

**Pittsburgh Colfax K-8**  
**Parent Handbook**  
**and Glossary of Terms**  
**2014-2015**

**Produced in Collaboration between**  
**Colfax PTO and**  
**Colfax Administration**

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## **Welcome to Pittsburgh Colfax and the updated Parent Handbook!**

Colfax parents and members of the Colfax administration developed this handbook to help families navigate all of the opportunities offered at Colfax. Contributors to the handbook include: Abbie Campsie, Chuck Cranor, Shannon Ewing, Jenny Ganger, Anne Kurzweg, Jessica Neiss, Jessie Ramey, Marcie Ritter, Sara Segel, Adam Sikorski, Jamie Kinzel-Nath, Cara McKenna, Sarah Sirlin, and Sukanya Srinivasan.

This handbook is a work in progress and information within will certainly change. Revisions will be posted on the Colfax PTO website, [www.colfaxpto.org](http://www.colfaxpto.org). Please send your feedback, corrections, and updates to Sara Segel, [segel@verizon.net](mailto:segel@verizon.net).

If you still have questions after reviewing this handbook, we suggest three paths to take:

1. Contact your child's homeroom teacher.
2. Ask the main office staff.
3. Seek out other parents. The best way to meet experienced parents is to attend PTO meetings. You can also approach any PTO officer, listed on the PTO's website, [www.colfaxpto.org](http://www.colfaxpto.org). Even if the matter is not PTO related, officers will try to help or steer you in the right direction.

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## I. BASIC SCHOOL INFORMATION

### School hours and calendar:

- The Pittsburgh Public School calendar can be found at the PPS website: [www.pps.k12.pa.k12.pa.us](http://www.pps.k12.pa.k12.pa.us)
- Colfax runs on a six-day schedule (see glossary for explanation of six-day schedule)
- Colfax hours for the 2014-2015 school year are 8:10 am - 2:51 pm
- Periods are:

Arrival:	8:10 am-8:13 am
Homeroom:	8:13 am-8:18 am
Enrichment:	8:18 am-8:48 am
1 <sup>st</sup> Period:	8:48 am-9:33 am
2 <sup>nd</sup> Period:	9:33 am-10:17 am
3 <sup>rd</sup> Period:	10:17 am-11:01am
4 <sup>th</sup> Period:	11:01 am-11:46 am
5 <sup>th</sup> Period:	11:46 am-12:31 pm
6 <sup>th</sup> Period:	12:31 pm-1:16 pm
7 <sup>th</sup> Period:	1:16 pm-2:01 pm
8 <sup>th</sup> Period:	2:01 pm-2:46 pm
Dismissal:	2:46 pm-2:51 pm

**Grade levels:** Colfax is a K-8 school, meaning it runs from Kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Sometimes the grades are referred to as:

- Primary Level: K-2
- Intermediate Level: 3-5
- Middle Level: 6-8

**Homerooms and departmentalized grades:** At Colfax, all students are assigned a homeroom:

- In grades K-2, students remain with their homeroom teacher for all subjects except Related Arts (see "Academics" below).
- In grades 3-8, students are assigned a homeroom teacher but also have topic-specific teachers for core subjects (i.e. communications, math, science, and social studies). The students move between classrooms as they change subjects.

### Dismissal and other information for bus riders:

- Each school bus route is given an assigned color. The numbers on the exterior of the busses do not correspond to the route numbers used by the District's computer system. Using colors to specify the route simplifies the process of finding the correct bus.
- K-5 students are dismissed through the back of the old building (towards the bus lane) and 6-8 students are dismissed through the grey double doors on the playground and proceed to the bus lane. All students are escorted with an adult and are grouped by bus room locations where they are monitored and supervised leaving the school, entering the bus lane, and boarding the busses.
- The school has the ability to discipline any student riding a bus who does not follow the conduct specified by the bus driver and found within the student Code of Conduct. Bus suspensions will be utilized after 3 warnings. Should inappropriate conduct continue, bus termination may result.

**Dismissal for walkers:** Students who walk home or are given a ride by their caregiver are dismissed out the front door on Beechwood Blvd. or the side door on Phillips Ave. **We ask that you please do not double park during drop off or dismissal on Beechwood Blvd.**

**Crossing guards:** Crossing guards provided by the District are stationed at the intersections of Beechwood & Phillips and Shady & Phillips. There is NOT a crossing guard at the intersection of Beechwood and Douglas, so caregivers are asked to be extremely cautious when driving and walking at that intersection.

**Where to park:**

- During drop-off and pick-up times, parking is NOT ALLOWED on Beechwood Blvd in front of the school. Caregivers can stop long enough to safely drop their children off and pick them up from this area, but they may not park here. *Parking on this block during drop-off and pick-up times creates serious safety concerns and traffic back-ups.*
- Between 9:00 am – 2:00 pm visitors to Colfax may park on Beechwood in front of the school.

**Driveway & parking lot:** Visitors to Colfax are not permitted to use the rear parking lot or driveway during school hours. *At no time are cars permitted to drive down the bus lane between the two buildings as this creates serious safety issues.*

**Parent visitation policy:** Pittsburgh Colfax K-8 has an open door policy for all current parents. If you would want a tour of the school, please contact the main office to set up an appointment. Simply report to the main office, let the office staff know which classrooms/grade levels you will be observing, sign in the visitor's book and receive a visitor's badge to wear. You may stay as long as you like (all day if you wish). Remember to sign out in the visitor's book and let the office staff know when you leave the building.

**Absences, tardies, early dismissals:**

- If a child is tardy to school (arriving later than 8:18 am) a parent must report to the main office and receive a tardy slip for the child to bring to his/her homeroom teacher. If a parent knows in advance that their child will be absent from school, the parent must write a note to the homeroom teacher. If the parent is picking his/her child up for an early dismissal, a note explaining the pickup must be delivered to the homeroom teacher during homeroom. The parent can then report to the main office and sign the child out for the dismissal.
- A child may not have more than 3 unexcused absences or 10 total absences throughout the year. Should this occur, the social worker will contact the parent and the parent may be subject to truancy filings with the local magistrate. If the parent is unsure if an absence is an excusable absence, he/she should contact the school's counselors.

**Snow delays and closings:**

- If the weather or road conditions do not allow for safe transportation of students and teachers to/from school, the District will delay by 2 hours or cancel a school day. The District's Facebook page, website, and Twitter will announce the delay/closing and they will deliver a robo-call to students as well (another reason to keep contact information up-to-date with Colfax). The news outlets offer email notifications too.
- On days when school is delayed, the breakfast program and all sporting events will be canceled. Practices will be determined based upon weather improvements; parents will be notified of practice status through phone calls.

**Dress code:**

No student shall wear any apparel or jewelry that by words, signs, pictures or any combination thereof appearing on said clothing or jewelry advocates or promotes sexual activity or violence, or the use of alcohol or drugs or demeans or degrades another because of race, sex, religious persuasion, national origin, handicap or disability. Students are expected to wear appropriate clothing at all times while at school. Clothing must not be of any style, length or fit that is of a provocative nature. Revealing attire that permits the exposure of undergarments or private body parts is prohibited. Students may not wear shorts that are higher than finger length when rested at their sides. Flip-flops are strongly discouraged and students will not be able to participate in gym if they do not have athletic shoes.

