

Ascent Academies of Utah



Family Handbook

www.AscentUtah.org

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School Purpose

Mission

Ascent Academies of Utah's (AAU) network of schools utilizes the Schoolwide Enrichment Model to build a strong educational foundation and to provide an enriching, individualized and varied educational experience to all students.

Vision

Ascent Academies of Utah will accomplish its mission by: (1) offering each student an opportunity to find and develop his or her own unique profile of gifts and talents; and by (2) providing all employees with exceptional development opportunities through professional learning communities, networking, and partnerships.

Ascent Academies of Utah (AAU) is a network of public charter schools designed to provide students with a strong academic program that (a) includes enrichment opportunities built upon their individual strengths and talents and (b) provides educators with unique opportunities to grow through ongoing professional development and collaboration.

AAU's network of schools combines the Schoolwide Enrichment Model's (SEM) research-based strategies with curriculum and instructional methods aligned to the Utah Core Curricula and Core Curriculum in order to provide students throughout the network with engaging learning opportunities

Board of Directors

Board Responsibilities

Ascent Academies of Utah (AAU) is a public school chartered by the Utah State Charter School Board. AAU's Board of Directors is a non-profit board of community members established to oversee the implementation of the AAU charter. The AAU Board of Directors are responsible for the following:

1. Sign any documents pertaining to the legal operation of the school and fulfill all other legal obligations.
2. Hire, evaluate and dismiss the administrator.
3. Define school policy.
4. Monitor school finance
5. Monitor and evaluate school performance.

Board Members

Information about our Board members can be found on Ascent's website at <https://www.ascentutah.org/governing-board>

Administrative Structure

Each AAU campus will have an assigned campus director. The director is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the school. Additionally, AAU will have a Lead Director who reports directly to the AAU Board of Directors. Information about administration can be found on the “Our Team” portion of the website.

Ascent Mountaineer Parents (AMP)

Ascent Academies of Utah strives to create a community of learners, which includes not only the student, but also the entire family. At AAU, we believe parental participation is key to a child's educational success. All families are encouraged to volunteer 30 hours per year. Parents are therefore encouraged to provide service to the School as volunteers. Each Campus Director will have authority over the establishment of volunteer committees at their campus. Please contact your schools' Campus Director for information about volunteer opportunities.

Curriculum & Programs

Schoolwide Enrichment Model (SEM)

All AAU schools will utilize components of the Schoolwide Enrichment Model. The SEM is a proven educational model focusing on student's strengths and talents. This model, developed through extensive research by Dr. Joseph Renzulli, creates school environments where students benefit from hands- on, student-driven, interest- based activities. Students at AAU schools will have many opportunities to participate in enrichment clusters. Enrichment clusters allow groups of students who share a common interest to come together to produce a product, performance, or service based on that common interest. www.gifted.uconn.edu

Utah State Core

Utah's core standards provide statewide comprehensive expectations for all students. These standards establish a framework for high quality instruction. They help Utah teachers ensure academic achievement for Utah students by defining the essential knowledge, concepts, and skills to be mastered at each grade level or within critical content areas. They define what students should know and be able to do as they move on to post-secondary training, college, or a career. www.schools.utah.gov

A list of the curriculum and resources Ascent uses to help students master the state core standards can be found on our website at <https://ascentutah.org/Curriculum>

Schedules

Daily Schedules, Recess & Lunch Schedules, Drop Off & Pick Up Procedures, & Junior High Schedules (including A/B day schedules) are specific to each campus and can be found on our website at <https://www.ascentutah.org/daily-schedule>

Short Days

Each campus dismisses early on Fridays at 12:35 pm in order to facilitate teacher collaboration, professional development and preparation time. Please refer to the campus calendar at <https://www.ascentutah.org/daily-schedule>.

Enrichment Clusters

Each Campus Director is responsible for scheduling Enrichment Clusters. Please check with your campus concerning days and times.

Homework Club

Homework Club offerings are campus-specific. Please contact a specific campus office for details.

Attendance

AAU's attendance procedures are consistent with the provisions of Utah's compulsory attendance laws, Utah Code Ann. §§ 53A-11-101 through 53A-11-105. A copy of AAU's policies and procedures can be found on the AAU website www.AscentUtah.org

Parents of AAU students are expected to take a proactive role in ensuring their children attend school. We recommend families plan their vacation schedule around the existing School calendar. When possible, medical and dental appointments should take place outside of school hours and parents should notify the School in advance of any absence. Parents and students are responsible for obtaining homework or assignments for the time period in which the student is absent.

