The Children's School

Family Handbook 2026-27

"The child's own instincts and powers furnish the material and give the starting point for all education."

John Dewey

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This is a living/evergreen document. Any updates or edits will be communicated to the current TCS parent and guardian roster and posted with a revised date on the website.

Introduction

Welcome to The Children's School!

Dear TCS Families,

On behalf of the TCS Board and staff, I would like to welcome you to The Children's School. TCS offers a different kind of educational program for our students, one that emphasizes project-based learning, emergent curriculum, democracy in action and a social justice focus. The curriculum leads to students taking responsibility for their learning through inquiry-based, in-depth projects. I am both delighted and honored that you chose TCS to play a central role in your child's education. I'm excited to get to know each and every one of you and hope you will find this community an inviting and inclusive one. There are numerous ways to get involved and I invite you to find your passion through multiple opportunities extended to our families.

From the beginning, TCS has been committed to hiring highly qualified and effective instructional and administrative staff. They are extremely patient, hardworking, and committed to our students and families. Without these dedicated individuals, TCS would not have the education program we desire for our children. Each year, they prove over and over again their commitment to children, families and their own professional learning.

Family involvement and community partnerships remain fundamental to our success. I am devoted to developing a culture that includes families and community members. TCS couldn't operate without the families and individuals who contribute many volunteer hours of direct support and service for teachers, students, and various programs. I invite you to get involved and enjoy contributing to the education of all TCS students.

Sincerely,

Michelle Candelaria-Dunstan
TCS Head of School

Our Mission and Vision

The mission of The Children's School is to nurture students' innate curiosity and love of learning through democratic practice, emergent curriculum, and hands-on projects, helping students become lifelong problem-solvers and engaged citizens.

Core Beliefs:

Learning: We believe that learning should be joyful, active, open-ended, project-based, and collaborative in order to foster children's independence, accountability, intrinsic motivation, and intellectual curiosity.

Engaging: We believe in cultivating a community of civically active learners, where everyone's voice can be heard as decisions are democratically determined through discourse.

Unfolding: We believe in allowing the time, patience, and unpressured environment necessary to support the individualized developmental unfolding of each child — academically, socially, and emotionally.

Vision:

We are known to be a progressive, justice-oriented school that embraces diversity, honors childhood, and helps students access their own intrinsic motivation through play, critical thought, and action.

- We have a full class of highly engaged students in each grade.
- Our philosophy and curriculum honor each student's full humanity and actively support their intellectual, social, and emotional growth.
- Our collaborative faculty comprises outstanding progressive educators who are valued and engaged.
- Our authentic assessment approach provides high quality data, artifacts, and evidence of student progress without the use of high-stakes standardized testing.
- Students, parents and alumni are confident, committed ambassadors for the school.
- Well-established administrative and instructional systems support teachers, families, and students.
- Resources are stable, enabling us to remain an accessible school of choice for a wide range of families.
- We are thought leaders in the broader educational context and a top choice school for parents and students.

Administration and Governance

Administrative structure

The administration of The Children's School is led by Michelle Candelaria-Dunstan, Head of School, with support from Steve Krzak, Organization Manger, Roshni Mondal, HR Coordinator.

Steve Krzak is our friendly face in the office who will help you and your student(s) with late arrivals, early dismissals, and record-keeping. Roshni Mondal manages records and systems for our employees. We are thankful to have such kind and dedicated team members and encourage you to connect with them.

Michelle Candelaria-Dunstan, our Head of School, wears a whole stack of hats. You can go to Michelle with questions regarding enrollment, tuition, and financial aid, as well as questions about your child's learning and school experiences. Gloria Mitchell supports Michelle and our faculty by helping to coordinate learning opportunities for teachers and facilitate alignment of our curriculum across grade levels.

We look forward to getting to know you this year, and helping you get to know how we do learning at The Children's School!

Governance

The Children's School is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization governed by an elected Board of four officers and seven other members. The responsibilities of the Board of Directors include fiscal oversight, institutional policy-making, long-range vision and planning, and hiring and evaluation of the Head of School. Please direct questions on these topics to Board members in their official capacities.

All parents/guardians of enrolled students are considered members of the organization and are eligible to vote in annual elections. Regular Board meetings are open to any member of the TCS community who wishes to attend.

For a list of all members of the Board of Directors, please see the Board of Directors page of our website. You can email the Board at tcsboard@tcsconnect.org.

Communications and Contacts

Communication protocol

We believe that building a strong community requires good communication. Our goal is to maintain respectful, good-faith communication throughout the entire school community — teachers, students, administrators, families, staff, and Board members. We value your input and want to partner with families to provide a wonderful educational experience for students.

To that end, we ask families to respect the communication protocol outlined below for raising concerns, asking questions, or making suggestions.

- For absences or notifications of late arrival or early pick-up, please call the office at 708.484.8033 or email skrzak@tcsconnect.org.
- If your concern or question pertains to billing or another business issue, please contact Head of School, Michelle Candelaria-Dunstan at mcdunstan@tcsconnect.org.
- If your concern or question pertains to fiscal policy or other policy matters, or long-range planning and vision for the school, please contact the Board at tcsboard@tcsconnect.org.
- If your concern or question pertains to the classroom, please begin by talking with your classroom teacher. After an initial and a follow-up conversation with your classroom teacher, if you are not satisfied with the outcome or need more information, please contact Head of School Michelle Candelaria-Dunstan at mcdunstan@tcsconnect.org.
- When bringing forth a concern or question, please be mindful of your timing. Teachers are not able to engage in an in-depth conversation with you at drop-off or pick-up or in the middle of the school day because of their responsibilities in the classroom. However, they will be happy to schedule a time for a longer conversation.
- We will not share confidential information about your child with other people, nor will we share confidential information about another child with you. Therefore we are limited in what we can say about how a situation is being handled with another child.
- If parents/guardians reach out to their teacher, or if a teacher reaches out to parents/guardians, it is expected that the other party will respond within 48 hours (except on weekends and school holidays).

The best way to reach teachers is by email. Please text or call teachers only in case of emergency.

If an issue is raised by email that warrants a more in-depth discussion, we will ask to set up an in-person or phone meeting to talk further.

Email communications

Regular email communications you can expect from TCS*:

- Administrative News You Can Use (weekly)
- Emergency announcements: health alerts, school closings, etc. (as needed)
- Head of School letters: school-wide announcements or updates (as needed)
- Social Worker letters (monthly)
- Communications from teachers: newsletter or post with classroom news (monthly)

* Please notify Steve Krzak (skrzak@tcsconnect.org) if you are not receiving emails from TCS at least once each week, or of any email address or contact information changes.

Communicating with your child during the school day

We understand that parents and guardians may sometimes need to reach their child during the school day regarding scheduling or pick-up arrangements.

We ask that you **contact the school office** rather than calling or texting your child or your child's teacher during school hours.

The office will ensure swift communication with the teacher/student in a way that limits disruption to the class. The office can be reached at 708.484.8033 or skrzak@tcsconnect.org.

Canceling woods due to inclement weather

In case of inclement weather, we will notify you by Tuesday evening if a Woods Day is canceled. Please note that according to the Illinois State Board of Education's Child Care Weather Watch, children can be permitted to play outside under the close supervision of adults when temperatures are low. However, when rain is added to the mix, the combination of wet and cold can make it dangerous or extremely uncomfortable to remain outdoors for extended periods. Thus we are more likely to cancel for rain than for cold.

Please know that each time we are in the woods, teachers are prepared with extra dry clothing and supplies. We also have access to buildings and cars in case they are needed. We strongly recommend that each student have a complete change of clothes, including socks and shoes, available at school in order to be comfortable while inside and to minimize mud and water entering the building.

School closings

Parents/guardians will be contacted via email should there be an emergency closing and an announcement will be posted on the school's website and social media channels. All efforts will be made to do so in a timely fashion. Extra days may be added to the school calendar if necessary to meet Illinois school attendance requirements.

Directory and contacts

Our TCS website (www.thechildrensschool.info) has a "Families" page where current families can find this Handbook, calendar, directory, and other information. We ask that everyone respect the privacy of others (addresses, contact information) by not sharing the login information with anyone outside the TCS community. **Password to the student directory on the Families page of the website: Coming Soon!**

For a list of all faculty and staff members, please see the Faculty & Staff page of our website. Teachers can be reached via email with their first initial and last name followed by "@tcsconnect.org."

The School Day

Daily schedule

The school day runs from 8:45 a.m. to 3:15 p.m. on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays. Wednesdays are early dismissal and school runs from 8:45 a.m. to 2:15 p.m.

Drop-off (8:40 a.m. or as early as 7:45 a.m. for Before Care)
Students should enter the school building through the east doors on Ontario Avenue. Doors open at 8:40 a.m. to allow students to put belongings in their lockers or cubbies and arrive at their classrooms by 8:45 a.m.

Students in K-3 who arrive early must have a supervising adult with them in order to wait outside. Please do not leave young children to wait by themselves on school grounds. Students in grades 4-8 may wait on the steps outside the east doors, being mindful not to block the public sidewalk in front of the building.

In inclement weather, we will open the school doors early and allow students to wait in the Narthex until 8:40.

Pick-up (3:15 p.m. on Mo, Tu, Th, Fr and 2:15 p.m. on Wed)
Doors will open at 3:15 p.m. for pick-up (2:15 p.m. on Wed).

For students in Kindergarten-3rd grade, we ask that you come into the east doors, go to the 2nd floor outside your child's classroom where teachers will help with dismissal and note on clipboards who picks up each child.