**Lost and found:** The main lost and found bin is located across from the school office. However, items lost during lunch and recess are left in a bin located inside the cafeteria. The bins are emptied periodically and the clothing is donated to Goodwill. Parents are asked to check the bins often and ensure that children return home with all of their belongings.

**Colfax school staff:** In addition to homeroom/content level teachers, there are many professionals at Colfax to support students:

- **Administrators:** Mrs. Jamie Kinzel-Nath, Principal; Ms. Cara McKenna, Vice Principal
- **Cafeteria staff:** Ms. Barbara Irwin, Head Cafeteria Manager
- **Custodians:** Mr. Jeff Henderson is the Head Custodian. Ms. Cana "CJ" Johnson is the Night Custodian.
- **English as a Second Language (ESL):** Colfax offers an ESL program and therefore welcomes many international families into its community. The ESL teachers at Colfax are Mrs. Mary King and Ms. Rebakah Laslow.
- **Gifted and Talented:** Mrs. Sarah Ricketts and Mrs. Betsy Juhas are the Gifted and Talented teachers at Colfax. See "Gifted" section below for more information.
- **Instructional Team/Teacher Leader 2 (ITL2):** A teacher who observes and confers with school leadership, delivers targeted professional development for staff, and participates on the Research Based Inclusive System of Evaluation (RISE) school level team. Starting in 2012-2013, the Reading ITL2 is Mrs. Robyn Stefanyak and the Mathematics ITL2 is Mrs. Nicole Murray. ITLs also spend half their time as classroom teachers.
- **Leadership Team:** Comprised of the administrators and school staff who meet weekly to set and accomplish school goals.
- **Nurse:** The school nurse works regular school day hours and is at Colfax 4 days a week (days TBD). The Colfax nurse is Mrs. Rachel Short. Nurse Short works with families to determine medication distribution and other medical and health concerns. If a child needs minor medical attention when the nurse is not in, the office staff will attempt to help and call parents if needed.
- **Office staff:** Ms. Pamela Burford is the Secretary who manages many of the front office duties. Mrs. Kimberly Schmotzer is the Student Data System Specialist. She is responsible for collecting accurate student record information and assisting with student registration, report cards, emergency contact information, and requests for records.
- **Paraprofessionals:** Mrs. Kimberly Williams and Mr. Rudy Nesbit are paraprofessionals. They assist special education teachers in providing services in the school.
- **Social Workers / Counselors:** Counselors work with students to ensure they are receiving appropriate services, manage and track student attendance, serve as liaisons for special education, conduct parent outreach, set high school student schedules, and serve as the primary contacts for student service inquiries. School counselors at Colfax are Ms. Erin Montgomery (grades K-5) and Mrs. Cheryl Rettger (grades 6-8).
- **Special Education:** Mrs. Sue Long and Mrs. Meghan Popp are the Special Education teachers at Colfax. See "Special Education" below.

**Colfax School Staff and Teacher List:** See Attachment

**Pittsburgh Board of Education (BOE) / Pittsburgh Public Schools (PPS) Key Personnel:** A few administrators & board members who are especially connected to Colfax include:

- **Superintendent of Pittsburgh Public Schools:** Dr. Linda Lane
- **Assistant Superintendent for K-8 and Middle Schools:** David May-Stein (formerly principal of Colfax)
- **Special Education Coordinator:** Mary Jane Conley
- **Gifted and Talented Coordinator:** Allison McCarthy and Jennifer Glover
- **Pittsburgh Board of Education:** There are nine members of the Board of Education. One current member who has a special interest in Colfax is Bill Isler, who represents the district in which Colfax is located (District 4), and where many Colfax families reside.

*Consult the board of education's website, [www.pghboe.net](http://www.pghboe.net), and Facebook page, <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Pittsburgh-Public-Schools/294241040320>, for up to date information.*

## II. ACADEMICS

**Common Core State Standards (CCSS):** A set of academic standards agreed on by most of the states in the country, including Pennsylvania. The Keystone exams are aligned to the CCSS. The PSSA exam is also gradually transitioning to the CCSS standard. <http://www.corestandards.org/> These new standards go into effect this year and will impact every academic content.

**Homework:** Homework is usually assigned Monday through Thursday in grades K-8. In the primary grades, students may receive “homework packets” which students may complete at their own pace throughout the week and submit on Fridays. As students advance, they may receive longer-term, project-based homework that might require a few days to a few weeks to complete. In most cases, homework serves as a formal portion of a student’s grade so it is important that children complete and submit their work.

**Related Arts:** All students in grades K-5 receive at least one period per six-day cycle of Library, Music, and Art. All students receive two periods of Physical Education/Health. Grades 3-8 students will sometimes swim during physical education class and will also receive Spanish instruction.

**Enrichment period:** The first 30 minutes of the day (8:18-8:48 am) is called the Enrichment Period. This period is a District-wide initiative to better individualize work for students. During this time, every student is assigned an enrichment class to attend that meets their learning needs and exposes the children to varying academic tasks in math or reading. Struggling students receive extra help (intervention) while other students receive extra enrichment during this time.

### **Gifted and talented:**

- Parents who are interested in gifted services for their child should first discuss this possibility with their child’s teacher and then the school counselor (Ms. Erin Montgomery for K-5 and Mrs. Cheryl Rettger for 6-8).
- Students who are identified as “Gifted” through an evaluation will receive a Gifted Individual Education Plan (GIEP).
- Pittsburgh Colfax has on-site gifted services and two full-time gifted and talented teachers (Mrs. Betsy Juhas and Mrs. Sarah Ricketts) for grades K-5. K-5 gifted students receive both pull-out instruction and push-in instruction from these teachers.
- Students in grades 6-8 attend the Pittsburgh Gifted Center at Greenway one full day per week.

### **Special education:**

- Parents who are interested in special education services for their child should first discuss this possibility with their child’s teacher and then the school counselor (Ms. Erin Montgomery for K-5 and Ms. Cheryl Rettger for 6-8).
- Pittsburgh Colfax has on-site special education services and two full-time special education teachers (Ms. Sue Long and Ms. Meghan Popp).
- Students who are in need of special education services will receive support through an inclusive education model within their regular education classroom and/or pull-out services depending on their Individual Education Plan (IEP).

### **Struggling students:**

- Parents who believe their child is struggling at school should first meet with their child’s teacher to receive supplemental work, diagnose difficulties, and see if the student is a candidate for the after school program or other services.
- The school counselors are available to identify additional services as needed.
- See Section V for information on after-school tutoring.