Make-up work is permitted for students who have excused absences. The teacher will provide the student or the parent/guardian with any make-up work upon request. Make-up work must be completed within a reasonable time-frame as determined by the teacher.

Students are allowed a maximum of five (5) unexcused absences per year. An oral or written communication documenting a valid excuse must be received from the student's parents/guardian within one (1) business day of the absence in order for the absence to be excused. In the event of multiple consecutive absences, written communication must be received within one (1) business day of the student's return

to school. In the event of an unforeseeable illness or emergency, the School should be notified as soon as reasonably possible.

Excused absences may become unexcused if the Campus Director determines that absences have reached an excessive level and are adversely impacting the student's education.

Late Check-In Procedures & Early Check-Out Procedures are campus-specific. Please contact a specific campus office for details.

Tardies

A student is tardy if he or she is not in the assigned classroom when the late bell rings. In general, tardiness will be handled on an individual basis with the teacher. If a student is chronically tardy, then the student may be referred to the administration. Elementary students are allowed five (5) tardies per quarter. Jr. High students are allowed five (5) tardies per class each quarter for the first period of the day.

Behavior

Safe School Environment

It is AAU's policy to promote a safe and orderly school environment for all students and employees. Accordingly, AAU holds all students, employees, and other adults to the highest standards of behavior on school grounds and during school-sponsored activities. Criminal acts or disruptive behavior of any kind will not be tolerated, and any individual who engages in such activity will be subject to disciplinary action, criminal prosecution, or both. More information regarding AAU's Safe School Policies and Procedures including a list of unacceptable behavior or activities and potential consequences can be found on the AAU website www.AscentUtah.org

Behavior Expectations

- Students will show respect for other students
- Students will show respect for adults
- Students will show respect for the building
- Adults will show respect for students
- Students will develop self-discipline

Students who deliberately compromise the safety of others, show blatant disrespect, or repeatedly engage in unsafe or inappropriate behavior will face consequences and receive positive behavior support to encourage better decision-making in the future. Consequences might include:

- In-School Suspension
- Out of School
- Suspension

- Expulsion
- Restitution
- Repayment for damages

Positive behavior supports may include:

- Behavior management plan
- Inclusion in a skills group to address the behavior
- Encouragement and recognition for displaying appropriate behavior

Classroom Management System

Classroom teachers will develop a classroom management system that fits the needs of their students. This information will be shared with parents at the beginning of the year. Teachers will refer students to administration for a pattern of behavior that is disruptive to the classroom environment.

Schoolwide Management System

All students are expected to follow Ascent’s school-wide rules known as “PEAKS”. Students who continually show compliance with PEAKS are rewarded with a PEAKS ticket.

PEAKS

- P** = Prepared to Learn
- E** = Excel Everyday
- A** = Act Responsibly
- K** = Kind to Others
- S** = Silent Transition

Communication

AAU believes that communication between home and school is paramount to a student’s success. Teachers and administration will communicate with a student’s parent or guardian via many modes such as: email, twice annual Parent Teacher Conferences, Canvas courses, Parent Orientation Meetings (twice annually), AAU website www.AscentUtah.org, notes home, phone calls, and text messaging.

Parent Grievance

AAU’s Board of Directors value open communication between parents, faculty, staff, administration, and the Board. The Board encourages active parent participation in their children’s education, and hopes that parents will feel empowered to voice their opinions, volunteer in and out of the classroom, and work as a team to provide the best education for their children. The Board also believes that individuals can generally resolve their own disputes through open, respectful communication. However, the

Board also realizes that there may be occasions that a complaint or grievance against an AAU employee may occur and thus the Board has implemented a comprehensive Parent Grievance Policy. Please visit <https://vahara-o5-public.s3.us-west-2.amazonaws.com/media/26875/Board-Policy-Manual---AAU---01.13.2025.pdf> for a complete copy of the Parent Grievance Policy.

