

Clarke Caregiver Handbook

2026-2027



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

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A MESSAGE FROM OUR DIRECTOR

September 2026

Dear families:

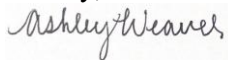
Thank you for choosing Clarke Schools for Hearing and Speech Pennsylvania for your child's education! Clarke Pennsylvania is part of the first and largest nonprofit organization of its kind, offering a continuum of services for students and their families at home, at sites along the East Coast, in mainstream 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 and families to the 2026–2027 school year. We look forward to another year of learning, growth, and partnership as we work together to help every child reach their fullest potential.

At Clarke Pennsylvania, we are committed to providing an exceptional listening and spoken language-based education while fostering strong relationships with families. Through open communication, collaboration, and evidence-based instructional practices, we strive to create a supportive learning environment where every child can build confidence, develop communication skills, and achieve academic success.

This handbook outlines our goals, expectations, policies, and procedures for the school year. Thank you for entrusting us with your child's education. We value the opportunity to partner with your family and look forward to a successful and rewarding 2026–2027 school year.

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 admission. It is important that caregivers read and understand the information in this handbook.

Please sign and return the Signature Page found in the Appendix D 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.

About Clarke Pennsylvania

Our Mission

Clarke Schools for Hearing and Speech teaches children who are deaf or hard of hearing to listen and talk. Through listening and spoken language, individualized instruction, advanced hearing technology, and strong partnerships with families, we prepare children to succeed in school, at home, and in their communities.

Clarke welcomes children and families without regard to race, color, sex, religion, national origin, cultural heritage, political beliefs, marital status, or other protected characteristics. Admission decisions are made in accordance with Clarke's policies as a state-approved private school.

Our Educational Philosophy

Every child deserves an educational program that supports the whole child. At Clarke Pennsylvania, we provide a language-rich learning environment that promotes listening, spoken language, cognitive growth, social-emotional development, physical development, and academic readiness.

Children learn through meaningful interactions, play, hands-on exploration, and individualized instruction. Small class sizes and collaboration among teachers of the deaf, speech-language pathologists, audiologists, and early childhood educators allow us to meet each child's unique strengths and needs while supporting progress toward Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals.

Our Program

Clarke Pennsylvania provides specialized educational services for children whose hearing loss affects their ability to benefit fully from traditional educational settings.

Our multidisciplinary team includes:

- Teachers of the Deaf certified in Listening and Spoken Language education
- Speech-Language Pathologists
- Audiologists
- Early Childhood Educators
- Educational support staff

Our goal is to prepare children to successfully transition into the neighborhood school chosen by their family while developing the listening, spoken language, academic, and self-advocacy skills needed for lifelong success.

Clarke's continuum of services includes:

- Birth to Age Three Programs
- Preschool and Early Childhood Programs
- Mainstream Support Services
- Teleservices

Programs are individualized to meet the needs of each child and family.

Educational Goals

Our educational program is designed to:

- Develop listening and spoken language skills throughout the school day.
- Provide a strong academic foundation aligned with best practices in early childhood education.
- Promote literacy, communication, and problem-solving skills.
- Foster self-awareness and self-advocacy related to hearing technology and hearing loss.

- Ensure children have optimal access to learning through appropriate hearing technology and acoustically supportive environments.
- Support speech, language, cognitive, social-emotional, fine motor, gross motor, and adaptive development through individualized instruction.
- Monitor each student's progress through ongoing assessment and individualized IEP goals.

Every student has an Individualized Education Program (IEP) with goals developed according to their strengths, developmental needs, communication abilities, and educational priorities.

Partnering with Families

Families are a child's first and most important teachers. Clarke values a collaborative partnership built on open communication, mutual respect, and shared responsibility for each child's success.

Throughout the school year, families are encouraged to:

- Maintain regular communication with teachers and therapists.
- Participate in conferences and classroom observations.
- Attend family events and educational workshops.
- Reinforce listening and spoken language strategies at home.
- Share updates that may affect their child's learning or well-being.

Together, we create consistent learning experiences that support children's communication, confidence, and independence both at school and at home.

School Operations

School Calendar

The Clarke Pennsylvania school calendar includes important dates such as the first and last day of school, holidays, professional development days, conferences, and school closings. Families will receive the current school calendar at the beginning of each school year and will be notified of any updates throughout the year.

Please find a copy of the 2026-2027 Clarke Pennsylvania Calendar in Appendix A.

School Hours

Clarke Pennsylvania's preschool program operates Monday through Friday from **9:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.**

While classroom schedules vary slightly to accommodate students' developmental needs and speech therapy sessions, a typical daily schedule includes:

Time	Activity
9:00–9:30 a.m.	Arrival, Listening Checks & Learning Centers
9:30–10:00 a.m.	Morning Meeting
10:00–10:30 a.m.	Snack
10:30–11:00 a.m.	Language Instruction
11:00–11:30 a.m.	Learning Centers
11:30 a.m.–12:00 p.m.	Language Instruction
12:00–12:30 p.m.	Lunch
12:30–1:00 p.m.	Recess/Gross Motor Play
1:00–1:30 p.m.	Literacy & Closing Meeting

Transportation

Transportation services are determined through each student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) and are coordinated by the student's local school district or county. Families may also choose to transport their child to and from school.