**Standardized testing:** Each spring, all Pennsylvania public school students in grades 3 and higher are required to take a standardized test (the PSSA). In Pittsburgh, students starting in 1<sup>st</sup> grade are required to take the TerraNova. Students prepare for these tests not only with the standard curriculum, but also with periodic practice tests throughout the school year. During testing weeks in the spring, the atmosphere of the school changes a little bit, as students are kept in their classrooms for longer periods of time, printed matter on the walls is covered, and visits are discouraged. Students work hard for this event all year, and some can experience a little anxiety when test week arrives. On the bright side, students do get a break from homework during testing weeks.

- **DIBELS:** Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills test. This is an assessment given three times a year to K-5 students to assess and evaluate their reading skills within the areas of fluency, phonics, comprehension, vocabulary, and phonemic awareness.
- **PSSA:** The Pennsylvania System of School Assessment standardized test. Students in grades 3-8 take the PSSA test yearly in the spring. The results are used to help determine whether a school makes AYP (Adequately Yearly Progress), as determined by the No Child Left Behind law.
- **Pennsylvania's Alternate System of Assessment (PASA):** an alternate standardized test for students with cognitive disabilities who are unable to take the PSSA or Keystone Exams. <http://www.pasaassessment.org/>
- **TerraNova:** The standardized assessment given to students in grades K-2 to assess their abilities within the core subjects.
- **Keystone Assessments:** This standardized test is given to any student who took Algebra 1 at Colfax. Students must pass this test as a graduation requirement before the twelfth grade. The test is offered multiple times for students who may not pass on the first try. The Keystone Exams are aligned to the national CCSS standards. <http://www.pdesas.org/module/assessment/Keystone.aspx>

#### Curriculum:

- Both Math and Reading are taught in 90-minute uninterrupted blocks for all grades
- **Everyday Math/Envisions Math:** The elementary math curriculum used by the District for students in grades K-5. The Elementary Mathematics Core Curriculum utilizes two mathematics programs: EnVision math, the core program, which offers resources to implement daily reviews, fact practice, visual learning and differentiated activities; and the Everyday Mathematics program for supplementary and routine practice, and enrichment to include open response questions, projects, portfolio pieces, strategy games and real-life inquiry-based applications to lesson concepts. Units are composed of sixteen to twenty enVision Topics per grade level, with each topic including seven to twelve lessons. Sixty to seventy-five percent of the lessons within each Topic are enVision Math lessons taken from enVision Resource materials. The other lessons within each Topic are taken from Everyday Math Resource materials. The blend of lessons is specifically designed to support both conceptual and procedural approaches to learning, as recommended in the 2008 Math Panel Report.
- **Macmillan Treasures:** The elementary reading curriculum used by the District for students in grades K-5.
- **Disciplinary Literacy (DL Model):** 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade students in Reading, Math, Science, and Social Studies follow this model which engages learners with content in ways that mirror what scientists, mathematicians, sociologists, and authors do in order to inquire and gain understanding in their disciplines.
- **First in Math:** A math educational web site created by the company that makes the Challenge 24 game. Colfax students get their own logins and passwords and compete with each other to collect the most virtual "stickers" (and practice their math, in the process).
- **FOSS:** Full Option Science System, the hands-on science curriculum that is used in grades K-5.
- **Spanish:** Grades 3-8 receive Spanish instruction at Colfax. The Spanish program incorporates an immersion strategy, such that 80% of spoken language in the class is in Spanish.

### III. MEALS, SNACKS, OTHER FOOD AND RECESS

**Breakfast:** Free breakfast is available in the cafeteria for all children from 7:45 am – 8:10 am.

**Lunch:** There are 3 designated lunch/recess periods:

- 11:01-11:46: Students in Grades K-2
- 11:46-12:31: Students in Grades 3-5
- 12:31-1:16: Students in Grades 6-8

**How the lunch and recess periods are structured:** To get 700+ students through lunch, there are six seatings in the three lunch periods. Each period is split into two seatings, with the kids not currently eating out on the playground or in the gym for recess. Volunteers are always needed to help on the playground and in the lunchroom, especially for the younger grades.

**Free lunch:** Free lunch is part of the hunger free kids act, which provides nutritious food to kids around the nation regardless of income. Lunch will consist of a protein, along with fruits and veggies, and milk. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Barbara Irwin, the café manager, at 412-422-6708.



**Buying lunch:** Any child can purchase a lunch. Last year, the price was \$1.25 for lunch including milk (current pricing TBD). Note that cafeteria staff will give students lunch and a la carte items on credit and parents will receive a (possibly unexpected) bill at the end of the year.

**Bringing lunch:** It is helpful to send food in containers that children can open themselves; otherwise, they have to wait for an adult to come by and help them and may have trouble finishing their lunch in the very brief time allotted. Note that children are frequently encouraged to throw away their garbage during the lunch period, and many younger children throw away a great deal of uneaten food because they are not sure what to do with it when they don't have time to finish. Sporks are available to all in the cafeteria.

**Lunch snacks:** Various healthy snacks are sold for \$.50 daily within the cafeteria. The snacks all follow the Health and Wellness policy of the school district.

**Classroom snacks:** In K-2 classrooms, children get a snack every afternoon. Parents take turns bringing in healthy snacks for the whole class. Children can opt out of this snack program. K-2 teachers and room parent volunteers coordinate the snack schedule.

#### **Healthy School Policy:**

- **Mission:** "Colfax K-8 aims to provide a safe environment that supports healthy growth and development. We know that physical and mental health is important to educational achievement. In that spirit, we are committed to providing an environment that promotes healthy options and choices." For information about how to help make Colfax healthier, or visit the Healthy Schools Campaign at [www.healthyschoolscampaign.org](http://www.healthyschoolscampaign.org).
- **Healthy Food Policy:** Colfax recognizes the correlation between promoting health and wellness and student achievement. Only healthy snacks are to be provided to students during school hours. For example, cupcakes, cake, and candy are prohibited for distribution within the classroom (this includes birthday celebrations). **Please do not send in unhealthy snacks with your child during birthdays or holiday celebrations. They will be returned.**

**Second recess:** Kindergarten classes will often take a second outside recess in the afternoon. This recess lasts no longer than 15 minutes, but allows for students to be physically active. Children should be dressed appropriately for the weather.

#### **IV. AFTER-SCHOOL CHILDCARE**

Pittsburgh Colfax provides an onsite afterschool childcare program which is new this year. The program is organized by the Early Childhood department of the school district and runs from school dismissal (2:51pm) until 6:30p.m. There is a maximum enrollment this year of 20 students who must be in grades K-5. More information regarding this program can be obtained by calling 412-325-4291. The program is held during all normal school days.

Community partners also offer afterschool childcare:

- **Boys & Girls Club:** Please contact Dave DiGirolamo, Assistant Director of the Shadyside Boys and Girls Club of Shadyside: 412-681-8575 or visit [www.bgcwpa.org](http://www.bgcwpa.org).
- **Brightside Academy:** Brightside offers not only childcare, but also academic curriculum to students who attend their academy in Squirrel Hill. Contact 412-422-8022 for more information regarding the program.
- **JCC:** the Squirrel Hill Jewish Community Center. The JCC offers an after school program for students called Clubhouse. Students of all religions are accepted. Children who participate in the program must be members of the JCC. Call the JCC for more information, 412-521-8010.