A parent who has a complaint involving a teacher, staff member or member of the School's administration (including the Lead Director or Campus Director) must first address the issue with the other individual involved and work reasonably and in good faith to resolve the concern. If the conflict cannot be resolved the parent should send a written complaint to the Campus Director specifying the individual(s) involved, details of the incident(s) giving rise to the complaint, including dates and approximate times, details of an attempt to rectify the situation, and the requested solution.

If the issue is not resolved the parent may send a written complaint to the Lead Director. In the event the complaint is still not resolved the parent may address the complaint to the AAU Grievance Committee by issuing a request through the Lead Director. The grievance committee will then consider the complaint and take whatever action it deems appropriate.

If a parent has a concern regarding Board policy or other Board action, the parent may communicate with any or all members of the Board in person, via telephone, or through e-mail and may address the Board during the "public comment" portion of a Board of Directors meeting. Parents may also request to be added to the Board meeting agenda by contacting the President of the Board of Directors at least three (3) working days prior to the scheduled meeting date.

Dress Code

All AAU students are required to comply with the dress code. Parents are responsible for ensuring that their children wear the appropriate clothing to school. Dress code specifics can be found on the AAU website www.AscentUtah.org. Students in violation of the dress code may be required to (not all inclusive):

- Change into loaned clothing provided by the school
- Contact home for replacement clothing
- Lose citizenship points
- Serve detention

Electronic Devices

AAU's Electronic Resources Policy can be accessed on the AAU website www.AscentUtah.org

Electronic devices include but are not limited to: Cell phones, Smart watches, laptop computers, iPods, MP3 players, eBook Readers, tablets, etc.

- Personal electronic devices may not be possessed and used during the school day.
- Electronic devices may not be used to bully, threaten, embarrass, harass, or intimidate other students, teachers, volunteers, school guests, or school employees.
- Personal electronic devices must be turned off and in a student locker during school hours.
- Students may not use or respond to personal electronic devices during instructional time or during other times designated by teachers, a Campus Director, or the Lead Director.

Campus Directors may adopt separate procedures for students to bring their own electronic devices to School for use in connection with their educational coursework.

Exceptions

A student may possess an electronic device on active mode at all times during the regular school day, including during assessments, based on a written 504 plan or an IEP.

Electronic devices may be used in the event of an emergency during the limited period of the emergency in order to protect the safety of a student or school employee, visitor or volunteer.

AAU is not responsible for loss, damage or theft of any electronic devices.

Consequences

Upon violation of this policy, the electronic device will be confiscated, labeled, and held in a secure location. The Campus Director, teachers, and other individuals designated by the Campus Director may confiscate electronic devices according to this policy.

The School will make reasonable efforts to notify parents/guardians that the School has a student's electronic device in its possession. Parents/guardians who show identification may retrieve confiscated electronic devices during School hours or by appointment. The School will retain un-retrieved electronic devices until the end of the school year, at which time all personal data will be cleared from the devices before their disposal.

The Campus Director may impose other additional disciplinary consequences for a student's violation of this policy as the Campus Director determines is reasonable under the circumstances, including the nature of the violation and other disciplinary actions in which the student has been involved. Such disciplinary actions may include:

- Loss of the privilege to possess or use electronic devices
- Disciplinary letter to the student's parent/guardian that is placed in the student's file
- Detention
- In-school suspension
- Suspension
- Expulsion
- Loss of the privilege of participating in school-sponsored activities or of receiving honor recognition.

Picture taking or sound or video recording by students is prohibited in school unless authorized by a teacher or the Campus Director. Picture taking or sound or video recording by students is prohibited in private areas of the school such as locker rooms, counseling sessions, washrooms, and dressing areas.

Students bring electronic devices on school property at their own risk. The school is not responsible for lost, stolen or damaged electronic devices.

Students are responsible for their own electronic devices and may be jointly subject to discipline if their device is misused by another student.

Food in the Classroom

AAU is committed to the health and safety of all of our students. Treats or food may not be used as a reward or as an incentive. To assure a student is not exposed to food items that could cause the student harm, food in the classroom must be pre-approved by the Campus Director and may only be used as part of an instructional activity tied to the core curriculum or during classroom parties and activities. Teachers must assure that adequate notice is given to parents prior to the activity and parents must provide written permission for their student to participate. A scanned, faxed, emailed or other form of a written signature is acceptable. Phone calls are not an acceptable form of signed, written permission. An alternate activity will be provided for students who are unable to participate or who do not have signed parental permission.