For students in 4th-8th grades, parents/guardians are asked to read and sign our self-signout form allowing 4th-8th grade students to meet you outside the building or get home on their own (the form is in TADS). Students in grades 4-8 will exit through the east doors.

Please note that before the school day begins, and once they are signed out to you at the end of the day, you are fully responsible for the children in your care. We cannot monitor the sidewalks, outdoor spaces, or public park grounds, and we depend upon caregivers to help keep children safe. Please respect our neighbors and do not allow children to climb trees, railings, or fences. Please drive slowly, refrain from cell phone use, cross the street at crosswalks only, and walk with children so that they can be seen. Each family is responsible for communicating these guidelines to other adults who may be picking up their child.

Late arrival and early dismissal

Students arriving at school after 8:50 a.m. should proceed to the west doors and ring the bell for The Children's School. Steve Krzak or another staff member will permit late-arriving students to enter. They will be marked as tardy unless a parent or guardian has notified us in advance of the late arrival.

If your child has an appointment during school hours, we ask that you notify the school office as much as possible ahead of time. All pick-ups and drop-offs outside of regular times will be coordinated through the school office. Please do not call or text a teacher to arrange pick-ups or drop-offs.

Before Care

Before Care is available each day from 7:45 - 8:40 am at a cost of $8 per day. Before Care is supervised by a teacher or staff member and provides a quiet place for students to read, draw, or play games.

After school workshops are offered for students of all grades two days per week. Click here for more information.

Absences

Regular and punctual attendance at school is important to best support your child's learning. If your child needs to be absent from school, please notify Steve Krzak in the school office as well as your child's teacher. You can email skrzak@tcsconnect.org or call the office at 708.484.8033.

Children who are ill in the morning should not return to school in the afternoon. Call or email the office any time your child has a contagious disease, no matter when it occurs. Whenever your child has any of the following, please keep them home:

- Fever in last 24 hours;
- Vomiting or diarrhea in last 24 hours;
- Flu-like or COVID-19 symptoms;
- Diagnosed with or experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, strep throat, pinkeye, or other contagious illness.

When parents/guardians are out of town, it is helpful for the school to be informed and to know when and where they can be reached. Please provide information regarding who is caring for your child while you are away.

Please note that because of the emergent, project-based nature of instruction at TCS, it is often not possible for a student to "make up" work missed during absences. If you are taking a family trip, your classroom teacher may ask your child to keep a travel journal and report back to the class (or something similar), but there may not be a separate list of assignments to be completed while gone.

Birthdays and holidays

Birthdays
We wish to honor all birthdays within the context of the regular school day in a manner that is low-key and equitable. Classroom teachers will work with students to create their own developmentally appropriate ritual around birthday celebrations. We ask that you NOT send cake, cupcakes, or other food as this can be difficult for students with food allergies or food sensitivities.

Holidays
TCS has a tradition of organizing a parade at the end of the day on Halloween (if it falls on a school day). Children are permitted to bring a costume with them to school if they choose, and to change into it after recess. Costumes should not include masks, weapons, blood or gore, and should not reference or stereotype people groups. Families are welcome to watch the parade and to pick up their child after it ends.

Other holidays may be observed by individual classrooms, multiple classrooms, or the whole school in a variety of ways. Your child's teacher will communicate with families about any special plans. Please reach out to your child's teacher if you would like to help organize a celebration. We love it when families share their traditions with us!

What to bring and what to leave at home

Children learn best when they are well rested and well fed, have opportunities for movement and outdoor exercise, and can focus their attention without distractions. You can support your child's learning by ensuring that they have what they need to learn each day.

Lunch, snacks, and water bottle
Please make sure your child brings a full water bottle each day, a nutritious lunch, and (if they like) 1-2 small snacks. If your child is staying for after-school activities, please pack extra snacks. Please make sure all food items are ones your child can manage independently.

Clothing
Please make sure your child has proper attire to play outdoors comfortably in all types of weather. During winter months, this includes boots, snow pants, hat, and mittens/gloves. Younger students should keep an extra set of clothing at school.

Shoes
Please make sure your student has a pair of gym shoes at school every day. All students should keep a pair of indoor shoes at school at all times. This helps us keep floors clean on wet and muddy days.

Bringing toys from home
We respectfully ask that children not bring toys or games from home to school. Our goal is to have play be fair, fun, safe, and inclusive. During any period of play, we want children to engage in activities that do not exclude. This can be difficult to accomplish when some children have personal toys or games at their disposal. If for some reason your child feels a strong need to bring a toy or personal belonging to school, please check with the classroom teacher first.

Bringing technology from home

Students who bring cell phones, tablets, or other Internet-enabled devices must turn them into a locked space in their classrooms at the beginning of the day. At dismissal, they will be returned to students. This includes all smartwatches.

This allows us to maintain a distraction-free learning environment.

Please contact the school office if you need to reach your child during the school day.

Students are not allowed to take photos/videos or record other students while at school without prior permission of a teacher or administrator. Students should not bring cameras to school.

Educational Program

Curriculum

The Children's School is an independent school with philosophical roots in the tradition of progressive education. Progressive educators strive to teach the skills, dispositions, and values that support engaged citizenship in a pluralistic democracy. At The Children's School, our aim is that our students learn to advocate for their own needs and respect the needs of others; to ask questions and think critically; to engage with and serve their communities; and to stand up for their own and others' rights with courage and compassion.

Accordingly, the school day and school week include structured opportunities for students to make decisions together. This includes some decisions about what to learn and how to learn it. While our curriculum includes lessons, activities, and units of study that are planned by teachers, it also makes room for learning opportunities that emerge from the curiosity, interests, and desires of a particular group of students.

Curricular goals
Grade-level curricular goals are posted on our website and are linked below. Please note that the goals are subject to periodic review and revision. Families will be notified of any substantive changes.

Kindergarten Curricular Goals
First Grade Curricular Goals
Second Grade Curricular Goals
Third Grade Curricular Goals
Fourth Grade Curricular Goals
Fifth Grade Curricular Goals
Middle Level Curricular Goals (Grades 6-8)
Social Justice Curricular Goals, K-8

Projects
At the heart of our inquiry-based and emergent approach to learning is the project. We use the term "project" to refer to a long-term, interdisciplinary inquiry into a topic of interest. Projects are undertaken by groups or classes of students under the leadership of their teacher, who helps guide students in formulating questions, researching information, and crafting a meaningful response.

Project-based learning is sometimes described as "hands-on," and it often is, but it is also "minds-on" as learners develop disciplinary understandings, acquire new vocabulary, negotiate to get their needs and desires met, grapple with questions of equity and justice, and collaborate with others to achieve something greater than they could create alone.

Teachers are intentional in finding and creating opportunities for students to work toward grade-level curricular goals in English Language Arts (reading, writing, speaking, and listening), research, social studies, science, and social justice during the course of project work.

Some projects may be more focused on a topic in the physical sciences, such as biology or engineering, while others may be more focused on the social sciences, such as history or sociology. All projects provide students with opportunities to inquire about a topic of interest, to gather information and ideas, and to collaborate with others in choosing and carrying out a response.

In a world of instant information and artificial intelligence, the deeply human skills of communicating with others, creatively generating solutions to problems, discerning the probable results of a course of action, and reflecting on outcomes have immense value. By guiding the development of these skills throughout project work, The Children's School equips young people with the creativity, curiosity, flexibility, and courage they will need to navigate a complex future.

English Language Arts

Students at The Children's School read and write for a variety of purposes and audiences throughout their school day and school year. As readers, students encounter and engage with texts to obtain information and to expand their understanding of the world and their place in it. Of equal importance, students are provided time to read for enjoyment and to feed their imaginations. All students at The Children's School are seen and celebrated as writers with powerful voices and stories to tell.

Project work contains boundless opportunities for students to encounter and discuss texts, and to engage in writing for authentic audiences and purposes. Within the context of projects, teachers work with students in a developmentally appropriate manner on research, observation, and note-taking; writing composition; English grammar and usage; and speaking, listening, and presenting. From stories and scripts to emails and newsletters, students engage in drafting, revising, and editing their writing to accomplish specific goals and outcomes.

In addition to the reading and writing that takes place within project work, our students study literature and compose their own works of creative writing. They learn to respectfully engage in a community of readers by sharing their own perspectives, listening to the ideas of others, and using the group conversation to advance their understandings of a work of literature. They learn to give and receive feedback and to improve a piece of writing by taking it through multiple drafts.

For a more detailed description of literacy learning at The Children's School, please see Our Approach to Literacy.

Mathematics

We believe that every student can learn mathematics to high levels, and we strive to make the study of mathematics an open, engaging, and creative pursuit for all students by posing problems and questions that elicit multiple solution paths and multiple representations. As students and teachers explore mathematical ideas, they engage together in the discourse, reasoning, and sense-making that are at the heart of mathematics. While projects may and often do include opportunities to do real-world mathematics, significant time is set aside on most days to focus on mathematics learning that is separate from project work. This allows us to ensure that we can teach topics aligned with grade-level goals, and it also gives students opportunities to explore the "pure" mathematics of observing and generalizing patterns.

Our mathematics curriculum aligns with established national standards and emphasizes number sense, algebraic thinking, problem-solving, reasoning, and mathematical discourse. Our aim is that all students will appreciate mathematics both as a set of tools for exploring and explaining the world, and as a challenging and enjoyable activity in itself.

Following the Principles and Standards of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, we do not divide students into academic tracks or levels for the study of mathematics. Differentiation happens in multiple ways, depending on the needs of the student:

- Teachers present "low floor, high ceiling" tasks that every student can engage with, and some can take to higher levels.
- Teachers plan lessons and activities to include support for students who need it as well as extensions for those who are ready to learn more.
- Some students may receive individual or small-group instruction outside the regularly scheduled math learning times.
- Eighth grade students who wish to "place out" of freshman math and begin high school in sophomore math will be supported by their teacher to complete the equivalent of a 9th grade math course while they are in 8th grade. In order to pursue this option, students must demonstrate not only mathematics ability but also the motivation and discipline for self-directed learning.

