



Explore Schools

EXPLORE SCHOOLS OF BROOKLYN NETWORK-WIDE FAMILY & SCHOLAR 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.



EXPLORE

CHARTER SCHOOL



EMPOWER

CHARTER SCHOOL



EXCEL

CHARTER SCHOOL



EXCEED

CHARTER SCHOOL

Updated June 2023

TABLE OF CONTENTS

WELCOME FROM OUR CEO	2
INTRODUCTION	3
EXPLORE SCHOOLS' VISION STATEMENTS	4
ACADEMICS	7
FAMILY & SCHOOL COMMUNICATION	11
FORMAL COMPLAINT POLICY	14
BEHAVIOR EXPECTATIONS	16
STUDENT SAFETY AND HEALTH	24
TECHNOLOGY AND INTERNET ACCEPTABLE USE POLICIES.....	34
STUDENT ATTENDANCE AND TRANSPORTATION.....	39
ADDITIONAL POLICIES	42
STUDENT MEDIA CONSENT AND RELEASE FORM.....	53
NETWORK-WIDE FAMILY POLICIES SIGN-OFF PAGE	54

WELCOME FROM OUR CEO

Dear Families,

Welcome to the 2023-2024 School Year at Explore Schools!

We are excited to introduce our shared priority for this year: Develop our Expertise. Elevate Student Learning. As a community, we prioritize the growth and outcomes of all our members, including both staff and students. We firmly believe that student progress and achievements are directly influenced by our own personal and professional development. Our goal is to foster a strong connection between the growth of our adult community and the support we provide to students, enabling them to succeed not only in school but also in their future endeavors.

We look forward to coming together to learn, grow, and celebrate our collective achievements. This year, we have incorporated the valuable lessons we have learned from previous years, integrating the best practices into our schools, which will allow students to thrive academically and personally.

Our network serves over 2,000 students across Brooklyn, and our dedicated staff at each school wholeheartedly believes in our mission to equip every student with the necessary academic skills and critical thinking abilities to succeed in college-preparatory high schools and beyond.

We are excited about the journey ahead and look forward to working together to create a supportive and enriching learning environment for all. Let us embrace this new school year with enthusiasm and dedication to make it a memorable and successful one. Here's to a fantastic year!

Sincerely,

Karen Annette Francois

Chief Executive Officer of Explore Schools Inc

INTRODUCTION

The following sections outline network-wide policies and practices upheld at each of the schools within the Explore Schools network. These include:

- Details about the academic program and what families can expect in terms of promotional criteria, homework, support services, and other policies related to classes.
- Resources and protocols for family communication
- The Formal Complaint Policy
- Behavioral expectations and details on how the network addresses interventions and consequences, including expectations outside of the classroom.
- Resources for families around student health and safety
- Technology and fair use policies with regard to the internet
- Information on attendance practices and transportation options
- Additional policies not covered by the above-mentioned categories.

While these are the general policies for the network, there may be changes and alterations for a given year to address extenuating circumstances, such as the need to operate a fully remote or hybrid academic program.

In addition to network-wide policies and protocols, this document also includes the vision and belief statements that guide the network's planning and decision-making.

Each school also maintains a Family Student Handbook with school-specific policies and protocols. It is strongly recommended that families keep a copy of their school-specific handbook as well and refer to it for policies and procedures not addressed in the following pages.

If you would like more information about anything in this document, please reach out to our Family Engagement Manager, Yetunde Olayinka, at yolayinka@explorenetwork.org

EXPLORE SCHOOLS' VISION STATEMENTS

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION BELIEF STATEMENT

As an organization, we acknowledge the detrimental impact of racism and systems of oppression. We envision a pathway to equity that features excellent curriculum and instruction in response to the opportunity gap—providing our scholars with access and opportunities to succeed. We commit to reflect individually on the roles we play within systems of oppression; and we channel our individual talents and cultural sensitivity to help our scholars and local community thrive.

WE DO THIS BY:

- Centering equity in our work—layering it into all of our decision-making.
- Empowering our scholars through teaching that balances cognitive development and critical thinking skills, and through responsive, rigorous, standards-aligned curriculum.
- Ensuring our adults have the necessary cultural competence to serve our students holistically.