Further information regarding this guideline can be found in AAU's Wellness Policy on our website www.AscentUtah.org

Grades

ASPIRE

Student's academic and citizenship grades, test results, and upcoming or missing assignments can be accessed through ASPIRE. Parents will need a login and password to access this system. Please contact your campus office for help in utilizing the ASPIRE system. ASPIRE can be accessed via each campus- specific website.

Elementary Grading Scale

Students in grades K-6 will earn grades based on a 4 - 1 marking system. An explanation of each mark is shown below:

4 - Mastery

- Consistently demonstrates concepts and skills of standard taught this quarter
- Frequency of behavior: nearly all the time
- Requires no support when demonstrating understanding
- Demonstrates a thorough understanding of content taught
- Makes no major errors or omissions when demonstrating concepts or processes taught

3 - Near Mastery

- Usually demonstrates concepts and skills of standard taught this quarter
- Frequency of behavior, most of the time
- Requires limited support when demonstrating understanding
- Demonstrates a general understanding of content taught
- Makes few major errors or omissions when demonstrating concepts or processes

2 - Needs Improvement

- Sometimes demonstrates concepts and skills of standard taught this quarter
- Frequency of behavior: some of the time
- Requires moderate support in order to demonstrate understanding concepts and skills
- Demonstrates a partial understanding of content taught
- Makes some errors or omissions when demonstrating concepts or processes

1- Substantially Below Expectation

- Seldom demonstrates concepts and skills of standard taught this quarter
- Frequency of behavior: seldom
- Requires considerable support to demonstrate learning of concepts and skills
- Demonstrates limited understanding of concepts, skills, and processes taught
- Makes frequent major errors when demonstrating concepts or processes

Junior High Grading Scale

Percentage Earned	Grade Earned
94-100%	A
90-93.9%	A-
87-89.9%	B+
84-86.9%	B
80-83.9%	B-
77-79.9%	C+
73-76.9%	C
69-72.9%	C-
66-68.9%	D+
63-65.9%	D
60-62.9%	D-
0-59.9%	F
Incomplete	I
Pass	P

Citizenship Grading Scale

All K-9 students may earn a citizenship grade based on the grading scale shown below. All students will begin each term with 100 citizenship points. Teachers will add points for appropriate behavior and deduct points for inappropriate behavior such as classroom disruption and dress code violations. Teachers will provide students and parents with specifics regarding citizenship grading.

SU - Superior = 100 - 90

- E** - Excellent = 85 – 89.9
- S** - Satisfactory = 80 – 84.9
- N** - Needs Improvement = 70 – 79.9
- U** - Unsatisfactory = 0 – 69.9

Homework

Reading at Home

Research is clear that students who participate in reading every day at home are more likely to succeed in school. A student’s chance at academic success also increases when parents or other adults engage with their children during reading through asking questions, sharing knowledge and helping students make real- world connections to their reading. **All students are encouraged to read 20 minutes each day.** Teachers may require students to complete a reading log or reading summary as part of their classroom grade.

Homework Guidelines

Homework is any activity or assignment directed by the teacher to be performed outside the classroom that may include practicing skills learned in class, reading, studying, projects, or completion of assignments. Homework must be constructed such that it can be completed within a reasonable time allotment with minimal adult help. Additionally, homework must be connected to class instruction and most importantly; homework must be purposeful and relevant.

Homework may be given Monday through Thursday. Weekends and holidays are primarily reserved for family time. Homework should be designed to be completed within the timeframes shown below. Please contact your child’s teacher if you have questions or concerns regarding your student’s homework.

Ascent Academies of Utah Homework Guidelines				
Grade	Minutes		Grade	Minutes
K	15		5th	45
1st	20		6th	45
2nd	30		7th	60
3rd	30		8th	60
4th	45		9th	75

Lockers

Lockers are available to students in grades 1 – 9 or 2-9. Lockers are school property and should be treated with respect. They are made available for student use to store

school supplies and personal items necessary for use at school and may be used with the following conditions:

- No food should be left in a locker overnight.
- Stickers are not allowed on the inside or outside of the locker.
- Students should keep their lockers locked at all times (not all grade levels will be required to lock their locker).
- Students are not allowed to share a locker unless assigned by Administration.
- Students are responsible for locker damage and condition.
- Students may not write in or on lockers or decorate with anything that is difficult to remove (no adhesives may be used).
- Students must keep their lockers clean.
- Students must use the locker and lock assigned to them and should not share their combination with friends.
- Any unauthorized locks may be removed by school personnel without notice and destroyed.
- Violation of locker usage will result in discipline.