Please reach out to Academic Programs Coordinator, Gloria Mitchell at gmitchell@tcsconnect.org if you have questions about the transition to high school.

Exploration
Students at The Children's School enjoy rich opportunities to explore music, the arts, and physical education.

- In K-5, students have weekly classes in Performance Art/Music, Art, Physical Wellness, and Tinker / Block Lab, which they attend with their classroom cohort.
- In grades 6-8, students join multi-age groups for electives in Art, Theater, Physical Wellness, STEM. Electives meet three times weekly for one trimester.

Outdoor education

Spending time in nature is an integral part of the student experience at The Children's School. There is an ever-increasing amount of research supporting the cognitive, physical, and emotional benefits of spending time outdoors and in natural environments. Fortunately, we have access to parks and an extensive forest preserve system where students can spend time exploring, engaging in open-ended play, developing sensory awareness, doing field investigations, and learning to love and value the natural world. The positive impact of these experiences can last a lifetime, and many former students have reported their ongoing appreciation and love for the outdoors.

Whereas the frequency of visits to the woods may change as they get older, students consistently spend time outside and in nature throughout their years at TCS. Our younger students (Kinder through 2nd grade) go to the woods weekly for open-ended play and exploration. As students get older (3rd grade through 8th grade), they may visit the woods once or twice a month where they continue to play and explore, while also participating in games, investigations, and stewardship.

Every school year, TCS students can be seen kayaking at Thatcher Pond or on the DesPlaines River, clearing invasive brush and organizing litter cleanups, laughing, playing, and learning about our environment and their place in it.

Documentation and communication of student achievement

At The Children's School, our approach to learning is project-based, student-centered, and rooted in inquiry. Accordingly, our approach to assessing, documenting, and communicating students' learning is holistic and comprehensive. Formative assessment is ongoing as teachers collect evidence of students' learning each day, using students' work and their own notes to inform their next steps in teaching. Families have opportunities to see and ask about their students' goals, learning needs, and achievements throughout the year.

In place of conventional report cards and test scores, you can expect the following:

Student-led conferences: Three times a year, you will have the opportunity to sit down with your child and your child's teacher for a collaborative conversation about your child's learning at school. From hopes and plans to growth and achievement, students are supported to think and talk about their own learning at a level that is developmentally appropriate for them.

Narrative reports: Teachers document students' learning and growth in the form of narrative reports. These will be shared with families at or shortly after each conference.

Portfolios: With the guidance of their teachers, students develop portfolios of work that demonstrate their growth across all areas of the curriculum, and also document their thinking about their learning. Students will share their portfolios with their families during mid-year and end-of-year conferences.

Project culminating events: Most projects at The Children's School include a demonstration or presentation of the work students have created. Families are invited to view these in a variety of ways, depending on the age and grade level of the students as well as the nature of the project. We ask that you remain open to the variety of ways in which a project can culminate, and be alert to news and emails from your child's teacher about what to expect. We look forward to welcoming families to these celebrations of learning!

Publishing Parties: These occur at the end of the school year and serve as a way to celebrate the writing each child has accomplished during the year. Depending on age and grade level, students may select a work that they have written during the year to revise and refine, or they may write a piece specifically for the occasion of their class Publishing Party. Family and friends are invited to hear students share their work and to celebrate with them.

Promotion

Teachers work hard to assure that each child is able to grow at developmentally appropriate rates. Because of the intense nature of ongoing communication between teachers and parents/guardians, there is usually a shared understanding of a child's growth. Should a teacher be concerned about whether a child will be developmentally ready for the next grade, the teacher will notify parents/guardians of such concerns by the mid-year conference. Any decision to retain a child in their current grade will be made, when possible, by May 1 of the preceding year.

Student supports

Our teachers work daily to honor the talents and meet the needs of the diverse groups of young people in their classrooms. Our small class sizes help to ensure that each student is seen and cared for, and our teachers have the flexibility to adapt the learning environment and activities to support a wide range of learning needs.

When students have a need for support beyond that provided by the classroom teacher, the following opportunities are available:

Social Work Program
The role of the school social worker is to work with students, families, teachers, and administrators to support students' social and emotional growth and address issues that may get in the way of learning and competence. The school social worker is available for consultation with students, teachers, and families as needed. When social-emotional concerns arise, a determination may be made that a student would benefit from regular one-on-one and/or small group sessions with the social worker. Parental/guardian permission is required for any such services exceeding 5 meetings. The onset and continuation of social work services are at the sole discretion of TCS.

Learning Specialist Program
The role of the school learning specialist (Ms. Donna Patitucci) is to work with students, families, teachers, and administrators to identify issues that may be impeding a student's academic growth, and to design and implement plans that support students with special learning needs. When academic concerns arise, the Building Intervention Team (BIT) will collaborate with the learning specialist to determine next steps, which may include classroom interventions, progress monitoring, and/or regular one-on-one or small-group sessions with the learning specialist. If the BIT recommends the development of an individual learning plan, parents/guardians will be notified and will be included in the creation of the plan. The onset and continuation of learning specialist services are at the sole discretion of TCS.

The Children's School strives to meet as wide a range of needs as possible within a general education setting. Some specialized services and accommodations are beyond our resources to provide. Please see the Exceptional Learners section of this document for more about our capacity to serve students with special education needs.

Use of Consultants at School
The following steps help ensure that the school is best able to support outside consultant services sought by parents/guardians for their child:

- Parents/guardians should give written permission for consultants to communicate with faculty and school administration as needed;
- Should an observation be requested, we ask that the consultant contact the child's teacher at least 2 days in advance to arrange for a mutually convenient time. We also appreciate being apprised of the purpose of the observation so that we can provide any relevant feedback.

Enrollment and Records

Tuition and financial aid

Tuition is the annual amount charged to cover routine instructional costs and supplies. While in the past we had a separate activity fee to cover technology and fieldwork, we've made things simpler by incorporating those costs into tuition.

2025-26 Tuition and Activity Fees	
Grade	Tuition
K-5th	$15,460
6th-8th	$16,460

WAYS TO PAY
All families are required to establish a tuition billing account through TADS.** The account will then be customized with the family's choices for A) payment plan option, B) payment method and C) preferred payment date as described below.

A). Payment plan options. A $1,000 deposit is due at the time of enrollment. Also, a $1000 "First Time Enrollment" deposit is due at the time of enrollment for each child enrolling at TCS for the first time, except newly enrolling siblings. The balance of tuition is then due in subsequent months as follows:

1. One single payment in August of a given school year.
   (If you choose this option, TCS pays the annual $55 TADS fee)
2. Two equal payments in August and December of that school year, or

3. Seven equal monthly payments from August through February of that school year.***

B). Pick a payment method:

- Electronic ACH payment *(easiest way to prevent late fees.)*
- Invoice for checks/cash
- Credit Card

C). Pick a payment date:

- 5th of the month
- 20th of the month

We will do our best to accommodate families who are experiencing temporary financial hardship by offering a repayment plan to help "catch up" after a lapse in tuition payments. If tuition payments are over 3 months past due, there will be discussion of termination of enrollment.

To learn more, contact the school office: 708.484.8033 or admin@tcsconnect.org

More Information:

*Siblings receive a 10% tuition discount.

**Families are required to have a TADS account to allow for easy and convenient billing of tuition, fees, and incidental charges such as before and after school, class photos, and spirit wear. TADS charges a separate $55 annual account fee.

***To calculate the monthly rate, subtract $1000 deposit (or $2000 if newly enrolled) from the TOTAL in the above table. Divide the balance by 7 to calculate the monthly amount due.

Vaccination and health records

The Children's School follows all State of Illinois guidelines requiring health examinations and immunizations. State law allows exceptions to required immunizations only for religious or medical exemptions, which must be documented in writing in the child's school file and updated each year. In addition, TCS strongly recommends that all students be up to date with COVID-19 vaccinations.

Each student must submit a record of up-to-date immunizations or completed exemption form by October 15th of each school year. Kindergarteners and 6th graders must submit a Health Examination form (which usually includes immunizations) by October 15th of each school year. Kindergarteners and 2nd graders must submit an Eye Examination form by October 15th of each school year. Kindergartners, 2nd graders, and 6th graders must submit a Dental Examination form by May 15th of each school year. Please see Required Health Forms

for more details and links to each form. Completed forms may be uploaded to TADS or emailed to Steve Krzak skrzak@tcsconnect.org.

Student records

Student records will be kept on file in the school and subject to confidentiality policies. These records may be inspected at any time at a parent's or guardian's request. We request 48 hours' notice to allow time to copy and prepare the requested documents. Students may request school records upon attaining the age of eighteen. All official records contain: basic identifying information, academic reports, attendance records, health and incident reports, and a record of release of permanent record information.

Transfer of student records occurs when parents or guardians give written approval to send such records to a given school. No records will be released until all outstanding financial obligations are met.

It is the obligation of the student's parents or guardians to notify the school and provide documentation of any divorce or parenting agreements that affect home-school communications, access to records, drop-off or pick-up permissions, or other.

Termination of enrollment

Per the enrollment agreement signed through TADS, TCS reserves the right to terminate enrollment of a student for any reason. TCS will terminate enrollment if it is our judgment that we cannot meet the student's academic or social-emotional needs. Reasons for termination of enrollment include a student exhibiting a pattern of aggressive behavior towards self or others or a student being unable for any reason to substantially follow regular classroom routines.