DEI COMMON LANGUAGE DEFINITIONS

- **DIVERSITY:**
At Explore, Diversity is when different groups or ideas come together with a liberated mindset to help students connect to their own identity and the broader world. We enable this through our curriculum—intentionally featuring diversity of thought in classrooms, and equipping teachers with skills to create and modify culturally relevant content. For us, diversity includes race, gender expression, nationality, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, ability, religion, and socioeconomic status, as well as other ways people might identify differently.
- **EQUITY:**
Equity means that everyone can access opportunities and resources to reach their full potential. At Explore, we actively work against implicit and unconscious bias, and remove the predictability of success or failure that currently correlates with any social or cultural factor. To do this, we customize the way we educate our students and adjust based on their individual needs.
- **INCLUSION:**
Inclusion is intentionally creating space for all voices to be heard, respected and valued. At Explore, this means having a culture of acceptance and opportunity—where students and adults who have diverse perspectives, beliefs and identities can be their authentic selves, pursue their personal goals and help fulfill Explore's mission.

ANTI-WHITE SUPREMACY STATEMENT

- Explore School is committed to providing a workplace that is free from bias, discrimination, and harassment. We acknowledge that historically, in our country, because of white supremacy, power, privilege, and institutionalized racism, the thoughts, actions, and feelings of White people have had more perceived value than those of People of Color. We recognize the impact these systems of oppression have on our community.
- As such, we are working to ensure that our policies and practices are designed to counter those historic (un)truths and affirm our commitment to recognizing, addressing, and eradicating all forms of white supremacy, racism, and systems of oppression.
- We vow to provide education for our staff members, to provide support in difficult situations, and to recognize our own shortcomings. We support, encourage, and expect courageous conversations around race, power, and privilege and expect that all staff members are open to and actively engaging in them.
- We ask staff members to understand and recognize how race, power, and privilege (individually, interpersonally, and institutionally) inform the ways in which they interact with coworkers, students, and families, and to ask for help when needed. We will do our due diligence to create, protect, and maintain safe spaces for all staff members.

EXPLORE SCHOOLS CULTURE VISION

At Explore Schools, we know that student culture is foundational to fulfill our mission and commitment to equity. Through prioritizing establishing student-centered classrooms, we believe we create an environment where our students can gain the academic skills and critical-thinking abilities they need to succeed in a college-preparatory high school.

This vision for student culture operates in service of our instructional vision, which is characterized by cognitive engagement, rigorous, transferrable thinking and authentic instruction.

Our schools foster a culture of achievement characterized by the following hallmarks:

- We focus on thinking and learning.
 - Our students *value their own academic growth* and recognize that their effort impacts achievement.
 - Our students demonstrate a *love of learning*, and teachers create a *joyful sense of urgency* in their classroom
 - *We use time well to maximize learning* and minimize distractions through intentional, clear and predictable routines and systems.
- We put the needs of students first.

- We anticipate that *our students may need different things at different times*, and we work relentlessly to find creative solutions to ensure that *all* our students are successful.
- We intentionally *teach students the skills they need* to make positive decisions.
- We design and implement interventions and consequences with *the goal of changing behavior*, not punishing misbehavior.
- Our schools have a palpable sense of community.
 - All community members foster a spirit of *welcoming and warmth*.
 - We cultivate authentic and meaningful *relationships* with students and families.
 - All community members demonstrate *mutual respect* and *solve problems collaboratively*.
 - All community members work together to ensure *safe and orderly* classrooms, hallways, and common spaces.

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.

We, at Explore Schools, are supporting our students to:

- create and celebrate their identity and readers and writers.
- see themselves as scientists, mathematicians, and technicians by doing the bulk of the thinking work in learning.
- leverage their brilliance by grounding in and building upon their skills and intellect.
- deepen their intellectualism and criticality through discussion and discourse experience.