## V. ENRICHMENT PROGRAMS, COMMUNITY PROGRAMS, AND EXTRACURRICULAR OPPORTUNITIES

**Community Time** is a school event that takes place in the gym, and invites all students and staff to celebrate the community that we have established as a school. During this time, students and staff offer “shout-outs,” students are highlighted for accomplishments, students perform musical talents, and games are played pairing staff members and students on teams to build rapport. Parents are permitted to attend but not encouraged to do so because space is very limited.

The **Principal’s Two Hundred Club** is Colfax’s Positive Behavior Incentive program. Students are “caught” doing impressive social or academic deeds and receive a golden ticket. Only 10 staff members receive golden tickets daily to hand out to students, and no one knows which staff have the tickets each day. Once a student receives a ticket, their name is posted on the Principal’s 200 Club bulletin board in the cafeteria and they receive an assigned number. These students then have the opportunity to win prize incentives later if their number is a winning number.

The **Principal’s Book of the Month** is a book selected by the principal each month for the school to read. Content level teachers build lessons around the PBOM to establish and build school community.

Our **School Song and Motto** is “Believe, Work, Achieve,” which encourages every student to believe in their potential, work hard towards identified goals, and achieve an opportunity to receive the Pittsburgh Promise scholarship for higher education.

**The Edible Schoolyard**, on the Phillips Avenue side of Colfax, is a thriving Edible Schoolyard garden that is a collaboration between Colfax and Grow Pittsburgh, a local non-profit that promotes urban food production. Each school year, the Garden Coordinator, hired by Grow Pittsburgh, teaches hands-on garden classes that are integrated with the science curriculum. Students plant seeds in the spring and harvest and eat the vegetables in the fall, thus seeing the process from seed to table. During the summer, Colfax parents and teachers tend the garden, a rewarding volunteer activity for our community.

**Frick Park:** A City of Pittsburgh park that is on the far side of Beechwood Blvd. It is used by Colfax for field trips. Attractions in Frick Park include:

- **Frick Environmental Center:** A nature center operated by the city's parks department. The center is within walking distance of Colfax (where Shaw Ave. intersects with Beechwood Blvd.) and some grades attend educational programs there, funded by the PTO.
- **Blue Slide Park:** A playground in Frick Park with a big blue slide. Blue Slide Park is within walking distance of Colfax (where Nicholson St. intersects with Beechwood Blvd.) and it is often used for reward field trips.

Students take **field trips** throughout the year and are required to provide permission slips to their teachers in order to participate. The teacher(s) organizing the trip will send permission slips in backpack mail. Parents/Guardians must sign and the student must return to the appropriate teacher. Often, the school asks that students bring in a small amount of money (usually not more than \$5) to help with the cost of the trip. If a student cannot provide this amount, arrangements will be made so as not to exclude the child.

Pittsburgh Colfax has partnered with Carnegie Mellon University and the University of Pittsburgh to offer an **afterschool tutoring program** for students in need of additional academic support. In 2012-13, the program was offered two days a week. University students who work in small groups with students in grades 3-8 staff the program. The program is about 2 hours in length and begins immediately after school. A permission slip will be sent home with children who are eligible for the program. More details concerning the program will be available in September. Questions can be directed to the teacher supervisors, Mrs. Alli Mayer and Mrs. Jenn Herr.

### **Sports and clubs:**

- **Girls On The Run:** Girls in grades 3-5 who are interested in discovering the art and sport of running while developing life skills should contact Mrs. Leslie Walker, Teacher/Coach. Meets after school.
- **Middle Level (6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade) Sports:** Swimming, Basketball, Cross Country, Soccer, Wrestling, Track, and Cheerleading. Middle Level students who are interested in playing sports should contact Ms. Kari Malvin, school athletic director. All students must receive a physical to participate. Interested students will receive documentation from their teachers to share with parents/guardians. Sports meet after school.
- **4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Sports:** Varies each year, but Basketball and Cheerleading have been offered. Contact Mr. Sikorski for more information on basketball and Ms. Robyn Stefanyak, 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher and ITL2, for information on cheerleading. In addition to these after school sports, Colfax's gym teachers select a swim team and a track team to compete in one or two District-wide meets. See Mr. Lydon or Ms. Lavelle for more information.
- **Chess:** Local Chessmaster Jerry Meyers operates the Chess in Schools program at Colfax each year with support from Colfax and the Colfax PTO. There are two 6-week sessions each year for students who *already know how the pieces move*, meeting once each week during lunch/recess. There is also a 6-week novice class for students in 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grades to learn how to play. Students will bring home a letter about the chess program some time in the fall of 1<sup>st</sup> grade. After that, only students who have participated in past years are automatically invited to attend. If a student does not bring home a letter, or if a student wants to get involved in chess after first grade, contact the chess adviser, Mrs. Julie King.
- **Challenge 24:** a math card game in which students use mathematical operations (e.g., multiplication) on the numbers printed on the card to form the number 24 as quickly as possible. Challenge 24 is an after school activity for grades 4-8 offered at Colfax and also an annual inter-school competition. The First in Math web site offers an on-line version of the Challenge 24 game.
- **CMU Science Squad:** Middle level students interested in attending the science squad will visit the campus of CMU weekly to work directly with staff at the university in preparation for their PA Junior Academy of Science project. Interested students should contact Mr. Doug Wolfe for more information. Students leave the building before the end of the school day and arrive at home on their bus around 4:00.
- **Musical Club:** Starting in the 13-14 school year, we will be starting an afterschool club for middle level students to perform the very first Musical in school history! There will be a theater coach to assist teaching staff throughout the process. More information will be made available during the year!
- **Ski Club:** During the 12-13 school year, we started a Ski Club in which students and chaperones attended Seven Springs to enjoy the slopes. Students needed to be in grades 4-8 to be part of this club. Trips were planned after school and on non-school days. For more information about the ski club, please reach out to Mrs. Conroy.
- **International Trip:** Ms. Scoratow, our Spanish teacher, organized our first international trip to Costa Rica during Spring Break in 2013 for all interested 8<sup>th</sup> graders. We are planning on taking another international trip in 2014. Please contact Ms. Scoratow for more details.

Our school playground, the **Bob O'Connor Community Playground**, is located on the lower playground next to Philips Avenue, named after a former mayor of Pittsburgh who lived in Squirrel Hill and supported Colfax. The District has a policy that it does not provide funds for building playgrounds, so the Colfax PTO stepped in and raised around \$250,000 to build this playground as well as the soft surface play area near the cafeteria.

**Instrumental Music** is offered to students starting in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.

- 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade students will have basic instrumental music taught to them during their assigned music period with Mrs. Vicky Moule.
- Students in grades 5-8 will have an opportunity to participate in the instrumental music program taught by Mr. Brian Lee, with a range of instruments offered. Students will be pulled from their regular classes weekly to learn and practice their instruments. Students will then perform at minimum twice per year during evening concerts for the Colfax Community. Mr. Lee will provide information and permission slips for students in grades 5-8. All students are welcome to participate and instruments will be provided by the school.

