



Family and Student Handbook

Our mission is to provide students with the academic skills and critical-thinking abilities they need to succeed in a college-preparatory high school.



Contents

Letter from the CEO & Founder	1
About Explore Schools	2
Academics	2
Family/School Communication	5
Formal Complaint Policy	6
Behavior Expectations	
Behavior Matrix	10
Student Safety and Health	14
Student Meals	15
Internet and IT Acceptable Use Policy	16
Student Attendance and Transportation	17
Additional Policies.....	19
Student Media Consent and Release Form	23
Family Student Handbook Sign-Off Page	24

Letter from the CEO & Founder

Welcome

Greetings Explore Schools' Families,

On behalf of the entire Explore community, we are thrilled to welcome you and your child to Explore Schools! Our mission, based on the critical need in our city and our community for more outstanding public schools, is to provide our students with the academic skills and critical-thinking abilities they need to succeed in a college-preparatory high school.

I founded Explore Charter School in 2002 after teaching for six years. When we first opened, we served 168 students in Kindergarten through third grade, and grew to graduate our first group of 8th graders in 2008. Recognizing an urgent need to create more public schools, we established Explore Schools to broaden our impact in Brooklyn. Today, we welcome over 2,000 students in Kindergarten through eighth grade at eight schools located on six campuses: Explore Charter School (Lower and Upper), Empower Charter School (Lower and Upper), Excel Charter School (Lower and Upper), and Exceed Charter School (Lower and Upper). Our schools are a community, bonded by our shared mission to ensure our students have the education they need to succeed in high school, college, and beyond. We know we'll achieve our shared mission by:

- Creating and maintaining a culture of achievement within each school
- Using achievement data to effectively respond to individual student needs
- Balancing skills-instruction with critical-thinking
- Partnering with families

I'm so excited to see what the future brings for our community and our students. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me directly at (646) 319-0002, or at mballen@explorenetwork.org.

Warmly,



Morty Ballen
CEO & Founder

About Explore Schools

Our mission is to provide our students with the academic skills and critical-thinking abilities they need to succeed in a college-preparatory high school. Explore Schools is a Brooklyn-based non-profit that supports public schools in educationally under-served communities.

Explore Schools began in 2002 when Chief Executive Officer and Founder, Morty Ballen, opened Explore Charter School in Flatbush, Brooklyn.

Launching from the success of its founding campus, Explore Schools has grown—in size, reputation, and achievement. Explore Schools is now the umbrella for three additional sites: Empower Charter School in Crown Heights, Excel Charter School in Canarsie, and Exceed Charter School in Crown Heights. Network wide, we serve over 2,000 students K-8th grade school students with a waitlist of over 6,000 students.

As of July 1, 2015, all four charters in the Explore Schools network merged into one “Education Corporation” (one organization of four schools, rather than four separate organizations) with SUNY as our authorizer. All charter schools are governed by a Board of Trustees, and only one Board oversees all our network schools. The Board is responsible for ensuring our school operates effectively and responsibly. The Explore Schools Board of Trustees meets on a regular basis and meetings are open to the public. Notice about these meetings are published in each school’s main office.

This simply means that the schools in our network are legally one organization, but continue to operate as individual schools. We have separate locations, staff, and student bodies. A merged structure allows our schools to operate more efficiently, with more flexibility to share resources across schools and, in some cases, allow student transfers between schools to help us meet individual students’ needs. If you have questions about a transfer for your student, please contact a member of the operations team to find out more information about our transfer process.

As a network, Explore Schools seeks to provide educational equity by providing an education that is rigorous and an environment that is nurturing. With high expectations, intentional education and remediation, and family partnerships, we are confident that we are providing more than a first-rate education—we are providing endless opportunities.

Academics

The academic program at Explore Schools is designed to ensure that all students achieve success in grades K-8 and have the academic skills and critical thinking abilities to succeed in a college preparatory high school.

To meet that goal, students engage in the study of literacy, mathematics, social studies, science, the arts, and physical movement during each of five academic terms. Instruction in all areas is designed to engage students in meaningful rigorous material that pushes students to think critically and gain essential skills as dictated by the New York State Common Core Standards http://www.p12.nysed.gov/ciai/common_core_standards/ To meet the needs of all students, teachers plan for instruction using internal and external assessments.

Mathematics instruction includes various types of lessons and tasks to build and reinforce our students’ critical thinking skills and fluency in mathematical facts and operations. Components of this program

include a core math lesson (primarily inquiry-based) that builds on prior knowledge, a spiraled review and/or math routines component to reinforce prior learning and promote fact fluency, and a reteach/support component to deepen and extend students' understanding of mathematical content. Each student is engaged in mathematics instruction for 90 minutes four times a week and 60 minutes once a week.

Literacy instruction includes many facets to ensure that students are able to critically think about text and communicate their ideas to the world orally and in writing. Reading instruction includes basic reading skills such as phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and word study (sight words, vocabulary, etc.) to create fluent, accurate readers. Students learn the content and critical-thinking skills needed to deeply comprehend text through theme-based units that include reading lessons, interactive read-aloud, whole class and small group discussion, guided reading, and independent reading. Our 3rd-8th grade students also engage in a Close Reading block, where learn to make meaning of grade-level, authentic texts. In writing, students learn to communicate their experiences, stories, and ideas through the study of narrative, informative, and persuasive writing. This involves writing workshop, explicit instruction in language and conventions (grammar, spelling, punctuation, etc.), the study of mentor texts, and independent writing.

Additionally, students in kindergarten and first grade engage in structured play labs that promote social skills, language development, and communication; and students in grades 3-8 engage in lessons designed specifically to prepare them for the demands of standardized state testing. Overall, students engage in approximately 120-190 minutes of literacy instruction per day.

