**Sturgis Public Charter School Handbook Review: Questions, Comments, Recommendations**

Overall, I feel the document does a good job covering most of what is necessary in a student handbook. However, I found a few areas to be missing some vital content (namely “Student Life” and information about the IB program). In addition, I think a clearer organization of information may help students and parents not only view the handbook as a useful, easy-to-use tool but also represent the unique culture and mission of Sturgis in a clear, dynamic way.

**You’ll find two sections below:**

**I.** A recommendation regarding the organization of contents.

**II.** A page-by-page review asking clarifying questions regarding policy, suggestions for re-ordering information, and a few recommendations..

**Initial Questions:**

 1. How much of a “living” document is this? In other words, how is it actively used (i.e. reviewed during enrollment/application sessions; during the first day of school; with advisors, only when necessary, etc.)?

 2. How does the website impact the use of this document? I did not find the handbook on the website - should it be uploaded? A survey of handbook use among students, parents, and faculty would be informative.

**I. Organization/Table of Contents - Recommendations:**

 **A.** Overall, could this be organized around the IB Learner Profile? For example, “Caring,” “Principled,” and “Balanced” would correspond most directly to the Code of Conduct as well as the CAS section. This might reinforce the IB Profile and IB Program as the central uniting value for all students in all ways at Sturgis.

 **B.** To reduce pages of “legal speak,” use **Appendices**:

* Bullying, dismissal, FERPA, etc. may best reside in an Appendix of legal documents outlining Laws and Policies
* Also, important early dismissal, lunch request, athletic, attendance, etc. forms could be placed here for ease of access.
* Final section (or after the opening page) could be placed a directory for important school, community contacts and resources (front desk, admin., guidance, support services, special ed. coordinator, department coordinators if applicable, athletic coordinator, community service coordinator and/or resources)
* Final page: a parent and student sign-and-return acknowledgement of having read the handbook and that they comply with policies and procedures

 **C.** **A suggested structure for the handbook (bold = new content)**

 I. **Directory** (can serve as organizational chart too - esp. useful with 2 campuses)

 II. Emergency Info/closings, (include shelter-in-place?); visitor policy; safety/security

 Communication Info and Expectations of parents/guardians - use of IPASS

 III. Letter from Ex. Dir.

 IV. **SPCS History, Mission, Vision, Values**

* What is a charter school?
* What is the school’s history?
* Who was Sturgis?
* What is IB, Why IB? Why IB for all?

 V. IB Learner Profile and General **Expectations for students: academic, social, civic**

 VI. Calendar - **include last days to change schedule, withdraw? Open house?**

VII. **Seven-Day Schedule/Bell** **Schedule** w/required arrival, 10:00 notice of absence, 4:30 off-campus requirement

 VIII. **IB Program Overview and Sample Pathways**

 IV. Academic Program/Policies

**Grades 9-10** - pathways; language requirements; grade 9 and 10 experience, support, challenges

 **Grades 11-12** - what is DP? pathways; HL/SL distinction; electives; course-decision process; college admissions process - responsibilities; EE

 Include

 **Testing** Info/Dates: MCAS, PSAT, SAT, IB (EE, EA/IA’s)

 X. Attendance Policies/Procedures

 XI. Student Life - CAS philosophy, sports, clubs (can students initiate?), **student gov’t/leadership, experiential learning (field trips local and abroad)**

 XII. Student Services (Guidance/College Prep, **Social/Emotional, Special Needs, ELL,** General Academic Support - earning a HS diploma w/o the full IB)

 XIII. Behavior - Expectations of students, parents, faculty/admin

 XIV. Code of Conduct

 XV. Discipline Policies and Procedures

 XVI. Appendices

**II. Page-by-Page observations and questions:**

p. 4 - Is there a SPCS Open House in the fall?

 Is there/should there be a parent-teacher conference (coupled with Open House?) opportunity for grade 9 before the 11/19 ½ day?

 SAT testing date/IB finals dates?

 Prospective student open house?

p. 5 - Mentioned above - can these also be integrated throughout handbook where applicable?

p. 6 - School Hours - can a schedule/timetable go here? Clarity needed around 7-day schedule and days not skipped for vacation, etc.?

 Closings - move to own sections re: communication/closings/safety/IPASS

 Add 11/19 P-T Conference? Is there a second-semester P-T Conference?

p. 7 - Clarity re: language requirements (i.e. a table format) and graduation vs. IB requirements

Each class passed = 1 credit?

Class status = Promotion?

p. 8 - Honor Roll?

Eligibility for Nat’l Honors Society?

Ind. Study/College Courses - better suited for grade 11-12 section of academic policies?

p. 9 - Field Trips - better placed in Student Life?

Incomplete Work - better placed under “Attendance” or “Support” sections?

Failure and Make-up Policy - deserving of its own section? What preventative measures are taken and communication w/students/parents done by SPCS?

As a policy, has this been successful? Is it an “easy out” in any way for unmotivated students?

p. 10 - Withdrawal - is GPA affected?

Summer school move to Failure/Make-up section

Electives - moved to 11/12th grade section; purpose and examples needed?

Is “Directed Study” an Academic/Student Support measure or just another option - should it be restricted to students requiring assistance?

Books - are report cards, extra-curricular opportunities affected if books aren’t returned?

 Progress Reports - any parental signature/verification required?

p. 11 - Curriculum Support (“After-School Help”) - best in Student Support section?

Peer Tutoring - St. Support (for tutees) and Student Life (for tutors)

Team Meetings - better in St. Support and/or Failure/Make-up section

Individual Parent/Teacher Discussions - quite important - better added to Communication section?

CAS Section - better termed “Student Life”? **Intro moved to V above?**

Spell out CAS requirements in IB section?

p. 12 - Academic Eligibility - reiterated in Failure/Make-up section

Chemical Health seems out of place - better in Discipline section

Clubs/Activities - is this a selection or everything offered? Is Student Council equivalent to Frisbee Club?

Anything else belonging in a Student Life section, i.e. transportation/parking, lockers, cell phone/media policy, dances, lunch, dress code, school health support, media resources [not rules], school celebrations - Spirit Week, other school culture programs or celebrations, lost and found, field trip policies, etc.)

p. 13 - Code of Conduct - I**ntro move to Section V above?**

 **Recommendation:** Distinguish between conduct and MA Law-breaking

First section - conduct pertaining to classrooms, hallways, food/drink, use of technology, respecting others and space/vandalism, academic integrity, etc.

Second section - more serious offenses (hazing, harassment, bullying, plagiarism)

**Recommendation:** Follow code of conduct with Disciplinary Procedures/Policies outlining the levels of offense and actions taken to resolve conflicts, involve parents, involve law enforcement, etc.

p. 14-25 - Move laws to Appendix

p. 26 - Attendance and Tardiness - **move Intro to V above?**

Policy - should this be clarified - “may fail a course upon reaching 21 unexcused absences...This policy applies to total excused and unexcused absences from school as well as total absences for individual courses”?

 Question - this seems like a large amount of absences allowed - why is this set at 11 per semester?

 **What does SPCS do if there is no notification from parent/guardian before 10am?**

p. 28-29 - Best included under “Student Life”?

p. 29 - College Counseling - moved to VI above? What are students’ and parents’ core responsibilities in this all-important process? Is there a college-admissions handbook? In general, the handbook may benefit from a greater presence of the college prep process.