

Clarke Caregiver Handbook

2025-2026



Clarke teaches children who are deaf or hard of hearing to listen and talk.

5414 Overbrook Ave
Philadelphia, PA 19131
267-930-5094
Fax # 215-884-5401
clarkeschools.org
Info@clarkeschools.org
Ashley Mahlstedt Weaver, Director
Updated 9/9/2025

[Type here]

A MESSAGE FROM OUR DIRECTOR	1
Introduction	2
Title IX Notice of Nondiscrimination	3
Statement of Purpose	3
Objectives.....	4
Program Goals.....	5
General Information about Educational Programs.....	5
School Calendar.....	6
Daily Schedule	7
Transportation	7
Transportation, Arrival and Departure	7
Arrival and Departure.....	7
Arrival In the morning,	7
Dismissal in the afternoon,	8
Curriculum.....	8
Curriculum Goals.....	9
Core Early Learning Standards	10
Auditory Speech and Language Embedded into the Curriculum and Instruction	11
Auditory Speech and Language Therapy (Speech Therapy).....	11
Audiology	11
Spare Parts and Batteries for Cochlear Implants and Hearing Aids:.....	12
Library	13
Family Communication	13
General Communications and Messages:.....	13
School Closings and Delays:	14
Clarke PA Class Dojo.....	14
Progressing from Clarke	15
Family Involvement.....	15
Parent/Caregiver Custody and Sharing Information.....	15
Families in Temporary Housing.....	15
Caregiver Observation and Conference	15
Visitors to the Building.....	16
Release of Children from School	16

Security of the Building	16
Caregiver-Family Rights.....	17
Progress Reports	17
Health Policies.....	18
Annual Health Assessment.....	18
Prescription Medication:.....	19
Emergency Medical Plan	19
Smoking/Tobacco.....	19
Fire Drills and Emergency Procedures	19
Food, Snacks and Nutrition	20
Lunch at Clarke Schools for Hearing and Speech	20
Special Events/Birthdays.....	20
Helpful Hints.....	22
Adjustment to School.....	22
Bringing Things from Home.....	22
Clothing	22
Social-Emotional Learning and Behavior Supports	23
Behavior and Discipline Policy	24
Parent/Adult Conduct and Behavior	24
Bullying.....	25
School Visitors/Building Security	25
Sexual Harassment.....	26
SPECIAL EVENTS	26
Five Reasons to Hold Classroom Celebrations.....	26
Research, Fundraising, Publicity and Observation Policies.....	26
Fundraising and Publicity	26
Observations and Student Clinicians.....	27
Connect with the Clarke Community and Online Resources	28
FAMILY/CAREGIVER SIGNATURE PAGE	29

A MESSAGE FROM OUR DIRECTOR

September 8, 2025

Dear families:

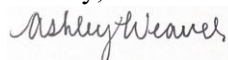
Thank you for choosing Clarke Schools for Hearing and Speech Pennsylvania for your child's education! Clarke Pennsylvania is part of the first and largest nonprofit organization of its kind, offering a continuum of services for students and their families at home, at sites along the East Coast, in mainstream classrooms and remotely through teleservices. In 1867, the Clarke School for the Deaf was founded in Northampton, MA, where Clarke maintains its home base. Clarke's focus in 1867, and today, remains the same – to provide children who are deaf or hard of hearing with the skills to listen and speak. Our goal is to prepare children to succeed in mainstream classrooms alongside their peers with typical hearing. You may learn more about Clarke's history here - <https://clarkeschools.org/about-us/history/>

The Clarke Pennsylvania team is excited to welcome our students back to school in September and filling the halls with the many voices that make up our school family. Looking ahead at the 2025-2026 school year, I am focused on continuing to move Clarke Pennsylvania forward. Forward in communication and continuing our strong parent-teacher-school partnerships by rethinking the way information is shared. Forward in creating a Clarke community among our students, staff, current and past families, and community partners through opportunities to learn from one another. Lastly, forward in programs and instructional methods to stay current with best practices and the dynamic ways our students learn.

By choosing Clarke Pennsylvania, you have already made the important decision to help the child(ren) in your life develop listening skills to learn spoken language on the same level as their peers with typical hearing. Clarke Pennsylvania uses a strong listening- and speaking-based approach to prepare children who are deaf or hard of hearing to mainstream into the public or private schools of their choice, learning alongside their peers with typical hearing with minimal support. At Clarke, you will find a specialized learning environment, which has been designed to maximize each child's listening and speaking skills and prepare them for grade-level, mainstream academics, while learning and working with them in a "whole child" approach. At Clarke, we help each child develop a foundation comprised of confidence, love, sense of self-worth and pride.

This handbook provides you with our goals, expectations, policies and procedures. You have entrusted us to partner with you to provide the child in your life with the best possible education. As we embark upon a new school year working together as a team, may the spirit of cooperation, support, and encouragement lead to a wonderful and successful year at Clarke Schools for Hearing and Speech!

Sincerely,



Ashley Mahlstedt Weaver
Director, Clarke Schools for Hearing and Speech
Pennsylvania

Clarke admits children who are deaf or hard of hearing, providing services to our families regardless of race, color, gender, religion, cultural heritage, political beliefs, national origin or marital status.

Introduction

This handbook has been prepared as an informational guide regarding Clarke Schools for Hearing and Speech (Clarke) policies and procedures. It is an important reference to save and refer to throughout the school year. The handbook was revised in response to suggestions from caregivers and staff while still meeting regulations of Saint Joseph's University, under which Clarke operates. Clarke is a state approved private school, which accepts students from public sources. As such, it retains autonomy over admissions. It is important that caregivers read and understand the information in this handbook.

Please sign and return the Signature Page found in the appendix to the Office Manager, indicating that you, as a member of the Clarke community, have read, understand and agree to follow these policies and procedures. The school must have on file the completed signature page as a requirement for admission.

Title IX Notice of Nondiscrimination

Clarke does not discriminate on the basis of sex in admission, administration of its educational programs or activities or employment. Clarke Schools is required by Title IX and its implementing regulations at 34 C.F.R. Part 106 not to discriminate on the basis of sex in admission, administration of its educational programs or activities or employment. The Senior Human Resources Manager, 45 Round Hill Road, Northampton, MA 01060, telephone number 413-582-1155, has been designated as the employee responsible for coordinating Clarke efforts to comply with and carry out its responsibilities under Title IX. Inquiries concerning the application of Title IX and its implementing regulations at 34 C.F.R. Part 106 to Clarke Schools may be referred to Andrea Harkins or to the U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, at 400 Maryland Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20202-1100, telephone number 800-421-3481.

Statement of Purpose

At Clarke, we teach children who are deaf or hard of hearing to listen and talk.

Children served by Clarke use advanced technologies, including cochlear implants and hearing aids, to maximize their access to sound. We work with children and their families from infancy through their teen years. Our teachers of the deaf, audiologists and speech-language pathologists have the background, training and experience to prepare children academically and socially for a world of limitless possibilities. Clarke children listen and learn in the classroom, run, and laugh with their friends on the playground, and have lives filled with music, sports, family and community. Many children who come to Clarke are ready to attend their neighborhood schools by preschool and kindergarten. In addition to our work with children, we serve families and adults through a wide range of programs and services. With our extensive staff of experts, physical locations along the Eastern Seaboard and a robust teleservices program delivering services remotely, we strive to reach people with hearing loss at all stages of life.