Promotional Criteria: Students may be retained in their current grade level for any of the following reasons:

- Absent more than 15 times in the school year
- Tardy/Early Pick-Up more than 30 times in the school year
- Reading below grade level, as indicated by internal assessments
- Did not earn a "3" or "4" on the state exams in Math and ELA.
- Low academic performance, as indicated by internal assessments and classwork
- Qualifies as an "Excellent" or "Good" retention candidate, as indicated by a score of 1-29 on the "Lights Retention Scale"
- For students with disabilities: did not demonstrate adequate growth, as indicated by the student's IEP goals and promotional criteria

The school reserves the right to make promotional decisions or change a student's class at any time. Families will be notified in Term 3 if a student's promotion is in doubt.

Explore Schools will provide support services for your student when deemed necessary to help them succeed in school. You will be notified by letter when your student is participating in support services, as well as when they have achieved their goals and no longer need services.

Student Support Services: Each of Explore Schools' campuses has a team of teachers who are here to help your student succeed. Therefore, your student may be provided with:

- Pull out or push in support
- Small group instruction

- Counseling
- Enrichment opportunities
- Tutoring

Explore Schools will provide these services for your student when deemed necessary to help them succeed in school. You will be notified by letter when your student is participating in support services and when they have achieved their goals and no longer need services.

6-8 Grading Policy: Percentage grades for core subjects are calculated as follows:

- 20% Homework
- 20% Classwork (in-class assignments)
- 60% Tests, quizzes and projects (including take-home exams, portfolios, and lab reports)

Homework (K-8): Homework is assigned regularly in all core subjects: Math, ELA, Social Studies and Science. Students are expected to record homework assignments as suggested by the teacher.

- All homework is to be turned in to the classroom teacher at the beginning of the period.
- Students must write their name and the date on all homework assignments.
- If a student has a question about a homework assignment, they should call their teacher before 6 p.m. Students should also use their classmates as a resource in answering general questions, but students are responsible for completing their own work.

Calling Your Teacher for Help with Homework: Students should call their teachers if they have a question about a homework assignment. All teachers have a school cell phone that you may use to contact them. Please contact your child's Academic Director if you are unable to contact a teacher.

Textbooks: Students may be assigned textbooks/novels. Students are responsible for turning in textbooks and novels in excellent condition. If a textbook or novel is lost or damaged, students may be held responsible for the cost of the book. Textbooks and novels range in price from \$6 to \$85. Students may not receive their final report card until they have returned all their textbooks or paid any outstanding fees.

Preparation for High School Admission: Our mission is to provide our students with the skills and abilities they need to succeed in a college-preparatory high school. The transition to high school from Explore Schools is a big one, and students and families need to be preparing for this transition several years in advance. During the year, there will be several meetings for the families of 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th graders to discuss high school admission. Attendance at some of these meetings is mandatory for families of each student. Please read school communication for specific information pertaining to meetings you are required to attend.

Family/School Communication

We believe we will achieve our mission if families are actively involved in their child’s education. To promote this involvement, Explore Schools employs the following systems and procedures to ensure there is ongoing and regular communication between school and home. Below is the main office phone number for each of our schools.

School	Address	Main Office Phone Number
Explore Lower & Upper Charter School	655 Parkside Ave Brooklyn, NY 11226	(718) 703-4484
Empower Lower & Upper Charter School	188 Rochester Ave Brooklyn, NY 11213	(718) 771-2090
Excel Lower Charter School	1077 Remsen Ave Brooklyn, NY 11236	(718) 303-3245
Excel Upper Charter School	956 East 82 nd Street Brooklyn, NY 11236	(718) 272-1827
Exceed Lower Charter School	443 St. Marks Ave Brooklyn NY 11238	(718) 989-6702
Exceed Upper Charter School	46 McKeever Place Brooklyn NY 11225	(347) 689-0200

Staff Communication: All staff members have cell phones and email accounts to discuss academic and behavior content. Teachers will not be accessible to communicate during hours of instruction. Teachers will check their cell phone and email accounts for messages once or twice each day and will respond within one business day. If you have questions or concerns, are inquiring about daily transportation, or would like to leave a message for your child, please call the main office directly.

Family Conferences: Families and teachers have the opportunity to discuss each student’s progress at the beginning of Terms 2 & 4. It is mandatory for families to attend each of the family-teacher conferences. In the beginning of October, look out for communication from your child’s homeroom teacher to schedule your first conference.

Report Cards: Report cards will be issued at the end of each term.

Homework Folder: Homework will be assigned for each evening and sent home either as a weekly packet or on a daily basis. Homework will be checked on a regular basis for completion and accuracy. The time expectation for homework is different for each grade level; please speak to your child’s teacher about the specific time requirements for your grade.

Classroom Visits: We have an “open-door” policy - families are encouraged to visit their child’s classroom. Please make arrangements with the main office and the classroom teacher at least 24

hours prior to your visit to ensure that classroom instruction will not be interrupted and to avoid any scheduling conflicts. Be sure to check in at the main office upon your scheduled arrival.

Formal Complaint Policy

A formal complaint is a complaint that concerns an alleged violation of law and/or charter. An individual who (or group that) has a formal complaint against a school policy or a member of the school community may follow the informal complaint procedures set forth in each school's individual handbook. Alternatively, the individual or group may file a formal complaint in writing to the Explore Schools Chief Operating Officer, Carrie Mauer.

The Chief Operating Officer will forward the complaint to the Chair of the School's Board of Trustees who shall then appoint the Chief of Staff at Explore Schools or another designee(s) to review the complaint. If the substance of the complaint directly involves the Chief of Staff, the Chief of Staff shall not be appointed as the designee. After reviewing the complaint, the designee(s) will respond in writing to the complainant within 45 days. At this time, the Chair of the Board of Trustees or the Chair's designee(s) shall provide the complainant with written notice of the opportunity to appeal the Board's decision to the Charter Schools Institute, and a copy of the Charter Schools Institute's grievance guidelines. Carrie Mauer, the Chief Operating Officer, can be reached in the following ways:

E-mail: cmauer@explorenetwork.org

Mailing address:

Carrie Mauer, Explore Schools Inc.