Clarke Pennsylvania does **not** arrange transportation services. Questions regarding routes, schedules, or transportation concerns should first be directed to your transportation provider or service coordinator.

While students are traveling to and from school, the transportation provider is responsible for their supervision. Responsibility transfers to Clarke staff when students are safely received at the school entrance.

If a child is transported to or from a childcare provider, childcare staff are responsible for bringing the child to the bus and receiving the child upon arrival.

Arrival

Morning arrival takes place between **8:50 a.m. and 9:10 a.m.**

Staff members greet students and assist them safely into the building from family vehicles or school transportation.

Parent Drop-Off

Families using the car line should:

- Enter the parking lot from 54th Street.
- Remain in their vehicle while staff assist children.
- Follow staff directions to maintain safe and efficient traffic flow.

Families who prefer to walk their child to the entrance should park on Overbrook Avenue and meet staff outside the main entrance.

If your child arrives after **9:10 a.m.**, please call the main office at **267-930-5094** or ring the entrance bell. A Clarke staff member will escort your child to the classroom. For student safety, families should not bring children upstairs without a staff member.

Please notify the school if your child will be:

- Absent
- Arriving late
- Leaving early

Dismissal

Dismissal begins promptly at **1:30 p.m.**

Students riding district transportation will be escorted to their assigned bus or van by Clarke staff.

For parent pick-up:

- Remain in your vehicle during dismissal.
- A staff member will escort your child to your vehicle.
- Once your child is safely secured, please exit the parking lot carefully.

If dismissal arrangements change, notify your child's teacher or the school office before dismissal whenever possible.

Bus Transportation

Transportation procedures established by your child's school district or transportation company remain in effect while students are on the bus.

Questions regarding transportation concerns should first be directed to the transportation company.

If additional assistance is needed, families may contact Clarke administration.

Bus drivers and transportation assistants are responsible for securing students into required car seats or safety restraints. Clarke staff are not permitted to board transportation vehicles or assist with securing children on buses or vans.

Attendance

Regular attendance is essential to your child's educational progress and communication development.

Please notify the school as soon as possible if your child will be absent, arrive late, or require an early dismissal.

Timely communication helps ensure student safety and allows staff to appropriately plan instruction and transportation.

Authorized Pick-Up

For your child's safety, students may only be released to:

- A parent or legal guardian
- Authorized transportation personnel
- Individuals designated in writing by a parent or legal guardian

Anyone other than a parent, legal guardian, or assigned transportation provider must present photo identification before a child will be released.

Please notify your child's teacher or the school office in advance whenever someone different will be picking up your child.

Educational Program

Curriculum

Clarke Pennsylvania provides a comprehensive preschool program designed to foster listening, spoken language, academic readiness, and social-emotional development through meaningful, hands-on learning experiences.

Our classrooms are acoustically designed to meet the unique needs of children who are deaf or hard of hearing and are led by master's-level Teachers of the Deaf specializing in Listening and Spoken Language (LSL). Every student also receives daily auditory, speech, and language therapy from a certified speech-language pathologist trained in Listening and Spoken Language and auditory-verbal practices.

Instruction is based on **The Creative Curriculum** and aligned with the **Pennsylvania Early Learning Standards**. Theme-based units provide engaging opportunities for children to develop vocabulary, critical thinking, communication, and a deeper understanding of the world around them.

Curriculum Areas

Instruction is intentionally designed to support all areas of child development while embedding listening and spoken language throughout the school day.

Auditory, Speech, and Language Development

Listening and spoken language instruction is integrated into every aspect of the school day. Classroom activities, small-group instruction, and individualized learning experiences reinforce each child's auditory, speech, language, and communication goals while encouraging the application of new skills in authentic settings.

Literacy

Students participate in daily literacy experiences that develop early reading, vocabulary, comprehension, storytelling, and language skills. Teachers read aloud daily while encouraging children to explore books independently, participate in dramatic retelling, create language experience stories, and engage in meaningful conversations about literature.

Each classroom maintains a classroom library, and students visit Clarke's Lending Library weekly to borrow a book to enjoy with their families.

Mathematics

Mathematics instruction is incorporated throughout the daily routine. Children develop early math skills including number recognition, counting, one-to-one correspondence, shapes, patterns, measurement, sequencing, and problem-solving while expanding mathematical vocabulary.

Science

Children explore scientific concepts through hands-on investigations, observation, experimentation, and exploration of the natural world. Learning experiences may include life cycles, plants, animals, physical science concepts, and environmental exploration.

