

PARENT/GUARDIAN HANDBOOK



**Concordia Learning Center at
St. Joseph's School for the Blind**

**761 Summit Avenue
Jersey City, New Jersey 07307**

**(201) 876-5432
(201) 876-5430 (FAX)**

*For updates about school events and other information,
Please visit our website*

www.clcnj.org

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WELCOME FROM THE PRINCIPAL

September 2013

Dear Parents/Guardians,

I am pleased to welcome you to the 2013-14 school year at the Concordia Learning Center at St. Joseph's School for the Blind. Our staff will work tirelessly to help your child grow academically and emotionally.

This handbook will be your guide throughout the 2013-14 school year. Please take the time to read it thoroughly to become familiar with the CLC and the services that we offer. It is always an exciting time as we begin a new school year. I know that I am looking forward to working with your children to help them as they reach their greatest potential. As you know the partnership between parents and educators is critical to help children succeed at school. With this in mind I encourage you to reach out to our staff at anytime with your thoughts or concerns regarding your child's school experience. We are always happy to hear from you!

Joseph Schwartz, Principal

MISSION STATEMENT

Concordia Learning Center at St. Joseph's School for the Blind is committed to the educational, psychological, social, and physical development of persons with special needs in an environment of caring, acceptance, and respect for each individual's rights and dignity.

HOW IT ALL BEGAN...

Past, Present, and Future

Concordia Learning Center at St. Joseph's School for the Blind was founded by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace in 1891. During the early years St. Joseph's provided both a traditional and an enriched extra-curricular program, usually residential, to an average and above average academic population of students who were blind. In 1960, following the integration of many of these children into public schools, St. Joseph's began to focus more on students who were not only blind or partially sighted but who also had severe additional disabilities and were in need of quality and comprehensive services.

To enhance and supplement our school based services Concordia Learning Center now provides academic and life skills services to people with special needs from birth into adulthood. Concordia's Early Intervention Program serves visually impaired children from birth to age 3 in their own homes and the Realizing Adult Potential (RAP) offers a self-directed day program for adults with developmental disabilities focused on promoting independence and productivity. With a wealth of over 120 years experience in serving people with special needs, Concordia Learning Center remains dedicated to the helping each person as they are "Learning To Be All They Can Be".

CONCORDIA LEARNING CENTER AT ST. JOSEPH'S SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND, founded and supported by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace, is a private non-profit organization licensed by the NJ Department of Health, approved by the NJ Department of Education, the Department of Human Services Division of Developmental Disabilities.



SCHOOL PROGRAM

Through our 5 day a week education program, with an extended summer school year option of 30 days, we provide students, ages 3-21, with the pragmatic skills of personal independence and academics needed to live and work in the community and to make the very best of their unique abilities. This is an exciting, creative, high quality special education program, specifically designed to respond to the individual and unique needs of each and every student we serve.

The academic program is based on the New Jersey Common Core State Standards and is taught by New Jersey Certified Special Education teachers. Occupational, Physical, Speech/Language, Braille, Music and Orientation/Mobility specialists enrich each student's academic program with training in mobility, technology, motor, language, prevocational and life skills essential to success in the world.

The school's Sharon and James D. Held Enrichment Center plays a key role in introducing students to the benefits of technology. Concordia House offers students a realistic home environment to practice life skills. The therapeutic pool, ADA outdoor playground and sensory gym promote each student's sensory and motor abilities and offers unique recreational opportunities.

The **Concordia House Residential Program** is a five day/four evening per week program option for students. This program provides an opportunity for students to learn and practice the skills needed for independent living to the maximum extent of their abilities. For additional information please contact the school social workers.

SCHOOL PERSONNEL

Our team of dedicated and experienced multi-cultural special educators work with each child and their family to assess, custom develop and implement their Individual Education Plan (IEP). The team includes:

Teachers of Students with Blindness or Visual Impairments
Teacher of Students with Disabilities
Orientation and Mobility Specialists
Technology Specialist
Music Teacher
Art
Braille Literacy Teacher
Social Workers
School Nurse
Speech/Language, Occupational and Physical Therapists
Teacher Aides
Residential Staff
School Administrators

Our goal is to ensure our students receive the best possible education in the least restrictive environment with the overall aim **"LEARNING TO BE ALL WE CAN BE"**.