20 Jay Street, Suite 211

Brooklyn, NY 11201

If, after receiving the written response from the Chair of the Board of Trustees and/or the Chair's designee, the individual or group determines that the Board has not adequately addressed their complaint, the complainant may present the complaint to the Charter Schools Institute, acting on behalf of the Board of Trustees of the State University of New York, which shall investigate and respond. If, after presentation of the complaint to the Charter Schools Institute, the individual or group determines that the Charter Schools Institute has not adequately addressed the complaint, the complainant may present the case to the State Education Department, acting on behalf of the Board of Regents, which shall investigate and respond. The Charter Schools Institute and the State Education Department each has the power and the duty to take remedial action to resolve the complaint, as appropriate. The Charter Schools Institute at the State University of New York can be contacted in the following ways:

E-mail: charters@suny.edu

Mailing Address:

Charter Schools Institute

**State University of New York
41 State Street, Suite 700
Albany, New York 12207**

Any individual or group that elects to follow the informal complaint procedures to resolve a formal complaint shall be permitted at any time to stop the informal complaint procedures and initiate the formal complaint procedures.

If an individual or group voices a complaint at a public meeting of the School's Board of Trustees or to individual trustees, trustees shall not respond to the substance of the complaint, but instead shall thank the individual or group for their time and direct them to the relevant complaint procedures.

Behavior Expectations

Rewards & Consequences: Our goal is to create a school culture in which the scholars want to follow the school's behavioral expectations. Scholars who follow the expectations are noted for their efforts and participate in special activities and celebrations.

Behavioral Expectations Outside of the Classroom (Common Spaces, Field Trips, Transportation): As long as a student is wearing their school uniform they are expected to follow Explore Schools' behavioral policies and expectations. Students are expected to remain silent when walking in the hallways as not to disturb learning in other classrooms. Students are to walk with their hands to themselves. At lunchtime, students are expected to speak quietly, keep their hands to themselves and to remain in their seats until given permission to do otherwise. On field trips, students must uphold Explore Schools' behavioral expectations and follow directions of all chaperones to ensure their safety and the safety of others.

Bullying and Harassment: All Explore Schools Charter Schools comply with the Dignity for All Students Act. The Dignity for All Students Act prohibits acts of harassment and bullying, including cyberbullying, and/or discrimination, by employees or students on school property or at a school function, including but not limited to such conduct based on a student's actual or perceived race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender (defined to include gender identity or expression), or sex (Education Law §12[1]). Cyberbullying is defined as harassment or bullying which takes place through any form of electronic communication (Education Law §11[8]). All Explore Schools Charter Schools reserve the right to investigate, and respond to, matters that fall into the categories of harassment, bullying, cyberbullying, and/or discrimination.

Behavior Intervention Procedures: In the event that students are not meeting the behavioral expectations, families will be notified during each step of the behavior intervention process. In an effort to help students meet the behavioral expectations and avoid serious consequences, a continuum of interventions has been put into place at Explore Schools. If a student does not respond to teacher interventions and continues to demonstrate inappropriate behavior that

interferes with the learning process, the teacher may issue a consequence and the behavior will be tracked using an “infraction slip.” Student behaviors can result in a variety of interventions, which will be accompanied by family communication to inform them of the infractions. Serious or repeated infractions will result in a mandatory family meeting.

Repeated Infraction Slips: These may result in a family conference and/or intervention plan, and one, or more, of the below interventions and/or consequences may be implemented.

Interventions and Consequences When possible, Explore Schools will use a variety of interventions and consequences before utilizing in-school or out-of-school suspension. Some examples of those interventions and consequences are listed in the table below. In more serious instances, or when previous interventions and consequences have not resulted in adequate progress, students may be suspended, as outlined later in this section.

Interventions	Consequences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behavior plan • Meeting with family, teacher(s) and administrator • Meeting with the school counselor and /or behavior counselor • Buddy teacher • Buddy student • Seat change • Special job/role • Reverse mentoring • Peer mediation • Individual incentive plan • Child Study Team /Committee on Special Education • Change in schedule/program • Required parent/guardian shadowing • External mentoring service • Home visit • Meeting with Explore Schools Incorporated (ESI) Personnel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phone call home • Time out/Time away from class • Loss of field trips • Written apology • Structured recess • Seat change • School project • Community service • Lunch/recess detention • After school reflection (upper school) • In-school suspension

Suspension: The school Leadership and Culture Teams will make every effort to work proactively with families to prevent an out-of-school suspension. However, your child may be suspended at any time for the following behaviors: assault; verbal or physical abuse; vandalism; theft; false bomb threat or false emergency alarm; use of drugs, alcohol, or tobacco; gambling; leaving campus without permission;

conduct which disrupts school or classroom activity or endangers the health, safety, or welfare of others; repeated violation of minor behavioral infractions; disrespect towards faculty; threatening or harassing students or staff; cheating; profane language; and/or any act which school officials reasonably conclude warrants a suspension. Behaviors, interventions, and consequences are outlined in more detail in the Behavior Matrix below.

If a student is suspended, he/she is entitled to 2 hours of alternative instruction each day. The otherwise hours of instruction will be stated on the suspension letter. During or immediately following the suspension, a post-suspension meeting with the family is mandatory and is required before the student is allowed to return to class.

Expulsion: The following behaviors may result in a recommendation by the school officials for immediate student expulsion: selling, using, or possessing fireworks or contraband; selling or transferring alcohol, drugs, or other controlled substances or drug paraphernalia; possession of a weapon; assault; commission of a felony; and/or any act which school officials reasonably conclude warrants an expulsion. Students who have been suspended repeatedly will be provided with intervention plans to support their improvement. Failure to improve behavior may result in a recommendation for expulsion.