Social Studies

Students learn about families, communities, transportation, community helpers, holidays, and cultures through stories, discussions, field trips, cooking activities, and classroom projects that encourage meaningful connections to everyday life.

Art

Art experiences encourage creativity, vocabulary development, self-expression, and fine motor growth. Students work with a variety of age-appropriate materials while participating in projects connected to classroom themes and seasonal learning.

Dramatic Play

Dramatic play supports imagination, cooperation, problem-solving, and communication. Learning centers provide opportunities for students to practice listening and spoken language while participating in pretend play, block building, sensory experiences, and collaborative activities.

Music

Music is incorporated into daily classroom routines through songs, finger plays, movement, and musical instruments. Music provides meaningful opportunities to reinforce listening, speech, language, rhythm, and memory skills.

Physical Development

Daily opportunities for gross motor play help children develop coordination, balance, strength, and teamwork through outdoor play, organized games, and activities in the Gross Motor Room when weather requires indoor play.

Assessment

Clarke Pennsylvania's curriculum is aligned with the Pennsylvania Early Learning Standards and is designed to support each child's cognitive, language, social-emotional, physical, and creative development.

Teachers use Teaching Strategies GOLD, an observational assessment system aligned with the Pennsylvania Early Learning Standards, to monitor student growth throughout the year. Assessment information guides individualized instruction and supports each student's Individualized Education Program (IEP).

Progress is formally documented and shared with families three times each year during the fall, winter, and spring reporting periods.

Additional information regarding the Pennsylvania Early Learning Standards is available at www.pakeys.org.

Speech, Language, and Auditory Therapy

Auditory, speech, and language instruction is embedded throughout the school day and is also provided through daily individualized therapy sessions.

Each student receives 30 minutes of auditory, speech, and language therapy five days per week from an ASHA-certified and Pennsylvania-licensed speech-language pathologist.

Speech-language pathologists:

- Monitor progress toward IEP goals.
- Administer standardized assessments to guide therapy.
- Collect ongoing data to inform instruction.
- Collaborate closely with classroom teachers to support skill generalization across learning environments.

Families receive regular updates through communication notebooks, which provide opportunities to exchange information about progress, celebrate milestones, and reinforce strategies at home.

Teachers of the Deaf and speech-language pathologists also collaborate to deliver integrated ("Infused") language lessons that strengthen communication skills within classroom instruction while supporting students' social-emotional growth through the Kimochis and Conscious Discipline curricula.

Audiology Services

Access to sound is essential for listening and spoken language development. Clarke's audiologists work collaboratively with families, teachers, and community providers to help ensure each child's hearing technology functions optimally throughout the school day.

Audiology services may include:

- Audiology consultation
- Hearing screenings and assessments (where available)
- Hearing technology support
- Recommendations for community resources
- Collaboration with outside audiologists and cochlear implant centers

Clarke's educational audiologist also supports classrooms by maintaining acoustically appropriate learning environments, troubleshooting classroom amplification systems, assisting with hearing technology, and providing guidance to families regarding hearing devices and related services.

Hearing Technology

Children should wear their hearing aids, cochlear implants, or other prescribed hearing technology during all waking hours to maximize listening and spoken language development.

To help ensure uninterrupted access to sound, families are asked to:

- Send hearing technology to school each day.
- Provide replacement batteries and spare parts to be kept at school.
- Notify Clarke if hearing equipment is not functioning before the school day begins.
- Maintain replacement parts and an adequate battery supply at home.
- Contact their child's audiologist or cochlear implant center when replacement equipment is needed.

If a child arrives without required hearing technology, families will be contacted to bring the equipment to school. In situations where a student cannot safely or effectively participate without amplification, families may be asked to pick up their child.

Clarke Pennsylvania is also a registered durable medical equipment provider for eligible families covered through Keystone First Medical Assistance.

Lending Library

Students visit the Clarke Pennsylvania Lending Library each week to select a book to enjoy at home with their families.

Families are encouraged to read together regularly and to help children care for borrowed books so they may be returned before the next library visit.

Clarke continues to expand literacy opportunities through partnerships with the Free Library of Philadelphia and other community organizations, providing students with additional opportunities to develop a lifelong love of reading.

Family Communication & Partnership

At Clarke Pennsylvania, we believe families are a child's first and most important teachers. A strong partnership between home and school is essential to every child's success. Open communication, shared goals, and collaboration allow us to provide the most effective educational experience while supporting each child's listening, spoken language, academic, and social-emotional development.

Communication

Families can expect regular communication from their child's educational team throughout the school year.

Weekly Classroom Updates

Teachers provide weekly newsletters that include:

- Classroom themes and learning activities
- Vocabulary and language targets
- Songs, finger plays, poems, and stories
- Upcoming events and field trips
- Classroom reminders and important announcements

Families should check their child's backpack each day for school communications and other important materials sent home.

