the area of special education, additional efforts to be competitive have been made. This includes significant salary increases for classroom staff, raised sub pay and offered bonuses, and brainstorming with union groups, St. Joseph County ISD is part of a 48 ISD consortium, called Talent Together, committed to filling programs with certified staff.
- Talent Together has recently been awarded a grant of over 60 million dollars to support growing our own talent locally.
- In addition, the county has opened a teacher cadet program through Career Technical Education to support needs in the community.

The ISD will ensure that students are provided with appropriate instruction if teachers and staff who hold the state required certification and endorsements are unavailable.

- When certified and endorsed educators are unavailable, the ISD will utilize subs with permits that work in our district (floating subs, current staff with sub permits or third party hires) for longer term positions, assigning the sub a mentor and contracting with certified teachers to support lesson planning and IEP oversight until the position can be filled.
- Certified subs will receive priority of placement over non certified subs.
- A letter of agreement allows current staff with appropriate permits to be paid for additional time if they are willing to sub and support classrooms for daily absences.
- Staff in other positions with needed certifications and endorsements will be asked to support immediate needs, as practical, based on their role in the organization.
- The local education agency with jurisdiction over ensuring the student receives FAPE will be notified to work together on other continuum options if adequate staffing is not found.
- Notify families in the class impacted by the loss of a certified teacher of the steps taken to ensure effective services continue. Consider compensatory education needs due to the lack of a certified teacher, if needed.

Continued efforts to overcome staff shortages and provide students with a FAPE.

- Knowing local schools and surrounding ISD's are struggling with the same shortages in the area of special education, we've made additional efforts to be competitive. This includes:
 - Significant salary increases for classroom staff, raised sub pay and offered bonuses.
 - On-going communication and brainstorming with union groups.
 - Joining a 48 ISD consortium, called Talent Together, with a grant of over 60 million dollars to support growing our own talent locally.
 - Opening a teacher cadet program through CTE.

When the ISD is unable to find certified staff to fill positions and utilizes substitute teachers, the following steps will be taken to ensure appropriate, quality instruction continues for students:

- For long term subs assigned as the Teacher of Record for a given assignment, building administration will provide support by assigning a mentor and certified teacher to oversee lesson plans and IEP's to provide needed support and peer training.
- A similar evaluation process to other classroom staff will be used for long term subs, including conducting walk through observations with feedback, documenting training or coursework completed at the ISD. EDUStaff sub evaluations include the building administrator completing an "Employee Performance Feedback Form" no less than once per semester.
- Families in the class impacted by the loss of a certified teacher will be notified of the steps taken to ensure effective services continue.
- Compensatory education needs will be considered due to the lack of a certified teacher.

When a certified teacher who is not trained in the instruction or persons with the disability in question is hired to be the teacher of the record, the ISD will consider the following additional supports to ensure that the teacher receives relevant training so that the teacher may effectively and adequately provide program services to the students assigned to their respective classrooms or programs:

- Assign a teacher consultant for specialized support services.
- Utilize performance contracts with certified staff.
- Provide professional development in the area of social/emotional learning.
- Assigning a mentor.

- Provide an extra layer of support from our behavior team, i.e., School Social Worker, School Psychologist.

The Local Education Entity, in collaboration with the ISD, has an obligation to provide a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) to each student. This obligation remains intact in the event of a teacher shortage. A notice will be provided to parents of students with disabilities when a certified teacher or staff is unavailable and will indicate the measures in place to ensure students are provided a FAPE, as outlined in this plan.

The ISD will monitor its Plan on a periodic basis, at least every semester, to ensure both the immediacy and effectiveness of its provision of programs and services.