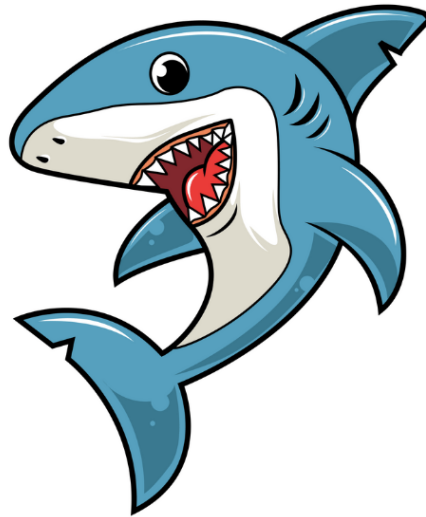


**Isaac A. Sheppard Elementary School
Staff Handbook 2023-2024
“Pursuing Exceptional Results Through the
Highest of Expectations”**



SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA

Dr. Yonaira Rodriguez, Principal
Mrs. R. Michelle Torres, Co-Principal
Dr. Tony Watlington, Sr., Superintendent

Isaac A. Sheppard Elementary School

“Pursuing Exceptional Results Through The Highest Of Expectations”

Philosophy: At Sheppard, we believe that when expectations are set high, children will rise to the challenge. Each day, our students will receive the highest quality education that is delivered by a passionate, talented, and caring staff that want to see each child reach their full potential. We put an emphasis on utilizing sound instructional strategies that implement the Common Core State Standards in a way that provides meaningful and memorable learning experiences for all of our students. Our children will develop the skills necessary to become critical thinkers so that they can gain a deep understanding of the curriculum. Our teachers utilize a data-driven approach, which informs the instructional decisions in each classroom. We believe that the entire Sheppard community must always “Be Respectful, Be Responsible, and Always Do Their Best” in order to maintain an educational environment that is conducive to learning. We will strive to meet the academic, social, and emotional needs of all of our students and their families by any means necessary.

Vision: At Sheppard Elementary School, we believe that all children CAN and WILL learn. To ensure that all children become lifelong learners, we will maintain high expectations, foster 21st century skills and promote academic excellence for all students. We will create a learning community in which all children and adults feel welcomed, respected, trusted, and viewed as valued community members. We will create a mutually supportive learning environment. We will nurture a positive school climate in a caring community which respects and values diversity.

Mission: Sheppard Elementary School will provide a safe and secure environment that motivates and empowers ALL students and parents to achieve high academic goals by providing rigorous instruction. In partnership with our school community and our School Advisory Council, the Sheppard staff will develop lifelong learners who demonstrate integrity and can cooperatively and independently succeed in the 21st Century. Together, as highly qualified educators along with our community partners, we will develop students and families who are prepared to become productive and meaningful members of society.

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”

~Nelson Mandela

Dear Sheppard Families:

I am excited to begin another great school year. We accomplished so much in 2022-23. Our attendance increased by 22% overall. Our students made academic gains. I look forward to our continued collaboration in order to ensure our students' success. We have many wonderful events occurring this year. We will celebrate our 125th year as a school community.

Please read the handbook carefully to review its contents and note any changes. The material contained in this handbook is not all-inclusive, but highlights information most often needed throughout the school year. Among its contents are many specific procedures for the effective operation of our school, as well as a review of some of the policies of the School District of Philadelphia. As you read this handbook, please remember that all policies and procedures are developed for the good of the school, its staff, our children, and families in good faith, and in compliance with the current collective bargaining agreements.

This handbook is a "living document". If at any point throughout the year you have questions or concerns, please feel free to discuss them with me. I am receptive to feedback and I am more than willing to meet with each of you.

We will continue to build on the success of previous years. Together, through high expectations, we will achieve greatness!

Sincerely,

Dr. Yonaira Rodriguez
Principal

R. Michelle Torres, MA, M.Ed
Co-Principal

BELL SCHEDULE 2023-24

Grades K – 4

9:00 AM Start Time for Pupils

3:39 PM Dismissal

- Kindergarten Dismissal: 3:30 pm
- Grades 1-4 Dismissal: 3:39pm

Arrival: Students can begin to arrive at 8:30 am for breakfast. If they are not eating school breakfast, then they should arrive at 8:45 am. **Prior to 8:45 there will not be adult supervision in the playground.**

Children should not be left unattended on the school grounds.