Email and Telephone Communication

Email is the primary method of communication between families and staff. Families are asked to maintain a current email address with the school and check messages regularly.

Teachers, speech-language pathologists, and administrators are available to answer questions or discuss student progress. Families may contact staff by email using the employee's first initial followed by their last name at @clarkeschools.org or by calling the main office.

Telephone conversations with teachers and speech-language pathologists are generally available after student dismissal between **2:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m.** Messages may be left at any time, and staff will respond as soon as possible.

Schoolwide Notifications

Clarke Pennsylvania uses **FinalSite** to communicate important school information and emergency notifications by phone, text message, and email.

FinalSite is used for:

- School closings and delays
- Early dismissals
- Weather-related announcements
- School emergencies
- Other important schoolwide communications

Families are automatically enrolled upon admission.

School Closings and Emergency Dismissals

Because Clarke serves students from multiple counties and school districts, weather conditions and transportation decisions may vary by location.

If your local school district closes or transportation is unavailable while Clarke remains open, it is the family's responsibility to notify both the transportation provider and Clarke if transportation services will not be used or if the student will be absent.

In the event of an early dismissal:

- Families using district transportation should ensure that someone is available to receive their child at the scheduled drop-off location.
- Families providing transportation should arrange prompt pickup at the announced dismissal time.

If dismissal procedures must change because of an emergency, families will receive updated instructions through FinalSite.

ClassDojo

Each classroom uses ClassDojo to strengthen communication between home and school.

Through ClassDojo, families can:

- View classroom and school updates
- See photos and highlights from the school day
- Receive reminders and announcements
- Reinforce classroom learning through suggested activities at home
- Communicate with teachers regarding classroom learning

Access is available by invitation only to protect student privacy.

ClassDojo messaging is intended for general classroom communication, comments, and home carryover activities. Families should not use ClassDojo to report attendance changes, medical information, transportation updates, or other urgent or confidential matters. Those concerns should be communicated directly to the school office or appropriate staff member.

Families are encouraged to review ClassDojo regularly and use classroom photos and updates as conversation starters to help children practice listening and spoken language while sharing about their day.

Family Involvement

Family participation is an important part of every child's educational program.

Clarke encourages families to:

- Attend conferences and meetings.
- Participate in classroom observations.
- Join family events and educational workshops.
- Reinforce communication strategies at home.
- Share important updates about their child's development and experiences.

Families are welcome to observe classroom instruction or therapy sessions by arranging a visit with their child's teacher or the administration.

Preschool families also participate in two guided classroom observations each year. These sessions provide opportunities to learn practical strategies that support listening, speech, and language development at home.

Progress Reports and Conferences

Student progress is monitored continuously throughout the school year through classroom observations, therapy data, assessments, and progress toward Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals.

Comprehensive progress reports are provided three times each year—in the fall, winter, and spring. Reports are prepared collaboratively by classroom teachers and speech-language pathologists and include updates on:

- Academic progress
- Developmental growth
- Listening, speech, and language development
- Assessment results
- Progress toward IEP goals

Following each reporting period, families participate in a parent-teacher conference to review progress, celebrate accomplishments, and discuss next steps. Conferences may be held in person or virtually to best meet family needs.

Families are encouraged to request additional conferences whenever questions or concerns arise.

Transitioning from Clarke

Preparing students to successfully transition to the educational setting that best meets their needs is an important part of Clarke's mission.

As students approach readiness for a neighborhood school or another educational placement, Clarke works closely with families and school districts to support a smooth transition.

Our team assists families by:

- Reviewing placement options.
- Participating in transition planning meetings.
- Developing recommendations for accommodations and support services.
- Collaborating with receiving schools.
- Preparing educators to support students with hearing loss.
- Providing continued consultation through mainstream support services, when appropriate.

Throughout the transition process, Clarke partners with families to ensure that each child is prepared academically, socially, and communicatively for continued success in their next educational environment.

Health, Wellness & Student Safety

The health and safety of our students, families, and staff are our highest priorities. Clarke Pennsylvania is committed to providing a safe, healthy learning environment where children are able to learn, communicate, and thrive.

Families play an important role in helping maintain a healthy school community by keeping children home when they are ill, providing required health documentation, and communicating any medical needs to the school.

Illness Guidelines

To reduce the spread of illness, please keep your child home if they or anyone in the household is experiencing symptoms of a contagious illness.

Children should remain home until they have been symptom-free for at least **24 hours without the use of medication**, including if they have:

- Fever of 100.4°F or higher
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Persistent cough
- Sore throat
- Headache or stomachache accompanied by illness
- Conjunctivitis (pink eye)
- Impetigo
- Head lice
- Pinworms
- An unexplained rash
- Any other illness that may be contagious

If a child becomes ill during the school day or is unable to participate safely in school activities, families will be contacted to pick up their child. If a parent or guardian cannot be reached, the emergency contact listed on the student's records will be contacted.