RELATED SERVICES

Braille Instruction – Students who are blind or visually impaired will be provided with Braille instruction to promote literacy and independence. Braille instruction will be individualized to best meet the needs of a particular student.

Health and Medical Services - A school nurse is available to provide medical, first-aid, and emergency care to students. Student growth and development is monitored with appropriate screening or referral when necessary. Please see medical section for more information.

Music Program— The music program addresses the cognitive, physical, emotional and social needs of our students. Individual and group instrumental and voice instruction may be provided depending upon student interest and ability. Classroom sessions promote music appreciation as well as assist students enhance memory, communication, express feelings and manage stress.

Occupational Therapy – OT services are provided to promote student’s ability to perform tasks in their daily living and school environments. Occupational therapists may address sensory motor challenges, functional limitations, and/or perceptual problems.

Orientation and Mobility – O&M instructors teach students with visual impairments how to move safely and as independently as possible in their school, home, and community and to increase awareness and understanding of their environment.

Physical Therapy – PTs provide services related to a student’s functional use of his/her body for mobility, postural alignment, and maintaining/ improving endurance. The purpose is to promote a student’s independent functioning and to decrease the effects of the physical disabling condition on the student’s ability to participate in the educational process.

Speech Language Therapy - Speech/Language services assist students to learn effective ways to communicate verbally as well as with augmentative and alternative communication systems. In addition, they work with students in the areas of oral-motor development, social language, concentration, memory and information processing.

Social Services/Counseling & Advocacy - The school social workers collaborate with the student and family to ensure that they are receiving all appropriate services available to them from both external and internal resources. The social workers offer an array of services to the families and students including: counseling, advocacy, information and training. In addition, the social workers are the liaison between the School and a student’s local school district.

Transition – Infused throughout each student’s day is training in life and prevocational skills. This instruction includes training in leisure skills, social skills, self determination, consumer and homemaking skills, and job skill training. This training, as well as proactive planning, are fundamental to a student achieving successful transitions to least restrictive environments and adult living.

STUDENT BEHAVIORAL EXPECTATIONS

Code of Conduct

Concordia Learning Center's mission is to provide services to people in an atmosphere of caring and respect for each student's rights and dignity. The goal for all students is that they learn and utilize behaviors that will encourage their independence and success in their school community and home environment.

Basic School Code of Conduct:

- Students must be respectful of other students and staff.
- Students must follow the rules of the School.
- Students are expected to attend school on a regular basis.
- Students will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including suspension, if they intentionally cause physical or verbal harm to another student or staff member while on the bus or at school.

Concordia Learning Center at St. Joseph's School for the Blind believes that the best discipline is self-imposed, and that it is the responsibility of staff to use disciplinary situations as opportunities to help students learn to assume and accept responsibility for their behavior and the consequences of their behavior. Staff members who interact with students shall apply best practices designed to prevent discipline problems and encourage students' abilities to grow in self discipline. Board policy requires all students in the School to adhere to the rules and regulations established by the School and to submit to such disciplinary measures as are appropriately assigned for infraction of these rules.

The Principal or his/her designee shall provide to students and their parents/guardians the rules of the School regarding student conduct, and the policy shall appear in all publications of the school's comprehensive rules, procedures and standards of conduct. The policy, "Prohibiting Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying on School Property, at School Sponsored Functions and on School Buses" can be found on Concordia's website: www.clcnj.org in a link on the Education Program page.



ATTENDANCE

Attendance records are kept on all students. If your child will not be in school, please call the school nurse (Ext. 118) to report the absence before the start of the school day. Your call is very important to us as it provides information necessary for our health reports and confirms that your child is safe at home. Any absences of five consecutive days or more is reported to your sending school district in accordance with the mandated tuition contract.

ABSENCES

Regular attendance is important for your child. It helps him/her be successful in school. If your child is absent for three consecutive days or more related to an illness, injury, or hospitalization, or if your child required emergency care at school, **a physician's clearance note** is required before the student is allowed back to school. This will be strictly enforced unless an exception to this requirement is made by the school nurse or school administrator. If your child is sent to school without this documentation, you will be expected to pick up your child from Concordia Learning Center. If you cannot do so yourself, then arrangements must be made by you to pick up your child. Please call the nurse in the morning on the first day of the absence to report the reason. If your child is absent for three consecutive days or more and is not ill, **please send in a written excuse** that explains the reason for absence.