All Kindergarten through Second Grade students must line up in the schoolyard by 8:55 AM. Kindergarten – Waterloo St. side of the building, Grades 1-2 front of school. Students in Grades 3-4 will enter through the back doors. Teachers will begin escorting students into the building at 9:00 AM.

Dismissal: It is imperative that parents/caregivers pick up students on time during regular and early dismissal days. **There is no supervision available after school hours. School District Policy states: “if a child is not picked up on time and the parent/caregiver cannot be reached, the child shall be placed in the care of the Philadelphia School District Police.”**

Students in grades 1-2 are dismissed from the front schoolyard at 3:39 PM. Students will stay in their line until the parent picks up the child. Students in grades 3-4 are dismissed from the back schoolyard. Kindergarten students are dismissed from their classrooms. Kindergarten students must be signed out by an adult. Please arrive promptly to pick up your child.

Virtual Instruction: On the occasion that the district calls for a virtual instruction day, students are expected to log into their google classroom using their SDP issues Chromebook by 9:00 am. The teacher will provide a schedule for lunch, specials, synchronous and asynchronous instruction.

Morning Clubs: Students who attend morning clubs can arrive at 7:50 for breakfast and/or morning club. Students must be registered for morning clubs to attend. Students who arrive at 8:30 will not be admitted to clubs.

Attendance (<https://www.philasd.org/studentrights/attendance-expectations/>)

The policy of the School District requires that school-aged students enrolled in the schools of this District to attend school regularly, on time, and for the whole school day in accordance with the laws of the State of Pennsylvania. The educational program offered by this District is based upon the presence of the student and requires continuity of instruction and classroom participation.

A note signed by a parent/caregiver must be brought to school after each absence, indicating the dates and reasons for the absence. Absences will be coded “unexcused” if a note is **not** provided by the parent or caregiver. *The school is allowed to excuse no more than 8 absences via parent/caregiver note.*

When a pupil is absent for three days due to illness, a written doctor’s note documenting the medical necessity for the absence must be brought to school unless the principal has verified the legitimacy of the absence through other means. When possible, a parent is to notify the school if a pupil is to be absent for several days.

When a student reaches **3 unexcused absences**, an auto-generated letter (C-31 Letter) is sent home as a notice. Dates of absences are listed on the letter. When a student reaches **6-8 unexcused absences**, the school attendance team will contact the family in order to set up a conference and create a Student Attendance Improvement Plan (SAIP). Students who reach **10 or more unexcused absences** in a school year could potentially be referred to regional truancy court.

Every effort should be made to make-up work missed as a result of illness or other unexcused absence. Work missed because of absence can lower academic marks. Students are responsible for making up work missed as a result of suspension or other disciplinary action. Unexcused lateness which causes a student to miss all or a substantial part of the day’s instructional time may be coded as an unexcused absence.

Early Dismissal: Students may not be excused early, except in cases of emergency. If the need for an emergency early dismissal occurs, a parent/guardian must report to the main office, and sign the “Early Dismissal Book” in order to have a child released from school. Identification must be shown before we can release a child from school. Children will only be dismissed from the main office. No teacher may release a student to a parent from the classroom. In accordance with District Policy, no student will be dismissed after 3:00 PM. Please be informed that students arriving after 10:30 or leaving before 1:00 will only be given credit for half -day attendance. Half- day attendance will accumulate into a full day absence after two occurrences. This may lead to truancy if a student accumulates more than 8 unexcused absences.

Lunch Periods

There will be a 22 minute recess in the beginning of lunch period, weather permitting.

Kindergarten & K-2 ASD 11:00 to 11:45

First and Third Grade Lunch 11:45 to 12:30

Second and Fourth Grade Lunch 12:30 to 1:15

Lunchroom and Recess

Breakfast begins at 8:30. Students will come to the cafeteria beginning at 8:30 and will be held until 8:45am. If students are attending morning clubs, they should arrive by 7:50 for breakfast and then go to morning club. If students arrive after 8:30 am, students will not be able to attend morning clubs.

Lunch periods for grades K-4 are forty-five (45) minutes long which includes 22 minutes for recess. Teachers will bring their class promptly (lunches are back to back) to the lunchroom at the designated time and seat all students at their designated tables before leaving. All students are to remain seated until they are called to get their lunch. Students are able to get lunch from the cafeteria or bring lunch from home.