Due Process Procedures: When a student engages in behavior punishable by expulsion or a long-term suspension of more than 10 days, they are informed of their misconduct and asked to leave the class or activity in which they are participating immediately. They report to the office and share their version of the events; their families are contacted and asked to pick the child up from school. The Principal, or a member of the Culture Team, immediately notifies the student's family in writing. The notice will set a time and place for an impartial disciplinary hearing with the Hearing Officer of Explore Schools and shall inform families of their right to be accompanied by counsel or an individual of their choice.

A letter outlining the incident and a time for the hearing will be sent to the families who will also be notified over the phone. At the meeting, copies of the following will be distributed to the family:

- The school's Family-Student Handbook- this includes the school's Behavior Matrix and the school's Due Process Procedures
- Proof that parent/guardian received the Family Scholar Handbook (from the students' file in the main office)
- "Disciplinary Letter to Committee"
- "Description of Behaviors and Interventions"

Students are expelled and long-term suspensions are only upheld after being found guilty at a formal expulsion hearing with the Hearing Officer of Explore Schools. The Hearing Officer will issue a decision at the hearing. Any member of ESI or a school leader from a network school other than the host school can serve as a hearing officer as long as they have been trained on how to do so. Families may appeal the decision to the full Board by writing to the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees. The parent or guardian

is permitted to speak for 5 minutes at the next regularly scheduled Board meeting, followed by questions from members of the Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees will go into executive session and either uphold or overturn the decision of the Disciplinary Committee. If dissatisfied with the result, the parent or guardian may appeal the decision to the SUNY Charter Schools Institute, then to the New York Board of Regents. Students who have been expelled from any school in the Explore Schools network are not eligible for re-enrollment at Explore Schools network school, except in special circumstances, determined at the discretion of the school’s administration.

Administration may use one, or a combination, of the following criteria to determine if a student is eligible for re-enrollment:

- the nature of the expellable offense;
- the student’s age and grade at the time of the offense;
- the student’s academic standing at the school;
- the student’s over-all behavior
- The length of time the student has spent enrolled at another school

Additionally, prior to making a decision about the student's eligibility to return to the school the leadership team, in consultation with network leadership, must convene a meeting with the student and his/her family to assess the following:

- The degree to which the student has reflected on his/her behavior
- The degree to which the student expresses remorse for his/her actions
- The degree to which the student has made progress with his/her behavior
- Any remediation sought out by the family

Behavior Matrix: At our schools, certain behaviors warrant an immediate response by administration. When these behaviors are demonstrated, we refer to the Behavior Matrix below.

Behavior Matrix <i>Explore Schools</i>		
Infractions	Teacher Moves, Interventions, Restorations, and Support	Consequences

<p>Level 1 -- Minor Infractions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calling out • Electronic devices: possession of cell phone, or non-instructional devices during school hours • Food and beverages (consuming at times other than school meals), chewing gum at any time • Late to Class • Inappropriate voice level • Running in the hall, skipping stairs, and other playfully careless behavior • Uniform Violation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student is reminded of appropriate behavior and task at hand • Student is reminded of what he/she is like at his/her best and of past good behavior • Student is reminded of past poor decisions and provided with productive alternatives/choices that should be made • Student is given a non-verbal warning • Student is given a verbal warning • Call home to parent/guardian • Staff places note in student's folder informing parent/guardian of behavior • Verbal apology to class 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Color change, clip move, or loss of point (if applicable) • In-class "time away" • Electronic device confiscated
<p>Level 2 -- Escalating Infractions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committing a Level 1 Infraction after intervention • Disrespect of peers (teasing, name calling, being rude, etc.) • Disrespecting a staff member (being rude, rolling eyes, etc.) • Disruptive behavior • Electronic devices: use of cell phone or non-instructional devices during school hours • Inappropriate/threatening gestures • Leaving classroom without permission, running away from school personnel, misuse of hall pass, being in a location without permission • Littering • Unwanted or aggressive physical contact with peer (pushing, play-fighting) • Weapon: playing with an object as if it is a weapon 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student is reminded of appropriate behavior and task at hand • Student is given a verbal warning • Student-Teacher-Family conference • Student-Family-Administrator Conference • Verbal or written apology to community • Student completes written reflection • Student is assigned a student or staff "buddy"/mentor • Student is given de-escalating coping mechanisms (ex: asking teacher for a break, taking 10 deep breaths) • Peer-to-peer meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Color change, clip move, or loss of point (if applicable) • In-class "time away" • Electronic device confiscated • Out-of-classroom "time away" -- referral to Dean's Office • In-school disciplinary action (which includes, but is not limited to, exclusion from recess, communal lunch, enrichment activities, sports, school events, trips, or activities) • After-school detention • In-school suspension

Level 3 -- Serious Infractions

- Committing a Level 2 Infraction after intervention
- Aggressive physical contact with school personnel
- Defiance of school authority
- Dishonesty (plagiarism, copying another student's work, forgery, lying etc.)
- Disrespect of peers using profane language or gestures
- Disrespect of staff using profane language or gestures
- Fighting with peer
- Fire alarm, tampering with apparatus
- Gambling
- Fire alarm, tampering with apparatus
- Inappropriate touching
- Leaving school grounds without permission
- Misuse of computer resources or electronic devices (hacking, violation of internet policies, violating copyright law, damaging equipment, etc.)
- Posting or distributing inappropriate materials (which includes, but is not limited to, unauthorized materials, defamatory or libelous materials, or threatening materials)
- Smoking
- Theft, or knowingly possessing property belonging to another person without permission
- Using profane, obscene, lewd, abusive, or discriminatory language or gestures in any context (which includes, but is not limited to, slurs based upon race, ethnicity, color, national origin, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or disability)
- Vandalism/graffiti
- Weapon: drawing a picture of a weapon aimed at someone
- Weapon: falsely claiming to possess a weapon

- Assignments/projects which require student to reflect on behavior in writing or orally (depending on grade)
- Call home to family
- Student-Family-Administrator Conference
- Verbal or written apology to community
- Student is assigned a student or staff "buddy"/mentor
- Recommendation for external counseling
- Peer-to-peer meeting

