



Student and Family Handbook

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Welcome

Welcome to Pinnacle Chartered Public School. We are honored to have you as part of our founding community. This handbook has been created to explain the expectations, policies, and procedures that will guide our daily operations and ensure that all students and families understand their rights and responsibilities. It is more than a set of rules; it reflects the values that shape our school culture: curiosity, competency, respect, and community. By reading and understanding this handbook, students and families will be better prepared to engage fully in the learning experience at Pinnacle and to work in partnership with our faculty and staff.

Mission and Vision

The mission of Pinnacle Chartered Public School is to prepare students for successful, fulfilling lives by supporting them in reaching mastery of essential knowledge, skills, and habits. We are committed to developing learners who are curious, resilient, and compassionate. Our mission emphasizes both academic achievement and the personal growth required to become responsible citizens.

Our vision is of a school where each student's learning path is recognized as unique. We seek to create an environment where learning is competency-based, where time is flexible, and where mastery—not seat time—defines progress. We envision graduates who are able to think critically, communicate effectively, and act responsibly in the service of their communities. Our guiding values of respect, responsibility, inclusion, curiosity, and growth are woven into every aspect of school life, from classroom instruction to extracurricular activities, from advisory groups to family engagement.

Academic Expectations

At Pinnacle, learning is organized around clearly defined competencies that describe the knowledge and skills students are expected to master. These competencies serve as performance standards against which progress is measured. Unlike traditional systems that rely on grades and credit hours, Pinnacle promotes students based on demonstrated mastery. This approach means that learning can proceed at an individualized pace: students who need more time are not penalized, and those who are ready to advance can move forward without unnecessary delay.

Assessment of student progress takes multiple forms. Teachers use portfolios, exhibitions, projects, presentations, and performance assessments in addition to more conventional tests. The emphasis is always on whether the student can demonstrate the competency in question. Regular progress reports will be provided, and families will participate in student-led conferences during which students present evidence of their learning and reflect on their growth.

Graduation requirements at Pinnacle align with state standards, ensuring that students meet the same expectations as their peers across New Hampshire. However, our competency-based model provides flexibility in how and when students meet those standards. We also incorporate Pinnacle-specific competencies such as civic responsibility, creativity, and wellness to ensure that our graduates are prepared for the full spectrum of challenges and opportunities they will face.

Code of Conduct and Discipline

Pinnacle is committed to cultivating a positive school culture that is safe, respectful, and conducive to learning. Each year, the Code of Conduct will be developed collaboratively by students and staff during advisory sessions. This process ensures that expectations are not imposed from above but are understood, accepted, and owned by the community.

The Code of Conduct emphasizes restorative practices rather than punitive measures. When misbehavior occurs, the goal is not simply to punish but to help students understand the impact of their actions, take responsibility, and restore any harm done. Restorative circles, mediated conversations, and agreements to repair harm are central to our disciplinary philosophy.

That said, certain behaviors require formal responses. Pinnacle uses a progressive discipline model in which responses escalate only when less formal measures prove ineffective or when the seriousness of the behavior warrants immediate intervention. Minor infractions may be addressed through redirection or advisory-based discussions. More serious infractions—such as harassment, threats, or repeated disruption—will result in administrative intervention. Suspensions and expulsions are reserved for the most serious cases and follow the due process procedures described below.

Due Process Rights

All students are entitled to due process before disciplinary action is imposed. In cases of short-term suspension, defined as removal for up to ten school days, students and families will be given oral or written notice of the charges, an explanation of the evidence, and the opportunity to respond. In cases where a long-term suspension or expulsion is considered, written notice will be provided in advance and a formal hearing will be conducted before the Board of Trustees. Families will have the right to present evidence, call witnesses, and be represented if they wish.

For students with disabilities, additional protections apply. If disciplinary action would result in a change in placement, a manifestation determination review will be convened to assess whether the behavior in question was a manifestation of the student's disability. In such cases, the student will continue to receive services in compliance with federal law, and the IEP team will consider modifications to the plan to address behavioral needs.

Attendance and Participation

Attendance is essential for learning. The school day runs from 8:15 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. and students are expected to be present and on time every day. Parents or guardians must notify the school office when a student is absent. Absences will be classified as excused for reasons such as illness, family emergency, or religious observance, and unexcused in all other cases.