Clarke follows guidance from the Philadelphia Department of Public Health, the Pennsylvania Department of Education, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) regarding communicable illnesses and public health recommendations.

Health Records

Pennsylvania requires each student to have a current annual physical examination and immunization record on file.

Families are responsible for providing updated health documentation as requested. Health forms may be submitted by email, fax, or paper copy.

Prompt submission of health records helps ensure compliance with state requirements and supports each student's safety while at school.

Medication at School

If your child requires prescription medication during the school day, please contact the administration before the medication is sent to school.

Prescription medications must be accompanied by a physician's written care plan that includes:

- Medication name
- Dosage
- Administration instructions
- Time(s) medication should be given
- Any special precautions

Because Clarke Pennsylvania does not employ a full-time licensed school nurse, the administration will meet with the family to review the care plan and determine how medication and health needs will be safely managed during the school day.

All staff working directly with students are certified in First Aid and CPR, including training in EpiPen administration. When ongoing nursing services are required, Clarke collaborates with the student's Local Educational Agency (LEA), family, and medical providers to arrange appropriate nursing support.

Toileting and Toilet Training

Clarke Pennsylvania recognizes that children develop toileting skills at different rates. Our staff works in partnership with families to support each child's growing independence while maintaining a respectful, positive, and encouraging approach.

Children who are toilet-trained will be encouraged to use the restroom independently with age-appropriate supervision and assistance as needed. Staff are available to provide reminders, encouragement, and support with clothing fasteners, handwashing, and other self-help skills appropriate to each child's developmental level.

For children who are actively toilet training, families and school staff should communicate regularly to promote consistency between home and school. Together, we will develop an individualized toileting routine based on the child's readiness and progress.

Families of children who are toilet training should:

- Notify the classroom teacher of their child's current toileting routine and any specific strategies that are successful at home.

- Provide an adequate supply of diapers or pull-ups, wipes (if preferred), and several complete changes of clothing.
- Replace used supplies and clothing promptly when items are sent home.
- Inform the school of any medical concerns or recommendations that may affect toileting.

Clarke staff will:

- Encourage regular toileting opportunities throughout the school day.
- Support children in developing independence with toileting routines.
- Assist with diapering or changing when appropriate and in accordance with the child's Individualized Education Program (IEP), health plan, or developmental needs.
- Maintain each child's dignity, privacy, and comfort during all personal care routines.
- Communicate with families regarding toileting successes, accidents, concerns, or changes in routine.

To support a healthy learning environment, children should always have a complete change of clothing available at school. If a child does not have clean clothing available following a toileting accident, families may be contacted to bring additional clothing.

Our goal is to work collaboratively with families to help children develop confidence, independence, and successful self-care skills while ensuring they remain comfortable and able to participate fully in the school day. A child should be demonstrating success with toileting routines at home before engaging in conversations with the Clarke team to transition the practice into the school setting.

Emergency Medical Care

Clarke staff provide basic first aid for injuries occurring during the school day.

When an injury occurs:

1. Staff immediately notify the supervising teacher or administrator.
2. Appropriate first aid or emergency care is provided.
3. Parents or guardians are contacted as soon as possible.
4. If a parent or guardian cannot be reached, the designated emergency contact is notified.
5. An incident report is completed, and families are asked to review, sign, and return the report.
6. If emergency transportation is required, an administrator will accompany the student until a parent or guardian is available, when appropriate.

Families are encouraged to keep emergency contact information current throughout the school year.

Emergency Preparedness

Clarke Pennsylvania conducts regular emergency drills throughout the school year to help ensure students and staff are prepared to respond safely in a variety of situations.

Drills include:

- Fire evacuation
- Severe weather
- Lockdown
- Other emergency procedures required by state or university policy

Emergency procedures are explained to students using developmentally appropriate language before each drill. Staff work closely with Saint Joseph's University Public Safety and Facilities personnel to maintain emergency plans and building safety procedures.

During an emergency or evacuation, students and staff report to designated safe locations and remain there until the all-clear has been given.

Tobacco-Free Campus

Clarke Pennsylvania is a tobacco-free campus.

Smoking, vaping, and the use of smokeless tobacco products are prohibited on school property and during all school-sponsored activities.

Food & Nutrition

Proper nutrition supports learning, growth, and communication development.

Families should send:

- A nutritious lunch each day
- A healthy morning snack
- A labeled reusable water bottle

Clarke Pennsylvania is a **nut-free school**. Please do not send foods containing peanuts or tree nuts.

Lunches should not require refrigeration or cooking, although staff may warm prepared food in the microwave when appropriate.

Families are encouraged to send balanced meals that include a variety of nutritious foods. Staff encourage healthy eating habits while respecting each family's food choices and will not restrict the order in which children eat the foods provided.

Any uneaten food will be returned home so families can monitor their child's eating habits.