- Electronic device confiscated
- Out-of-classroom "time away" -- referral to Dean's Office
- Loss of classroom/school privileges
- In-school disciplinary action (which includes, but is not limited to, exclusion from recess, communal lunch, enrichment activities, sports, school events, trips, or activities)
- After-school detention
- In-school suspension
- Out-of-school suspension
- Referral to law enforcement, depending upon nature of infraction and at the discretion of school personnel

<p>Level 4 -- Egregious Infractions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committing a Level 3 Infraction after intervention • Arson • Assault and battery of school personnel • Bomb threat • Drugs or alcohol: selling, using, possession • Fighting, or assault and battery, resulting in, or with the intention of causing, serious injury to a peer • Sexual assault or harassment • Threat of physical violence (empty or real), harassment, intimidation, or extreme bullying behavior • Weapon/Weapon-Like Object: possession or use of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendation for external counseling • Assignments/projects which require student to reflect on behavior in writing or orally (depending on grade) • Student-Family-Administrator Conference • Verbal or written apology to community • Disciplinary Committee Hearing with school officials and network representatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of classroom/school privileges • In-school disciplinary action (which includes, but is not limited to, exclusion from recess, communal lunch, enrichment activities, sports, school events, trips, or activities) • After-school detention • In-school suspension • Out-of-school suspension • Expulsion • Referral to law enforcement, depending upon nature of infraction and at the discretion of school personnel
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before moving to the "next level" for repeated infractions, staff should implement multiple interventions and supports listed. For example, a repeated Level 2 infraction should not be elevated to a Level 3 infraction unless staff have attempted to address the behavior with multiple interventions and supports. • Consequences are not mutually exclusive of each other, and staff may implement multiple consequences when appropriate. For example, certain infractions may warrant an out-of-school suspension and a loss of classroom privileges upon the student's return to school. • Serious misconduct outside of the school is considered a school disciplinary offense when evidence exists that the student's behavior or the student's continued presence at the school poses a significant detrimental impact on the learning environment and/or would create a risk of substantial disruption to the work of the school. • Schools reserve the right to alter consequences at their discretion. Any of the offenses listed in the matrix may result in immediate expulsion depending on the severity of the action. 		

Discipline Policy for Students with Disabilities: At our schools, we ensure that when scholars with IEPs, students in the evaluation process/students who should be in the evaluation process, and students with 504 Plans receive consequences for behavior that they receive the proper due process they are entitled to. The School recognizes that it may be necessary to suspend, remove, or otherwise discipline scholars with disabilities to address disruptive or problem behavior. The School also recognizes that scholars with disabilities are entitled to

certain procedural protections throughout the discipline process. The School is committed to ensuring that the procedures followed for suspending, removing or otherwise disciplining scholars with disabilities are consistent with the procedural safeguards required by applicable laws and regulations. In the event that your scholar with a disability is suspended for more than 10 school days, you are entitled to a Manifestation Determination Review (“MDR”). The purpose of the MDR is to determine whether or not the student’s behavior is a result of their disability or a failure to implement the IEP or 504 plan. If behaviors are a function of their disability, we will adjust our consequences accordingly to ensure compliance with federal and state due process regulations. For scholars with IEPs and student in or entering the evaluation process the MDR will be facilitated by the Committee on Special Education. For scholars with 504 Plans the MDR will be facilitated by the school. You may contact the Support Services Coordinator for further details.

Student Safety and Health

Confidentiality Policy: Personal information about individual students is considered confidential. We store this information in student files that are located in a locked file cabinet. These records are only available to those staff members who work with the students. Files may not be removed from the building except when they are officially requested from another school.

A student’s family has the legal right to inspect and review their child’s file upon written request to the Director of Operations. Families also have the right to representation during any review of their child’s record.

Conversations between teachers, administration, and families about students, their specific educational concerns, or their past records are confidential. Information should not be shared with staff members or school community members that are not directly involved with the student. If an individual believes that this confidentiality has been violated, the individual should bring their concern to the attention of the Director of Operations. The Director of Operations will review the situation and determine if the policy has been violated. If the Director of Operations determines that an individual has violated the confidentiality policy, he or she will be subject to disciplinary action.

Mandated Reporting: Members of the Explore Schools staff are known as “Mandated Reporters”, in compliance with state law. If a member of the staff suspects that a child is being abused or neglected, they are obligated to report their suspicion to the Administration for Children’s Services (ACS). Sign of abuse or neglect may include but are not limited to; patterns of lateness to school and absence from school, late pick-up from school or the school bus; consistently unkempt or dirty; signs of physical abuse.

Incident Reports: Any accident involving a student will be documented. The nurse will contact the family; if the family cannot be reached, the nurse will send a report home with the student.

Suicide Threat: If a student threatens their own life or the life of someone else, this will be brought immediately to the attention of the School Social Worker or Counselor. If the School Social Worker or Counselor feels that the child is in imminent danger, the family will be contacted, and a psychological evaluation will be required before the child can return to school. When a student exhibits potentially suicidal behavior and the family refuses to cooperate with the school or to take alternative preventive measures, the School Social Worker must report this information immediately to the Administration for Children's Services.

Medical and Immunization Information: All students must be immunized, in compliance with New York State law, unless they receive an exemption for the Department of Health or the Department of Education's Health Office. Students who do not have the proper immunizations will be denied access to the school until the immunizations are administered. Families are asked to alert their child's teacher and indicate on their child's Emergency Contact Card with information about any allergies from which their children suffer.

Please note that in emergency medical circumstances wherein the school-based nurse is unable to resolve a situation, the student will be sent to the Hospital Emergency Room for treatment. Students sent to the Hospital will be accompanied by an Explore Schools' staff member if a family member is not available to accompany the child.