Medication

Teachers are not allowed to administer any medication, including aspirin to a student. Medication can be administered from the front office under the following conditions:

1. The student's parent or guardian must complete the parent/guardian section of the Student Medication Form requesting that medication be administered to the student during regular school hours. Parents are responsible for updating the Student Medication Form as necessary. The applicable form is available at the office.
2. The student's health care provider must complete the Health Care Provider section of the Student Medication Form indicating the child's name, the name of the medication, the purpose of the medication, the means of administration, the dosage, the time schedule for administration, the anticipated number of days the medication needs to be given at school, and possible side effects. The practitioner must also affirm that giving the medication during school hours is medically necessary.
3. Prescription medication must be brought to the front office in its original pharmacy container. The pharmacist will put medications in two bottles upon request. It is the parents' responsibility to keep medication in adequate supply.

For the safety of all, medications will not be sent home with children. Parents must pick up medication from the office.

If your child must take short-term medication (prescribed or over-the-counter) for any reason, please make arrangements to administer the doses yourself.

EpiPens or Asthma Medication

Students with EpiPens or rescue asthma medications are allowed to keep the medication with them, easily accessible providing the appropriate forms have been completed. Forms may be obtained from the front office.

Parties & Holidays

Parties and Classroom Celebrations

Birthdays - If a classroom teacher chooses to celebrate student birthdays, the celebration will take place in the classroom in a manner that honors the student while respecting their personal and religious values. Students and parents may not bring food or treats to share with the class.

Teacher and staff birthdays may be celebrated by the school.

Holidays - Holidays, if chosen to be observed, will be celebrated in ways that will enhance the meaning and the understanding of the holiday for the students. Three class “parties” may be planned each year by teachers, in conjunction with parent volunteers, and must be planned with respect to students who may have personal or religious beliefs that restrict them from participating. Because of health and safety reasons AAU’s Wellness Policy must be followed in order to have consumable treats and food items accessible to students.

Search & Seizure

School officials have the authority to search a student’s person or personal property while located on school property or at a school sponsored activity, when they have reason to believe that the search will turn up evidence that the student has violated or is violating a particular law or school rule. School administrators may do random locker checks.

School Safety

Evacuation & Closure for Emergency or Weather procedures are campus-specific and can be provided by specific Campus Directors.

Students will have outdoor recess unless the weather is severe or the "feels-like" temperature drops below 20 degrees.

Testing

All AAU students will participate in state-mandated testing as well as in other school wide testing. Teachers and administrators will use data from all assessments to determine a student's individual instructional needs and to plan for instruction. Contact your specific campus for dates of testing.

Visitors & Volunteers

Parents, volunteers and visitors are a regular part of AAU and are welcome to visit provided the visits are not a disruption in the school or in the classroom. For the protection and safety of students all persons entering the building must check in at the school office and wear identification badge while at the school. Visitors and Volunteers should be prepared to present ID. Trespassers are subject to legal action.

All AAU families are encouraged to volunteer 30 hours each year. There are volunteer opportunities that fit all schedules and circumstances.

Library

The primary mission of the Ascent Academies of Utah library system is to provide library facilities and services to the students and staff (patrons) of Ascent Academies of Utah that support our educational goals. To continue to provide materials to all students and staff, patrons are responsible for materials checked out on their library account. Patrons are expected to return the items in a timely manner and in the same condition as borrowed so others have access to the library materials. Items damaged beyond repair or lost may result in a fine being assessed to the patron's library account, and the item will remain on the account until the fine is settled. Fee waiver eligibility does not cover lost or damaged library materials. Patrons shall not attempt to repair a book, please.

Patrons may not check out materials beyond the maximum number allowed by the campus librarian. All materials need to be returned at the end of the school year or before leaving Ascent.

The AAU Family Handbook may be updated periodically throughout the year based on the needs of each specific campus.