Termination of enrollment will also occur if a student's parent or guardian fails to make tuition payments as agreed in TADS. We will do our best to accommodate families who are experiencing temporary financial hardship by offering a repayment plan to help "catch up" after a lapse in tuition payments. Repayment plans must be agreed to by both parties and adhered to by the parent/guardian responsible for tuition payments. If TCS determines that sufficient progress has not been made toward the repayment of tuition within three months, TCS will terminate enrollment.

If a student withdraws or leaves TCS for any reason, the family is responsible for paying tuition on a prorated basis through the month of withdrawal.

Family Involvement

Family participation is a treasured component of life at The Children's School. Research shows that family involvement in school is directly correlated with student success. Therefore we welcome parents and guardians into the school and celebrate their ability to bring an added dimension to the learning process. The experience of having families, children, and faculty work together as a team creates a powerful message for all.

Volunteer opportunities include everything from assisting with a project in the classroom or chaperoning fieldwork to serving on the Board of Directors or volunteering with our Family Council. Classroom volunteer jobs will be coordinated by classroom teachers, while school-wide volunteer jobs will be coordinated by administrators, the Board, or the Family Council.

All volunteers must complete the TCS Family Engagement & Volunteer Agreement (this link will be updated each year) before undertaking any volunteer work with the school.

TCS requires background checks on all student-facing volunteers (classroom support, fieldwork/field trips, driver, etc.), teachers, staff, and faculty. We use Sentry Link to process background checks. Background checks must be renewed every 3 years. Volunteers are responsible for the expense of the background check ($19.95). Background Check Process link.
Board approval 02/19/25

Anyone who drives students must also sign a copy of the TCS Driver Agreement and meet all requirements listed therein. The owner-operator's insurance is primary.

Family Council

New this year, our Family Council will bring together parents, guardians, and adult family members of TCS students to support our school and build community in a variety of ways. If you're looking for a way to get more involved in your child's education, joining the Family Council is a great place to start.

This group will coordinate and support social events like picnics and meetups, fundraisers like Donut Day and Dining for Dollars, and celebrations of children's accomplishments like the Chorus Concert and Publishing Party. A bonus of joining the Family Council is that you'll always know what's going on at school! You'll also have the opportunity to give feedback and voice ideas about the school, as this group will serve in an advisory role on administrative issues that affect families.

Family Council meetings take place once a month. You can join even if you are not able to commit to attending all meetings – we will find a way for you to be involved! To learn more, contact Michelle Candelaria-Dunstan at mcdunstan@tcsconnect.org.

Volunteering in the classroom

Classroom Support
When parents or guardians are in the classroom (including on a field experience), it requires a relationship of trust and mutual respect. We ask parents to model excitement about learning by participating enthusiastically in the life of the classroom. We also ask that you refrain from using your cell phone while with students; please step away if you must call or text.

Please note that all classroom volunteers work at the teacher's discretion and that there may be times when a teacher needs to limit the number and/or frequency of family volunteers due to the developmental needs of the classroom community. Family volunteers are there to help all children in the classroom. Together we help children understand that sharing a family member during volunteer days is healthy and enriching.

Confidentiality
In order to be effective, our family volunteer system requires parents to maintain strict confidentiality in the classroom and with students' or families' personal information. Each parent is asked to sign a confidentiality agreement each year, and to share only general information about the school day with others, rather than information about the specific learning needs or behavior of individual students. If you have questions about anything you see or hear in the classroom, please ask the classroom teacher to help you understand what occurred and why. If you experience a breach of confidentiality, please immediately inform your classroom teacher or the Head of School.

Fieldwork
In all field experiences, safety of the students is our primary concern. Thus when parents or guardians are helping to chaperone excursions away from campus, we ask that you adhere to the schedule and activities as set by the teacher. Please remain with the whole group unless directed otherwise by the teacher. We ask that you avoid using your phone while with students. If you take photos, please do not share them on social media without first getting permission from the parents/guardians of each student pictured. Please follow the lead of the teacher with any questions regarding student behavior. Avoid giving special treats (e.g., an extra snack or purchased item) to only the children in your group. Please do not allow children to be on screens while riding in your car. Except in case of emergency such as illness, please do not cancel or ask to join a field trip the morning of the trip.

Family volunteers who chaperone outdoor experiences agree to:

- Promote students' exploration and enjoyment of natural settings
- Maintain (and help students maintain) calm but alert presence
- Allow students to take acceptable risks (e.g., climbing a tree) on their own terms
- NOT allow students to engage in activity or behavior that in their judgment is unacceptably risky (e.g., entering or walking over an unknown body of water)
- NOT allow students to eat or drink plants, mushrooms, or water unless part of a program led by an expert
- NOT allow students to touch, harass, or disturb animals
- Model respect for nature and good stewardship
- Follow all instructions of the teacher in charge
- Follow lead of teacher in charge on behavioral or activity questions

Student Health and Safety

Food and nutrition

Please make sure your child brings a full water bottle each day, a nutritious lunch, and (if they like) 1-2 small snacks. If your child is staying for afterschool activities, please pack extra snacks. Please make sure all food items are ones your child can manage independently. **For the 2025-26 school year, all food and snacks at school must be nut-free.**

Allergies

If your child has food or other allergies not disclosed in your TADS application for enrollment, please contact your child's teacher to discuss the nature and severity of the allergy so we can best work together to protect your child.

Pets

If you have a dog with you at pick-up or drop-off, the dog must be kept leashed at all times.

Safety drills

TCS performs periodic safety drills to ensure that faculty, staff, and students know what to do in case of an emergency. We work with students to practice staying quiet and following directions to stay safe. Safety drills are not always announced to students ahead of time; please contact your child's teacher if you have specific concerns about the impact an unexpected announcement or alarm may have on your child during the school day.

Illness and injury

All full-time and part-time teachers at The Children's School hold current certifications in first aid and CPR. In cases of minor injury, children will be treated at school (e.g., with cleaning and a band-aid for a scrape) and you will be notified via email of the incident.

In the event of a more serious injury or any type of illness, the school office will contact the student's parent or guardian by phone. The child will be kept in the office until the parent/guardian arrives to get the child. It is essential that the school have up-to-date contact information at all times for each parent or guardian. In the event of an emergency, the office will call 911 before calling the parents/guardians.

Medications

Parents/guardians are asked to give medication at home, before or after school, whenever possible. If the medication must be administered during school hours:

- For prescription medications, prior written authorization (including student name, dosage and frequency) from a licensed prescriber must be submitted to the school.
- For non-prescription medications, prior written authorization (including student name, dosage and frequency) from a parent/guardian must be submitted to the school.
- Parents/guardians will be notified by phone or voicemail when we administer a dosage.
- Parents/guardians are responsible for ensuring that medications kept at school are not expired.
- If your child requires an epi-pen, we ask that you provide two for school use.
- Children old enough to self-administer their inhalers or epi-pens are asked to notify their teacher before or immediately after use. The teacher will let the office know to notify parents/guardians.

Mental health first aid

Faculty and staff at The Children's School have completed Youth Mental Health First Aid training and are alert to signs of distress that may warrant support or intervention from a trained professional. In the event that a student expresses thoughts or intentions of harming themselves, teachers and staff will immediately alert a member of the school crisis team, who will take action to ensure the well-being of the student following the protocols outlined in our Disaster Recovery Plan.

Faith's Law (sexual misconduct policy)

All employees of The Children's School are expected to maintain high standards in their school relationships, to demonstrate integrity and honesty, to be considerate and cooperative, and to maintain professional and appropriate relationships with students, parents, staff members, and others. In addition, the tenets of the Illinois Educator Code of Ethics, adopted by the Illinois State Board of Education, is incorporated into the TCS Code of Professional Conduct.

Any employee who sexually harasses a student, willfully or negligently fails to report an instance of suspected child abuse or neglect as required by the Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act (325 ILCS 5/), engages in grooming as defined in 720 ILCS 5/11-25, engages in grooming behaviors, violates boundaries for appropriate school employee-student conduct, engages in sexual misconduct as defined in 105 ILCS 5/22-85.5, or otherwise violates an employee conduct standard will be subject to discipline up to and including dismissal.

Sexual misconduct is defined as any act, including but not limited to, any verbal, nonverbal, written, or electronic communication or physical activity, by a TCS employee with direct contact with a student that is directed toward or with a student to establish a romantic or sexual relationship with the student.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

- A sexual or romantic invitation;
- Dating or soliciting a date;
- Engaging in sexualized or romantic dialogue;
- Making sexually suggestive comments that are directed toward or with a student;
- Self-disclosure or physical exposure of a sexual, romantic, or erotic nature;
- Sexual, indecent, romantic, or erotic contact with the student.

TCS employees are expected to maintain professional relationships with students.

1. Employees are strictly prohibited from using any form of communication with students (e-mails, letters, notes, text messages, phone calls, conversations) that includes any subject matter that would be deemed unprofessional and/or inappropriate between an employee and student.

2. Employees are not permitted to transport TCS students in the employee's privately owned vehicle, unless the employee has obtained the prior permission of the student's parent/guardian and the Head of School to do so.

3. Employees are not permitted to take or possess a photo or video of a student on their private devices. Student pictures for school sponsored activities used in furtherance of TCS's educational mission are permitted.

4. Employees are not permitted to meet with a student or contact a student outside the employee's professional role. Employees are expected to avoid crossing a line that results in an actual or perceived inappropriate relationship

Please see The Children's School Child Safety Policies (below) for further policies on physical contact.