The school nurse provided by Department of Health and Mental Hygiene Members is authorized to administer prescribed medication only if the family submits signed documentation from the doctor. Over-the-counter medication **CANNOT** be administered in the school.

Student Elevator Use: If the building has a functioning elevator, Students are not permitted to use the elevator unless they have a health condition documented by a doctor. Students who have permission to use the elevator must be escorted by a staff member.

Student Meals

Explore Schools works with the Office of School Food through the New York City Department of Education to provide breakfast and lunch to students each day. Although breakfast and lunch are provided to all students free of charge, families will be required to complete an Income Inquiry Form at the beginning of each school year. Refer to the School Foods website for more details about the program. Families can complete this form digitally at <https://www.applyforlunch.com/> These forms are used to determine how much federal funding our school gets to provide additional services to students, so it is really important that you complete it as soon as possible.

If you prefer not to complete the Income Inquiry Form online, we will be sending a paper version home with your child in September. It is important that when you receive the lunch application you complete it as soon as possible.

Your privacy is important to us. All information is kept confidential. Federal regulations do not allow the Department of Education to share your information with any other agency. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact School Food at (877) 363-6325.

If your student has any food allergies, please submit signed documentation from your family doctor to the main office. Accommodations for any food allergies will not be made without documentation from your family doctor. Students may also bring their own food for breakfast, lunch, or snack. While we will have a milk chest and food warmer for school provided meals, we will not have a microwave or refrigerator available for student use for meals brought from home. Students should not bring meals that need to be heated or refrigerated. Please note that if your child requests a school lunch, they will be provided one, regardless of any other food they may have eaten or brought from home.

Internet and IT Acceptable Use Policy

Explore Schools provides its students with internet access and information technology resources for school-related, educational purposes. These resources include Wi-Fi internet, laptops, Chromebooks, and Google Apps for Education accounts. This access requires users to act responsibly and adhere to legal standards, Department of Education policies, and Explore School's values. Explore Schools regulates student behavior online using the same high expectations we have for our students at all times; as such, students are expected and required to avoid actions that are dishonest, unkind, or invasive, even if those actions are not prohibited by law.

Access to these resources is a privilege. The school maintains the right to revoke IT privileges or issue consequences for any behaviors it deems to be unacceptable; this includes the right to review student accounts, and violation of this policy can result in disciplinary action that may include immediate suspension or termination of a user account. If a student's access is revoked, Explore Schools will ensure that the student can participate in related educational activities to meet learning objectives.

Family Notification and Responsibility: Explore Schools' Internet Acceptable Use Policy restricts the access of inappropriate material, and while using the system student use will be supervised. Due to the wide-ranging material available on the internet, some material may not fit the particular values of the students and their families. Because of this, it is not practical for Explore Schools to monitor and enforce a wide range of social values in student use of the Internet. If families do not want students to access information beyond the scope of the Internet Acceptable Use Policy, families should instruct students not to access such materials.

Internet Usage and Privileges: As required by the Children's Internet Protection Act ("CIPA"), Explore Schools will monitor students' online activities. Such monitoring may lead to discovery that the user has violated the Internet and IT Acceptable Use Policy, the student disciplinary code, or the law.

Student users will not post or transmit photographs or personal contact information about themselves or other people without prior written guardian consent from the family of that student.

Student users will not agree to meet with someone they have met online without their family's approval and participation.

Student users will disclose to their teacher or other school employee any message they receive that is inappropriate or makes them feel uncomfortable.

Students are strictly prohibited from accessing social networking or chat sites, and agree that creating or sharing threatening, offensive, or abusive language or content via email, social media, etc. is a violation of their internet use agreement.

Google Apps for Education Accounts via Hapara Platform: Explore Schools provides eligible students with Google Apps for Education accounts, which include Gmail email addresses for login purposes. This tool may also include free, web-based programs such as calendars, documents, and collaboration tools. This tool will be accessed via Explore Schools' system and is intended for educational use. Accounts are accessible at home, the library, or anywhere with Internet access. Families share Explore Schools' responsibility of monitoring their child's use of this tool outside of Explore Schools' system.

Student Attendance and Transportation

Student Attendance: At Explore Schools we take attendance very seriously and view it as a key lever of student achievement. We track when students are absent, tardy, or leave early, and you should expect to receive communication about your student's attendance throughout the year, especially when the student is frequently absent or tardy, or leaves early often.

An automated call will alert the families of students on days when they are absent or tardy. Please contact the main office if you think you have received an absent/tardy call in error. Absences and tardies may ONLY be excused for the following reasons:

- Illness
- death in the family
- religious observance
- required court appearance
- attendance at a health clinic or hospital
- other medical visit

Appropriate documentation, given to the main office, is required to excuse an absence. A doctor's note is required for students who have been absent for two or more days due to illness. **No exceptions to Explore Schools' attendance policy are made for family vacation.** Students who have more than fifteen absences (a combination of excused and unexcused absences) or thirty tardies/early pick-ups may jeopardize promotion to the next grade level.

Explore Schools' staff will investigate any situation in which a student has more than ten unexcused absences or 15 unexcused tardies. A conference may be called with the family and a member of administration. At that time, a plan will be outlined to help make sure that the student is arriving to school every day on time. If this plan is not followed and excessive absences or tardies continue, this may be considered educational neglect and reported to the Administration for Children's Services (ACS).

Full Fare Transportation- Yellow Bus Service: Students eligible for full fare transportation may apply for yellow bus service, which is available at some of our campuses. If available, yellow bus service is bus service provided from designated stops at designated times to and from schools receiving this service. To apply for yellow bus service, a student must meet the following criteria:

- The student’s school must have yellow bus service.
- The student must be in grades K-6.
- The student’s residence must be in the same district as the school (if attending a public school) or the same borough (if attending a charter or non-public school).