We believe that the home environment is the most influential factor in a young child's life. We believe that teachers and families should work together to ensure the safety, happiness and overall development of children enrolled at Clarke Schools for Hearing and Speech.

1. We have an open-door policy for caregivers and families and encourage families to visit at any time their child is at school.
2. We use various platforms to promote home/school communication, which include home/school notebook, blog, etc. to collaborate with families and other caregivers to ensure ongoing communication across the child's daily environments. We are happy to arrange progress meetings and or phone calls with the child's teachers or the director.
3. Families are encouraged to participate in caregiver-teacher conferences, guided observations, family fun nights and caregiver workshops at Clarke Schools for Hearing and Speech.

We believe that educational planning for children who are deaf or hard of hearing must consider the whole child, and not just the communication needs. Educational experiences should support learning across all developmental domains: cognitive development, social and emotional development, motor development and communication development. We believe that children learn best when curriculum is presented in theme-based units, including hands-on experience with the materials and high levels of teacher guidance and interaction.

1. We provide a comprehensive preschool program with an enriched language component. The children's educational needs are addressed in a structured, well-ordered, child-centered, process-oriented developmental curriculum designed to promote the acquisition of age-appropriate conceptual and problem-solving skills.
2. We provide age-appropriate activities and materials that encourage children to explore and build foundations for knowledge in Mathematics, Science, English Language Arts, and History and Social Sciences, Health Education and Arts.
3. Each child is provided with activities and instruction to promote acquisition of new skills based on their individual level of development.
4. Our typical class has up to eight students, providing a small student/teacher ratio which allows for ample individual instruction and attention in the classroom. Each child also receives 30 minutes of daily audition, speech and language instruction outside of the classroom. These sessions may include a peer at times to provide opportunity for peer-to-peer communication, and opportunity for specific work on social routines and conversational skills.

Our team has extensive knowledge in child development, hearing loss, audiology and speech and language development as it relates to children who are deaf and hard of hearing.

1. We have a multi-disciplinary team of teachers at Clarke Schools for Hearing and Speech, including, teachers of the deaf, speech-language pathologists, audiologists and early childhood teachers. Our staff works collaboratively to ensure that all the children's needs are met.
2. All staff hold certification to their position. All staff participate in ongoing professional development activities.

Objectives

1. To provide a strong academic base by (a) employing a staff that is certified, well-prepared and abreast of current educational best practices for children who are deaf or hard of hearing; (b) continuously updating curriculum to meet the educational needs and prepare students for the mainstream; (c) increasing the literacy skills of all students.
2. To provide direct instruction on developing the self-awareness and self-expression skills to promote confidence with their hearing loss by (a) ability to explain their own hearing loss and equipment, (b) communicate appropriate accommodations, (c) troubleshoot their own equipment in a variety of settings.
3. To promote the development of listening and spoken language skills throughout the school day by (a) daily audition, speech and language therapy sessions, (b) focused auditory targets embedded into academic curriculum.
4. To provide sound training in communication (speech, language, listening and social skills) by (a) providing adequate amplification devices; (b) providing acoustically sound classrooms; and (c) providing sufficient print and non-print materials to promote development of articulation, voice, language, pragmatic and social language skills.
5. To provide optimal access in all settings by maintaining the integrity of the hearing technology equipment, and ensure the environment is accessible for each child. Individual auditory, speech and language services are also available for children in mainstream programs.

6. To analyze each child's ability to hear specific sounds, identify auditory, articulation and language concerns and dedicate time to building the speech and language skills needed for success in a hearing world.

Additionally, each child has an Individual Educational Plan (IEP) with individualized goals and specific objectives. The goals and objectives for each individual child are based on the child's levels in the areas of auditory, speech, expressive language, receptive language, cognitive, fine motor, gross motor, life skills and social-emotional development.

Program Goals

Clarke Pennsylvania's program is designed to provide educational programming that is specifically designed to meet the needs of children, who because of a diagnosed hearing loss, are currently unable to benefit sufficiently from instruction provided for children with typical hearing. Clarke Pennsylvania's goal is to prepare children who are deaf or hard of hearing to join their peers in a neighborhood school of their family's choice. To accomplish this, Clarke Pennsylvania utilizes a listening and spoken language method of instruction, with evidence-based strategies to support a student's auditory, speech and language development alongside typical preschool educational and developmental milestones.

General Information about Educational Programs

Clarke Schools for Hearing and Speech is a national nonprofit organization using a listening and spoken language approach with children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Clarke's continuum of services includes a Birth to Age Three Program, Preschool/Early Childhood Program, Mainstream Services (Massachusetts and Pennsylvania) and teleservices. Services are customized to fit various needs and ages.



Clarke Schools for Hearing and Speech in Philadelphia 2025 - 2026 School Calendar

JULY						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

19 Student Days
19 Staff Days

AUGUST						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

6 Student Days
6 Staff Days

SEPTEMBER						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

17 Student Days
21 Staff Days

OCTOBER						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

23 Student Days
23 Staff Days

NOVEMBER						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

17 Student Days
18 Staff Days

DECEMBER						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

16 Student Days
17 Staff Days

July
7 Summer Session Begins for Staff and Students

AUGUST
TBD 6th or 7th - End of Year Celebration
8 Last Day of Summer Session

SEPTEMBER
2-5 Teacher Inservice (No School for Students)
8 First Day for Students
18 Back to School Night

OCTOBER

NOVEMBER
4 Teacher Inservice - No School for Students
27-28 Thanksgiving Holiday (School Closed)

DECEMBER
4 Parent Evening Conferences
5 Parent Conferences - No School for Students
24-31 Winter Break Begins for Students (School Closed)

JANUARY
1-2 Winter Break (School Closed)
19 Martin Luther King Holiday (School Closed)

FEBRUARY
16 President's Holiday (School Closed)

MARCH
5 Parent Evening Conferences
6 Parent Conferences - No School for Students
20 Teacher Inservice - No School for Students
30-31 Spring Break (School Closed)

APRIL
1-6 Spring Break - (School Closed)
24 Grandparents Day

MAY
TBD Clarke Listening Walk
25 Memorial Day Holiday (School Closed)

JUNE
17 Last Day of School for Students
17 Parent Evening Conferences
18 Parent Conferences - No School for Students
19 Juneteenth Holiday (School Closed)

Staff Days	214
Student Days	180
Student Summer Session	25

 School Closed For All
 No School for Students
 Parent Information Meeting
 Grandparents Day

JANUARY						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

19 Student Days
19 Staff Days

FEBRUARY						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28

19 Student Days
19 Staff Days

MARCH						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

18 Student Days
20 Staff Days

APRIL						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

18 Student Days
18 Staff Days

MAY						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

20 Student Days
20 Staff Days

JUNE						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

13 Student Days
14 Staff Days

Daily Schedule

Clarke Schools for Hearing and Speech Pennsylvania Preschool program hours are Monday through Friday from 9:00 A.M. to 1:30 P.M. Each classroom participates in the following activities daily. The times may vary from classroom to classroom to accommodate for developmentally appropriate expectations and rotating speech therapy schedules:

9:00-9:30am	Arrival/Centers/Listening Checks
9:30-10:00am	Morning Meeting
10:00-10:30am	Snack
10:30-11:00am	Language 1
11:00-11:30am	Centers
11:30-12:00pm	Language 2
12:00-12:30pm	Lunch
12:30-1:00pm	Recess/Gross Motor Play
1:00-1:30pm	Literacy/Afternoon Meeting

Transportation

Clarke Pennsylvania works in partnership with individual counties to support transportation for enrolled students. Parents have the option of providing transportation for their child to and from Clarke themselves. While students are in route to and from Clarke Pennsylvania, the transportation company is responsible for their well-being, documenting and reporting any incidents that occur in transport via company policy. Upon arrival at Clarke, drivers or bus aids hand off students to Clarke Pennsylvania staff members, at which time, Clarke assumes the role of responsible party. If a student is transported to and/or from a childcare facility, it is the responsibility of the childcare facility to bring the child to the bus and get them off of the bus. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your child's transportation services, you can contact your service coordinator or transportation company directly. Clarke Pennsylvania is not responsible for arranging student transportation to and from school.