Reporting requirements:

1. TCS employees are mandated reporters and required to comply with all reporting requirements of the Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act (325 ILCS 5/), Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (20 U.S.C. §1681 et seq.), and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (20 U.S.C. § 7926).

2. Employees, students, parents/guardians, and any third party can report prohibited behaviors and/or boundary violations pursuant to TCS policies to TCS directors or any staff member the person feels comfortable reporting to.

3. Employees are required to complete training related to educator ethics, child abuse, grooming behaviors, and boundary violations as required by law and school policies.

Child Safety Policies

Approved by TCS Board of Directors, March 2023

At TCS we seek to maintain an environment in which students and adults are and feel safe. We are committed to developmentally appropriate practices around physical touch and caring for students, which means that safety practices for a young child may differ from those for an adolescent.

1. One-on-one contact between TCS adults and students is prohibited both inside and outside of school hours, except by consent of parents/guardians in special circumstances such as tutoring or babysitting. Whenever possible TCS adults (teachers and staff) must avoid being alone with a student.
    - In situations requiring a personal conference, the meeting is to be conducted with the knowledge and in view and/or hearing of other adults and/or youth.
    - For the school social worker, 1:1 meetings with students are routine and important to maintain student confidentiality. However, such meetings will take place with the knowledge of TCS administrators and in an office with a window.
    - Whenever possible, a TCS adult (teacher or staff) should not be alone in a car with a single student. If this circumstance is unavoidable, the TCS adult should obtain prior permission of the student's parent/guardian and the Head of School, and the student should ride in the back seat.

- Online communications (texting, phone calls, chat, IM, etc.) should include another TCS adult (teacher or administrator) and/or the student's parent/guardian.
- Communication by way of social media (Facebook, Snapchat, etc.) should include another TCS adult (teacher or administrator) and/or the student's parent/guardian.

2. For young children, physical contact with caregivers is a normal, healthy, and necessary element of child care. TCS adults (teachers and staff) should ask a child's permission before touching them. Hugs are best initiated by the student.

3. Inappropriate and/or unwanted physical contact between students is prohibited. Teachers and staff will enforce rules protecting children's personal bodily integrity in a developmentally appropriate manner.

4. In some circumstances, teachers and staff may restrain pupils in order to protect them and others. They will do so in a way that is not intended to injure or humiliate the student and they will use the minimal amount of restraint necessary to ensure safety in the situation. Any situation in which a child is restrained by a teacher or staff member will be reported to the child's parents/guardians, recorded with an incident report, and kept in the child's file.

   However, in the case of a younger child for whom physical contact with teachers is an ongoing part of their regular care, teachers will not inform parents/guardians or complete an incident report each time but will make sure parents/guardians know that physical restraint is needed at times.

5. All adults in the school building (teachers and staff) are mandated reporters of suspected child abuse or neglect. Teachers and staff are trained upon hire and every 3 years thereafter on how to recognize and report suspected child abuse or neglect.

Equity and Inclusion

Non-Discrimination Policy

The Children's School admits students of any race, color, and national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, religion, or national or ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, hiring policies, admissions policies, financial aid program, or any other school-administered program.

Gender diversity guidelines

TCS is committed to creating a safe, informed, and affirming learning environment in which all children can develop a healthy self-image and thrive as confident, self-aware learners who are able to engage with and work well with others. The TCS community will take a student's lead in acknowledging and affirming their gender identity and are aware that gender may present in different ways. How a student asserts their gender may vary based on their age and developing sense of self. Our Gender Diversity Guidelines provide direction for the TCS community in addressing issues that may arise concerning the needs of students who are transgender, transitioning, gender questioning, or otherwise gender non-conforming.

Exceptional learners

Our Approach to Exceptional Learners

Like all school communities, The Children's School serves children whose physical, behavioral, or learning attributes differ from the typical in a way that affects their ability to benefit from the standard school setting. Exceptional learners include children with or without a formal diagnosis of a learning, behavioral, or physical disability or impairment, as well as any child whose developmental or learning needs at a given time require a modified approach in the classroom.

At The Children's School we are fortunate to have a curriculum that is intellectually rigorous, complete, comprehensive, yet flexible and fluid. In addition, we have small class sizes that allow for greater attention to individual needs. A flexible curriculum and small class size support our commitment to progressive education, which includes critical thinking, reflection, discourse, and small group work. We are also able to tailor our work with children to help meet individual needs, be they academic, social, and/or emotional.

The Children's School also employs a full-time social worker and full-time learning specialist who are available to work with students who may need academic, socio-emotional, or behavioral support.

While we are able to adjust teaching strategies and attend to the unique social and emotional needs of students, our special education resources at The Children's School are limited. Our teachers, administrators, social worker, and learning specialist work to assure that the school provides a thoughtful plan for each child's learning needs. Listed below are the means we can use to provide individualized attention to children identified as needing additional support:

WHAT WE CAN DO:

- Our teachers will provide flexible curriculum and pedagogy to meet the individual academic, social, and emotional needs of each child within the

context of the classroom community.

- We are available to meet with families throughout the year to discuss the unique challenges their child faces and to offer suggestions as to how we can support the child's needs in school.
- We are willing to collaborate with consultants or others who can provide us with additional insights into a child. We welcome information families provide from outside consultations, including testing, tutoring, and special services. In certain circumstances, we are able to work with a one on-one aide hired by the family to support the child while at school.
- We can coordinate with families to refer students to the public school district for evaluation, and we will work with the public school district on implementation of a service plan if needed. With limited resources, the public school district is required only to assess children attending private school within the district; in rare cases, the district may also provide consultative or other services to TCS students.

As we work with families of children needing additional support, it must be noted that there are limitations to what TCS can provide.

LIMITATIONS:

- Our faculty will make every effort to adjust learning strategies to support the social, emotional, and academic needs of the child. However, we are limited by the fact that there is generally only one teacher in the classroom and the teacher is responsible for the learning needs of each and every child in the room. If it is determined that a child would benefit from a one-on-one aide during the school day, that aide would be hired by the family with approval by TCS.
- In addition to our social worker and learning specialist, we can accommodate (within limits) a child working with non-TCS specialists during the school day at The Children's School, at a district site, or elsewhere. For non-TCS specialists wishing to see children on-site at TCS, we reserve the right to approve their presence and scheduling.
- At times students may enter The Children's School with a pre-existing Individual Education Plan (IEP) or other assessments that describe a specific set of recommended therapeutic or medical interventions and resources. We are limited in our capacity to honor each and every action such assessments may recommend. While we will make every effort to address the concerns listed by such reports, we cannot be responsible for enacting all aspects.

At The Children's School, we strongly believe in the importance of bringing a full range of learning modalities to all children. Our commitment to the social and emotional lives of children is inherent in our day-to-day routines and activities. We believe in helping all children learn and in working with families and outside resources to support learning goals. With

limited resources we work hard to celebrate the unique potential each child has. It is our responsibility to best address individual needs and to inform parents when and if we cannot do so in the context of our educational environment.

Student Conduct

It is to the benefit of all students and the school community as a whole when students clearly understand the behavioral expectations and uphold the values of The Children's School, and when they are held accountable for violating school expectations and/or failing to uphold school values.

Accordingly, TCS has set forth the following expectations and is prepared to respond to student misconduct as outlined below.

General expectations

Parents/guardians are asked to review these expectations with their student(s).
Students are expected to:

1. Be present and on time in school every day at 8:45 a.m, except when absence is unavoidable (e.g., illness or travel).
2. Participate to the full extent of their ability in school activities and programs, including all-school classes and fieldwork.
3. Follow the instructions of teachers, administrators, and family volunteers both inside and outside of the classroom and school building.
4. During fieldwork, students should follow all school rules, plus any specialized instructions.
5. Be mindful of respectfully sharing the space with each other and with people outside the TCS community (when applicable).
6. At no time should a student be in a classroom or other TCS space without a teacher, administrator, or designated adult family volunteer present. At the teacher's discretion, older students may be given more freedom (e.g., to go on their own to retrieve supplies), but should never be in a classroom or other TCS space without a teacher's or administrator's knowledge and permission.
7. Students should never open an outside door to admit any person, even if the person is familiar to them, but instead should notify a teacher or administrator that someone is at the door.
8. Students should keep a pair of indoor shoes or slippers at school for when their outdoor shoes or boots become muddy or wet. Students must wear athletic shoes (no boots, hard soled or high heeled shoes, flip flops, sandals, or loose fitting shoes) for physical wellness classes and recess.

More specific rules around moving throughout the building and use of different school spaces will be shared with students during the first days and weeks of the school year.

Recess expectations

The recess expectations below will be communicated to all students within the first week of school. Your support in enforcing and adhering to these expectations is appreciated.

1. Students should never be out of sight of teachers while at Recess.
2. Students should not pick up any garbage or other foreign objects, but should instead alert a teacher.
3. No tackling games or other rough play; no “pyramids,” “piggyback rides,” or other games in which one child bears the weight of another except with express permission and under supervision of a teacher.
4. No tree climbing except with express permission of a teacher. No tree climbing during all-school Recess.
5. No assisted backbends or other assisted gymnastics moves; however, students will be allowed to perform gymnastics moves they can complete unassisted.
6. Games must be inclusive and equipment must be shared; any child who wants to join a game or activity must be included.
7. The teachers in charge are responsible for determining the safety of games and activities. Students must alter or stop their game if a teacher deems that a situation is unsafe.
8. Students should not leave the designated area to chase balls or for any other reason except with express permission of a teacher.
9. No throwing of snow, mud, sand, rocks, etc.
10. No taking an item from someone and playing with it/keeping it from them.
11. Students should help pick up, transport, and care for all Recess and other equipment.
12. Students should adhere to other rules for use of materials and space as established by the school community.