ILLNESS DURING SCHOOL HOURS

For the welfare of all our students and staff, do not send your child to school under the following conditions:

- vomiting or diarrhea (more than two times within 24 hours)
- temperature greater than 100.0 degrees Fahrenheit
- severe coughing or sore throat
- undiagnosed rash or skin infections
- obvious illness or injury as evidenced by pain
- red eyes with discharge

If your child is sent to the school nurse due to any of the above illnesses or other medical reasons during the course of the school day and the nurse determines that he/she should be sent home, you will be immediately contacted. You are expected to pick up your child from school or make necessary arrangements to do so.

LATE ARRIVAL AT SCHOOL/EARLY PICK-UP

Please make every attempt to make medical appointments outside of school time. If this is not possible and your child will be arriving late to school due to a previously scheduled appointment, please call the school with this information.

Please notify the social worker if you will be picking up your child early for any reason. This should be done by 11:30 am on that day. It is the parents/guardian's responsibility to notify the bus company of cancellation or alternative scheduling.

SAFETY

SCHOOL SAFETY ZONES

For the safety of all children coming to and from school, the school has established marked areas that **MUST** be free from vehicular traffic. It is imperative that drivers of automobiles observe these safety zones and under no circumstances use these zones for parking or for the drop off or pick up of students.

VISITORS

The safety and security of children is of utmost importance. Please understand that we have procedures in place to ensure this:

- ❖ Check in to the main office at all times and we will either call the classroom or give you a badge for passage through our hallways.
- ❖ Supply us with court documents if you are the only one who is to pick your child up.
- ❖ At times we may ask for identification if we're not sure of whom you are.
- ❖ Call us if there's any doubt or questions about our procedures.
- ❖ Enter and Exit from the main office area only! All non-staff must sign in and out.

FIRE, LOCK-DOWN, AND EMERGENCY EVACUATIONS

We have taken every reasonable precaution to ensure the safety of our students. Fire, tornado, and disaster procedures are established for the safety of the students and regular drills are held.

Other safety measures taken include locking exterior doors 10 minutes after the beginning of the school day. Also, all visitors and volunteers must report to the office and wear ID badges while in the building.

Please rest assured that the safety of your child is of our utmost concern. Our policies/procedures are available for your review.



BUS TRANSPORTATION

Transportation is provided by your child's home school district. If there is a problem with transportation services, please contact the bus company and/or your local Board of Education. If your child is involved in an accident or incident on the bus, it is the responsibility of the bus company to report to parents/guardians. Following an accident or incident with the bus, feel free to ask that an incident report or information obtained from a report be provided to you. If for any reason your child is required to leave school early, it is your responsibility to contact the bus company directly to make all arrangements.

FOOD AND NUTRITION

A nutritious and well balanced lunch is provided in our school dining room. The school lunch program is responsive to the various nutritional and/or medical needs of our students. If needed, alternate lunches can be provided for dietary or religious reasons. Please submit documentation by the students' physician for food allergies. Students are supervised and assisted by school staff during lunch. This lunch program gives students the opportunity to develop appropriate social skills as well as an opportunity to learn to be as independent as possible in some of the basic activities of daily living.

Concordia Learning Center at St. Joseph's School for the Blind Nutrition Policy*

Concordia Learning Center at St. Joseph's School for the Blind recognizes that child and adolescent obesity has reached epidemic levels in the United States and that poor diet combined with the lack of physical activity negatively impacts on students' health, and their ability and motivation to learn. Concordia Learning Center at St. Joseph's School for the Blind is committed to:

- Providing students with healthy and nutritious foods;
- Encouraging the consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables, low fat milk and non-fat milk and whole grains;
- Supporting healthy eating through nutrition education;
- Encouraging students to select and consume all components of the school meal; and
- Providing students with the opportunity to engage in daily physical activity.

All reimbursable meals shall meet federal nutrient standards as required by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Child Nutrition Program regulations.

The following items may not be served, sold or given out as free promotion anywhere on school property at anytime before the end of the school day:

- Foods of minimal nutritional value (FMNV) as defined by U.S. Department of Agriculture regulations;
- All food and beverage items listing sugar, in any form, as the first ingredient; and
- All forms of candy.