Transportation, Arrival and Departure

Arrival and Departure

Clarke Pennsylvania's school day begins at 9:00 am and ends at 1:30 pm.

Arrival In the morning,

Beginning at 8:50 am until 9:10, staff will bring students into the building from cars and transportation vehicles. Vehicles may enter the parking lot from 54th Street and staff will support getting students outside the main doors. If you prefer to get out of your vehicle, please park along Overbrook Ave and meet staff outside the front doors. If you are in the car line, we ask that you remain in your vehicle to keep the flow of traffic moving smoothly.

If you arrive later than 9:10 am, please call the main office at (267)930-5094 or ring the bell and someone will come downstairs to bring your child to their classroom. Please do not bring students upstairs without the accompaniment of a Clarke team member.

Please call or send an email if you know your child will be absent, arriving late, or in need of early dismissal.

Dismissal in the afternoon.

At 1:30 pm, staff will begin taking students to their bus for dismissal.

The students being picked up by parents/caregivers/etc. will be brought to your/their vehicle. **Wait in your vehicle** for someone to bring your child to you. Once your child is secure in your vehicle, safely exit the parking lot.

Please direct any concerns to Anne Malarick at amalarick@clarkeschools.org, 267-930-5094 x8235.

Busing

If your child is bused back and forth to school, the bus drivers or attendants will also be asked to follow this procedure. Transportation is determined at your child's IEP team meeting. All questions or concerns should first be directed to the bus company. If a challenge occurs, email Anne Malarick at amalarick@clarkeschools.org or Ashley Mahlstedt at amahlstedt@clarkeschools.org. It is mandated that the bus drivers/bus assistants are responsible for buckling the children into their car seats. Clarke's staff are not to board the bus/van or assist in this process.

Curriculum

Preschool and pre-kindergarten classroom activities are designed to enhance children's listening, speech and language while supporting their pre-academic/academic, social, emotional, cognitive, physical and creative skill development. Children engage in problem-solving, discovery, exploration, reasoning, and experiential activities in a joyful, nurturing environment. Classrooms are designed for the unique acoustical needs of children with hearing loss, and curriculum is aligned with state and national standards. Classes are led by experienced professionals. Classes are taught by master's-level teachers of the deaf who are educated in the Listening and Spoken Language (LSL) approach to intervention. All children receive daily auditory speech and language therapy with a speech-language pathologist trained in auditory-verbal therapy and/or listening and spoken language.

Clarke Pennsylvania classrooms incorporate The Creative Curriculum into classroom instruction. The Creative Curriculum is an early childhood curriculum that builds children's confidence, creativity and critical thinking skills through hands-on, project-based investigations. The Creative Curriculum is aligned to the PA Start Early Learning Standards for Preschool and is integrated into Clarke Pennsylvania's literacy and social-emotion learning curricula. In addition to The Creative Curriculum, Clarke Pennsylvania preschool classrooms engage in theme-based learning units to strengthen students vocabulary development and content knowledge about their environment and community.

Curriculum Goals

Audition, Speech and Language: Preschool children are engaged in activities throughout the day that require receptive and expressive language skills and ongoing communication development. Specific activities are planned throughout the day that target the child's auditory, speech and language development goals. Classroom activities provide opportunities for carryover of targeted skills to more realistic settings. Small group and one-on-one instruction emphasize auditory, speech, language, and other cognitive skills simultaneously.

Sensory-Motor Integration: We integrate motor skills and the five senses through various types of experiences daily. Finger painting, sand and water play, manipulation of materials and experimenting with a variety of textures provide many enriching experiences. Students spend time focusing on fine motor skills, increasing manual dexterity and eye/hand coordination through activities such as learning to write letters and numbers.

Math: Children utilize math concepts in all areas. Number recognition, one-to-one correspondence, counting, shapes, patterning, comparing, measuring and time sequences are incorporated during calendar, story time, snack, lunch and learning centers. Math concepts introduce many new vocabulary words. Understanding and using these new words is one of our goals.

Art: Art is an ongoing process of discovery and experimentation. Families can reinforce the rich vocabulary and language that are reflected in the many projects completed in school. Crayons, paint, finger paint, clay, markers, watercolors, chalk, scissors, and glue are always available. Specific projects integrating holidays and seasonal themes are always part of our art curriculum. Incorporating everyday items such as cotton balls, yarn, macaroni, buttons, straws, fabric scraps, rocks, pudding, etc., gives each child many creative options. Displaying the children's art in the classroom and around school builds a sense of pride and an appreciation for artistic expression.

Literacy/Library: There is daily use of our classroom libraries. Each age group has appropriate books for the children to enjoy. The children are taught how to handle a book. We use stories for dramatic play, for picture interpretation, as a basis for dictating their own stories and for teaching comprehension skills. The children are read to daily and have a designated time to explore books on their own. Often, staff will make use of manipulatives, hands-on learning, and real-life images to support the themes introduced in a book. Classroom libraries also consist of language experience stories the children have taken part in throughout the year. Each classroom visits the Clarke Pennsylvania Lending Library weekly, where students can preview books and select one to take home for the week to share with families.

Science: Animal life (e.g. class fish and observation of animals in the immediate outdoor environment), life cycles of butterflies, frogs and plants and physical concepts (e.g., float/sink, light/heavy and magnetism) will all be explored through hands-on experiences in and out of the classroom.

Social Studies: Community helpers, family life, holidays and transportation are just a few of the themes that we will become familiar with through books, stories, field trips, cooking and art experiences.

Dramatic Play: Dramatic Play usually complements the theme or unit that we are working on. The children use their creativity and imaginations to role-play daily living skills and events that take place in their lives. Centers may also include other areas of development, such as art or sensory play. The block area contains an assortment of building materials that encourage motor planning, inventing and cooperation with others. Students are encouraged to engage in activities that target many learning domains through dramatic play and put into practice their listening and spoken language skills to engage in cooperative play with their peers.

Music: Music is incorporated into the classroom every day through a variety of songs and finger plays. Once a month all the classes enjoy a period of music together. Seasonal and holiday songs are taught when appropriate. Music is further integrated into the curriculum by experimenting with musical instruments. Music is another approach to learning and reinforcing listening, speech and language concepts in a simple and repetitive format.