To meet that goal, students engage in the study of literacy, mathematics, social studies, science, the arts, and physical movement during each of the four 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 Next Generation Learning Standards, <http://www.nysed.gov/curriculum-instruction>. 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, problem-solving abilities, and fluency in mathematical facts and operations. Components of this program include a core math lesson (primarily discourse-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. In grades K - 4, students also have a math stories lesson that promotes representing problems for deepening understanding and engaging in discussion to promote flexible thinking, problem-solving, and critical thinking.

Literacy instruction includes many facets to ensure that students can critically think about the text and communicate their ideas to the world orally and in writing. In grades K-2, reading instruction focuses on developing foundational reading skills such as phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and word study (sight words, grammar, spelling) 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 discussions, small group reading instruction, and independent reading.

In grades 3-8, students build their knowledge and capacity to read through thinking, talking, and writing about complex texts. Students build knowledge about the world by reading different text types, including but not limited to poems, novels, nonfiction books, academic papers, and newspaper articles.

They engage in structured collaborative discussion in pairs, small groups, and as a whole group about the topics and texts they are reading. Our K-8 grade students also engage in a Close Reading block, where learn to make meaning of grade-level, authentic texts. Students identify the precise central idea of the text so that they can apply what they learned about the process of identifying the central idea to any text they encounter. Students are empowered to understand how authors construct meaning through their craft and structure choices.

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.

SPECIAL POPULATIONS SERVICES

We believe that ALL students can achieve at the highest levels and deserve an exemplary education, where all members of the Explore community:

- Emphasize content mastery for ALL students (including those in the RTI process, multilingual learners, and students with disabilities)
- Provide empowering, data-driven support rather than lowering expectations.
- Understand students’ strengths and encourage scholars to advocate for their learning styles.
- Inspire students to be lifelong learners and independent thinkers by honoring their identity, strengths, and abilities.

At Explore Schools, we believe that all children can learn when immersed in a rich environment full of high expectations, rigorous academics, and caring, committed adults. We believe equity and excellence are not mutually exclusive—we can meet the needs of all students in our schools, while actively partnering with parents and driving toward excellent academic results. Explore Schools has a multi-tiered system of support to meet the needs of all learners. Our multi-tiered system of support creates inclusive and equitable systems that ensure that all students have equal opportunities to learn and develop their social-emotional well-being at high levels. Our staff is equipped with the necessary tools and supports to cultivate identity, skills, intellect, and criticality in all of our students.

In order to achieve this vision, we provide the following services:

RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION

- Small group intervention for literacy and math
- Social-emotional and behavioral support
- At-risk counseling
- Tutoring

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES (AS MANDATED BY IEPS)

- Special Education Teacher Support Services
- Integrated Co-Teaching Classrooms
- 12:1:1 Classrooms
- Counseling
- Contracted Related Services: physical therapy, occupation therapy, speech therapy, paraprofessional support.

**These services are available across our network but might not be available at every school.*

MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS

Standalone and integrated language instruction based on student's proficiency level as indicated by New York State Identification and Examination Policies.

IDENTIFICATION

We implement RTI cycles which include universal screening, data analysis and intervention planning, intervention implementation, and progress monitoring to ensure effectiveness. Throughout this process, progress and concerns will be communicated to families.

If a student has been receiving targeted support and has not made significant progress, the school support team may recommend evaluating a student for special education services. In addition, at any time, a family may request that their student receive intervention service and/or be evaluated for special education services by the Committee for Special Education.

K-8 GRADING POLICY

Our grading policy reflects our values around sharing accurate and objective feedback with students and their families about what they know and demonstrate. It is designed so that students' overall grades are not disproportionately affected by one assessment grade or one day. Specific policies vary by grade band and by subject, but students will receive a final course average for each class.

HOMEWORK (K-8)

Homework is assigned regularly in all core subjects: Math, ELA, Social Studies, and Science. Homework will be checked on a regular basis for completion and or 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.

- All homework is to be turned in to the classroom teacher or updated electronically at the beginning of the period.
- If a student has a question about a homework assignment, they should call or email their teacher. Students should also use their classmates as a resource in answering general questions, but students are responsible for completing their own work.

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 prepared 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 the families of each student. Please read school communication for specific information pertaining to meetings you are required to attend.

