



School Handbook

2023 - 2024

Integrity * Courage * Compassion * Community



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Stellar Academy for Dyslexics

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website: www.stellaracademy.org

(Physical address: 39399 Cherry St., Newark, 94560)

(Send ALL mail to the PO Box address-thanks!)

We proudly employ highly qualified teachers and staff with a desire to see every student reach his/her academic potential.

Head of School

Heather Leyva

Teaching Staff Info

Our Language Arts teachers have completed intensive post-graduate work in the Slingerland® approach to literacy; they are passionate about what they do.

Our part-time instructors and aides provide a variety of highly valuable skills, training, and experiences to support our educational program.

Board of Directors

Will Davi – Board President

Dale Grant – Founding President; Vice President

Keith Gaff - Chief Financial Officer

Sampada Chavan – Secretary

Merritt Gerow - Member at Large

If you're a current parent and are interested in joining the Board we'd love to welcome you to the team!

Welcome

Thank you for choosing to entrust your most precious gift— your child – to our care. In September of 1988, Stellar Academy was born out of a desire to create a success-based learning environment for children with dyslexia. Since its inception, Stellar has provided educational experiences which optimize its students’ academic growth.

The purpose of this Handbook is to inform all Stellar students, their families, and all our staff and volunteers of our school’s policies and procedures. **As part of your Admission Agreement parents/guardians agree to read the entire Handbook with your student, explaining as necessary to ensure understanding.** Your student will be held to the behavior and academic standards contained within. Upon enrollment, your signed Admission Agreement signifies that you agree to abide by all the policies and procedures contained in this Handbook.

Unlocking the Door of Language

Stellar Academy exists to ***Unlock the Door of Language*** for children with dyslexia in a safe learning environment. Special attention is given to Language Arts through the implementation of the research-based, IMSLEC and IDA accredited, Slingerland® method -- a sequential, simultaneous, multisensory instructional approach to language arts instruction.

Educational Philosophy & Stellar Values

- **Teamwork** - Stellar staff, students’ family members, and area professionals work as a team.
- **Race against the clock:** Intervene early in the life of a child and return them to general education “as fast as we can and as slow as we must.”
- **Intense focus:** on Language Arts instruction.
- **Uniqueness:** Identify and develop the strengths of each student.
- **Equip** each student with strong study skills in all academic areas.

Our Vision: Every child with dyslexia succeeds in school and life.

Our Mission: Provide children with dyslexia the education they need to thrive.

Our Core Values:

- **INTEGRITY:** We commit to doing the right thing, even when it’s hard.
- **COURAGE:** We courageously pursue our authentic selves, advocate confidently, and pursue a growth mindset, no matter the challenge.
- **COMPASSION:** We accept and empathize with others while demonstrating kindness, respect, and belonging.
- **COMMUNITY:** We succeed by fostering connection, collaboration, and friendship.

Equity and Inclusion Statement

Stellar Academy is committed to providing a diverse, inclusive, and equitable learning experience for our students. A commitment to equity and inclusion is an integral component of academic excellence and social development. We celebrate and explore differences in experience based on, but not limited to; racial, socioeconomic, gender, sexuality, physical ability, family composition, and religious diversity. We promote acceptance of learning differences and disabilities and celebrate the many positive experiences and viewpoints that diversity, in all its forms, brings to our school community.

Community Standards and Norms

- Members of the Stellar Academy school community, led by the faculty and including administrators, students, parents, volunteers, and members of the Board of Trustees, are expected to model and uphold the standards and norms listed here.
- Place the safety and well-being of students foremost in policy and action.
- Promote a culture of dignity, equity, and respect for all members of the school community.
- Remember that a culture of dignity, equity, and respect is one that does not tolerate discrimination, harassment, threats, or bullying, and which seeks to protect and magnify the needs of community members who may need additional support due to disability, race, religion, gender expression, sexuality, or other minority status.
- Remember that each member of the school community has their own unique, lived experience. Listen to understand, and to learn.

School Policies

Appearance in News Media Coverage

A parent/guardian who prefers that their student not be photographed or interviewed may write an email or a note to the school to express their preference. School staff and administrators will then make every effort to ensure that this student's photo or name does not appear in a news report. Stellar cannot guarantee that students will not appear in the background of photographs.