**Chorus:** Mrs. Vicky Moule, music teacher, assembles a choir for students in the intermediate grades (3-5). Students who have demonstrated their singing abilities will be invited to participate by Mrs. Moule. Families will be notified directly and permission must be given for students to join. Mrs. Moule will often practice with the chorus during their lunch periods and occasionally after school hours.

**Middle Level Student Council and student newspaper:** All students in grades 6-8 who are interested in joining student council may do so by contacting Ms. Kipp Dawson. Students interested in joining the student newspaper

club may contact Mrs. Jenn Herr. Both organizations meet during their assigned lunches.

## VI. VOLUNTEERS

**Volunteer opportunities:** volunteers are needed to help with PTO events, fundraisers, and communications, as well as volunteering in classrooms, the playground, the lunchroom, morning bus arrival, and the office. Contact the Volunteer Coordinator (jennifer.ganger@gmail.com or 412-621-8411 or see [www.colfaxpto.org](http://www.colfaxpto.org)) to get started.

**Volunteer clearances:** Pittsburgh Public Schools requires volunteers who will work directly with students or student information to have two clearances before working in schools, and also the Board of Education's volunteer intake form. These are described below. Several weeks after you submit requests to the state, you will receive clearances by mail. You must then bring those forms to Colfax. The state may take a long time to respond to requests for clearances, so make the requests well before you would like to begin volunteering.

**You can obtain copies of these forms from the Colfax office, or from [www.colfaxpto.org](http://www.colfaxpto.org), in the "Links" section at the bottom of the site. The forms are:**

### 1. **Request for Criminal History Record Check**

**SUBMIT THIS FORM FIRST** because you must have the results before you can submit form #2.

Three options for submission:

- Complete it online at [www.epatch.state.pa.us/Home.jsp](http://www.epatch.state.pa.us/Home.jsp) and pay by credit card (\$10). Print and retain a copy of the certificate to use for the next step. *OR*
- Submit the completed form yourself via U.S. mail and pay by certified check or money order (\$10). *OR*
- If you cannot cover the cost yourself, give the completed form to the main office at Colfax and allow the school to submit it at no cost to you. This option may take the longest.

### 2. **Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearance**

This clearance may only be submitted by mail. You can submit it yourself (for a \$10 fee which must be paid by money order), or if you are not able to cover the cost, you can ask the Colfax office to submit it. Here are a few things to know when filling out this form: You must provide your full legal name; for "purpose," check the box marked "Volunteers"; for previous names used, include all legal names you have had, including maiden names; for previous addresses, fill in as much information as possible, even if you can't remember exact mailing addresses; and the section on household members cannot be left blank.

### 3. **Pittsburgh Public Schools Board of Education Intake Form for Volunteers**

There is no fee associated with this form. Obtain the form from the Colfax office or [www.colfaxpto.org](http://www.colfaxpto.org) and return it to the office.

**Homeroom Representative(s):** Homeroom representatives, or homeroom parents, can be recruited by a child's homeroom teacher or by the PTO volunteer coordinator. Either way, they are asked to make contact with the PTO volunteer coordinator. Responsibilities vary depending on what the teacher needs, but typically the "homeroom reps" make sure there is a snack calendar coordinator (grades K-2), organize holiday parties, organize teacher gifts for the holidays and teacher appreciation week (held in May), help to recruit volunteers for field trips and other classroom needs, and serve as a conduit to connect parents to the PTO. More than one parent/guardian can share these responsibilities within a classroom.

## VII. COMMUNICATIONS

**School communication:** The Colfax administration communicates with parents primarily via "backpack mail" and robo-calls to students' homes / parents cell phones. *For this communication to work, it is critical for the school to have updated contact information for all families.* Principal Adam Sikorski also routinely attends and gives updates to parents at PTO/PSCC meetings.

**PTO communication:** The Colfax PTO maintains a FaceBook page (<https://www.facebook.com/colfax.pto>), a Twitter account, @colfaxpto, and a website: [www.colfaxpto.org](http://www.colfaxpto.org)

**Newsletter:** The PTO publishes the *Colfax Communicator*, a newsletter, 4 to 10 times each year to keep the community apprised of PTO activities as well as some school activities. The *Communicator* is sent home with students.

**Directory:** The PTO also publishes a school directory. Parents must “opt in” to have their students’ contact information included in the school directory. Forms are sent home in the mail in August, and are also available at [www.colfaxpto.org](http://www.colfaxpto.org). Teachers’ names, room numbers and emails are also included.

**Email lists:** Please join the following email lists to stay up to date on school news and issues:

- **ColfaxPTO:** This email list is for announcements and updates. Only the PTO Communications Chair and Co-Presidents can post these informational messages; members cannot post, so there is no back and forth discussion to read. To subscribe, send a request to [ColfaxPTO-owner@yahoogroups.com](mailto:ColfaxPTO-owner@yahoogroups.com).
- **ColfaxPSCC:** This email list offers parents an opportunity to discuss issues or ask questions related to Colfax. To subscribe, send a request to: [ColfaxPSCC-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:ColfaxPSCC-subscribe@yahoogroups.com)
- **ColfaxGifted:** This group is for Colfax parents of students who are part of the gifted program in the Pittsburgh Public Schools. To subscribe, send a request to: [ColfaxGifted-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:ColfaxGifted-subscribe@yahoogroups.com)
- **HarrisburgStrategy:** With Colfax parents at its core, this group of public school parents and friends advocate for adequate and sustainable public school funding at the state level. To subscribe, send a request to: <http://groups.google.com/group/HarrisburgStrategy>.
- **Yinzercation:** A volunteer, grassroots movement based in Southwestern PA and founded by Colfax parents to advocate for adequate, equitable, and sustainable public school funding. Visit this site for more information and to subscribe to the blog: <http://yinzercation.wordpress.com/>

## VIII. PARENT / TEACHER / ADMINISTRATOR ORGANIZATIONS

### A history of parent activism:

Colfax has a good reputation in the District for having quite active parents and caregivers.

- In the past decade or so, the school has seen a significant resurgence, drawing many neighborhood families back into the public school system. Parents re-established the PTO in 2004 and incorporated it as a charitable organization that can raise money for the school and apply for grants. Working with the principal and the PPS administration, parents successfully expanded the elementary school to K-8 and lobbied to have the new addition built to house the middle-level students.
- In the meantime, the PTO launched an annual fund-raising plan to support classroom activities and general school needs. For example, the PTO raised \$250,000 to build the Bob O’Connor Community Playground, a state-of-the-art facility designed to include children of all abilities in active play, and open to the neighborhood during non-school hours. The playground includes several “science of play” signs designed in partnership with the students and Carnegie Mellon University undergraduates and was largely installed in a single day with over 150 parent and community volunteers.
- Similarly, the PTO worked with the Edible Schoolyards program to build the garden and raises money each year to sustain the educational programs designed around what the students grow in it. When the District was forced by budget cuts to cancel the after-school tutoring program for struggling students, parents stepped in to build a new program in partnership with undergraduate volunteers from Carnegie Mellon University.
- Colfax parents have been very active in District level programs and policy as well. Parents helped to develop a district-wide Gifted Pilot Program, built on several years of research, and parents continue to be very involved in District committees and task forces.
- Most recently, Colfax parents responded to the state budget cuts by forming a grassroots movement, called Yinzercation, with other PPS families. The movement has spread across Southwestern Pennsylvania and helped to successfully prevent \$100 million in additional cuts to public schools.