Celebrations & Birthdays

Families are welcome to celebrate birthdays and other special occasions with their child's class.

To help ensure student safety and accommodate food allergies, celebrations should be coordinated in advance with the classroom teacher.

Only store-bought, individually packaged treats may be shared with classmates.

Please contact your child's teacher or the Director if you would like to plan a classroom celebration.

Daily Life at Clarke

Starting school is an exciting milestone for both children and families. Every child adjusts to a new school environment at their own pace, and Clarke's staff is committed to making that transition as positive and successful as possible.

By working together, families and school staff can help children develop confidence, independence, and enthusiasm for learning.

Adjusting to School

It is normal for children—and parents—to experience a period of adjustment when school begins. Some children adapt quickly, while others need additional time to become comfortable with new routines, teachers, classmates, and expectations.

Families can support a successful transition by:

- Establishing consistent morning and bedtime routines.
- Arriving at school on time each day.
- Speaking positively about school and teachers.
- Keeping goodbyes brief, calm, and reassuring.
- Encouraging children to participate independently in classroom routines.
- Communicating any concerns or significant changes at home with your child's teacher.

Although separation can be difficult during the first days or weeks of school, children typically adjust quickly as they develop trusting relationships with their teachers and classmates. Our staff will always provide reassurance, comfort, and encouragement while helping each child feel safe and successful.

If your child continues to experience difficulty adjusting, please speak with your child's teacher so we can work together to develop strategies that support a successful transition.

Clothing

Children learn best through active exploration, outdoor play, art projects, sensory activities, and hands-on experiences. Please dress your child in comfortable clothing that allows them to participate fully in all daily activities.

Families should send children to school dressed appropriately for the weather, including:

- Closed-toe shoes suitable for active play
- Weather-appropriate outerwear
- Hats, gloves, or boots during cold weather, when needed

Because outdoor play is an important part of the school day whenever weather permits, students should arrive prepared for seasonal conditions.

Please label all clothing, jackets, lunch boxes, backpacks, and other personal belongings with your child's name.

Extra Clothing

Accidents and spills are a normal part of early childhood.

Please send one complete change of clothing to be kept at school, including:

- Shirt
- Pants or shorts
- Underwear
- Socks

Additional clothing may be requested as needed based on your child's individual needs.

If your child uses borrowed clothing from school, please wash and return the items as soon as possible so they remain available for other students.

Personal Belongings

To minimize distractions and prevent valuable items from being lost or damaged, children should leave toys and other personal belongings at home unless requested by the classroom teacher.

Items that may be appropriate when requested include:

- Books related to classroom themes
- Special items for sharing activities
- Comfort items approved by the teacher during a child's transition to school

Please clearly label all personal items brought to school.

Clarke cannot be responsible for lost, damaged, or misplaced personal belongings.

Student Technology

Clarke Pennsylvania recognizes that some students may use personal electronic devices, such as iPads, tablets, or smartphones, while traveling to and from school.

If a personal electronic device is brought to school for use during transportation, it must remain in the student's backpack or another designated location during the school day. Upon arrival,

school staff will ensure the device is powered off and stored securely. The device will be powered back on and returned to the student's backpack prior to dismissal for use during the ride home.

Personal electronic devices may not be used during the school day unless specifically authorized by the educational team as part of a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP), communication needs, or other approved educational or medical accommodations.

Clarke Pennsylvania is not responsible for the loss, theft, or damage of personal electronic devices brought to school.

Supporting Your Child's Success

Families can help reinforce learning and independence by:

- Reading together every day.
- Encouraging conversation about the school day.
- Practicing listening and spoken language strategies shared by teachers and therapists.
- Completing recommended home activities.
- Maintaining consistent attendance and daily routines.
- Communicating questions or concerns with school staff promptly.

The partnership between home and school is one of the most important factors in a child's success. By working together, we can provide consistent support that helps children develop the confidence, communication skills, and independence needed to thrive both at Clarke and beyond.

Student Conduct, Campus Safety & Family Expectations

Clarke Pennsylvania is committed to providing a safe, respectful, and inclusive learning environment where every child can develop academically, socially, and emotionally. Students, families, and staff all share responsibility for creating a positive school community built on kindness, respect, and collaboration.

Positive Behavior Support

Children learn best in environments where expectations are clear, consistent, and developmentally appropriate. Clarke uses positive behavior support strategies to teach social-emotional skills, encourage independence, and help children develop appropriate ways to communicate their needs.

Teachers proactively model and reinforce skills such as:

- Listening and following directions
- Taking turns and sharing
- Problem-solving
- Emotional regulation
- Respect for others
- Independence and responsibility

Behavior expectations are taught through daily classroom routines, direct instruction, and evidence-based social-emotional curricula, including Conscious Discipline and Kimochis.

When behavioral challenges arise, staff respond with guidance, redirection, and positive reinforcement while considering each child's developmental level and communication abilities. Families are informed of significant concerns and are included in developing strategies to support consistent expectations between home and school.