Physical Education/Gross Motor Skills: Our outdoor play space allows students to engage in cooperative gross motor games such as soccer, hula hooping, or playing tag. During times of inclement weather, students engage in gross motor play in the Gross Motor room. Classroom teachers develop activities that help support student's gross motor skills and introduce them to team sports and organized games such as kickball, bowling, shooting basketballs, or playing tee-ball.

Core Early Learning Standards

Learning standards provide the framework for learning. They provide the foundational information for what children should be able to know and do.

Pennsylvania's Learning Standards for Early Childhood build on information learned previously, creating a continuum of learning that assures consistent and linked learning that begins in infancy, increasing in complexity as it extends through graduation. Pennsylvania also uses program standards that assure children's experiences are being offered in high-quality settings. Pennsylvania's state-funded programs all offer similar sets of standards that provide guidance on program operation that exhibit best practices. The Clarke curriculum for preschool fosters social, emotional, physical, cognitive and creative development in children through their own activity, discovery and exploration (we aim to have a child question thoughtfully and learn to think for him/herself). Our curriculum meets the state of Pennsylvania standards in preschool learning. Our staff encourages young children to refine their skills of problem solving, thinking, reasoning and creating. We utilize all the following areas, as identified in the link below, in achieving our philosophy and curriculum goals. Learn more: <https://www.pakeys.org/pa-early-learning-initiatives/early-learning-standards/>

Learn more about the Pennsylvania's Learning Standards for Early Childhood which are research-based according to age and development, within early care and education programs at the Pennsylvania Keys Early Learning Standards.

Clarke Pennsylvania teachers use GOLD as a curriculum-embedded observational tool customized for individual student's age/grade level to guide classroom instruction. Skills in the GOLD assessment tool are directly linked to performance indicators on the PA Early Learning Standards, allowing teachers to use both tools seamlessly in conjunction with one another. Formally, students' progress is documented three times a year (fall, winter, spring) and information is shared with families in written progress reports Teachers are using this observational assessment tool daily in the classroom to develop a student learning portfolio and develop meaningful reports that help inform classroom practices and individualized instruction.

Auditory Speech and Language Embedded into the Curriculum and Instruction

Students receive intervention and education from master's degree level teachers of the deaf and ASHA and State Board certified speech-language pathologists. The staff are supervised by professionals who are Listening and Spoken Language Specialists, Certified Auditory-Verbal Educators or Therapists (LSLS Cert. AVEd/AVT) and who also provide direct service to children as part of their daily responsibilities. All professionals work to foster development of age-appropriate listening, vocabulary, and language. All interaction promotes the basic goals of early childhood education and includes structuring the environment to provide opportunities to aid in each child's intellectual, social emotional, and physical growth. In addition to a variety of standardized assessments, the GOLD, and anecdotal data collection, the Clarke Pennsylvania teams use the eCASLLS (electronic Cottage Acquisition Scales of Listening, Language and Speech) to closely monitor cognitive, listening, and conversational skills during classroom and individualized instruction.

Auditory Speech and Language Therapy (Speech Therapy)

Auditory, speech and language development and strategies are embedded into the curriculum and instruction in addition to being targeted during speech and language therapy sessions. Each student receives 30-minutes of auditory, speech, and language therapy five-days a week by an ASHA and PA state certified speech-language pathologist. Through daily speech sessions, therapists will collect data specific to a student's IEP goals. Clarke Pennsylvania's speech therapists administer a battery of standardized assessments to help quantify progress and drive therapy goals. Assessments and timelines are communicated with parents/caregivers and results are shared through a written progress report.

Speech therapists utilize a communication book to help facilitate dialogue to monitor progress seen at home and school. Therapists may suggest activities, goals, and strategies for families to work on incorporating into their daily routines at home. The communication book can also be used as a place to celebrate milestones both big and small!

Clarke Pennsylvania classroom teachers and speech therapists collaborate to plan weekly "Infused" language lessons, where the teacher of the deaf and speech therapist plan and co-teach a lesson to merge the expertise of both professionals and monitor the generalization of speech skills into the classroom setting. Infused speech lessons also support Clarke's Social-Emotional Learning for students, focusing on the "Kimochi" and Conscious Discipline curriculums to develop a stronger sense of school community, self-regulation, theory of mind, and executive functioning skills in students.

Audiology

Clarke recognizes that children who are deaf or hard of hearing need appropriate hearing technology to maximize the use of residual hearing. Clarke audiologists are licensed and certified health care professionals who have training, expertise and state of the art information about amplification devices for children/students ensuring that hearing technology works optimally. In addition, our audiology teams follow recognized protocols for audiological assessments.

Clarke's experienced staff and partners support the audiology care of infants and children.

Clarke offers audiological services and support for our birth-through-high-school-age population including:

- Audiology consultation for young children, as well as students in the mainstream
- Screening and assessment at some locations
- Full-service audiological care for adults at some locations (hearing aid testing and selection)
- Recommendations for local resources

Some Clarke sites have limited audiologic services on site. In these cases, the teacher and SLPs work closely with the child's private audiologist to communicate and troubleshoot equipment. Teachers and SLPs perform sound checks daily in the classroom and in individual therapy. Caregivers send spare batteries in their child's backpack. HAT (Hearing Assistive Technology) and compatible equipment (e.g., receivers) are provided by the family. Clarke uses the Roger Sound Field System in each classroom. Private audiologists provide loaner equipment if needed and respond quickly to requests to help with equipment issues through email or text message. The audiologists consult with the Clarke program regarding children on their caseload with their child's teacher and/or SLP. Some offer complimentary services on site. Examples of services include participation in caregiver meetings, staffing for a particular child, earmolds, impressions and mapping services if warranted on a case-by-case basis.

Spare Parts and Batteries for Cochlear Implants and Hearing Aids:

In preschool, caregivers are responsible for providing this equipment to Clarke to ensure a child always has full auditory access.

- Children should wear their hearing aids or cochlear implants during all waking hours. Research shows that children need to wear their technology (hearing aids, Baha, cochlear implants, etc.) at least 10 hours per day to develop age-appropriate listening skills (caregivers are encouraged to discuss wear time with their child's audiologist).
- Please send a supply of replacement parts and batteries to be left at school.
- Please call or email Clarke in the morning if a child's hearing aid or implant processor did not work prior to the child getting on the bus.
- Caregivers must notify their child's primary audiologist or implant center when replacement parts are needed. Please have at least one spare for each external component of a child's implant and a three-month battery supply at home.
- If your child is sent to school without their hearing aids or cochlear implants, caregivers will be called to bring the device to school immediately.
- Caregivers may be called to pick up their child to bring them immediately to their audiologist, especially if not having amplification creates a safety and health concern for your child.

The Clarke Pennsylvania staff is assisted by an educational audiologist and hearing aid specialist who works with the teachers, SLP's, children and their families to ensure optimal use of residual hearing in combination with the listening device being used, whether a cochlear implant or a hearing aid or both. Responsibilities include, but are not limited to, the facilitation and collaboration with students, private audiological centers; assisting families regarding individual services; developing and maintaining an acoustically beneficial environment within the school; troubleshooting, maintaining, and adjusting existing classroom amplification;

and making ear molds. Clarke Pennsylvania is also a registered durable goods provider in the state of Pennsylvania for families who have Keystone First Medical Assistance Insurance.

