

Syracuse/Utica Academy of Science Charter School Visitors and Class Observations

This memorandum states the policy of SASCS and UASCS regarding visitors to their schools and the obligations of school personnel in that regard. As used below, the term “visitor” means a person who is not employed by SASCS/UASCS; the term “building administrator” means the senior administrator in each school building; the term “school personnel” means all school employees; an “evaluator” means a person certified or licensed by the State of New York to evaluate a student for a disability; and the term “student service area” means an area where students receive instruction or services, such as a gymnasiums, athletic areas, cafeterias, guidance offices, tutoring areas, and other similar areas, except for a school’s main office.

Our schools seek to protect student privacy and well-being. Accordingly, access to school buildings shall be controlled according to this policy. No one who is not an employee of our schools shall be permitted access to our school buildings, except according to this policy’s terms.

All visitors must, immediately upon arrival, report to the school’s main office and request authorization to visit a specific person and area. When appropriate, main office personnel will issue a visitor a Visitor’s Badge, which shall clearly identify the visitor and the person(s) and area(s) the visitor may visit. All visitors shall be accompanied by school personnel throughout their visit and may only visit the person(s) and area(s) specified on their Visitor Badge.

If school personnel encounter an unaccompanied visitor, they must determine if the visitor has a current Visitor Badge and, if so, whether he/she is in the area specified on the Visitor Badge. When a visitor does not have a Visitor Badge, school personnel should, whenever possible, notify the main office of the person’s presence and escort the person to the main office. An unauthorized visitor shall never be left unaccompanied in the school building. If school personnel encounter a visitor who has a current Visitor Badge, but is not in the area(s) specified on his/her Visitor Badge, school personnel shall determine who the visitor is to visit, remind the visitor that he/she must remain in the specified area(s) and escort the visitor to the authorized location. If the employee who the person was to visit is unavailable, school personnel shall escort the visitor back to the main office.

In order to protect student privacy and minimize disruption and distraction, visitors are not permitted to access classrooms or student service areas. When appropriate, a building administrator may authorize a parent or person in parental relation to observe his/her child’s class, provided the parent agrees to comply with this policy. Individuals who are not a parent or person in parental relation to a student are not permitted to visit classrooms or student service areas, except as stated below.

When necessary and appropriate, a building administrator may authorize a professional and appropriately licensed or certified evaluator to observe a student in class, provided such observation is authorized in writing by the student’s parent and the evaluator agrees to comply with this policy.

Contractors and vendors may be permitted access to areas of the school relating to their services or products, provided they are advised of and agree to comply with this policy. Such persons may be permitted access to classrooms and student service areas when necessary to provide services or evaluate, repair or service equipment. However, such individuals must display a current Visitor’s badge at all times during their visit and, whenever possible, shall be accompanied by school personnel.

No person will be permitted to visit a school unless the person is first advised of, and agrees to comply with, the following rules:

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1. Every visitor must report to and register with the school's main office upon arrival at the school.
 2. Upon presenting appropriate identification, and if authorized, a visitor will be given a Visitor's Badge that specifies the school employee to be visited and area(s) the visitor may access;
 3. A visitor shall only enter the area(s) stated on the Visitor Badge and shall immediately comply a directive from school personnel to return to such area or the main office;
 4. Under no circumstances may a visitor photograph, video, or audio record a class or any student, except in rare instances when a credentialed evaluator has been previously authorized by student's parent and the building administrator to do so;
 5. A visitor shall not be permitted access to any student's educational records, except those of his/her own child or as authorized by a student's parent or person in parental relation (or, regarding a student 18 years of age or older, by the student). School personnel shall take all reasonable measures required to protect educational records from inadvertent and unauthorized disclosure;
 6. School personnel may terminate an authorized visit at any time, and a visitor shall immediately return to the main office when directed to do so by school personnel. A visitor's failure to comply with such a direction shall constitute a trespass;
 7. All video, audio, or photographic material created during a visit, pursuant to Rule No. 3, stated above, shall be the property of SASCS/UASCS and may be used only as authorized by the building administrator. All visitors agree to turn over or dispose of such material when requested by a building administrator to do so.

School personnel shall immediately report a violation of the above-stated rules to the school's main office and take all reasonable measures necessary to prevent such violation, bearing in mind any potential for disruption of the educational process or the creation of unnecessary alarm. When reasonable and necessary, school personnel shall immediately seek assistance from law enforcement to enforce this policy.

Whenever school personnel encounter an incident or issue relating to a school visit that they do not believe to be clearly addressed by this policy, they shall be responsible to immediately refer to the matter to the building administrator to obtain guidance.