Schools shall reduce the purchase of any products containing trans fats. (Federal labeling of trans fats on all food products has been required since January 1, 2006.)

All snack and beverage items sold or served anywhere on school property during the school day, including items sold in a la carte lines, school stores and fundraisers shall meet the following standards:

1. Based on manufacturers nutritional data or nutrient facts labels:
 - No more than eight grams of total fat per serving, with the exception of nuts and seeds
 - No more than two grams of saturated fat per serving

2. All beverages shall not exceed 12 ounces, with the following exceptions:
 - Water
 - Milk containing one percent or is non-fat
3. Whole milk should not exceed eight ounces.

In elementary schools:

- 100 percent of all beverages offered shall be milk, water or 100 percent fruit or vegetable juices

In middle and high schools:

- At least 60 percent of all beverages offered, other than milk and water, shall be 100 percent fruit or vegetable juices
- No more than 40 percent of all ice cream/frozen desserts shall be allowed to exceed the above standards for sugar, fat, and saturated fat

Food and beverages served during special school celebrations or during curriculum related activities shall be exempt from this policy, with the exception of foods of minimal nutritional value as defined by USDA regulations.

This policy does not apply to: medically authorized special needs diets pursuant to 7 CFR Part 210; school nurses using FMNVs during the course of providing health care to individual students or special needs students whose Individualized Education Plan (IEP) indicates their use for behavior modification. See "Food and Nutrition Information for School" Form.

Adequate time shall be allowed for student meal service and consumption. Concordia Learning Center at St. Joseph's School for the Blind shall provide a pleasant dining environment.

Concordia Learning Center at St. Joseph's School for the Blind's curriculum shall incorporate nutrition education and physical activity consistent with the New Jersey Department of Education Common Core State Standards.

Concordia Learning Center at St. Joseph's School for the Blind is committed to promoting the Nutrition Policy with all food service personnel, teachers, nurses, coaches and other school administrative staff so they have the skills they need to implement this policy and promote healthy eating practices. The school will work toward expanding awareness about this policy among students, parents, teachers, and the community at large.

- ***Based Entirely on the New Jersey School Nutrition/Wellness Policy - 4/09***

BIRTHDAY TREATS

During the course of the school year, students will often celebrate their birthday by bringing a treat. Treats are not a requirement. If you wish to bring in a treat, please contact the child's Social Worker. Healthy treats are encouraged.

IMPORTANT NOTE

If your child is bringing food from home, please respect the school's nutrition policy and dietary restrictions. Concordia Learning Center is a peanut-free environment. Please keep this in mind when food is brought from home or birthday treats are provided for the classroom.



HEALTH AND MEDICAL SERVICES

A school nurse is available to provide medical, first-aid, and emergency care to students. Student growth and development is monitored with appropriate screening or referral when necessary. If your child requires the administration of medication during the school day, please contact the school nurse to complete all necessary paper work. If a medical emergency arises, you or an individual you designate will be contacted. Be sure that changes in your telephone number or address are updated in our files. Feel **free to discuss any concerns with the school nurse about how your child's medical condition is handled or monitored in the school. The school nurse can be reached at (201) 876-5432 ext. 118.**

EMERGENCY CARDS

Emergency cards are completed during the registration process. They give information about how to contact a parent/guardian in case of an emergency, as well as designated people who can be called in the event that parents cannot be reached. Parents/Guardians should be sure that the designated people are willing to pick up the child at school if it is necessary. Parents/Guardians are also responsible for updating information on the Emergency Card if any of the information should change. Only those individuals listed on the Emergency Card as authorized may pick up a child from the school. The appropriate legal documentation regarding people prohibited from having contact with a child must be kept on file in the office.