Library

In addition to daily use of classroom libraries, students at Clarke Pennsylvania take weekly trips to Clarke's Lending Library. Students are encouraged to spend time looking at different books, removing and replacing them from the shelves independently to help support proper book handling skills. Students are permitted to select one book to take home and share with family and friends after library trips. Clarke requests that parents support treating borrowed books with respect and care so that they may be returned ahead of the next library visit and exchanged for a new book. Students will have opportunities to visit a local branch of the Philadelphia Free Public Library, located across the street from our new school. The Clarke team is working with the library staff to find more ways to enrich our students' literacy journey through a partnership with the public library system.

Clarke Pennsylvania's Lending Library is stocked with books that have been collected through donations and grant funding throughout the years.

Family Communication

Caregivers and families are the child's primary educators; therefore, we encourage and promote your involvement during these exciting and crucial years.

General Communications and Messages:

A description of the week's activities in the classroom including theme-based language and vocabulary, field trips, words for the songs, finger plays, or poems we are learning, and other pertinent information is sent home by the teacher via weekly newsletters. Other important messages may be placed in your child's backpack. Please remove parent letters or other messages from the backpack daily so that we know that you have seen them. Teachers will also post information on Clarke Pennsylvania's Class Dojo site. Clarke staff and administration will utilize email communications to send and receive important information regarding your child's educational services. Please provide Clarke with a current email address and check regularly for important information from your child's educational team.

You can email your child's teacher or any other staff member by using their first initial/last name@clarkeschools.org. The best time to talk to a teacher or speech therapist on the telephone is from 2:00 - 4:00 p.m. You may leave a message at any time for a staff member, and he/she will get back to you as soon as possible. Clarke phone numbers are as follows:

Pennsylvania Campus: 267-930-5094
FAX: 215-844-5401

Important information may also be relayed via the Office Assistant daily. Clarke will also use the **Blackboard Connect** system to send out important messages via phone, text, and email.

School Closings and Delays:

Clarke Pennsylvania utilizes **BlackBoard Connect**, an automated messaging system to communicate emergency notifications to families and community partners, such as inclement weather delays or closings. Clarke administration will enroll contacts into the system as they enter Clarke Pennsylvania's program. Messages will be sent by phone, text messaging, and email.

Given that Clarke students travel from many different counties in the Greater Philadelphia area, some may experience more severe inclement weather than others. Situations may arise where the school district responsible for your child's transportation services and Clarke's schedule differ. If that is the case, it is the parent's responsibility to notify the respective party if transportation is not needed or your child will be unable to attend school due to a local school district closure.

In the event of an early dismissal:

If your child rides the bus and is dismissed early due to inclement weather or a school emergency, please make sure someone is home when the bus drops your child off.

If you drive your child to school and there is an early dismissal due to inclement weather or a school emergency, please make sure someone can pick your child up at the indicated time of early dismissal.

In the event of a school emergency that requires any changes to the dismissal procedure, families will be notified of the situation and changes through BlackBoard Connects emergency messaging system.

Clarke PA Class Dojo

The classroom teachers post to the *Clarke Pennsylvania Class Dojo* on a routine basis. The page is accessible by invitation only to protect the privacy of your child. Your child's teacher will invite you to join the class via email. Once you have accepted the invitation and have set up a username and password, you can then access classroom stories, school story posts, and message with your child's team.

Messages through Class Dojo are reserved for comments about posts, carry over ideas, and strategies and skills to practice at home. **Please refrain from using the Class Dojo messaging system to relay important details about your child's attendance, medical information, or sensitive matters.**

On the *Class Dojo Stories*, you will see photos of your child at school and the teacher will share some news about the day. You will also find announcements and reminders and, most importantly, you will find ideas to practice some of the skills your child is learning at school in your home or community.

The *Class Dojo Story* is a great tool to use as a conversation starter with your preschooler. They will be excited to see pictures of themselves and to tell you about their day. Share the blog to expose your child to new vocabulary and to enjoy the news of their day with them.

Check the dojo daily as you will not want to miss a moment of the exciting happenings here at Clarke PA.

Progressing from Clarke

Progressing from a specialized program, like those available at Clarke, to a neighborhood school is an exciting time for each child and family. For many, the age of progression to school-aged settings has decreased to the preschool level over the last 15-20 years because of newborn hearing screening, early identification, early amplification and early education. Clarke guides families through the process, providing step-by-step instructions and offering support and guidance throughout this important time of change. During these early years, the staff will provide a continuum of relevant information to direct placement and IEP goals, benchmarks and accommodations.

Once a school is chosen, a Clarke professional begins to prepare the staff of the school to receive the student and is available to provide ongoing support through our itinerant services. Some questions that may come up include:

- What is the best placement for my child?
- What kind of support services will my child need?
- How do we educate our child's teachers and classmates about hearing loss?
- What do we do if something unexpected comes up?

Family Involvement

Clarke Pennsylvania's team strives for a collaborative partnership between home and school to help each student reach their individual potential. Parent and caregiver involvement can be directly linked to student's progress and success.

Parent/Caregiver Custody and Sharing Information

Clarke Schools for Hearing and Speech is obligated to abide by custody/divorce agreements and court orders regarding the sharing of information with other family members, guardians or court appointed officials. Please make an appointment to discuss the specifics of your child's situation, should there be important information that would help us in working with your family.

Families in Temporary Housing

Please let us know if you/your child are in temporary housing, such as a shelter. There are special regulations to support your child in enrolling in school and providing more time, if needed, to get some of the health requirements to us.

Caregiver Observation and Conference

Caregivers are encouraged to observe as often as they wish. Please let your child's classroom teacher or a member of Clarke's administration staff if you'd like to schedule a time to observe.

In a continued effort to foster a true sense of caregiver involvement within our school, caregivers of preschool children are required to participate twice a year in a **Guided Observation** of their child. These guided observations are an opportunity for caregivers to further educate themselves on strategies and techniques to enhance their child's auditory, speech and language skills.

Guided observations are arranged two times a year by a Clarke staff member who acts as a facilitator. Caregivers are encouraged, however, to observe and/or participate in therapy sessions as often as they are able.

Conferences are scheduled with caregivers immediately following the distribution of progress reports. These reports are written three times a year (December, March and June). Please see the school calendar for conference dates. Meetings with caregivers are a vital part of the "Team Clarke" concept and we highly recommend participation in these meetings at least three times a year. Notice of any updates to scheduling will be communicated with families in a timely manner.

Clarke staff members want to hear from you often. If there are any changes in your child's life at home, any special events, new accomplishments, stressful situations - anything that might be important to the understanding of your child's moods, feelings and behaviors - please let the teachers know. You can convey this information in a written note or leave a message for the teachers, and we will return your call. It is important that caregivers let us know what is happening at home because the children are not always able to tell us themselves. A short note about a visit to a friend's house, making a cake or going to grandma's would be helpful for the teacher to understand your child better and to provide familiar subjects for conversation.

Any caregiver wishing to schedule a team meeting in addition to the conferences for the progress reports is encouraged to contact their child's teacher to select a date and time. Caregivers may request a meeting at any time throughout the year.