A minimum number of students (11) must live in proximity to one another to permit creation of a route that does not extend beyond five miles when measured through all the stops on the route. If the above criteria are met and the student applies for yellow bus service, the student will be assigned to a bus stop by his or her school. If you are interested in yellow bus service for your student, please reach out to the main office to see if this service is available at your school. If bus service is mandated on a student’s IEP it will be provided regardless of yellow bus availability for general education students.

If yellow bus service is not available in your school, please contact the main office for information on additional transportation options. Families will be responsible for getting their child to and from school.

Full Fare Metro Card Transportation: Students eligible for full fare transportation may be issued a Full-fare Metro Card by requesting one in the main office.

Half Fare Metro Card Transportation: Students not eligible for full-fare transportation may be issued a Half-Fare Metro Card by requesting one from the main office.

What is a Half-Fare Metro Card?: A Half-Fare Metro Card allows a student to travel to and from school and school-related activities on buses only.

How Much Does a Student Pay for a Half-Fare Metro Card?: The family/student contributes half of the cost of the fare.

Loss of Metro Cards: Request for the replacement of Metro Cards must be completed in writing and given to the Main Office. Explore Schools relies on the NYC DOE Office of Transportation to replace these Metro Cards, so there may be delays in processing these requests.

		DISTANCE FROM RESIDENCE TO SCHOOL			
		Less than ½ mile A*	½ mile or more, but less than 1 mile B*	1 mile or more but less than 1½ miles C*	1½ miles or more D*
GRADE LEVEL	K-2	Not Eligible**	Eligible for Full Fare Transportation		
	3-6	Transportation Not Provided	Eligible for Full Fare Transportation		
	7-12	Transportation Not Provided	Not Eligible**		Eligible for Full Fare Transportation

*Students in these categories are not eligible for full fare transportation. These students may receive a half fare student Metro Card good for use on buses only. These half fare Metro Cards are provided as a courtesy by the Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA)

Additional Policies

Field Trips: During registration, families grant their student permission to participate in school-related field trips that are within walking distance by completing the Handbook Sign-off Page. Families will be required to sign permission slips for any field trips that require transportation (bus or subway) and will send home permission slips prior to the trip.

Although some field trips will be free for students, certain trips will require a fee (transportation costs, entrance fees, etc.). We will make every effort to keep these fees to a minimum. In addition, when families are notified about a field trip, we may send a list of items needed for participation in the trip. Gift shops are typically not visited during field trips and purchases are not permitted. Please do not send money with your student to make a purchase from the gift shop. At times teachers will ask for a limited amount of family chaperones to attend field trips. Family chaperones are required to supervise students at all times and uphold Explore Schools' expectations. Family chaperones may not leave the field trip early and must come to and from the school with the class.

Family Volunteer Opportunities: As a family member of an Explore Schools student, you have the opportunity to volunteer at the school. This may include helping to supervise a field trip as mentioned above, working in the office, assisting your child's teacher, or assisting at breakfast or lunch duty. Volunteers working with students must have a staff member present. To volunteer in your child's classroom or to supervise a field trip, please contact your child's teacher directly. To volunteer on a regular basis, please contact the school's main office.

Attending School Events: Families are encouraged to attend many school events throughout the year. Invitations to events will always be communicated to families in advance via newsletters, fliers, and automated calls. Students in grades K-8 must be accompanied by a family member to attend events at school unless otherwise specified.

Holiday Policy: Explore Schools does not endorse any religious holidays during the school year.

Recess Procedures: Students will have recess every day. There will be indoor recess on days when there is inclement weather, such as rain or snow, or temperatures below 32 degrees Fahrenheit. Students may stay inside during recess only if the school is provided with a doctor's note stating that they may not go outside.

Requesting Teachers: School administration does not assign or switch students to a teacher of their choice. Similarly, while families may have a preference for a specific teacher, it is our policy to select each teacher's class roster at our discretion. If you have a question or concern about your student's teacher, please speak to the teacher directly or to the Principal/Academic Director for your child's grade. We will make every effort to ensure that your student's classroom experience is safe and meaningful. The school's leadership team went through a rigorous teacher selection process in which their teaching abilities were assessed. Additionally, references were checked, and a criminal background check was completed on each teacher. Please note that during the school year, school administration may make determinations to switch children's classes based on academic and/or behavioral concerns. You will be contacted directly if this is being considered for your student.

School Closing Due to Inclement Weather: In the event of inclement weather, we will follow the New York City Department of Education school closing policy. In the event that the New York City Department of Education is not in session, Explore Schools will also be closed. 1010 WINS announces all NYC DOE school closure information. If the NYC DOE is not in session and there is inclement weather, the network Managing Director of Operations will lead the determination. Families will also be notified via an automated call.

Other Emergency School Closings: In the event of an unforeseen emergency that results in the need to close school, families will be notified via an automated call.

Student Records: The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99) is a Federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. The law applies to all schools that receive funds under an applicable program of the U.S. Department of Education.

FERPA gives families certain rights with respect to their children's education records. These rights transfer to the student when he or she reaches the age of 18 or attends a school beyond the high school level. Students to whom the rights have transferred are "eligible students."

- Families or eligible students have the right to inspect and review the student's education records maintained by the school within 45 days of the day the School receives a request for access. Families or eligible students should submit to the Director of Operations a written request that identifies the record(s) they wish to inspect. The Director of Operations will make arrangements for access and notify the family or eligible student of the time and place where the records may be inspected. Schools are not required to provide copies of records unless, for reasons such as great distance, it is impossible for families or eligible students to review the records. Schools may charge a fee for copies.
- Families or eligible students have the right to request that a school correct records which they believe to be inaccurate or misleading. If the school decides not to amend the record, the family or eligible student then has the right to a formal hearing. After the hearing, if the school still decides not to amend the record, the family or eligible student has the right to place a statement with the record setting forth his or her view about the contested information.
- Generally, schools must have written permission from the family or eligible student in order to release any information from a student's education record. However, FERPA allows schools to disclose those records, without consent, to the following parties or under the following conditions (34 CFR § 99.31):
 - School officials with legitimate educational interest;
 - Other schools to which a student is transferring;
 - Specified officials for audit or evaluation purposes;
 - Appropriate parties in connection with financial aid to a student;
 - Organizations conducting certain studies for or on behalf of the school;
 - Accrediting organizations;
 - To comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena;
 - Appropriate officials in cases of health and safety emergencies; and
 - State and local authorities, within a juvenile justice system, pursuant to specific State law.