Attendance

It's of the **utmost importance** that students attend school **every day** to maximize the benefit of instruction and practice learned skills. Because student attendance is a top priority, staff carefully monitors attendance and holds students and parents accountable for good attendance. Progress in their lessons is directly affected when students miss school. Student failure to attend school regularly, or an abundance of absences, is grounds for termination of enrollment.

Absences

It is the responsibility of the student to be in school on time every day. Illness or healthcare appointments are generally the only acceptable excuses for absences. Parents are asked to call the school office before 8AM (510) 742-3165 each day of their child's absence. If this does not happen, the Office Administrator will call home or work regarding absences that have not been cleared for the day. Both excused and unexcused absences will be reflected on student progress reports.

If a student arrives late to school, they must first check in at the office for a late slip. The late slip must be shown to the teacher to enter the classroom.

If your child needs to be released early for an appointment, they may bring a note to the office. Likewise, parents/guardians should call or email the office if you will be sending an alternate person to pick-up your child. Make sure to include alternate pick-up permission on your student's emergency card. Whenever possible, schedule appointments for after 11:00a.m. to avoid missing Slingerland lessons.

Having accurate knowledge of which students are on campus at any given moment is an important safety issue.

Discipline

Our Discipline Policy is built on the premise that each student has the right to learn and each teacher has the right to teach. We strive to help students focus their energies in positive ways. Any behavior which disrupts learning, safety, physical or mental health, or the well-being of others will have consequences. The following is a partial list of behaviors and resulting possible consequences. All decisions are at the discretion of the Head of School, except mandatory expulsion.

School staff:

- Will fairly and equitably enforce the written policies of the school.
- With reasonable belief that a student has illegal, dangerous or inappropriate objects at school, will require the object to be handed over. If a student refuses to

hand over the object, then that student's parent/guardian will be called, while the student waits in the office, to remove their child from the school.

- May refer a student to the Head of School for suspension or expulsion for acts that occur at any time while under school jurisdiction, including but not limited to: while on school grounds, during recess & lunch, and during or while going to or coming from a school-sponsored activity.

Some examples of behaviors that may lead to disciplinary action include:

- Failing to obey school personnel
- Causing classroom or recess disturbance or disruption
- Committing an obscene act or engaging in habitual profanity or vulgarity
- Playing aggressive games that include behaviors such as hitting, grabbing, etc.
- Teasing, name calling, ethnic slurs, bad language, or sexual remarks
- Behaving in an unsafe manner
- Disturbing other people's property
- Bringing toys to school without staff permission
- Failure to comply with the dress code
- Running (other than on the playground)
- Throwing objects (other than PE balls on the playground)

Possible disciplinary consequences for the above behaviors:

- Verbal warning
- Recording the incident
- Parent/child conference with Head of School
- Loss of privileges such as excursions
- Suspension from school
- Expulsion from school

Possible Suspension or Expulsion

Examples of behaviors for which a student may be suspended (*removed from school for one to five days*) or expelled (*removed from school permanently*):

- Disrupting school activities or otherwise willfully defying the valid authority of school personnel engaged in the performance of their duties.
- Causing, attempting to cause, or threatening to cause physical injury to another person.
- Committing an obscene act or engaging in habitual profanity or vulgarity
- Bullying - defined as, "Aggressive behavior that is: repeated over time, intentional and involves an imbalance of power or strength."
- Committing robbery or damage to school or private property
- Possessing a dangerous object
- Possessing or using tobacco

- Possessing any controlled or non-controlled substance, alcohol, or intoxicant
- Possessing any drug paraphernalia

Mandatory Expulsion (removed from school permanently):

Expulsion is mandatory when a student commits one or more of the following while under the school’s jurisdiction:

- Using a substance in a manner to try and chemically harm an individual
- Committing or attempting to commit a sexual assault or sexual battery
- Making terrorist threats against school officials, school property or both
- Committing or attempting to commit extortion
- Selling or otherwise furnishing a firearm, knife, explosive or other dangerous objects, or controlled substance
- Using, selling, or otherwise furnishing, or being under the influence of any controlled or non-controlled substance, alcohol, or intoxicant.
- Offering, arranging, or negotiation to sell any drug paraphernalia

Dress Code

Students are to dress appropriately at school and at all school activities. The purpose of the dress code is to support student safety and maintain a conducive learning environment.