Family Partnership in Behavior Support

Families play an important role in helping children develop positive behavior and self-regulation.

When concerns arise, Clarke staff will work collaboratively with families to:

- Share observations.
- Identify possible contributing factors.
- Develop consistent strategies.
- Monitor progress.
- Revise supports as needed.

Our goal is to teach skills, not simply correct behavior, while helping every child feel safe, successful, and included.

School Visitors

To protect the safety of students and staff, all visitors must enter through the designated entrance and check in with the school office upon arrival.

Visitors may be asked to:

- Present a valid photo ID.
- Sign in and out.
- Wear a visitor badge while in the building.
- Be escorted by a staff member when appropriate.

Unauthorized visitors will not be permitted to enter classrooms or other student areas.

Families are encouraged to schedule classroom visits or conferences in advance to minimize disruption to instruction.

Student Release & Campus Security

Students are released only to:

- Parents or legal guardians
- Authorized transportation personnel
- Individuals designated in writing by a parent or legal guardian

Any individual not routinely authorized to pick up a student must present photo identification before a child will be released.

Clarke Pennsylvania maintains building security procedures in partnership with Saint Joseph's University. Exterior doors remain secured during the school day, and access to the building is monitored to help ensure the safety of all students, families, and staff.

Respectful School Community

Clarke is committed to maintaining an environment free from discrimination, harassment, bullying, intimidation, and retaliation.

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.

Families, students, staff, volunteers, and visitors are expected to treat one another with courtesy, professionalism, and respect.

Any concerns involving inappropriate conduct, harassment, discrimination, or bullying should be reported promptly to school administration so they can be addressed in accordance with Clarke's policies.

Parent and Visitor Conduct

Positive relationships between families and staff are essential to a successful educational partnership.

Families and visitors are expected to:

- Treat all students, families, and staff respectfully.
- Use appropriate language and behavior while on school property.
- Follow school safety procedures.
- Support a positive learning environment.
- Address concerns through respectful communication with school personnel.

Threatening, abusive, discriminatory, or disruptive behavior will not be tolerated and may result in removal from school property or other appropriate action.

Family Rights, Administrative Policies & Resources

This section summarizes important administrative policies and family rights that support student services, educational planning, and school operations.

Family Educational Rights

Students receiving services through an Individualized Education Program (IEP) are entitled to the procedural safeguards provided under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and applicable Pennsylvania regulations.

Families receive copies of these procedural safeguards through their Local Educational Agency (LEA) and are encouraged to contact their LEA or Clarke administration with questions regarding educational rights or due process procedures.

A copy of the procedural safeguards and information about FAPE are attached in Appendix B.

Custody and Student Records

Unless restricted by a court order provided to the school, both parents generally have equal access to educational records and information regarding their child.

Families are responsible for providing Clarke with copies of any court orders or legal documents that affect custody, educational decision-making, or student release.

Clarke will follow all applicable legal requirements regarding custody and student records.

Families Experiencing Temporary Housing

Clarke Pennsylvania is committed to supporting students and families experiencing housing instability.

Families who are living in temporary housing are encouraged to notify the Director or administration so that available educational support and community resources may be discussed confidentially.

Student Privacy

Photographs, videos, and student work may be used for educational, promotional, or development purposes only with appropriate family permission in accordance with Clarke's media release procedures.

Families who do not wish for their child's image or work to be used should notify the school and complete the appropriate documentation.

Student records and personal information are maintained in accordance with applicable federal and state privacy requirements.

Research and Student Clinicians

As a leader in education for children who are deaf or hard of hearing, Clarke occasionally participates in educational research and professional training opportunities that support best practices.

Families will be informed whenever participation requires consent.

Graduate students, student teachers, and clinical interns may observe or participate in educational programming under the supervision of qualified Clarke professionals. These experiences support the preparation of future educators and clinicians while maintaining the confidentiality and dignity of every student.

Fundraising and Community Support

Clarke Pennsylvania relies on the generosity of families, community partners, and donors to enhance educational programming and provide opportunities beyond those funded through tuition and public resources.

Participation in fundraising activities is always voluntary. Families are encouraged, but never required, to support Clarke through events, campaigns, or volunteer opportunities.

Clarke Pennsylvania is an approved recipient through Pennsylvania's Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) Program. By making a qualifying contribution through BLOCS, eligible individuals and businesses may receive a Pennsylvania tax credit of up to 90% of their contribution while helping provide scholarships for children and families served by Clarke. If you want to learn more about this program, contact Denise Kozuch-Harakal, Director of Development at Clarke Pennsylvania, at dkozuch@clarkeschools.org.

Additional details for families can be found in Appendix C.

Staying Connected

Families are encouraged to stay informed by visiting Clarke's website and following the school's official social media channels for updates, events, family resources, and program news.

