

# Handbook Change Summary 2026-27

The updated 2026-27 handbook incorporates the latest recommendations from the IPA Model Student Handbook to ensure alignment with current standards. Most of these revisions consist of minor grammatical corrections and updated cross-references to external resources, such as PRESS policies, without changing the underlying substance of our district rules.

To ensure our policies reflect the needs of our community, these updates also integrate feedback gathered through meetings with our parent-teacher advisory groups and discussions with the administrative leadership team.

Here are notable changes/updates:

<b>Section 2.20 Student Absences</b>	
<p>The District maintains a specific threshold for documenting chronic health issues. <b>We mark absences as "Verified" only after a student reaches their 10th total absence, regardless of whether the first nine days were excused or unexcused.</b> The State of Illinois does not recognize the attendance code, "Verified". Thus, effective SY 2026-27 the verified attendance code is no longer valid. However, we will use the verification code internally after a student has been absent for 10 days to determine whether the student should be reported to the regional office of education for truancy concerns under the law.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Physician Requirement:</b> Once a student has been absent for <b>three consecutive days</b> or has accumulated <b>nine total days</b> of absences without a physician's verification, a medical statement <b>must</b> be provided for every absence thereafter (except students are allowed up to 5 absences for mental or behavioral health without a physician's note).</li> <li>• <b>Consequence:</b> Without a physician's statement after this threshold, the absence will be marked unexcused. These "Verified" records are essential, as a judge may consider verified medical/legal absences during truancy proceedings.</li> </ul>	<p><i>We have completely reorganized this section to improve its flow and readability. While our core policies remain unchanged, we have clarified the "Verified Absence" attendance code to prevent confusion.</i></p> <p><i>Anecdotal evidence suggests a common misconception among District families: that "verified" absences are not counted against a student's attendance record. This is incorrect; these absences do count and may be a factor in our high chronic absenteeism rates.</i></p> <p><i>We plan to discuss these updates further with parents during the Fall 2026 Open House.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Emergency Only" contacts cannot sign-out students without express parent/guardian permission.</li> </ul>	<p><i>We added this statement as clarification that only parents/guardians have the right to remove a student from attendance during the school day, regardless of any permission to pick up, such as "Emergency Only" contacts.</i></p>

### 2.121 Assistance with FAFSA Application (High School Only)

The following individual(s) has/have been designated by the school to assist senior students with questions related to the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (known as FAFSA) or to refer senior students to other appropriate resources.

The school offers a variety of services aimed at helping senior students complete FAFSA paperwork, including the opportunity to receive help during the school day in completing the student's portion of the FAFSA application.

**FAFSA Contact Person:**

Amanda Kyle, School Counselor  
618-286-3812 ext 2132  
akyle@dupo196.org

*Because the FAFSA application is a graduation requirement, by law, we must now list a contact person in the student handbook.*

### 6.40 Prevention Of And Response To Bullying, Intimidation, And Harassment

...and (3) the posting or distribution of an unauthorized digital replica by electronic means if the posting or distribution creates any of the effects enumerated in the definition of bullying.

*PRESS policy clarified that AI-generated images can be considered bullying.*

### 6.45 Harassment & Teen Dating Violence Prohibited

(see handbook)

*This passage was re-worded to comply with updated Federal language. No notable changes.*

### 7.50 Use of Artificial Intelligence

...You can find more details by checking the District AI Policy.

*This clarification was added as reference to our upcoming District AI Policy which expands and clarifies the statement printed in student handbooks.*

## 11.20 Student Records

4. Disclosure is also permitted without consent to: any person for research, statistical reporting or planning, provided that no student or parent/guardian can be identified; any person named in a court order; appropriate persons if the knowledge of such information is necessary to protect the health or safety of the student or other persons; **to the III. Department of Human Services (DHS) for the sole purpose of assessing or evaluating the student's eligibility for Medicaid waiver benefits consistent with the rules adopted by the DHS;** and juvenile authorities when necessary for the discharge of their official duties who request information before adjudication of the student.

*By law, the District may disclose student records without consent to DHS for Medicaid eligibility per DHS rules.*

*(In general practice, this is a rare circumstance and not likely to come up.)*

1. **The right to prohibit the release of directory information.**

Throughout the school year, the District may release directory information regarding students, limited to:

- a. Name
- b. Address
- c. Grade level
- d. Birth date ~~and place~~
- e. Parent/guardian names, addresses, electronic mail addresses, and telephone numbers
- f. Photographs, videos, or digital images used for informational or news-related purposes (whether by a media outlet or by the school) of a student participating in school or school-sponsored activities, organizations, and athletics that have appeared in school publications, such as yearbooks, newspapers, or sporting or fine arts programs
- g. Academic awards, degrees, and honors
- h. Information in relation to school-sponsored activities, organizations, and athletics
- i. Major field of study
- j. Period of attendance in school

Any parent/guardian or eligible student may prohibit the release of any or all of the above information by delivering a written objection to the building principal within 30 days of the date of this notice.

*Birth Place is no longer considered Directory Information and cannot be released without explicit parental consent.*

*(In general practice, the District does not release directory information with personally identifiable information (PII) except to trusted/contracted partners.)*