Peer conflict resolution

We recognize that conflicts surface in school, and we know from experience that conflicts present important opportunities for growth. Our philosophy is to guide students towards an ability to independently resolve conflicts. At developmentally appropriate levels, we give children the opportunity to confront problems and work through them with their peers.

Please note that our conflict resolution process applies to regular peer conflict (disagreements and oppositional interactions that are situational, immediate, and developmentally appropriate, and between two or more individuals with relatively similar observed or

perceived power or status). In a situation involving bias-based or discriminatory behaviors or bullying, the TCS Bullying Policy and procedures will apply.

For peer conflict, teachers and staff will guide students through these steps:

1. The student will be encouraged to talk to the other student if it feels safe to do so, saying some version of "I didn't like it when . . . ", asking the student to stop, and listening to the other student's response.

2. If a student is not able to resolve their own conflict or feels unsafe to approach the other student on their own, they should seek help from a teacher or adult. The adult will likely facilitate the conversation described in #1. Most peer conflicts are resolved satisfactorily at this point. Parents/guardians will not necessarily be informed by teachers of every instance in which a conflict is resolved at this stage.

3. If the problem is still not resolved after a teacher-facilitated conversation, the student(s) and/or teacher will discuss the situation with the social worker and/or Head of School. The teacher, social worker, and/or Head of School will contact parents/guardians to inform them of this conversation.

4. For ongoing conflict or behavioral concerns, parents/guardians, teacher, social worker, and Head of School will meet to discuss the situation. The student may also attend. At this meeting, a written plan may be created to specifically address the student's behaviors and delineate agreed-upon consequences as outlined in our Discipline with Dignity protocols.

After facilitating a peer conflict resolution, teachers will support students in following up to see how the agreed-upon solution is working and whether any further conversation or intervention is warranted.

Parent/guardian role in supporting children

We want to work as a team to support students throughout their school experience. As parents/guardians, you can:

- Provide a safe and loving space for your child to talk through his or her feelings and perceptions.
- Keep in mind the steps of our approach to conflict resolution when talking with your child about something that happened at school. First ask your child to talk to the other child(ren) involved; then encourage your child to go to their teacher. Empower and support your child to feel comfortable talking with other children and with their teacher.

- Be OK with your child feeling uncomfortable (sad, angry, worried) as they work through a conflict. For a child, experiencing and handling discomfort is an important part of the process and not something to be quickly smoothed over by adults.
- Be careful in the way that you talk about other children and families as gossip is harmful to our whole community. It is OK for kids to ask questions and receive honest answers, but keep the language positive. Acknowledge that “everybody is working on something.”
- Remember that modeling is a powerful tool. As adults, we should hold ourselves to the same expectations for respectful conflict resolution that we would like our children to meet.
- Keep in mind that a child’s perception of events may be limited. Experience tells us there are nearly always multiple sides to any action/experience and that those involved are not always aware of each other’s perspectives. Do feel free to talk with your child’s teacher if you have questions or concerns about anything your child brings home to you.
- Understand that we will not share confidential information about your child with other people, nor will we share confidential information about another child with you. Therefore we are limited in what we can say about how a situation is being handled with another child.

Restorative Practices

Restorative Practices are a continuum of school-based alternatives to exclusionary discipline. After conflict or harm, Restorative Practices provide a way of thinking about, talking about and responding to issues and problems by involving all participants to discuss their feelings and opinions, identify what happened, describe how it affected everyone, and find solutions to make things better. The conventional approach to school discipline asks, “What rule was broken, and who did it?” Restorative justice asks, “Who was harmed, and how can the harm be repaired?”

Faculty and staff at The Children’s School are experienced and trained in implementing Restorative Practices. We recognize the value of a restorative approach in maintaining a just community, strengthening interpersonal bonds, and contributing to the personal growth and understanding of individuals. We also recognize that Restorative Practices require the willingness, trust, and readiness of all involved to undertake them. These practices are therefore implemented on a case-by-case basis that is crafted with the collaboration of the students and staff involved, and with the guidance of the Head of School.

Discipline with Dignity

Misbehavior is often a child’s attempt to meet a need. A child who repeatedly demonstrates challenging behavior is signaling that they have unmet needs, are lacking skills, or require a

different form of support. By collecting behavior data through the Discipline with Dignity processes, a plan for supporting the student is developed collaboratively.

Students are entitled to the recognition and preservation of their constitutional rights, and to the allowance for such rights, including freedom of expression, freedom to petition, and the rights to personal property, due process, and involvement in school and community affairs. These rights are not unlimited, and must be balanced against the rights of others and the overarching purposes of the school.

Violent or hurtful behavior will be stopped immediately. Staff will intervene verbally first and physically if necessary. Physical intervention might include temporarily isolating children, restraining violent acts by holding a hand, or placing oneself between angry children. Children must never be treated roughly or violently by adults – physically or verbally.

Priority is placed on affirming and responding to the physically or emotionally injured child. The Discipline with Dignity Plan serves to support the offending student in taking personal responsibility and learning a better way. When teachers and staff respond to the needs of all students involved in the conflict in a timely way, trust and safety are restored.

This plan was developed collaboratively with teaching staff, support staff, and administrators. It is being prototyped this year and will be reviewed and improved as we learn and grow together. As revision occurs, communication will be sent to families via email.

The Discipline with Dignity Plan outlines the steps to be taken in response to violations of TCS community norms and values. The following chart explains Level 1 through Level 3 violations.

Staff response to the violations below will depend on the specifics of the situation as well as the developmental age/needs of the student.

Level 1 – Minor Violations	Level 2 – Major Violations	Level 3 – Illegal Violations
• Loud voice/yelling/noise-making • Inappropriate language/gestures • Name-calling • Unsafe running/horseplay • Disrupting the learning of others • Breaking bathroom rules or elevator rules • Personal device use during school day without teacher permission • Lying • Disrespect/rudeness • Failing to turn in assigned schoolwork	• Verbal aggression/use of obscenities • Bias-based behavior/racial slurs • Fighting/physical aggression • Harassment/bullying/cyberbullying • Overt defiance/disrespect • Spitting on another • Destruction/misuse of school equipment/property • Internet misuse • Leaving designated area without permission • Invasion of privacy/depantsing • Inappropriate/repeated reference to weapons or acts of violence	• Drug use/possession • Weapon use/possession • Arson • Bomb threat • Vandalism • Combustibles • Assault • Threats of physical assault • Sexual aggression • Exposure • Theft

	● Taking pictures/video without teacher permission ● Forgery ● Plagiarism ● Truancy/skipping class	

Discipline with Dignity Plan

All staff and families share responsibility for supporting student behavior following this plan. Consistency and timeliness are essential for restoring trust and safety when misbehavior occurs.

Part 1 - Responses to Misbehavior

Minor Violations

1. Conversation with the student to understand WHY misbehavior(s) are occurring and make a plan for improving behavior.

If misbehavior continues…

2. Teacher or supervising staff contacts parents/guardians regarding concerns, cc'ing Head of School.

If misbehavior still continues…

3. Teacher consults with the Building Intervention Team (BIT) to plan supports. The BIT may create or modify goals/interventions.

Major Violations

1. Teacher or supervising staff completes Incident Report and notifies Head of School.
2. Staff notifies parents/guardians via email, cc'ing school social worker and Head of School.
3. Depending on the severity and/or persistence of the behavior, the teacher collaborates with the BIT to initiate the Individual Behavior Plan (IBP) process. The plan may include Restorative Practices and/or other measures, depending on the situation and the individuals involved.

Illegal Violations

1. Immediate removal from the classroom.
2. The student is immediately referred to the Head of School.

Part 2 - Description of Processes & Forms

Incident Report

This form is for documenting student misbehaviors that occur in the school setting and that fall under “Major Violations” or “Illegal Violations” on The Children’s School’s behavior violations chart. It serves as a record of the incident and supports the development of a response by school staff. The completed Incident Report form will be placed in the offending student’s file as well as that of any student(s) known to have been harmed by the incident.

Parents/guardians will be informed of what occurred and what actions will be taken by administrators. Actions may include facilitating the student’s apology to another student(s) and/or staff involved, scheduling service restitution, planning alternative recess, or other actions deemed necessary by the administrator.

Individual Behavior Plan (IBP)
This process is beneficial and powerful for students when they are struggling to overcome social and behavioral challenges despite a period of intervention.

The process is initiated by classroom teachers, in collaboration with behavior support staff and administrators as needed. Parents/guardians and the student are invited to participate in a conference to identify areas of concern and set specific goals for improving the student’s social and behavioral success.

Loss of Privileges:

Privileges may be lost for a period as short as recess time or as long as several days. Loss of privilege may occur in any Level 1-2 violation, depending on the violation and age of the student.

Suspension:
Suspensions may be short-term (five or fewer days) or long-term (more than five days). Suspensions may occur for any Level 2-3 violations.

Disciplinary Hearings and Expulsion:

Students who receive a long-term suspension or who receive three or more suspensions within a school year are subject to a disciplinary hearing by a Hearing Panel that shall consist of two to three staff members not involved in the disciplinary action in question, and one to two TCS Board members who do not currently have a child enrolled at the school. The Head of School shall be present during the hearing as the hearing officer but shall not vote on any decision. Hearings are conducted in two parts. During the first part, the Hearing Panel determines if the student is guilty of the charge. If the panel does find the student guilty, during the second part the panel reviews the student’s previous record and determines the recommended consequence for his or her actions, up to and including expulsion. The Hearing Panel shall put their decision in writing within one school week (5 school days) of making a decision to expel as well as inform the Board of Directors of this decision within the same

five-day period.