Official communication regarding school operations, emergencies, or student-specific information will always be provided directly through Clarke's established communication systems.

Questions or Concerns

We encourage families to contact their child's teacher whenever questions arise regarding classroom activities or student progress.

Questions regarding school operations, policies, transportation, or other administrative matters may be directed to the Director or school office.

Open communication helps us build strong partnerships and ensures that concerns are addressed promptly and collaboratively.

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

Clarke Schools for Hearing and Speech Pennsylvania 2026 - 2027 School Calendar

APPENDIX A

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	

20 Student Days
20 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					

5 Student Days
5 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
20 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

22 Student Days
22 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					

18 Student Days
19 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
6 Summer Session Begins for Staff and Students

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

SEPTEMBER
1-3 Teacher Inservice (No School for Students)
8 First Day for Students
17 Back to School Night

OCTOBER

NOVEMBER
3 Teacher Inservice - No School for Students
26-27 Thanksgiving Holiday (School Closed)

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

JANUARY
1 Winter Break (School Closed)
18 Martin Luther King Holiday (School Closed)

FEBRUARY
15 President's Holiday (School Closed)

MARCH
5 Teacher Inservice - No School for Students
18 Parent Evening Conferences
19 Parent Conferences - No School for Students
22-29 Spring Break (School Closed)

APRIL
23 Grandparents Day

MAY
15 Clarke Listening Walk
31 Memorial Day Holiday (School Closed)

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

Staff Days 213
Student Days 180
Student Summer Session 25

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

If necessary, the school reserves the right to adjust the scheduled instructional hours outlined in the school's calendar

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			

15 Student Days
17 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	

22 Student Days
22 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			

12 Student Days
13 Staff Days



APPENDIX B

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Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

Family Policy Compliance Office (FPCO) Home

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99) is a Federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. The law applies to all schools that receive funds under an applicable program of the U.S. Department of Education.

FERPA gives parents certain rights with respect to their children's education records. These rights transfer to the student when he or she reaches the age of 18 or attends a school beyond the high school level. Students to whom the rights have transferred are "eligible students."

- Parents or eligible students have the right to inspect and review the student's education records maintained by the school. Schools are not required to provide copies of records unless, for reasons such as great distance, it is impossible for parents or eligible students to review the records. Schools may charge a fee for copies.
- Parents or eligible students have the right to request that a school correct records which they believe to be inaccurate or misleading. If the school decides not to amend the record, the parent or eligible student then has the right to a formal hearing. After the hearing, if the school still decides not to amend the record, the parent or eligible student has the right to place a statement with the record setting forth his or her view about the contested information.
- Generally, schools must have written permission from the parent or eligible student in order to release any information from a student's education record. However, FERPA allows schools to disclose those records, without consent, to the following parties or under the following conditions (34 CFR § 99.31):
 - o School officials with legitimate educational interest;
 - o Other schools to which a student is transferring;
 - o Specified officials for audit or evaluation purposes;
 - o Appropriate parties in connection with financial aid to a student;
 - o Organizations conducting certain studies for or on behalf of the school;
 - o Accrediting organizations;
 - o To comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena;
 - o Appropriate officials in cases of health and safety emergencies; and
 - o State and local authorities, within a juvenile justice system, pursuant to specific State law.

Schools may disclose, without consent, "directory" information such as a student's name, address, telephone number, date and place of birth, honors and awards, and dates of attendance. However, schools must tell parents and eligible students about directory information and allow parents and eligible students a reasonable amount of time to request that the school not disclose directory information about them. Schools must notify parents and eligible students annually of their rights under FERPA. The actual means of notification (special letter, inclusion in a PTA bulletin, student

handbook, or newspaper article) is left to the discretion of each school.

For additional information or technical assistance, you may call (202) 260-3887 (voice). Individuals who use TDD may call the Federal Information Relay Service at 1-800-877-8339.

Or you may contact us at the following address:

Family Policy Compliance Office
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20202-5920

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Last Modified: 04/27/2007

School Year 2026 – 2027

Dear Clarke Families:

As a nonprofit organization, Clarke receives public funding and scholarships to supplement the cost of tuition and services for our children. We also receive donations from individuals and foundations. Financial support from these sources allows Clarke to offer increased educational opportunities to our children every year.

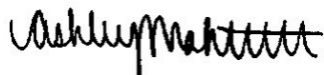
In order to receive funding, we need information from each family. The information remains anonymous. Please note that when we share information for funding purposes, we share the information as a school group and not individually.

A large reason we need this information is to apply for funding from the **Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC)** program. We greatly appreciate your assistance with completing the online forms in Veracross/Magnus.

We would like to expand the number of businesses and foundations who support Clarke. Providing the attached information will help!

Thank you for taking the time to complete the required information. If you have any questions, please contact me at amahlstedt@clarkeschools.org or 267.930.5094 x8228.

Sincerely,



Ashley Mahlstedt Weaver
Director

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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