Excessive unexcused absences compromise student progress and will trigger intervention. After three unexcused absences, families will be contacted. Continued unexcused absences may result in a meeting to develop an attendance improvement plan. Truancy will be addressed in accordance with New Hampshire law, which requires schools to work with families to ensure students attend regularly.

Participation extends beyond physical presence. Students are expected to engage actively in classwork, advisory activities, and community learning opportunities. Regular participation is a condition for demonstrating mastery of competencies.

Special Education and Section 504

Pinnacle provides a free appropriate public education to all students with disabilities, consistent with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. Students who require specialized instruction will receive services under an Individualized Education Program (IEP) developed by a team that includes the family, educators, and specialists. Accommodations for students with disabilities who do not require specialized instruction will be provided under Section 504 plans.

Services may be delivered by Pinnacle staff or contracted specialists, depending on student need. Supports may include push-in services in the general classroom, pull-out services in small groups, or individualized therapy sessions. Related services such as speech, occupational therapy, or counseling will be provided as required. Families will receive procedural safeguard notices explaining their rights, including the right to participate in planning, to request evaluations, and to pursue dispute resolution if disagreements arise.

Non-Discrimination Policy

Pinnacle is committed to providing an environment free from discrimination, harassment, and bullying. The school does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, religion, or any other status protected by law. Harassment and bullying are prohibited by state law (RSA 193-F) and by Pinnacle policy.

Reports of discrimination, harassment, or bullying may be made to any staff member, to the Executive Director, or directly to the Board of Trustees. Reports will be investigated promptly and fairly. Retaliation against individuals who make complaints is strictly prohibited. Corrective action will be taken as needed to restore a safe and respectful environment.

Health, Safety, and Emergency Procedures

The health and safety of students are paramount. Students must meet state immunization requirements in order to attend school, unless exempted for medical or religious reasons. Parents must provide written authorization for any medications to be administered at school. All medications must be stored securely in the nurse's office.

Pinnacle maintains emergency procedures for fire, severe weather, lockdown, and evacuation scenarios. Drills are conducted regularly so that students and staff are familiar with protocols. The school will work closely with local emergency responders to ensure preparedness.

All staff members are mandated reporters of suspected abuse or neglect, as required under RSA 169-C. Reports are made immediately to the appropriate authorities to ensure the protection of students. Pinnacle also maintains a wellness policy that encourages healthy eating, physical activity, and emotional well-being.

Technology and Acceptable Use

Technology is an integral part of the learning environment at Pinnacle. Students are issued devices for use during the school year. With this privilege comes the responsibility to use technology ethically, safely, and for educational purposes.

Students are prohibited from using technology to harass others, to access inappropriate content, or to damage equipment. Cyberbullying, unauthorized access to systems, or misuse of social media will result in disciplinary consequences. Families and students will be asked to review and sign a technology use agreement at the start of each year, affirming their commitment to responsible digital citizenship.

Extracurricular, Enrichment, and Extended Learning Opportunities

Learning at Pinnacle extends beyond the classroom. Students are encouraged to participate in extracurricular activities such as clubs, sports, arts, and service projects. These activities foster leadership, teamwork, and school spirit.

Enrichment programs are offered on Fridays, when the flexible schedule allows students to explore new interests. These may include extended science labs, visual and performing arts workshops, wellness activities, or partnerships with community organizations.

Extended Learning Opportunities (ELOs) provide students with the chance to earn credit through internships, mentorships, independent studies, and community projects. Each ELO must be approved by the school, aligned to competencies, and documented through a plan and final demonstration of learning.

Parent and Family Engagement

Families are essential partners in the success of students at Pinnacle. The school communicates regularly with families through newsletters, the parent portal, conferences, and community events. Families are invited to attend exhibitions of learning, volunteer in school activities, and participate in advisory committees.

Translation and accessibility supports are available for families who need them. Pinnacle values family feedback and provides opportunities for parents and guardians to share their perspectives through surveys, meetings, and forums. We believe that when families and schools work together, students achieve more.

Grievance and Complaint Procedures

Pinnacle is committed to addressing concerns fairly and transparently. If a student or family has a concern, the first step is to discuss it directly with the staff member involved. If the concern is not resolved, it should be brought to the Executive Director. As a final step, families may submit a written appeal to the Board of Trustees.

Grievances will be handled confidentially and without retaliation. Families also have the right to seek resolution through the New Hampshire Department of Education if concerns remain unresolved.