If parent/s so desire, they may appeal the decision to the Board of Directors at the next scheduled board meeting. Depending on the violation, the Head of School may determine at a Level 2-3 to go directly to expulsion.

Technology use

The school's information technology resources, including Internet access, are provided for educational purposes. It is the student's responsibility to use these resources in a respectful and responsible way for school-related educational purposes only. Students in grades 4-8 and their parents/guardians are required to sign the TCS Technology Acceptable Use form (completed in TADS at time of enrollment and linked here) prior to student device use. Younger students will work with their teacher to develop a technology use policy specific to that classroom as needed.

Chromebooks are a school resource and should remain at school at all times. If your student needs their Chromebook at home to complete schoolwork, please contact the office to make arrangements.

Students who bring cell phones, tablets, or other Internet-enabled devices must keep them in their backpacks and use them only with prior permission of a teacher or administrator. Failure to do so may result in consequences such as losing possession of the device for the rest of the day.

Students are not allowed to take photos/videos or record other students while at school without prior permission of a teacher or administrator. Such permission is granted only for school purposes, such as a class video or podcast project. Students should not bring cameras to school.

If your student fails to comply with technology use guidelines, you will be notified. Consequences may include restriction or loss of technology privileges. Students are responsible for repair costs if equipment is damaged while under their use or in their care.

Bullying Policy

Pending approval by the TCS Board on 9/18/24, the following policy will govern bias-based behavior and bullying at The Children's School:

Purpose

Bullying is contrary to Illinois state law (105 ILCS 5/27-23.7 and Illinois Admin. Code title 23, 1.295) and the policies of TCS. This policy protects TCS students against interpersonal harm from bullying and bias-based behaviors. TCS acknowledges that all students have the right to

participate fully in the educational processes, free from bullying and harassment, and in that regard, a safe and civil environment in school is necessary for students to learn and to excel. Bullying, biased-based behaviors, and harassment, like other disruptive or violent behaviors, are forms of conduct that disrupt both a student's ability to learn and a school's ability to educate its students in a safe environment. Because students learn by example, school administrators, faculty, staff, and volunteers should be expected to demonstrate appropriate behavior, treat others with civility and respect, and refuse to tolerate bullying, bias-based behaviors, and harassment.

The Children's School (TCS) is committed to being a safe and inclusive community for all. This means that bias-based, discriminatory, or bullying behavior is not tolerated. Bias-based behaviors, including racism and all forms of discrimination on the basis of actual or perceived membership of a protected category, can cause physical, psychological, and emotional harm to students and interfere with their ability to learn and participate in school activities. TCS seeks to understand, disrupt, and dismantle patterns and structures of institutional bias and racism (conscious or unconscious) that create disparities or perpetuate achievement differences among students and staff.

Scope

This policy is applicable to the entire TCS community, including administrators, teachers, faculty, students, parents/guardians, and volunteers, and covers conduct that takes place in the school, on school property, at school-sponsored functions and activities, and on school buses/vehicles. This policy also pertains to usage of electronic technology and electronic communication that is used for bullying, biased-based behaviors, harassment, or cyber-bullying.

TCS recognizes a number of protected categories. In addition, TCS recognizes the particular vulnerability of students with actual or perceived disabilities as well as those who identify as or are perceived to be LGBTQ+.

Nothing in this policy is intended to infringe upon any right to exercise free expression or the free exercise of religion or religiously based views protected under the First Amendment to the United States Constitution or under Section 3 of Article 1 of the Illinois Constitution.

Prohibition on Bullying Behavior

Bullying, biased-based behaviors, harassment, and cyber-bullying are prohibited at TCS. Retaliation or threats of retaliation and/or false accusations meant to intimidate the victim of bullying, bias-based behaviors, harassment, or cyber-bullying, or toward those investigating incidents thereof, are also prohibited.

School Responsibilities

A. TCS shall identify the administrator and faculty responsible for collecting and responding to reports of bullying, bias-based behaviors, harassment, or cyber-bullying.
    a. The system for reporting suspected incidents must ensure that the reporting can be done easily, safely, and privately.
B. TCS administration and faculty shall create environments where the school community upholds the standards of respect and civility and understands that bullying, harassment, cyber-bullying are inappropriate, harmful and unacceptable.
C. TCS shall provide a report on the aggregate complaints of bullying, biased-based behaviors, harassment, cyber-bullying and responses to these complaints to the Board annually.
D. TCS shall receive and investigate complaints from parents/guardians, students, faculty, and staff members, addressing and taking each complaint seriously.
E. The policy will be distributed annually, and will also be included in any school-wide student codes of conduct, disciplinary policies, student and parent handbooks, staff handbooks, and on the TCS website.
F. This policy and procedures are based upon the engagement of a range of school stakeholders, including input from students and parents/guardians. Administration in tandem with faculty and the board will re-evaluate this policy every **two years** based upon an assessment of its outcomes and effectiveness.
    a. The assessment will include, but is not limited to, factors such as the frequency of victimization, student, staff and family observations of safety at school; identification of areas of school where bullying or bias-based behaviors occur; the types of bullying or bias-based behaviors utilized; and bystander intervention or participation.
    b. The information collected and relevant data must be made available on TCS' website.
    c. No later than September 30 of each subsequent school year the policy must be filed with the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE).
G. TCS shall maintain written or electronic records regarding all complaints of bullying, harassment, and cyber-bullying, any investigation thereof, and any actions taken. These records shall be maintained and stored for no less than **five years**.
    a. As required by law, TCS will collect, maintain, and submit non-identifiable data regarding verified allegations of bullying to ISBE in report form **annually**.

Faculty Responsibilities

Faculty and school staff at TCS share responsibility for modeling appropriate behavior and creating an environment where mutual respect, civility, tolerance, and acceptance among students and staff are promoted and where students understand that bullying and harassment are inappropriate and harmful and are taken seriously.

All faculty and school staff will take reasonable measures to prevent bullying, bias-based behaviors, harassment, and cyber-bullying and are obligated to report in a timely manner any such acts or complaints that come to their attention.

Student Responsibilities

Students share responsibility for helping to create a safe school environment by not engaging in or contributing to bullying, bias-based behaviors, harassment, and cyber-bullying, treating everyone with respect, and being sensitive as to how others might perceive their actions or words.

TCS asks every student, with the support of their parents/guardians and the adults at the school, to commit to the following principles, which apply to everyone on school property and at school-related activities:

- I will not bully or intentionally harm others.
- I will try to help anyone I suspect is being bullied or harmed.
- I will work to include students who are left out.
- If someone is being bullied or harmed, I will tell an adult at school and an adult at home.

Any student who observes an act of bullying, bias-based behavior, harassment, or cyber bullying should report the incidents to the school in a timely manner.

Definitions

Bias-based Behavior:
Any physical, verbal, nonverbal, or other act or conduct, including communications made in writing or electronically, directed towards a member or perceived member of a protected category within the school community that is of a discriminatory or harmful nature.

Bullying:
Includes “cyber-bullying” and means any verbal or physical act or conduct, including communications made in writing or electronically, directed toward a student or students and meets some or all of the following criteria:

A. An observed or perceived imbalance of power exists between the person or persons engaging in the bullying behavior and the targeted student or students.
B. The behaviors are severe or pervasive (repeated over time), or there is a high likelihood that behaviors will be repeated.
    a. While bullying is often characterized by repeated acts, sometimes a single incident constitutes bullying depending on the severity and if other elements of bullying are present.

C. The intent of the person or persons engaging in the behavior is to cause physical or emotional harm to the targeted student or students.
D. The behavior has or can be reasonably predicted to have one or more of the following effects:
    a. Placing the student or students in reasonable fear of harm to the student's or students' person or property.
    b. Causing a substantially detrimental effect on the student's or students' physical or mental health.
    c. Substantially interfering with the student's or students' academic performance.
    d. Substantially interfering with the student's or students' ability to participate in or benefit from the educational programming, services, activities, or privileges provided by TCS.

Bullying may take various forms, including without limitation one or more of the following: harassment, threats, intimidation, stalking, physical violence, sexual harassment, sexual violence, theft, public humiliation, destruction of property, or retaliation for asserting or alleging an act of bullying. Knowingly making false accusations of bullying will be investigated and will be treated as bullying behavior. No person will be subject to consequences for making a good-faith report. This list is meant to be illustrative and non-exhaustive.

Cyber-Bullying:
Bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, including without limitation any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data, or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by a wire, radio, electromagnetic system, photo-electronic system, or photo optical system, including without limitation electronic mail, internet communications, instant messages, app communications, or facsimile communications. "Cyber-bullying" includes the creation of a webpage or social media post in which the creator assumes the identity of another person or the knowing impersonation of another person as the author of posted content or messages if the creation or impersonation creates any of the effects enumerated in the definition of bullying. "Cyber-bullying" also includes the distribution of by electronic means of a communication to more than one person or the posting of material on an electronic medium that may be accessed by one or more persons if the distribution or posting creates any of the effects enumerated in the definition of bullying. This definition also includes cyber-bullying by means of technology that is not owned, leased, or used by TCS. This policy does not require or establish an expectation that TCS will staff or monitor any non-school related activity, function, internet content, or program.

Discrimination:
Treating an individual less favorably because of their actual or perceived membership in one or more of the Protected Categories.

Harassment:
Any unwelcome verbal, nonverbal, visual, or physical conduct that is based on an individual's actual or perceived membership in one or more of the Protected Categories defined below,

that is persistent, pervasive, or severe and objectively offensive and unreasonably interferes with, limits, or denies an individual's educational or employment access, benefits, or opportunities. Unwelcome conduct may include, but is not limited to, bullying, intimidation, offensive jokes, slurs, epithets or name calling, assaults or threats, touching, ridicule or mockery, insults or put-downs, offensive objects or pictures, messages sent via email, text or social media, sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, conduct of a sexual nature, or any other sex-based conduct.