**Parent School Community Council (PSCC):** Mandated by the District, this group consists of parents and school staff that meet monthly to discuss academic and policy issues. Meetings will be announced by PTO email, backpack mail, and robocalls. The primary responsibility of the PSCC is to assist in the development and implementation of the School Plan for Excellence and long-term plan to improve school performance in conjunction with the administration and faculty. PSCC meetings are often the time when our principal shares important school updates and takes questions on school-related matters.

### **Parent Teacher Organization (PTO):**

**Mission:** All Colfax parents, guardians, staff and teachers are members of the PTO. There is no fee to be a member. The Colfax PTO, in its current incarnation, was established in 2004 with the mission of promoting and supporting the welfare of Pittsburgh Colfax. PTO activities include fundraising, holding social events, and promoting communication and volunteerism. While groups sometimes form within the PTO to address school or District issues, the PTO's mission is to support Colfax rather than to make decisions about school policy. The PTO maintains a website: [www.colfaxpto.org](http://www.colfaxpto.org).

**Meetings:** PTO meetings are held once per month on a consistent day and week (e.g., second Wednesday of the month). Minutes from the meetings are posted on the PTO website.

**Officers:** Colfax PTO has two co-presidents, four vice-presidents (fundraising, special events, volunteer coordinator, communication), a secretary, a treasurer, and an assistant treasurer. Colfax's principal and one faculty adviser also sit on the board. Elections for co-presidents are held each year in April. Elections for all other positions are held in May. A list of current officers can be found at [www.colfaxpto.org](http://www.colfaxpto.org)

**Fundraising:** The PTO raises funds through various activities over the course of the year (see "Fundraising").

#### **Expenses / Grantmaking:**

- Colfax administration, teachers, parents, and students can request funding from the PTO for student-related projects. Inquiries should be directed to the PTO Treasurer, Ellie Monaco: [elizamonaco@gmail.com](mailto:elizamonaco@gmail.com).
- In a given year the Colfax PTO typically supports: Colfax's Edible Schoolyard (\$5,000-\$6,000); Field trips (\$10,000); Classroom supplies for teachers (\$3,000); A Principal's Discretionary Fund (\$10,000); Clubs, activities, and enrichment as needed, including a program with the Frick Environmental Center program (\$2,000); Playground maintenance and equipment such as balls and jump ropes (\$1,500); Sports (\$1,000-\$5,000); Middle level (6-8th grade) activities, including dances, group outings, and the promotion ceremony (\$1,500). However, the budget changes from year to year. The budget is approved at the general PTO meeting each year in May.

**Special events:** In a typical year, the PTO holds several events to bring the school community together. Volunteers are needed to support these events. The events usually include:

- September: Fiesta: an evening potluck event the PTO puts on in the fall for Colfax students and their families. The name of this event is a holdover from Colfax Spanish Academy days.
- Fall or Spring: Talent Show
- Winter: Ice Skating Night, Movie Night, or other Family Fun nights
- February: Party for Play (see fundraising)
- June: Carnival, a Latin-themed event with carnival games, cultural displays, food, and family fun
- The PTO also holds a Teacher/Staff Holiday Lunch in December and sponsors Teacher Appreciation Week in May

## IX. FUNDRAISING

**PTO Fundraising:** Each year, the PTO has several small and large fundraisers to fulfill its commitments to Colfax. These can include:

- A fall fundraiser such as Memory Tiles, Spirit Wear, Restaurant Nights, a Fun Run, and/or products from a catalogue
- A large donation drive directed toward current families, their extended families, alumni, and community members
- Party for Play, an adults-only party and auction, typically in February. It consists of a party (for adults), a silent auction, a raffle, and a regular auction. Funds from the first Party for Play helped pay for building Colfax's playground and the name has stuck.
- A Read-a-Thon
- A Spring Plant Sale
- BoxTops: Students and their families collect "BoxTops for Education" logos from the packaging of products that they buy and send them in to homeroom teachers. The school gets money for each BoxTop collected. (See <http://www.boxtops4education.com/>.)

Specific fundraisers vary from year to year

**Middle level trip fundraising:** Middle Level students (grades 6-8) are offered an end-of-year overnight trip. The cost varies but can be as much as \$500. To help individual students pay for the trip, Middle Level parents and staff help the students raise funds in several ways. In the past, students have sold items from a catalogue or local business; offered coupon books; sold small items during lunch periods; and held bingo games for adults. Fundraisers for this purpose should be identified as "Middle Level fundraisers" and are used only for the trip. General Middle Level activities such as dances and other social events are funded by the PTO or the administration.

## X. GLOSSARY OF ADDITIONAL TERMS

**A+ Schools:** a community group that monitors and lobbies the Pittsburgh Public School District. A+ Schools volunteers monitor school board meetings and issues "grades" for the board ("Board Watch"). They also produce and mail out a "Report to the Community" that contains PSSA AYP results for each school in the District. <http://www.aplusschools.org/>

**Acceleration:** skipping a grade (not to be confused with "compaction"). Students can also be accelerated in a single subject, for example math.

**AYP:** short for Adequate Yearly Progress. AYP is the metric used by the federal No Child Left Behind law to determine if a school or school district is "failing" or not. AYP is mainly a function of standardized test scores (i.e. the PSSA test). AYP status for each school is reported on the <http://paayp.emetric.net/> web site.

**Carnaval [Spanish spelling]:** a free family event hosted by the PTO at the end of the school year celebrating Colfax's diversity and community.

**CAS:** Center for Advanced Studies. A four-year high school program for high achieving students.

**Central Office:** short for the Pittsburgh Public School District's central administration organization. Offices are located at 341 South Bellefield in the Oakland neighborhood of Pittsburgh.

**Charter school:** a public school that is funded by the District (at a rate set by the state) but not operated by the District. Instead, charter schools are operated by a company or group that is in the charter school business. You have to apply to a charter school in order to be admitted to it. Colfax is not a charter school.

**Clearance:** a background check that adults must have in order to volunteer to work in a school. See "Volunteer Clearances" in Section VI.

**Cluster grouping:** a system for dividing students in a grade up into individual classrooms so that classroom teachers have a narrower range of student abilities to teach to, yet classrooms are still racially and academically

diverse. Colfax implemented cluster grouping several years ago as part of a District pilot program which proved very successful and is now being used by many schools. The program also addresses the large number of High Achieving (“HA”) students at Colfax who are not necessarily gifted-identified.