Schools may disclose, without consent, “directory” information such as a student’s name, address, telephone number, date and place of birth, honors and awards, and dates of attendance. However, schools must tell families and eligible students about directory information and allow families and eligible students a reasonable amount of time to request that the school not disclose directory information about them. If you wish to keep your student’s directory information confidential please notify the school’s Director of Operations in writing.

For additional information, you may call 1-800-USA-LEARN (1-800-872-5327) (voice). Individuals who use TDD may call 1-800-437-0833.

Or you may contact us at the following address:

Family Policy Compliance Office
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20202-8520

To facilitate provision of the Professional Development and Data Storage Services and related purposes, Explore Schools may disclose to a limited number of vendors student-related records and personally identifiable information contained in such records (collectively, “Student Records”). Pursuant to its obligations under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, 20 USC §1232g, and its implementing regulations, 34 CFR pt. 99, as each may be amended from time to time (“FERPA”), Explore Schools hereby acknowledges that, in the course of providing the Professional Development, Data Storage Services and related purposes, the limited vendors are school officials with legitimate educational interests in the Student Records disclosed to them, pursuant to 34 CFR §99.31(a) (1). Each of these vendors agrees to use, maintain, and re-disclose Student Records only in accordance with the requirements of FERPA. Without limiting the foregoing, each vendor agrees that it shall not maintain, use, disclose, or allow access to Student Records except as permitted by this Agreement or as otherwise authorized by Explore Schools or by law, and will use Student Records disclosed by Explore Schools only for the purposes for which such disclosure was made. Explore Schools acknowledges that vendors may re-disclose Student Records to third parties pursuant to their provision of the Professional Development and Data Storage Services, as provided in 34 C.F.R. § 99.33(b),

If you have questions about the current list of vendors, and the types of access these companies have, please contact the school’s main office.

Additionally, teachers will sometimes display grade work and assessment scores in support of Student Achievement. If you have questions or would like to request that your student’s work not be displayed, please contact the main office.

Freedom of Information Law: Explore Schools complies with the New York State Freedom of Information Law (Article 6 of the New York Public Officers Law). This means certain school records can be made available to the public upon request because Explore Schools are publicly funded schools. Copies of our school’s FOIL policy are available in the main office. For more information about the

process for requesting records please contact the school's Director of Operations who serves as the school's Records Access Officer.

Title I Information: This policy is updated annually by the Title I committee. Please reach out to your school's main office if you would like to ensure you have the most updated copy. An annual open meeting is hosted at the beginning of the school year to learn more about how we participate in Title I programs.

Student Media Consent and Release Form

Throughout the school year, students may be highlighted in efforts to promote Explore Schools' activities and accomplishments. For example, students and student work may be featured in materials to train teachers and/or increase public awareness of our network schools through print media, radio, TV, the web, DVDs, displays, brochures, MTA ads, and other types of media. In addition, in the context of instruction, improving our school, sharing best practices with others, and research for educational purposes, videos or other recordings may be made of our students, student work, and classrooms, which may include student voices and images.

I, as the guardian of _____, hereby consent and give Explore Schools and its employees, representatives, agents, and authorized media organizations permission to videotape, photograph, interview, and/or record my child or my child's school work for use in audio, video, film, or any other electronic, digital, and printed media, both during and after my child's enrollment at an Explore Schools location.

I also grant Explore Schools permission to edit, use, and reuse any such products for non-profit purposes, including but not limited to education-related purposes, events and presentations (such as conferences and workshops); school events (including website and social media images); fundraising; and classroom activities.

I am fully aware that I will not receive monetary compensation for my child's participation.

I also hereby release Explore Schools and its employees, representatives, agents, and authorized media organizations from all claims, demands, and liabilities whatsoever in connection with the above.

OR – Sign below if you are opting to “decline” the use of your student’s image:

I, as the guardian of _____, do not consent.

Please print (all information below is required of all guardians):

Name of child _____ Grade _____

Street Address _____ City / Zip _____

Name of parent/guardian _____

Signature of parent/guardian _____

Date _____ Phone Number _____

Family Student Handbook Sign-Off Page

Please complete this form and return it to your school's Main Office.

Handbook – I have received the Explore Schools' Family Student Handbook. I understand it is my responsibility to read the Handbook to understand the school's policies and procedures, and to discuss them with my child.

Internet Acceptable Use Policy – I have read the Explore Schools Internet and IT Acceptable Use Policy in this handbook and agree to the terms of the policy.

Permission to Release Address and Phone Number – I hereby give Explore Schools permission to print my address and phone number. I understand that this information will only be used by staff, parents and guardians who are members of the school's community.

Field Trip Permission – I hereby give permission for my child to walk to recreational spaces with a two-mile radius of my child's school. Notification for field trips and special activity dates and locations will be sent in advance of the field trip or special activity. I may decline my child's attendance by submitting a request in writing.

Student Media Consent and Release Form – I have received the Explore Schools Student Media Consent and Release Form as included in this Family Student Handbook and have returned the signed form to my school's main office.

<p>By signing the Family & Scholar Handbook sign-off page, you are indicating that you agree* to all the policies and procedures as documented. You are committed to working together with Explore Schools to adhere to our expectations for all scholars. If you have multiple children attending Explore Schools, please list each of them below.</p>	
Today's Date	
Name of Child(ren)	
Name of Parent/Guardian	
Signature of Parent/Guardian	

**If you do not wish to agree to all of the policies and procedures, please request an alternate Parent/Guardian Sign-off page in your school's the main office.*