Visitors to the Building

Visitors must be pre-arranged with Clarke Pennsylvania staff before being granted access to the building. Any non-Clarke staff member is required to check in and sign into the visitor's log. Once a visitor has been signed in, a member of the Clarke team will meet them at the entrance and accompany them to their destination. Visitors are not permitted to roam the facility without a Clarke team member.

Release of Children from School

Please remember that we cannot release your child to anyone other than a parent, legal guardian or bus driver without written permission. We will review proof of identification when anyone other than the parent, legal guardian or bus driver picks up a child. Please notify your child's teaching staff or administration if someone different is picking up your child from school.

Security of the Building

Clarke has a security system in place for the safety of families, staff and students. Your understanding and cooperation are appreciated.

All visitors, including families, entering the building must sign in and take a visitor badge. This allows us to have an accurate count of the individuals who are in the building in the event of an emergency drill.

Main entrance doors to the building are always securely locked and the building is monitored by closed-circuit cameras through Saint Joseph's University Public Safety Department. The building can only be accessed by those granted entrance via pre-programmed SJU magnetic badges or as allowed after verifying their identity and purpose of their visit. All Clarke Pennsylvania rooms on the first floor of the facility remain locked throughout the day, only accessible by a Clarke/SJU ID Badge. The second floor is secured via two magnetic locks and only accessible by a Clarke/SJU ID Badge. Clarke Pennsylvania staff works closely with SJU Public Safety and Facilities personnel to ensure that all security measures are in place and executed properly.

Caregiver-Family Rights

Caregivers of children with disabilities from ages three through 21 have specific educational rights under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). These rights are called procedural safeguards. When the caregiver has a concern, it is important that they contact their child's teachers or administrators to talk about their child and any problems they see. Caregivers must be given opportunities to participate in any decision-making meeting regarding their child's special education program. Caregivers have the right to participate in individualized education program (IEP) meetings about the special education eligibility, assessment, educational placement of their child and other matters relating to their child's free appropriate public education (FAPE).

Some basic rights you have as a caregiver are:

- To have your child receive a free, appropriate public education (FAPE)
- To be a member of the team that develops your child's education program and to attend meetings about that program
- To understand every document, you sign
- To know and understand your rights in the language you understand best
- To pursue other options if you disagree with your LEA

For more information about your rights as they relate to your children, you may refer to Wrightslaw [here](https://www.wrightslaw.com/) - <https://www.wrightslaw.com/>

Progress Reports

Clarke students' progress towards IEP goals and general curriculum acquisition are provided to the caregivers and to their public schools on an annual basis according to the school's calendar.

Clarke Pennsylvania classroom teachers of the deaf and speech therapists collaborate on comprehensive progress reports documenting student progress three times a year. These reports are sent to families, caregivers, and LEAs in December, March, and June each school year. Reports contain classroom participation input, GOLD assessment reports, present levels in the domains of Personal/Social Development, Language and Literacy, Mathematical Thinking, Scientific Thinking, Social Studies, and Physical Development and the Arts. Speech therapists report on any standardized assessments administered throughout the progress reporting period.

and provide comprehensive analysis of the results. Speech therapists address any progress made towards IEP goals and objectives.

Once families have had an opportunity to review written reports, Parent-Teacher conferences are scheduled for the team and family to discuss. Conferences are offered both in-person or virtually, depending on the family's preference. It is an expectation of enrollment at Clarke Pennsylvania that families participate in three parent-teacher conferences throughout the school year.

Health Policies

Clarke Pennsylvania appreciates everyone's support and assistance in keeping our school community safe. If your child, or anyone in the household is experiencing any of the following symptoms, do not send your child to school until symptoms have subsided for 24 hours or more without the assistance of medication:

Vomiting	Sore throat, headache, stomachache
Fever of 100.4 or more	Persistent, bothersome cough
Conjunctivitis	Impetigo
Pinworms	Diarrhea
Unexplained rash	Head lice

If, in the judgment of the staff, your child is not well enough to be at school, you will be called to pick up your child. If we cannot reach you, we will call the emergency contact person. Please remember that infections spread easily in group environments. Please keep in mind the health of the other children, staff, and parents before sending a child who is not healthy to school.

If you have any questions regarding your child's health, please contact Ashley Weaver at amahsltedt@clarkeschools.org or by phone at (267)-930-5094 x8228. Clarke Pennsylvania is following the guidance of the Philadelphia Department of Health, Pennsylvania Department of Education, and CDC.

Annual Health Assessment

The Pennsylvania Department of Education requires that each child have a yearly physical examination by a physician. Please fill out the health forms that you received in your packet of forms. If you cannot schedule an appointment right away, fill out all but the physician's report yourself, keep the form to take with you to the appointment and notify us in writing of the date of your child's physical.

Your physician may also mail the form directly to school or FAX the form to (215)-844-5401. It is especially important that we have your child's immunization records on file (this is monitored by the Department of Public Health) so please make sure that this section of the Health Form is complete and accurate.

Prescription Medication:

All prescription medications must be unopened, in the **original** prescription bottle, with a current date and the name of the student on the bottle. All medication is kept in a locked drawer in the Office Manager's office. A care plan created by the prescribing physician must be accompanied by any prescription medication to be administered at school. The care plan should detail when to administer the medication and instructions on how. Clarke Pennsylvania does not have a licensed school nurse on staff.

If a student has a care plan in place, a meeting between the family and administration team is scheduled to review details and discuss how the plan would be enacted at school. All Clarke team members are First Aid and CPR certified, which includes training on EpiPen administration. In certain circumstances, if a child has medical needs that require ongoing nursing support in school, Clarke works with their Local Educational Agency and family/insurance provider to establish nursing care in the school setting.

Emergency Medical Plan

The emergency care for injuries shall be limited to simple first aid procedures. Clarke staff working directly with students are certified in both First Aid and CRP in accordance with PDE guidelines. Parents must be notified of all injuries on the same day that the injury occurs. The procedure that Clarke follows when a child is injured is as follows:

1. The teacher-in-charge is notified immediately of any injury to a child.
2. The teacher-in-charge will report injury or incident to members of administration team and perform first aid or determine necessary medical attention.
3. Teacher-in-charge or administrator will notify the parent/caregivers. If parent/caregivers are unavailable, the emergency contact will be notified.
4. Parents will be asked to sign an incident report and return it to school detailing the injury to your child within 24-hours of the incident.
5. When ambulance transportation is necessary, an administrator shall accompany the child if the parent is not able to do so.

Smoking/Tobacco

Clarke is a tobacco-free location. Smoking, vaping, and chewing tobacco are prohibited on all school grounds and on and off-site activities.

Fire Drills and Emergency Procedures

Fire drills, emergency evacuation routes and "alternate" routes are posted within each classroom. Practice emergency procedures will be held periodically throughout the school year. The function of these drills is to practice a rapid, safe and organized method of keeping everyone safe whether in the building or by exiting the building. An additional purpose of practicing the procedures is to also help students and adults remain calm and prepared during an actual emergency. Practiced procedures include scenarios for severe weather emergencies and lockdowns, which would be implemented if there were a possibility of a person within the building causing

a risk to students. All drills must be considered an actual emergency, and all persons present during a drill or actual emergency will be expected to follow the established procedures.