SCHOOL PROCEDURES

SCHOOL CLOSINGS

October 14 – Columbus Day (No School)
November 27 – **1:30 pm dismissal**
November 28-29 – Thanksgiving Holiday (No School)
December 20 - **1:30 pm dismissal**
December 23-31 - Winter Recess (No School)
January 1 – New Year’s Day (No School)
January 20 – Martin Luther King Jr. Day (No School)
February 17 - 21 – President’s Week (No School)
March 7 – Professional Day (No School)
April 18-25 – Spring Recess (No School)
May 26 – Memorial Day (No School)

Save the Date – October 16 – Back-To-School Night

MORNING DROP-OFF PROCEDURE

If your child misses the school bus, or for any other reason a family member provides transportation to school, it is expected that your child will arrive at the school between 8:45 am and 9:00 am. Please do not drop students off prior to 8:45 am as there will be no staff to monitor students. Entry after 9:00 am must be approved by the Principal or designee.

EMERGENCY SCHOOL CLOSING PROCEDURES

School Closings, Delays, and Early Dismissals

Emergencies due to weather, power outages, and other unforeseen circumstances may cause the cancellation, delay, or early dismissal of school. The School phone system will typically announce all closings, delays or early dismissals. The following radio and TV stations will be notified of all emergency schedule changes. When the weather is bad, it is always a good idea to listen to one of these stations: WCBS-880 AM or NJ News 12 or to check out the website at NJ News 12.

IMPORTANT NOTE

IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT WE HAVE THE CORRECT PHONE NUMBER, ADDRESS AND EMERGENCY CONTACT FOR YOUR CHILD.

PLEASE ALERT US BEFORE YOU MOVE and CHANGE ADDRESS

LET US KNOW IMMEDIATELY WHEN A PHONE NUMBER IS CHANGED OR DISCONNECTED.

SCHOOL VISITATION PROCEDURES

Visitors are welcome at Concordia Learning Center. However, state law requires that all visitors report to the office before visiting any classroom so that the educational program for your children can run smoothly and without interruption. If you wish to visit a classroom, please make arrangements with your school social worker. Safety and security is easier to monitor when the office can quickly identify any visitors in the building. We have a sign in clipboard in the



office where you may also pick up a Visitor Badge. Scheduling visits by all volunteers and visitors will limit the random interruptions during your child's instructional time.

We cautiously guard the confidentiality of each family and sincerely ask all who work in our schools to abide with privacy regulations.

As teaching time is limited valuable time, and the teacher's attention must be on the students at all times, we ask that you not visit with the teacher during a time when the class is in session. Teachers are available by phone from the hours of 8:00 am – 8:30 am, 11:15 am – 12:15 pm, and after 2:50 pm.

- ❖ During a classroom visit, the visiting parent/guardian should check with the teacher to determine the appropriate procedure as a visitor to minimize disruption and maintain confidentiality.
- ❖ The parent/guardian shall not photograph, tape record, video tape, or otherwise make an audio or visual recording of the classroom, the students, or the staff.
- ❖ Classroom visits are limited to two hours each.



FIELD TRIPS

Many wonderful field trip experiences are provided for students. These field trips are educational experiences that enhance our curriculum. A note of permission signed by a parent/guardian is required for each field trip participant. When field trip permission slips come home from your child's teacher, please return them on or before the date requested. Our staff spends considerable time planning for these meaningful trips. If a signed permission slip for a field trip is not returned for your child, he/she will be at risk for not being allowed on the trip.

SUPPLIES

Parents/Guardians are responsible for supplying the following items:

To participate in therapeutic and recreational swimming activities, students need:

- Two bath towels
- Two bathing suits
- Pool foot wear
- Eye wear (optional)
- Bathing cap

If a student is not toilet trained or involved in toilet training:

- Disposable diapers/ pull-ups
- Underwear if student is on a toileting program at school
- Cleansing wipes
- Change of clothes

COMMUNICATION LOG

The purpose of your child's **Communication Log** is to provide relevant educational information between home and school, not personal or medical information. We encourage parents/guardians to check the log daily.

NON-CUSTODIAL PARENTS

According to New Jersey State Statute, non-custodial parents of any student may be provided all report cards, notices of school activities, disciplinary reports, conference appointments and summaries, or other student records which are provided to the custodial parents, unless otherwise expressly curtailed or restricted by a provision of a court order provided to the principal. Please call the school office to make arrangements if necessary.

STUDENT VALUABLES

PLEASE DO NOT SEND YOUR CHILD WITH VALUABLES TO SCHOOL (e.g.: JEWELRY, IPOD, ELECTRONIC GAMES, ETC...). WE WILL NOT BE RESPONSIBLE FOR LOST, MISPLACED, OR STOLEN VALUABLES.