**Compaction:** covering a curriculum at a faster pace to help challenge students who are performing beyond their grade level. For example, one could compact two years of Everyday Math into a single year. The District is resistant to the idea of curriculum compaction due to the complexities associated with having groups of students out of sync with the standard curriculum. Instead of compaction, the District would prefer that schools offer additional enrichment materials to students who can easily master their on grade level material to keep them occupied while their peers complete grade-level work.

**Data driven instruction:** Instructional planning and implementation that uses specific student data to address learning needs. Teachers routinely use both formative (typically classroom exercises) and summative (typically unit tests and standardized tests) assessments to gather information that impacts instruction.

**DI time:** the time during a class where a teacher offers differentiated instruction to groups of students to meet specific learning needs.

**Differentiation:** a process used in a single classroom to provide work of varying difficulty levels to different groups of students based on their ability.

**EFA:** Excellence for All -- the name of the District's academic improvement plan. It has its own logo with a gold swirl and star.

**Enrichment:** extra instruction or instructional material that helps students dig deeper into material that they have already mastered. Enrichment materials are often used to engage students when they pretest out of a unit.

**ESL:** the English as a Second Language program to help non-native speaking students learn English.

**Feeder pattern:** the neighborhoods around Colfax where students are assigned to Colfax as their home school. Students who attend Colfax either live in the Colfax feeder pattern or have made special arrangements to transfer into Colfax.

**Gates grant:** a \$40M grant awarded to the Pittsburgh School District by the Gates Foundation to help provide the Empowering Effective Teachers initiative within the District. Part of this effort includes the new RISE teacher evaluation system, Value Added Measures Analysis (PVAAS), and Student Perception Surveys. This grant also enables teachers to apply and serve in Career Ladder positions within the District. This effort is to ensure that there is an effective teacher in every classroom everyday.

**Gifted Center:** a center located in the Greenway School on the west side of the city that provides gifted services for most of the District's gifted students, including Colfax students in grades 6-8. Students are bussed from their home school to the gifted center one day a week to participate in the gifted program with gifted kids from other schools.

**Gifted Individualized Education Program (GIEP):** an official document, updated at least once a year that describes the gifted services the school is offering a student who participates in the gifted program. The meetings where GIEPs are discussed are called GIEP meetings. Each gifted student has his or her own personalized GIEP. Parents that are not happy with their GIEP plan can request that the school "reopen" it so that it can be revised.



**Gifted Multidisciplinary Evaluation (GMDE):** the test used to determine if a child is gifted and can enter the gifted program. To take the GMDE, parents must request and allow the school to test their child. The GMDE process can be initiated by parents on their own, or can be suggested by a classroom teacher. To pass the gifted test, a student either needs to have an IQ of 130 or more, or can provide a supporting portfolio in combination with a slightly lower IQ score.

**Gifted program:** a program that provides education and enrichment for gifted students. The school district is required by law to provide educational services to gifted students. Students are identified as gifted through the gifted test (the GMDE). Students in the gifted programs must have a Gifted Individualized Education Program (GIEP) document that outlines the gifted educational plans for that student.

**Gifted Resource Teacher (GRT):** Colfax currently has two resident gifted resources teachers for grades K-5.

**Individualized Education Program (IEP):** a special educational plan for students with disabilities. Having IEPs for special education students is required by federal law (specifically, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act [IDEA]).

**Inquiry-based learning:** an instructional model where students learn by solving problems rather than just memorizing solutions. In inquiry-based learning students often work together in groups (so this fits well with the workshop model).

**Junior Great Books:** A book reading program that promotes reading comprehension, critical thinking, writing, and collaborative discussion. <http://www.greatbooks.org/programs-for-all-ages/junior/jgbseries.html>

**Magnet school:** a public school that focuses on a core area (languages, performing arts, science and technology, etc.). To go to a magnet school you must apply for admission. In some cases, there may be a lottery in order to get in. Colfax is not a magnet school.

**Master schedule:** the teaching and class schedule for the entire school. There are many requirements (from the District and locally) placed on the master schedule that makes changing it after the school year has started very difficult. Colfax currently has a six-day master schedule (but has also used a weekly master schedule in past years).

**Metal detector:** Colfax has been provided a metal detector by the District to check for unauthorized items coming into the school. It is only used occasionally (as directed by the District).

**No Child Left Behind (NCLB):** NCLB is a federal law that mandates standards based reform in schools. Every year each school must give students a standardized test (in Pennsylvania it is the PSSA test). The student population is broken into subgroups such as white, African American, IEP (special ed), and economically disadvantaged. If all the subgroups of students at each tested grade level meet the targeted scores in both reading and math, then the school is said to have made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). But if *any* of the subgroups at any of the grade levels fails to meet the targeted achievement level in reading or math, then the school has not made AYP. Schools that do not make AYP have their AYP status changed to Warning. If a school repeatedly fails to make AYP their status progresses from Warning down to School Improvement (I and II), and then bottoms out at Corrective Action (I and II). The state can take action against schools that are unable to make AYP. (See "Proficiency on PSSA's" below.)

**Online information portal:** a web system provided by the District to provide a way for parents or guardians to access some of their children's records on-line. Parents will need their child's student ID number to access the portal. This ID number can be found on the child's report card, or the parent can ask the Student Data Systems Specialist (SDSS) in the main office. <https://epromise.pps.k12.pa.us/>

**Paraprofessional:** an educational assistant who helps in the classroom (often with special needs students).

**PGHBOE (pghboe.net):** short for Pittsburgh Board of Education. PGHBOE is also used by the District for staff email addresses (e.g. [asikorski1@pghboe.net](mailto:asikorski1@pghboe.net)) and web services (<http://www.pghboe.net/>). The District also uses the domain "pps.k12.pa.us" for internet services.

**Pittsburgh Colfax K-8:** The current official name of our school (previously used names include Colfax Accelerated Learning Academy, Colfax ALA, Colfax Spanish Academy, and Colfax Elementary).

**Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers:** The local union that negotiates the collective bargaining agreement between teachers and the District. This agreement sets rules for how the District manages and evaluates teachers.  
<http://www.pft400.org/>

**Pittsburgh Promise:** a city-wide program that provides cash for students to go to college. To qualify (or be "Promise Ready") students must stay in the school district and have good grades and meet an attendance requirement. <http://pittsburghpromise.org/>

**Pool:** Colfax has a small pool in the basement of the old building that is used by the physical education program to teach swimming to 3rd to 8th graders. The physical education teachers will notify students of their swimming days. Students need to provide a swimsuit and towel on swimming days. Girls must wear a one-piece swimsuit. (Some Colfax families have found it easiest to keep a swim bag with a clean towel and swimsuit in the student's locker so they don't worry about which days are swim days.) Students who actively participate in swimming throughout the year will be eligible to attend a field trip to a local pool at the end of the year.

**Pretest:** taking a test on material to be covered in the next unit before the unit is started. If a student has already mastered the material to be offered, then they are often allowed to "pretest out" of the unit and instead do enrichment while the other students do the unit.