Due to the age of our students, explanations about the emergency procedures will be age-appropriate and will be explained to students prior to any of the practices. If the building must be evacuated, all students and staff will report to their emergency location immediately. No one should return to the building for any reason until the all-clear signals have been given. Emergencies are unexpected, unpredictable and take many forms. No one can be fully prepared for everything that may happen, but guidance and strategies are helpful in any emergency. Clarke's primary goal is to ensure that our students are safe in any situation.

Food, Snacks and Nutrition

We seek to have all the food consumed in the school as wholesome, natural, and as nutritional as possible. Parents provide a mid-morning snack every day. Please send your child to school with a labeled water bottle, thermos, or canteen for hydration throughout the day.

Please note that Clarke Pennsylvania is a nut-free school.

Lunch at Clarke Schools for Hearing and Speech

Parents will need to send snacks and lunch for their child daily. We encourage you to send in nutritious and well-balanced meals that will not spoil easily while stored in their cubbies during the morning hours. Please send only the amount of food your child will eat. We can refill reusable water bottles and understand that a child may request a special drink in their lunch box from home and they are welcome to bring them to school. Some healthy lunch ideas are sandwiches: ham, turkey, tuna, etc. Bagels with cream cheese are popular, as well as cut up cold meats, leftovers (pizza, chicken), cheese and crackers, soups (in thermoses), yogurt, cut up vegetables, pasta, fruit and trail mixes are all great and appealing to most children.

Staff can warm food in the microwave but do not have the capability of "cooking food".

All children will be encouraged to eat their food in an appropriate manner (i.e. healthy food first...meat, vegetables, and fruits followed by a snack treat and/or dessert), but staff will not limit students from eating what is sent in their lunch. We will send home whatever your child does not eat, so you can be aware of what he/she has eaten.

Special Events/Birthdays

In the event of a special event or celebration, store-bought, individually wrapped treats may be shared with classmates. Please reach out to your child's classroom teacher or Ashley Weaver at amahlstedt@clarkeschools.org if you would like to plan for a special occasion.

Pack Smart!

Help your kids stay healthy and focused in school— pack them a nutritious lunch. Each lunch should be about $\frac{1}{2}$ **Fruits** and **Vegetables**, $\frac{1}{4}$ **Grain**, and $\frac{1}{4}$ **Protein** with one serving of **Dairy**.

Encourage children to eat vegetables and fruits by making it fun. Provide healthy ingredients like the ones below and let kids help with preparation!



Fruits	Vegetables	Grains	Protein	Dairy
<i>Go easy on juice and make sure it's 100%.</i>	<i>Use dark green and orange veggies.</i>	<i>Make half of the grains whole grain.</i>	<i>Use low-sodium, lean or lowfat meats.</i>	<i>Choose lowfat or fat-free dairy.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apple Orange Pear Peaches Grapes Melon Dried Fruit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Broccoli Carrots Cauliflower Red Peppers Zucchini Broccoli Cucumber 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whole Wheat Bread Pita Bread Brown Rice Cereal Pasta Salad Sunflower Seeds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chicken Turkey Fish Nuts Seeds Peas Beans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yogurt Milk Cheese <p>TIP Mix yogurt with cinnamon or garlic to make a delicious dip for fruits or veggies!</p>

Source: U. S. Department of Agriculture

MyPlate is the newest version of the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA's) Food Guidance System (replacing the Food Guide Pyramid). MyPlate depicts proper meal portions of the five food groups (fruit, vegetables, grains, proteins, and dairy), helping Americans build healthy meals.

Helpful Hints

Adjustment to School

Children respond in many ways to starting school. The transition from home to school is a major one in the child's life. Effects of this stress may be observed in a child's behavior and are considered normal and healthy. Some children may cry when they leave home, others may revert to earlier behaviors such as bed-wetting or baby talk, and others may simply refuse to talk about school with their families. It is helpful to be patient and supportive of your child's feelings and to share changes in behavior at home with the teachers.

In the classroom, children adjust to being in a group with other children in various ways. Some children join the group right away, seem comfortable from the start and never seem to have separation problems. Other children may seem to adjust easily at first but show signs of stress after a week or two. We will do our best to make this adjustment period as smooth as possible for your child and will stay in touch with updates on how they are settling in during the first few weeks of school

One of the best ways to ease the morning routine is with a hug, a kiss, and reassurance like "I'll be back" or "I'll see you soon", followed by a quick exit.

The staff realize that the separation of a child from their caregiver(s) is filled with emotion for the caregivers, as well as the child. The beginning of school is especially difficult for those caregivers who will be separated from their child on a regular basis for the first time. Clarke's goal is to be supportive of families as well as to their children. Please feel free to talk to staff if you are having difficulty adjusting to separation from your child.

Bringing Things from Home

We discourage children from bringing their own toys to school, as they might be lost, misplaced or broken. In addition, it is often difficult for children to share their special possessions. The classroom teachers often will have a weekly "sharing" time when children can bring special things from home and tell the other children about what they have brought at group time.

Sometimes children need a "transitional object" to help them through the switch from home to school. This is especially true of those children who ride the bus to and from school. A book, a favorite stuffed animal, a photo of the family or a blanket could all serve as transitional objects. We welcome these objects but ask that they remain in the child's cubby during class time. Caregivers can help by assuring the child that while it is fine to bring a reminder –of home to school, their blanket or toy will stay in their cubby during class time.

Clothing

Each child should wear comfortable play clothes that they can manage for toileting. Clothes with elastic waists are ideal. Tennis shoes are preferred. Sandals with backs and straps are permitted. Please, ***no flip-flops or heels allowed***. Children in the preschool and pre-kindergarten classes are required to wear shorts under dresses/skirts. Do not dress your child in clothing that has to be kept especially clean. We encourage the child's use of materials, and we would not want their clothing to inhibit their freedom to investigate and explore.

Accidents do happen

We have many toilet-training or newly toilet-trained students. In working with young children, we expect that bathroom accidents, spills and general messes will happen. As such, we ask that each child have a bag with a complete change of clothing (e.g., underwear, socks, pants, shirt, etc.). Your child's name should be marked clearly on the bag. In December we will need another set of clothes that are appropriate for cooler temperatures. If back-up items are used and soiled clothing sent home, please be sure to send in replacements for the classroom.

Pets

As of this writing, there are no classroom pets living at Clarke. From time to time, families may have a pet they would like to introduce to their child's class. Arrangements for pet visits should be made in advance with your child's teacher to make sure we can accommodate all safety concerns. There may also be opportunities for community organizations to offer animal visits to our location. Should such visits be planned, we will inform families in advance in the event they would prefer that their child not participate. Any visiting animals should be leashed and/or crated, and under the sole supervision of their owner.

Social-Emotional Learning and Behavior Supports

It is the policy of this program to use positive reinforcement whenever possible in eliciting behavior. We encourage children to think of alternative solutions and effects of taking those alternatives. Through problem-solving, children develop a sense of responsibility for their actions, begin to understand other's needs and strengthen their decision-making skills. Clarke staff utilize a program called **Conscious Discipline**. Conscious Discipline is a social-emotional learning program that supports first teaching ourselves about self-control and self-regulation and then teaching children. The program is based on brain research and moving from an unconscious brain state to a more aware brain state. In this aware brain state, we have a higher level of executive functioning and can be solution driven to respond instead of reactive. Clarke Pennsylvania's intent is to expand our knowledge of Conscious Discipline to caregivers with education series in the coming school years.