SCHOOL COMMUNICATION

Any questions? Need some help? Please call us at school.

We're here to offer assistance in whatever way we can. Clear and timely communication between home and school, and parent/guardian involvement all contribute to the total educational experience of the student.

SCHOOL DIRECTORY

Main Office (201) 876-5432

Administration

Judy Ortman, Executive Director Ext. 112
Joseph Schwartz, Principal Ext. 102

Education Office Staff

June Martinez Ext. 103
Yardeline Davenport Ext. 104

Social Workers

Monique Herrera Ext. 119
Maria Malapoe-Streko Ext. 120

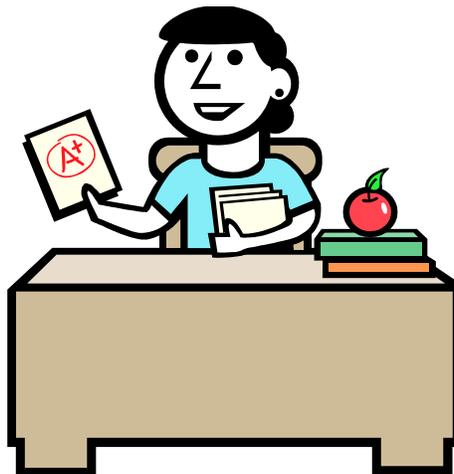
School Nurse

Theresa Hall, R.N. Ext. 118

Concordia Residential Center

Maureen Weining, Director Ext. 170

Teachers, Specialists and Aides are available through the Main Office. They will return calls as soon as possible.



SCHOOL CALENDAR

**CONCORDIA LEARNING CENTER AT ST. JOSEPH'S SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND
761 SUMMIT AVENUE, JERSEY CITY, NEW JERSEY 07307
201-876-5432**

CALENDAR 2013 – 2014

**STAFF ORIENTATION - TUESDAY - SEPTEMBER 3, 2013
HOURS**

**8:45 A.M. - 2:45 P.M. SEPTEMBER - JUNE
8:30 A.M. - 2:00 P.M. JULY - AUGUST**

JULY/AUGUST 30 DAYS (Extended School Year)

July 1 MONDAY CLASSES BEGIN FOR STUDENTS
July 4 THURSDAY INDEPENDENCE DAY / NO SCHOOL
August 12 MONDAY STUDENTS LAST DAY

SEPTEMBER 19 DAYS

4 WEDNESDAY CLASSES BEGIN FOR STUDENTS

OCTOBER 22 DAYS

14 MONDAY COLUMBUS DAY / NO SCHOOL
16 WEDNESDAY BACK TO SCHOOL NIGHT

NOVEMBER 19 DAYS

27 WEDNESDAY 1:30 DISMISSAL FOR STUDENTS
28-29 THURS-FRI THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY / NO SCHOOL

DECEMBER 15 DAYS

20 FRIDAY 1:30 DISMISSAL FOR STUDENTS
23-31 MON-TUE WINTER RECESS / NO SCHOOL

JANUARY 21 DAYS

1 WEDNESDAY NEW YEAR'S DAY / NO SCHOOL
2 THURSDAY SCHOOL RESUMES
20 MONDAY MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY / NO SCHOOL

FEBRUARY 15 DAYS

17-21 MON-FRI PRESIDENT'S WEEK / NO SCHOOL
24 MONDAY SCHOOL RESUMES

MARCH 20 DAYS

7 FRIDAY PROFESSIONAL DAY / NO SCHOOL

APRIL 16 DAYS

18-25 FRI-FRI SPRING RECESS / NO SCHOOL
28 MONDAY SCHOOL RESUMES

MAY 21 DAYS

26 MONDAY MEMORIAL DAY / NO SCHOOL

JUNE 12/13/14 DAYS

17/18/19 TUES/WED/THUR STUDENTS LAST DAY

180-182 DAYS/210-212 DAYS WITH EXTENDED SCHOOL YEAR - TWO DAYS HAVE BEEN ADDED TO THE CALENDAR AS POTENTIAL INCLEMENT WEATHER DAYS. ADDITIONAL WEATHER DAYS WILL BE ASSIGNED IF NEEDED.