**Proficiency on PSSAs:** Scores on the PSSA are divided into 4 categories: Below Basic (the student is missing a great deal of required knowledge or skills in this subject for this grade level); Basic (the student is missing some required knowledge or skills that are required in this subject for this grade level); Proficient (the category where students have met the requirements for the subject and grade level in which they are tested); and Advanced (students have scored above the required score range for demonstrating proficiency). Schools are judged on whether a certain percentage of their students score in the Proficient range or higher.

**Project M3:** A math curriculum designed to nurture math talent in elementary school students (M3 stands for "Mentoring Mathematical Minds"). <http://www.gifted.uconn.edu/projectm3/>

**Pull out:** part of the On Site Gifted Services program where gifted students are pulled out of their normal classes to attend special gifted classes taught by a gifted resource teacher.

**Push in:** part of the On Site Gifted Services program where gifted resource teachers attend normal classes and assist/train the classroom teacher to better meet the needs of gifted students.

**PVAAS:** The Pennsylvania Value-Added Assessment System, a statistical method used to measure the influence of an academic unit (district, school, program, or classroom) on the academic growth of an individual student or groups of students over time.  
<http://www.psea.org/general.aspx?ID=1108>

**Racial achievement gap:** the gap in achievement and test scores between many minority students and everyone else. Schools are trying to "reduce the racial achievement gap" by supporting non-proficient students.

**Renzulli:** a web site that provides links to enrichment/entertainment activities for students based on their interests.  
<http://www.renzullilearning.com/>

**RISE:** Research-Based Inclusive System of Evaluation. The teacher evaluation system used by the Pittsburgh Public Schools is modeled after the teaching framework of Charlotte Danielson.

**Round:** the number of classrooms in a grade. Colfax has between 2-4 rounds per grade level.

**Rubric:** a standardized grading grid for student work. Each row contains a metric and each column corresponds to the number of points awarded for that metric (students receive 1 to 4 points, low to high).

**Science calendar:** the District science curriculum includes a set of project-based science homeworks that are assigned monthly. The list of possible projects comes home on a grid that looks kind of like a calendar (but isn't a real calendar --- it is just a list of projects for the month).  
<http://www.carnegielibrary.org/kids/bigkids/homework/sciencecalendars/>

**Six day schedule:** a rotating schedule that cycles through six numbered days. In each normal week, five of the six days occur (the sixth occurs on the following week). The schedule is suspended for holidays and snow days (so you don't skip a day). An alternate to the six day schedule is a weekly schedule. See the PTO calendar for the schedule.

**Subgroup:** a subset of the student population used to help determine if a school meets AYP, as defined by the No Child Left Behind law. To establish a subgroup, you need at least 40 students in the subgroup. Subgroups are defined by race, economics, and special education.

**The board (sometimes BOE):** the school board. The overall District is divided up into 9 numbered districts. Each district has an elected representative on the school board. Most Colfax parents are in District 1 (parts of North and South Point Breeze, East Liberty, and East Hills) and District 4 (parts of Squirrel Hill, Shadyside, and Oakland). The Superintendent of Schools reports to the school board.

**Title I:** part of the national Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) that provides additional funding for schools that have a high percentage of low income students (35% or more). Colfax does not qualify for Title I funding. This funding is determined by the percentage of Colfax students who qualify for free and reduced price lunch. If there is any chance that your child qualifies, please complete and return the form. Even if a child does not need the lunch program it is important for parents / guardians to return the completed form because the percentage of qualifying children affects other aspects of the school's funding.

**Tracking:** dividing students in a grade up into different classrooms based on their ability. Tracking is not allowed at Pittsburgh Public Schools like Colfax because of concerns about it separating students into classrooms based on race and/or economic status.

**Workshop model:** a teaching model that includes 3 definitive sections of each subject taught: the opening, worktime, and closing. Within each section, the learning is student-centered and encourages active engagement and participation.

Pittsburgh Colfax Staff  
2014-2015 School Year.

**K**

K-1 Ms. LeeAnn Banycky (112)  
K-2 Mrs. Tracy Tuchin (110)  
K-3 Mrs. Crissy Hills (104)  
K-4 Mrs. Kaela Filipek (106)

**3**

3-1 Ms. Paula Acie (301)  
3-2 Mrs. Nicole Murray (202)  
3-3 Mrs. Alli Mayer (201)  
Ms. Donna McCartney

**6**

6-1 Ms. Toni Murdock (226)  
6-2 Mrs. Raffaella Greco (213)  
6-3 Ms. Diane Smith (127)  
6-4 Mrs. Julie Montgomery (214)  
Mrs. Beth Pellegrini (006)

**Related Arts**

119 – Mrs. Erika Lavelle (Gym)  
119 – Mr. Danny Lydon (Gym)  
208 – Ms. Jane McKee (Library)  
108 – Mrs. Vicky Moule (Music)  
123 – Mr. Brian Lee  
(Instrumental/Music)  
015 – Mrs. Gwyneth Miller (Art)  
007 – Ms. Ilene Scratow  
(Spanish)

**Office Rm.# 114**

Mrs. Pamela Burford  
(Secretary)  
Ms. Kimberly Schmotzer  
(SDSS)

**Nurse**

Mrs. Rachel Short

**Paraprofessionals:**

Mr. Rudy Nesbit  
Mrs. Kimberly Williams

**1**

1-1 Mrs. Melissa Morgano (111)  
1-2 Ms. Jillian Gallagher (105)  
1-3 Mrs. Sharon King (113)  
1-4 Ms. Katherine Bartels (103)

**4**

4-1 Mrs. Tina Theiss (204)  
4-2 Ms. Liz Campione (205)  
4-3 Mrs. Amy Mlay (206)

**7**

7-1 Ms. Kipp Dawson (227)  
7-2 Mr. Doug Wolfe (219)  
7-3 Mr. Ryan Schmiedlin (129)  
Ms. Kari Malvin (126)

**ESL**

Mrs. Mary King (006)  
Ms. Rebekah Laslow (006)

**Special Education**

Mrs. Sue Long (230)  
Mrs. Meghan Popp (231)

**Gifted Rm. # 302**

Mrs. Betsy Juhas (Old Gym)  
Mrs. Sarah Ricketts (Old Gym)

**Custodians:**

Mr. Jeff Henderon  
Ms. Cana Johnson (CJ)  
Ms. Dee Smith (cleaner)  
Ms. Audrey (cleaner)

**2**

2-1 Mrs. Randi Grujich (018)  
2-2 Mrs. Julie King (014)  
2-3 Mrs. Marci Hricik (016)  
2-4 Ms. Kristina Alvarez (017)

**5**

5-1 Mrs. Robyn Stefanyak (211)  
5-2 Ms. Nicole Bobrzynski (212)  
5-3 Ms. Leslie Walker (210)

**8**

8-1 Mr. Mark Cohen (223)  
8-3 Ms. Jenn Herr (222)

**Social Workers/Counselors**

Ms. Erin Montgomery (225); K-5  
Mrs. Cheryl Rettger (229); 6-8

**Speech:**

Mrs. Crystal Guilfoyle

**ELS**

Mrs. Joie Conroy (108 Office)