If your child does not eat the school lunch, consider sending the following healthy options and avoid the not so healthy options.

Healthy Lunch suggestions:

- Lunch meat or Cheese
- Lunchables
- Sandwiches
- Fruits and Vegetables
- Cereal
- Yogurt
- 100% juice, Gatorade or water

Not So Healthy Items:

- Soda
- Juices high in sugar
- Taki or other spicy items that upset kid's stomachs
- Cakes
- Chips

Please review proper lunchroom behavior and procedures with your child on a regular basis:

- Enter and exit in an orderly fashion.
- Keep your body and belongings to yourself
- Keep all food on your tray
- Wait your turn in line
- Value the property and rights of others
- Refrain from bullying and harassing others
- Place all trash in trash cans
- Follow the instructions of school personnel the first time
- Use appropriate tone and volume when speaking to others

- Keep hands, feet, and objects to yourself
- Stay seated at assigned table
- Ask permission to leave assigned table
- Make sure to clean off your area

Inclement Weather

Morning intake and lunch recess are to be conducted outdoors whenever weather permits. When outdoor intake is called for, students are not to be permitted to remain inside of doorways, hallways, etc. Children are to remain inside for morning intake and lunch recess if:

- There is significant rainfall.
- The temperature is below 32 degrees Fahrenheit and the “wind chill factor” is below 20.
- Excessive wind presents a danger.
- There is significant precipitation on the ground in the form of puddles, ice, or snow.
- A danger is present in the surrounding neighborhood.

Inclement weather delays or early dismissals will be announced by the district. Please follow your local news outlet and school district’s communications for up to date information. As a school, we will do our best to communicate with families about any delays as soon as possible. Please pay attention to ClassDojo.

Parent/School Communication:

Please impress upon your children the importance of taking home all notices. It is important for parents to check book bags, notebooks, agenda books, and also ask their children for any letters on a daily basis.

All information to be sent home from school is required to go home on the day distributed, unless otherwise directed by the administrator. Every child should have a communication folder. Use this folder to send newsletters, monthly calendars, announcements, Home and School Advisory Council information and School District publications.

Parent/Teacher Conferences:

Parent conferences should be productive and positive. It is important for all parents to participate in their child's education. Conference dates are scheduled by the district.

(<https://www.philasd.org/calendar/#1677075699804-0be59929-f936>) If you are unable to attend a conference, please contact your child's teacher to schedule a time to meet.

Parents should contact the teacher to schedule a conference to address any concerns they are having about their child's progress at any time.

Parent Visitor

Parents are welcome to visit the school. All parents must check-in at the main office. Per SDP protocol, all parents must have valid identification to enter the school. It is preferable to schedule an appointment prior to showing up to the building.

The School District of Philadelphia has a parent visitor policy. Please see the policy here:

<https://www.philasd.org/schoolboard/wp-content/uploads/sites/892/2022/09/School-Visitor-Administrative-Procedures-for-Policy-907.docx-1.pdf>

Please be mindful that we are a school. Behaviors not conducive to keeping our students safe will result in an expulsion which would result in the parent not being able to enter the building and possible call to DHS. These behaviors include but are not limited to:

- Addressing a child (not yours) without their parent present.
- Foul language and/or aggressive behavior
- Appearing to be under the influence of drugs and alcohol

Parent/School Communication:

Please update any changes to your address and/or phone numbers. It is imperative that we have accurate information so that we may contact you in the event of an emergency.

Parents will receive communication from the school via letters, newsletters and calendars. You may receive phone calls as well. As a school, we will use ClassDojo to share information.

Please join the ClassDojo community via this link:

<https://www.classdojo.com/ul/p/addKid?target=school&schoolID=52629ad92afd34040800025f>

Title 1/SAC:

Your input to our school community is invaluable. Parents should attend monthly meetings including Title 1 and SAC meetings. There will be attendance incentives for each meeting. These dates are scheduled.

- Back to School: September 21st, 2023 at 3:45pm
- SAC meeting: October 31st, 2023 at 2:00pm
- Title 1 Fall Night: November 14th, 2023 at 3:45
- SAC Meeting: January 19th, 2023 at 9:00 am
- Title 1 Winter Event: February 1st, 2024 at 2:00 pm
- SAC budget Meeting: March 14, 2024 at 9:00 am
- Title 1 Parent Budget Meeting: May 16th, 2024 at 9:00 am

Uniform Policy

The School District of Philadelphia mandates that school uniforms be worn by all students every day that school is in session. Exceptions to this policy must be approved in writing by the administration and /or teaching staff.