- Students are to be neat and clean.
- Closed-toed shoes are to be worn at all times. **Shoes deemed appropriate are to be worn for PE, such as tennis shoes.**
- Undergarments are not to be worn over outer clothing. Undergarments are not to be visible. The torso and buttocks are to be covered.
- Students may not wear any clothing, jewelry, emblem, badge, or symbol, or other insignia that advocates or encourages the use or abuse of drugs, tobacco, or alcohol.
- Students may not wear any clothing that expresses or advocates prejudice or discrimination against people based on race, ethnicity, gender, religion, national origin, or sexual orientation.
- Sunglasses may be worn only outdoors. They may be worn indoors with a doctor’s written medical permission. Exceptions noted for Transition-type lenses.
- No wearing gang-related clothing on school premises or at school–sponsored activities as it poses a danger to students and disrupts instruction.
- Chains, spikes on jackets/pants or other potentially dangerous objects may not be worn on school sites.

- Other inappropriate clothing accessories or body markings, determined by the school administration to be a deterrent to safety or to detract from the educational process are prohibited.

Enforcement

The majority of students are in step with the dress code each day. However, when a student arrives at school out of dress code, the following procedures will be followed:

- First time – Office staff will review the dress code privately with the student.
- Second time – Office staff will review the dress code privately with the student. Student will borrow appropriate clothing from the office supply of Stellar logo-wear, if available.
- Third time – Parents will be called to bring an appropriate change of clothing so their students may return to class.

School administrator has the final say on whether clothing is appropriate for school.

Field Trips/Volunteering

Volunteer parent drivers are essential to making excursions possible. All drivers must fill out a Parent/Volunteer Driver form and proof of vehicle insurance on file in the school office.

If you choose for your child to opt out of an excursion, your child will need to remain at home. Field trips are designed to give your child authentic experiences in their world and, with few exceptions, will be attended by our entire school. Siblings are not permitted to attend.

Chaperoning our field trips is a critical component of their success. Per Assembly Bill 506 (AB506) all volunteers must also be fingerprinted and complete online Mandated Child Abuse Reporter training to ensure the safety of all students. All forms and links can be picked up from the school office.

Health Services

Medical Assistance at School

The students' Emergency Card will be used to contact a parent/guardian in the event of a medical emergency. The school will make necessary emergency medical or hospital services available for a student while at, or on the way to or from, any school activity. It is important to include all information regarding student health needs. A parent/guardian is responsible for updating their student's emergency card as information changes during the school year. This confidential health information will

only be shared, at the discretion of the Head of School, with staff members who have a “legitimate educational interest”.

Authorized Medications:

- When necessary, staff can administer medication to students during school hours (ex. ADHD, Allergy, Asthma medications.)
- **Medication Authorization forms** exist to facilitate meeting these needs. A parent/guardian must present written permission for medicines to be on-site and administered to students during school each school year.
- It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to provide and maintain current (prescription) medications in an original, pharmacy-labeled container.
- Students are not allowed to have medications (prescription or over-the-counter) in their possession at any time, as this presents a health & safety risk.
- Staff will administer non-prescription medications only when provided by the parent/guardian and only per the package directions.

Allergies at School

There are students who are severely allergic to certain foods, including milk, nuts (peanuts, walnuts, hazelnuts, etc), and animals. We need your help to ensure the health and safety of all our students while at school.

- If you have a student who has food allergies, parents must notify the office and provide an allergy plan if relevant.
- Talk to your student about not sharing or trading their food or lunches with other children.
- When sending food for others to consume, **do not send any foods that have nuts or nut by-products in them.** Read food labels for nuts or nut derivatives.
- Sometimes even plain M&M’s, gummy bears, breakfast bars or puddings have nuts or nut oils in them.

Pets are not allowed at school due to student allergies.