Behavior and Discipline Policy

Clarke considers behaviors as part of learning.

Conscious Discipline and the Pyramid Model are used to determine the level and type of support a child may need to develop appropriate social and learning behaviors. Caregivers and other family members play a key role in collaborating with the school team to address behaviors that may be interfering with a child's learning. Examples of strategies that may be used include problem solving to work through conflict, picture schedules to support change between activities transitions, modeling language of behavior, empathetic listening by identifying how a child feels, making adjustments to the schedule that help the child move smoothly from one activity to another. At times, for safety, a child may be removed from a situation if there is a concern that the child or others could be hurt. The teacher will communicate with caregivers about general or specific concerns about behavior. Clarke will partner with caregivers to develop a plan to support a child that can be used consistently at home and school. On rare occasions, Clarke staff may call a caregiver to pick up their child if a child's behavior is particularly inappropriate or dangerous or if an immediate meeting is required. Either the teacher or an administrator will let a parent know as soon as possible following a behavior that:

- results in the child, another child or a staff member being injured;
- lasts for a significant amount of time and/or requires the child or other students to be removed from the environment for safety reasons;
- was dangerous, even if no one was injured.

Under no circumstances is corporal punishment permitted in our school.

Parent/Adult Conduct and Behavior

Clarke families and staff come from a range of cultures and backgrounds, with different parenting, personal and communication styles. To ensure that caregivers, children, and staff benefit from an environment that is respectful, safe and secure, Clarke does not allow:

- Physical or verbal punishment of a child
- Physical or verbal punishment of other children
- Threatening, harassing or otherwise disrespecting staff, other caregivers or other children
- Swearing/cursing or threatening/obscene gestures
- Quarreling with other caregivers or staff
- Making negative or disparaging comments regarding the school, staff, children or other caregivers to staff, caregivers, or anyone other than administration (including outside of school)
- Ignoring school policies
- Clarke administrators will attempt to resolve any concerns about a caregiver's behavior through direct discussion. On a case-by-case basis, either before or after discussing it with the individual involved, the individual may be barred from entering the building immediately.

Should any caregiver have a concern about another parent or a staff member, they should immediately contact: Ashley Mahlstedt Weaver at amahlstedt@clarkeschools.org.

Bullying

The Clarke community is committed to making our school a safe and caring environment for all students. We will treat each other with respect.

Bullying is not always easy to define but is unfair and one-sided.

Young children at times may put their own feelings before others, and even the most considerate child will have the occasional outburst due to frustration, anger or over exuberance. We acknowledge that this is a developmental area that needs to be nurtured and supported and that young children do not intentionally wish to cause hurt. Strategies that are used in our program include:

- Recognizing that young children are not always able to manage their own feelings and deliver them appropriately
- Clarke staff will assist in this management to support their developmental development
- Offer support to all children who may be involved and discuss the issues through play, story times and circle time activities

Clarke students will do the following things to prevent bullying and ensure their friends feel safe at school:

- Treat everyone with respect and kindness
- Will not bully others
- Will not let others be bullied
- Try to include everyone in play, especially those who are often left out

Teachers and staff do the following things to prevent bullying and help children feel safe at school:

- Closely supervise students in all areas of the school and playground
- Watch for signs of bullying behavior and stop it when it happens
- Look into all reported bullying incidents
- Assign consequences based on the school social emotional and behavior supports

The role of caregivers:

- Caregivers who are concerned or have questions should contact the program director
- Caregivers are encouraged to support Clarke's policy and actively encourage their child to be a positive member of the Clarke community
- Caregivers and staff work together to develop their child's social and emotional behavior skills

School Visitors/Building Security

Caregivers, outside therapists, and site visitors will be permitted with administration approval. ALL visitors must use main entrance, must sign in and be wearing a visitor pass/id while visiting and then sign out when leaving and return to the pass/id.

Visitors must be pre-arranged with Clarke Pennsylvania staff before being granted access to the building. Any non-Clarke staff member is required to check in and sign into the visitor's log stationed in the lobby. Once a visitor has been signed in, a member of the Clarke team will meet them at the entrance and accompany them to their destination. Visitors are not permitted to roam the facility without a Clarke team member.

Sexual Harassment

There is nothing more important to us than the children we teach and support. We understand that children and youth are not only our future; they are a valuable part of the community today. However, our students are also vulnerable. Sadly, because of their vulnerability, awareness and knowledge, they can be taken advantage of or worse, become victims of abuse. Therefore, it is imperative that we are proactive in protecting them and in providing safe environments.

We must, as well, protect those who work with our students. Our school personnel need the security of knowing that they are working in a setting where processes and procedures are in place to minimize any possibility of an erroneous accusation.

Clarke's Plan to Protect® Policy establishes the criteria for the provision of a safe environment for children, youth and school personnel. All personnel working at Clarke Schools for Hearing and Speech Pennsylvania are Mandated Reporters and Clarke's main office maintains record of all clearances and training certificates for staff and therapists.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Five Reasons to Hold Classroom Celebrations

Classroom celebrations – from semi-formal celebrations that include food and drink, music and even special guests – to impromptu opportunities to play outside – help build connections, target skills development, grow relationships, develop social etiquette and improve academic performance. How does this work? Classroom celebrations help build connections.

- Classroom celebrations help develop social skills.
- Classroom celebrations help build positive relationships with the community.
- Classroom celebrations help children practice and develop social etiquette in real-life situation.
- Classroom celebrations help support academic achievement.

Research, Fundraising, Publicity and Observation Policies

From time-to-time Clarke participates in research projects with other institutions. When such projects arise, we will seek your permission for your child's participation and will provide detailed information regarding the nature of the research study.

Fundraising and Publicity

Clarke depends on the support and generosity of those in our community, who know how crucial the work is that we do with young children, to continue this transformative program. Clarke conducts necessary fundraising and publicity for programs and services. If you would like to become more involved with efforts to support fundraising and Clarke's long-term sustainability, please contact develop@clarkeschools.org.

Observations and Student Clinicians

Clarke is committed to training future professionals, such as teachers and speech-language pathologists, to work with children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

- College students and professionals often visit Clarke for the opportunity to observe and learn more about the work we do. Such observers are not allowed to have direct, unsupervised interaction with any child.
- Graduate student clinicians, typically speech/language interns or student teachers - are often accepted for placement at Clarke, as they complete a required component of their professional training. They come from a variety of colleges and universities, such as Fontbonne University, Saint Joseph's University, Temple University, LaSalle University, and Thomas Jefferson University. All student interns and student teachers undergo the same rigorous background checks that employees go through. You will be notified if your child's teacher or speech-language pathologist will be mentoring a student clinician.

Connect with the Clarke Community and Online Resources

Clarke produces a variety of resources for caregivers including tips, at-home strategies, blogs, newsletters and more. Visit clarkeschools.org/resources and follow @ClarkeSchools on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter to stay connected.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding these policies, or any information contained within Clarke’s handbook, please contact:

Ashley Mahlstedt Weaver, Director
amahlstedt@clarkeschools.org
(267)930-5094



FAMILY/CAREGIVER SIGNATURE PAGE

I have read the Clarke Caregiver Handbook. I/we agree to abide by the policies written within.

Please sign and date below, detach and submit to your school's office manager.

Parent or Legal Guardian

Student Name

Date