Parents will be immediately notified if a student is in violation of the dress code and failure to wear the acceptable school uniform will result in loss of recess and/or other privileges determined by the administration. If a student continues to violate this policy, further disciplinary action will be taken.

- Boys and Girls wear solid navy golf or button down shirts with a collar and khaki slacks. Students may also wear a shirt with the Sheppard logo. Students may wear a long sleeve shirt under their uniform or Sheppard tee shirt.
- Girls may also wear a khaki skirt or jumper that is appropriate in length at the knee.
- Students should wear comfortable shoes, such as a loafer or sneaker—NO flip-flops, open toe or backless shoes. Hats, head coverings and outerwear are not part of the dress code. If head coverings are to be worn for religious purposes, parents must notify the school in writing.
- Hoodies are not part of the uniform. During cold weather students can wear a sweater but no hoodies in the building. If your child wears a hoodie, they will have to take it off and place it in the coat closet for the duration of the school day.

It is expected that students will come to school clean and well groomed. Hats, coats and jackets must be placed in the closets in the morning.

Not Permitted: Bare shoulders, sleeveless T-shirts, tank tops, halter or midriff tops, torn clothing, short-shorts and mini skirts are prohibited. Clothing with offensive language, pictures, or symbols are prohibited.

Field Trips

All class trips should have educational value and should be geared to the instructional program. Parents/guardians must give written permission allowing their children to participate in classroom trips. Parents must **contact the teacher one week prior** to the field trip to confirm that they are volunteering. Parents who are volunteering on field trips will need all clearances completed. They must ride on the bus with the students. School District policy prohibits teachers and chaperones from taking their own children. Some field trips will take place at public spaces (i.e. the zoo). If you show up to the trip on your own, you will not be able to participate with or engage with the students. This is for the safety of all students.

Students may not be excluded due to inappropriate behavior without discussion with student parents/guardians and previous approval from the principal. Students who have been a disciplinary problem of long standing and have permission to be excluded must be notified one (1) week in advance of the intent to exclude. Any funds collected will be returned to the student if he/she is excluded for disciplinary reasons. The sponsor of the trip will notify the parent/guardian.

Behavior:

As a school, we follow Positive Behavior and Incentive System (PBIS) as a behavior management tool. Students will receive Sheppard pride bucks for (1) Being respectful, (2) Being Responsible and (3) Always doing their best. The Sheppard pride bucks can be used to purchase entry to incentives (i.e. Rolling Thunder) or items (i.e shopping from the prize cart).

At the beginning of the school day, teachers are to collect all cell phones and keep them secured. Cell Phones will be returned to students at dismissal. Students who do not submit their phones will face disciplinary actions for violating the district's policy. Please see the SDP cell phone policy <https://www.philasd.org/schoolboard/wp-content/uploads/sites/884/2017/06/237.pdf>

The following items are not permitted in the school:

- CD players, radios, ipods, MP3's
- Cell Phones
- Any other electronic devices
- Toys
- Glass bottles
- Chewing gum
- Weapons or objects that might be used in harming someone (BB Gun, razor blade, mace, pepper spray)
- Hoodies or sweaters with hoods

Infractions that can lead to consequences:

- Disrespectful; talking back to adults, using foul language; using inappropriate language
- Destruction of school property
- Theft
- Eloping (leaving the classroom without permission)
- Hitting; physical aggression

Students who misbehave will face consequences. There is a progression of disciplinary actions (include but not limited to):

- Verbal warning
- Parent contact (i.e. call home or Class Dojo message)
- Redirection
- Removal from classroom
- Lunch Detention; Loss of recess
- Loss of Fun Friday
- Loss of field trips and/or fun activities
- In-School suspension
- Out-of-school suspension

The Office of Family and Community Engagement

The Office of Family and Community Engagement (FACE) offers a wide array of programs and services for families, students and community members. FACE answers inquiries both over the phone and in person. They have staff ready to help in a variety of locations and in a variety of languages. Our FACE liaison is at Sheppard on FRIDAYS. FACE Liaisons generally help facilitate the resolution of family concerns by supporting families in connecting them to the appropriate people and resources to address their needs. If any parent/guardian would like to speak to one of their team members, Family Engagement Liaisons are available to speak with you at your child's school or you can stop by the Parent and Family Resource Center at the School District of Philadelphia's Administration Building. For additional information and support requests, please visit the [FACE website](#) or reach out in person via the Parent and Family Resource Center (PFRC) or by phone via the Call Center 215-400-4000.