IEP Meetings

A staff member will attend one IEP meeting per student each year at no cost to the family. Further meeting attendance, &/or support outside of teachers’ contracted responsibilities, may be available by individual arrangement with and billed directly by the indicated educator.

Please schedule IEP meetings in the afternoon (from 12pm on) when the teachers have finished daily language instruction. Likewise, please provide ample notice in order for staff to make the necessary arrangements.

As a student is ready to transition out of Stellar Academy, the Head of School, with input from the student’s teacher(s), will assist the family with a transition plan. Parents can contact the office to schedule an appointment to discuss school placements and have forms completed by Stellar (recommendation letters, etc.).

Illness

- If a student experiences any Covid-19 Symptoms: fever, vomiting, diarrhea, cough, sore throat, runny nose, severe headache, fatigue, difficulty breathing, or a new loss of taste/smell = keep them home and do not send them to school.
- **Should your child test positive for Covid-19 contact the Office so that we can activate our required notification protocols.**
- Students recovered from Covid-19 can return to school after they've been fever free for 24 hours, all symptoms are improved, and it's been 5 days since their positive test or onset of symptoms.
- If your child becomes ill at school they will be sent to the office and given a [mask](#) to wear. You will be contacted for immediate pick-up.
- In cases when a student is not physically ill, but emotionally struggling, the student may be sent to the office for an opportunity to collect themselves, and a phone call home may be needed for a bit of extra encouragement.

Safety

- It is Stellar Academy's goal to create a positive and safe school environment where teachers teach effectively and students reach their full academic and personal growth potential.
- To ensure the general safety of students and staff and to avoid potential disruptions, all **visitors must check in at the school office** immediately upon arriving to the school grounds.
- To ensure minimum interruption of the instructional program, all visits shall be arranged in consultation with the student's teacher and/or the Head of School.
- Virtual classroom visits or conferences will be scheduled within a reasonable time of the parent/guardian's request.
- Except for law enforcement or emergency medical services personnel, only the parent/guardian or those persons designated on the student's emergency card are permitted to contact &/or take your student from school.
- All students, staff, parents, and volunteers have the right to be free from experiencing any hate crime, hazing, and/or degrading and inflammatory statements, which include, but are not limited to abusive, harassing, or insulting behaviors which degrade or stereotype an individual on the basis of race, religion, ethnicity, culture, heritage, or gender.
- Stellar does not permit any gang activity, such as but not limited to: initiations, paraphernalia, clothing, writings, tagging, gestures, or any form of gang affiliation.
- Stellar does not permit the administering of corporal punishment to students.
- Stellar students are not permitted to share food (*due to severe student allergies*).

- Monthly Fire and other Drills (earthquake, lockdown) will be conducted periodically to ensure students are familiar with safety procedures in the event of a true emergency. Stellar Academy will also participate in all drills organized by Ohlone College.
- **In the event of a major emergency** (earthquake, fire, gas leak) which makes staying on the premises unsafe our **Evacuation, Relocation and Reunification** sites are:
 - Silliman Center, 6800 Mowry Ave., Newark, 94560
 - Newark Memorial High School, 39375 Cedar Blvd., 94560
 - ***Student emergency contact information will be used to alert families whenever the premises are evacuated. Immediate student pick-up once contacted is expected, unless extreme circumstances indicate otherwise.***

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment constitutes a violation of the California Education Code, Section 212.6 and 48900.2, as well as Federal law, Section 703 of Title VII. As such, sexual harassment may constitute just cause for disciplinary action against pupils committing such an offense. Sexual harassment will not be tolerated of any student by any other student or any employee.

Definition: Sexual harassment is defined as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal, visual, or physical conduct of a sexual nature made by someone from or in the educational setting (students grades 4-12). The conduct must be considered to be sufficiently severe or pervasive to have a negative impact upon an individual's academic performance or to create an intimidating, hostile, or offensive educational environment.