Protected Categories:
An individual's actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender or sex (includes gender identity, gender expression, pregnancy, childbirth, breastfeeding, and pregnancy related medical conditions), race or ethnicity, ethnic group identification, ancestry, nationality, national origin, religion, color, mental or physical disability, age (40 and above), immigration status, marital status, registered domestic partner status, genetic information, political belief or affiliation (not union related), military status, unfavorable discharge from military service, or on the basis of a person's association with a person or group with one or more of these actual or perceived characteristics, or any other basis protected by federal, state or local law, ordinance, or regulation.

Peer Conflict:
Defined as disagreements and oppositional interactions that are situational, immediate, and developmentally appropriate. Conflicts arise when two or more students with relatively similar observed or perceived power have differences in opinion or perspectives. When school employees are aware of peer conflict, they are expected to guide students in developing new skills in respectful communication, personal boundaries, and peaceful conflict resolution.

Racial Discrimination:
Any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, color, community, national or ethnic origin which has the impact of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, of a right to an equitable educational experience and fundamental freedoms in the social, economic, cultural, political, and linguistic aspects of school, school and district life (Adapted from United Nations, 2019).

Retaliation:
Any form of intimidation, reprisal, or adverse action or change to educational program or activity taken against a student for having made a complaint or report of bullying or bias based behaviors whether made internally or externally with federal, state, or local agency, or for participating, aiding, or refusing to participate in an investigation, proceeding, or hearing related to a report or complaint of bullying or bias-based behaviors. Retaliation is considered to be a form of bullying and is prohibited according to this policy.

Restorative Measures & Practices:

A continuum of school-based alternatives to exclusionary discipline, such as suspensions and expulsions that:

A. Are adapted to the particular needs of TCS and TCS community.
B. Contribute to maintaining school safety.
C. Protect the integrity of a positive and productive learning environment.
D. Teach TCS students the personal and interpersonal skills they will need to be successful in school and society.
E. Serve to build and restore relationships among students, families, schools, and communities. Restorative practices are ways of pro-actively developing relationships and community, as well as repairing community when harm is done.
F. Reduce the likelihood of future disruption by balancing accountability with an understanding of students' behavioral health needs in order to keep students in school.
G. Increase student accountability if the incident of bullying is bias-based.

After conflict or harm, Restorative Practices provide a way of thinking about, talking about and responding to issues and problems by involving all participants to discuss their feelings and opinions, identify what happened, describe how it affected everyone, and find solutions to make things better.

School Faculty
Persons employed by, on contract with, or who volunteer at TCS, including without limitation administrators, teachers, school social workers, and office staff.

Prevention

TCS shall work to develop safe and supportive school environments that prevent and are clearly intolerant of bullying, bias-based behaviors, harassment and cyber-bullying. Establishing an environment in which students and teachers feel safe and are able to focus on learning is the desired standard.

While this list is not exhaustive, TCS does this through:

- *Developing supportive school climate strategies,* including clear expectations to guide interactions between students, and between staff and students.
- *Teaching all students social and emotional skills* interwoven throughout TCS' curriculum both inside and outside of the classroom. Additionally, establishing classroom and school-wide practices that promote relationship-building, including teaching students to speak out when they see or hear bullying, degrading language, bias or prejudice.
- *Establishing predictable and effective responses and practices* that address root cause, teach skills, build empathy, and repair harm.
- *An ongoing commitment to welcoming and inclusive practices* that center belonging, affirm cultural differences, and address and support the transformation of bias-based harm.

- *Involvement of parents/guardians* at orientations, Back to School nights, and other opportunities as necessary.

Professional Development:
TCS shall implement ongoing professional development to build the skills of all staff members, including but not limited to, preventing, identifying and responding to bullying, bias-based behaviors, harassment, and cyber-bullying. The content of such professional development shall include, but not be limited to:

A. Developmentally appropriate strategies to prevent incidents;
B. Developmentally appropriate strategies for immediate, effective interventions;
C. Information regarding the complex interaction and power differential that can take place between victim, perpetrator, and witnesses;
D. Research findings, including but not limited to information about specific categories of students who have been shown to be particularly at risk in the school environment;
E. Information on the incidence and nature of cyber-bullying;
F. Internet safety issues as they relate to cyber-bullying.

TCS shall identify and offer information on alternative methods for fulfilling the professional development requirements of this section.

Student Training and Prevention
TCS shall present age-appropriate training and resources for students, which will include:

A. Instruction on how to prevent bullying, bias-based behaviors, harassment, and cyber-bullying;
B. The process for reporting and filing complaints;
C. And the process along with potential consequences that can result from the complaint.
D. Internet safety:
    a. Safety on the internet, appropriate online behavior, and digital citizenship;
    b. Cyber-bullying awareness and response.

This policy will be distributed annually to students and will also be easily viewable and accessible on the TCS website.

Complaint Procedures

All allegations of bullying, bias-based behavior, harassment, or cyber-bullying shall be reported to the designated school report manager, either orally or in writing. Any student, parent/guardian, volunteer, teacher, or staff member may file such a report. Complaints can be made to any staff member at TCS, who will direct all complaints to TCS's designated representative. If a report contains incomplete information, the designated report manager shall take reasonable measures to contact the individuals involved to determine whether an investigation should be pursued. Complaints may be taken anonymously, and will be

investigated with the same procedures and timeline as other reports, however, *actions cannot be taken solely on an anonymous report.* School administration shall also use this procedure to investigate complaints of retaliation or threats of retaliation meant to intimidate the victim of bullying, bias-based behaviors, harassment, or cyber-bullying or toward those investigating incidents thereof.

TCS Designated Report Manager:

Name: Michelle Candelaria-Dunstan

E-mail: mcdunstan@tcsconnect.org

Phone: 708-484-8033

Upon receiving a complaint/report, TCS will investigate whether such reported act(s) of bullying is within the permissible scope of its jurisdiction. The designated school report manager shall:

1. Promptly and thoroughly investigate the alleged incident of bullying, bias-based behavior, harassment, or cyber-bullying.
2. Take immediate steps and intervene immediately to ensure and establish the safety of everyone involved.
3. The parents/guardians of all students involved in an alleged incident will be notified of such, along with threats, suggestions, or instances of self-harm determined to be the result of bullying, within one school day after TCS' administration is made aware of the student or student's involvement in the incident, provided that such notification does not endanger the health, safety, or well-being of any student.
    a. TCS shall make diligent efforts to notify a parent/guardian, utilizing all contact information the school has available or that can be reasonably obtained by the school within the 24-hour period.
    b. Notifications shall be made privately and confidentially to students' parents/guardians.
    c. When incidents have a larger impact on the school community, TCS administration shall provide clear communication to students, faculty, and parents/guardians to reinforce school-wide expectations.
4. Maintain a written or electronic record of the complaint, investigation, and any intervention or responses taken.
5. Conduct an investigation and make all reasonable efforts to complete the investigation within *ten school days* after the date the complaint was received, taking into consideration additional relevant information received during the course of the investigation about the reported incident.
    a. The investigation shall include:

i. Identifying all involved parties, including the student or students alleged to have engaged in the bullying behaviors, alleged target or targets and bystander or bystanders, as well as any adult who witnessed the incident or may have reliable information about it.
ii. If necessary, conducting individual interviews in a private setting with all involved parties. *The alleged target should never be interviewed in public or with the student or students alleged to have engaged in bullying.*
iii. Determining how often the conduct occurred, any past incident or continuing pattern of behavior, and the impact of behaviors on the targeted student or student's education.
iv. Assessing the individuals involved and the school-wide effects of the incident relating to safety.

6. Involve appropriate school support personnel and other staff persons with knowledge, experience, and training, as deemed appropriate and necessary, in the investigation process. An external investigator may need to be procured depending upon circumstances.
7. Make a determination whether allegations of bullying are substantiated or not and document determination in an internal report with a summarization of investigation and actions taken and recommended remedial steps along with recommended restorative measures.
    a. If it is outside the scope of TCS and determined to be a criminal act, the report manager shall refer the incident(s) to appropriate law enforcement.
8. Notify all involved parties of the outcome of the investigation.
    a. Notification must be consistent with student privacy rights under the applicable provisions of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).
    b. Parents/guardians of the students who are parties of the investigation may request a personal conference with administration to discuss the investigation, its findings, and the actions taken in response to address the reported incident.
    c. Private educational or personal data regarding an alleged perpetrator who is a student or employee of TCS shall not be disclosed, to the extent protected by law.
9. Take proper actions immediately following the conclusion of the investigation.
    a. As appropriate, TCS may also discuss the availability of social work services, counseling and psychological services, other interventions, and restorative measures. TCS will coordinate with all parties to provide supportive measures to the best of their ability and resources, however there may be situations where external resources are recommended. TCS assumes no financial responsibility for external resources and recommendations.

10. Determining an appropriate response:
    a. Identifying school risk factors and ensuring a universal strategy for school climate improvement and social and emotional development.
    b. Supporting the targeted student or students.
        i. Assign school staff and implement a plan that will restore a sense of safety for the target student and other students who have been impacted. Determine any other interventions that may be appropriate.
    c. Determine interventions and/or consequences that address the root cause of the students' bullying behaviors, taking into account the nature of the behavior and developmental age of the student.

For incidents that impact the larger school community, administration will seek to provide opportunities in safe, structured environments for affected students to speak about the incident, its impact, and what is needed to repair the harm.