No Smoking Policy:

Smoking is forbidden in any school in the School District of Philadelphia, including staff bathrooms, the schoolyard or entrances. Please be mindful of this policy especially during arrival and dismissal.

Contact List

Mrs. Torres- School Secretary

- Scheduling time with your teacher or principal/co-principal
- Reporting that your child will be late or absent
- Questions about everything!

Nurse Murphy- School nurse

- All things health related

Justine Rybaltowski- Counselor

- Concerns about your child's emotional health
- Accessing community resources

Melissa Achuff- Special Education Compliance Monitor

- Questions about your child's IEP or special education services

Markcus Gill, HPE Teacher/Attendance Designee

- Questions about your child's attendance

Carmelina Vazquez- ESOL

- Questions about your child's EL Level

Important Dates

September 2023

- 4th: Labor Day; Schools closed for students and staff; Administrative offices closed
- 5th: First day of school for students
- 5th-11th: Kindergarten interview days (Three Hour early dismissal K only)
- 25th: Yom Kippur; Schools closed for students and staff; Administrative offices closed
- 29th: Staff Professional Development (Half Day); Three Hour Early Dismissal for Students

Additional Important Dates:

16th-17th: Rosh Hashanah (Weekend)

October 2023

- 27th: Staff Professional Development (Full Day); School closed for students

Additional Important Dates:

9th: Indigenous Peoples' Day of Learning (In-school day)

November 2023

- 7th: Election Day; Schools closed for students and staff
- 22nd: 3-hour Early Dismissal for students and staff
- 23rd-24th: Thanksgiving Recess; School closed for students and staff; Administrative offices closed
- 27th: Term 1 Report Card Conferences (Full Day); School closed for students

Additional Important Dates:

5th: Daylight Saving Time ends

11th: Veterans Day

12th: Diwali

December 2023

- 15th: Staff Professional Development (Half Day); Three Hour Early Dismissal for Students
 - 25th: Christmas Day; School closed for students and staff; Administrative offices closed
 - 26th-29th: Winter Recess; School closed for students and staff; Administrative offices closed
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January 2024

- 1st: New Year's Day; School closed for students and staff; Administrative offices closed
- 2nd: Staff Professional Development (Full Day); School closed for students
- 15th: Dr. Martin Luther King Jr Day; School closed for students and staff; Administrative offices closed
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Additional Important Dates:

3rd-17th: Keystone Testing Window

6th: Three Kings Day

February 2024

- 1st, 2nd: 2nd Term Report Card Conferences (Half Day); Three Hour Early Dismissal for Students
- 9th: Staff Professional Development (Half Day); Three Hour Early Dismissal for Students
- 19th: Presidents' Day; School closed for students and staff; Administrative offices closed

Additional Important Dates:

10th: Lunar New Year (weekend)

March 2024

- 8th: Staff Professional Development (Half Day); Three Hour Early Dismissal for Students
- 25th-28th: Spring Recess; Schools closed for students and staff
- 29th: Good Friday; School closed for students and staff; Administrative offices closed

Additional Important Dates:

10th: Daylight Saving Time starts

11th: Ramadan begins

April 2024

- 4th, 5th: Report Card Conferences (Half Day); Three Hour Early Dismissal for Students
- 23rd: Election Day; School closed for students and staff (tentative)
- 10th: Eid al-Fitr; School closed for students and staff; Administrative offices closed

Additional Important Dates:

8th: Ramadan ends 22nd: PSSA testing window begins

May 2024

- 10th: Staff Professional Development (Half Day); Three Hour Early Dismissal for Students
- 27th: Memorial Day; School closed for students and staff; Administrative offices closed

Additional Important Dates:

3rd: PSSA testing window ends

13th- 24th: Keystone testing window

June 2024

- 13th: Staff Professional Development (Half Day); Three Hour Early Dismissal for Students
- 14th: Last Day of School for students and staff; Three Hour Early Dismissal for Students, Full day for Staff
- 17th: Eid al-Adha; Administrative offices closed
- 19th: Juneteenth; Administrative offices closed

[Board-approved](#) 2/23/2023