In general, the following conduct is considered sexual harassment:

- sexual assault; physical abuse (unnecessary touching, pinching, or cornering);
- verbal abuse (propositions, lewd comments, or sexual insults); leering, or display of pornographic material designed to embarrass or intimidate; or
- subtle or overt pressure for sexual favors accompanied by an implied or overt threat

Stellar Academy believes all persons, regardless of their gender, should be free from discrimination of any kind, including sexual harassment. All sexual harassment claims should be immediately presented to the Head of School and shall be handled in a confidential manner.

Technology

We believe technology is not only a tool to improve your child's learning while in school, but a tool to improve their ability to successfully deal with the future.

- Because access to computers by students and staff is essential, any actions that might harm school equipment or software, or impair their effective use will not be tolerated.
- All students are expected to treat school equipment with respect and in accordance with school policies.
- Accessing any files, documents, applications, etc. other than your own without permission from the staff, may result in disciplinary action.
- No programs, applications, files, etc. may be loaded onto the school equipment without permission from the instructor.
- No games are allowed, other than those designed for instructional learning and approved by the staff.
- Students are to leave their assigned computers as they found them.
- Students must contact their teacher concerning any problems with the equipment, or they will be held responsible for any damage caused to the computer.
- Students may bring a personally owned iPad to school if a "Personal iPad Use" form has been signed. Contact the Office directly if you are interested in pursuing this option.



Internet Use Agreement:

- Report any misuse of the network to the teacher. Misuse may come in many forms. It is commonly viewed as any communication, sent or received, that indicates or suggests obscene material, unethical or illegal solicitation, racism, sexism, inappropriate language, and other issues described below.
- Use the internet in support of education and research in keeping with the high academic goals, moral values, and objectives of the school.
- Use other organizations' networks or resources according to the rules of that organization.
- Abide by the laws of the United States, and state organizations, which prohibit transmission of any copyrighted, threatening, obscene material or information protected by trade secrets.
- Show maturity by using the recognized rules of network etiquette. These rules, pertaining to email and other communication include:
 - politeness, using appropriate language, respect for privacy

- personal information: phone number, address, etc. or information, your own or another student's, should **never** be given out.
- Email is not guaranteed to be private.
- As part of the school curriculum, students are expected to maintain their Typing.com, Stellar Academy-created, accounts as intended.



Cell Phones/Electronic Devices:

- Cell phones/electronic devices are to **remain in backpacks** while at school.
- Students are responsible for any damage or loss of cell phones/electronic devices brought to school.
- Students are prohibited from taking pictures at school (*unless for an approved purpose, ex. Yearbook Committee, with direct instruction from a Staff member*).
- Students may use cell phones/electronic devices, following the Internet Use instructions above, under the supervision of Staff for educational purposes (i.e. in-class assignments) or while in After Care.
- While at school, students will maximize opportunities for in-person socialization during Recess and Lunch and save device use for After Care or the drive home.

<h2><i>Student Responsibilities</i></h2>

You're *why* we're here! You can maximize your learning when you:

- Attend school regularly.
- Arrive to all classes on time.
- Show respect for yourself and others through your actions & attitudes.
- Be actively involved in learning.
- Complete classroom work and homework diligently, honestly, and on time.
- Treat school property, and others' private property, with respect.
- Obey all school and classroom rules while at school.
- Follow directions and directives given by staff members.
- Dress according to the school dress code.

Parent Behavior Expectations

We absolutely appreciate and need our student's families! We recognize parents as the primary educators of their children. Student success depends hugely on support received at home.

With that said; parents/guardians must exhibit appropriate behavior while on campus or in communication with the staff and other Stellar Community members. Parents/guardians may not be intoxicated or emotionally out of control. Parents/guardians may not use corporal punishment on their own children while on campus. Parents/guardians must not discipline or correct other children at any time. Address any concerns you may have with the Head of School as soon as possible.

If you ever need anything, please reach out to us at: the office 510-742-3165, Mrs. Huckaby, Office Manager, office@stellaracademy.org, or Ms. Leyva, Head of School, at hleyva@stellaracademy.org. We are happy to provide any needed information, help problem-solve issues, hear positive suggestions, accept donations of time, materials, supplies, support or funding, or simply to offer emotional support as needed.

We are glad you are here and know that, together, this will be a great year of learning and growth, for all.



Stellar Academy: Home of the *“Wildcats”*