FAMILY & SCHOOL COMMUNICATION

Family engagement is important to the success of every student. Together, we will achieve our mission and every student will be on a path to a college preparatory high school. 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

PARENTSQUARE

ParentSquare is the communication tool used by Explore Schools to share posts, notifications, alerts, emails, texts, and calls. ParentSquare can be used online or through a web application and improves communication, coordination, and engagement between home and school. At Explore we use ParentSquare to share our school calendar, send important messages and alerts, share surveys and seek RSVPs for upcoming events. ParentSquare also allows families to receive information in languages that they are most comfortable with, and can be leveraged to:

- Receive or send information - email, calls, text messages.
- Get notices from class, grade, school, or network.
- Receive materials in your preferred language.
- Respond to surveys and other forms.
- Schedule appointments.

Parent groups such as the Parent Teachers Association or Organization can also create communication groups to easily share information.

POWERSCHOOL'S PARENT PORTAL

PowerSchool is the Student Information System (SIS) used by Explore Schools of Brooklyn for student contacts, attendance, grades, etc. PowerSchool's Parent Portal is the family-facing version of our SIS that provides families with real-time access to information connected to their student accounts. Families can leverage that Parent Portal to view student-specific information and provide updates.

Families receive a web access username and password, unique to them and connected to their personal email accounts. Access to PowerSchool's Parent Portal allows families to **view grades, report cards, and attendance**. Families may also use this platform to upload important documents, sign agreements, and make updates to information connected to their child's profile, such as contact information.

STAFF COMMUNICATION

All staff members have cell phones, email accounts, and ParentSquare accounts to discuss instructional and non-instructional content.

For requests or concerns related to transportation, attendance records, enrollment verification letters, report cards, and other administrative needs, families can contact their school's main office for support.

For instructional support and questions, teachers may not be accessible to communicate during hours of instruction but will check their cell phones and other correspondence and respond within one business day.

FAMILY CONFERENCES

Families and teachers have the opportunity to discuss each student's progress two times per year. It is mandatory for families to attend each of the family-teacher conferences. Each Fall and Spring, please look out for communication from your child's teacher about scheduling your conference.

REPORT CARDS

Report cards will be issued at the end of each term and will be either mailed home or shared electronically. Please check in with your school's leadership team for more details about report card timing and policies.

CLASSROOM VISITS

We have an "open-door" policy - families are encouraged to visit their child's classroom. Please coordinate 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. Please remember to check in at the main office when arriving at school.

All visitors are required to present a government-issued photo ID to enter Department of Education buildings.

All families and visitors will be required to follow school guidance aligned with Department of Health and Department of Education regulations. Furthermore, visitors must adhere to school-based health and safety policies to support health and safety in our school building.

A NOTE ABOUT CO-LOCATION

While each of our schools are individual entities, all Explore Schools of Brooklyn Charter Schools are co-located in New York City Department of Education buildings, sharing space and resources with one or more public schools. As co-located schools, our schools share common school-building spaces such as the gymnasium, auditorium, cafeteria, library, and recess yard. We also share the support of our school-building resources and staff, including the school safety agents, school nurse, custodial team, and kitchen staff. While we are in a shared school building, we coordinate routinely to allow schools to maintain their unique properties and attributes. Our schools work with their co-located partners to arrange for separate arrival, lunch/recess, and dismissal times.

It is important that our school leaders work to ensure the safety of our entire school building community; therefore, every school in the building collaborates and coordinates to align on safety and emergency response procedures, including visitor policy, response to evacuations, lockdowns, shelter-ins, holds and other emergency protocols, and how we prepare students to respond in the event of an emergency.

With this, we commit to upholding a respectful and safe environment for all staff and students within our school buildings. We request your support in upholding and reinforcing these expectations. If there are issues or concerns regarding interactions and/or expectations involving our shared building community, please contact your school's main office.

FORMAL COMPLAINT POLICY

A formal complaint is a complaint that concerns an alleged violation of the law and/or the Explore Schools' charter. An individual who (or a group that) has a formal complaint may voluntarily follow the informal complaint procedures set forth in each school's individual handbook. Alternatively, the individual or group may bring their formal complaint directly to the Explore Schools Board of Trustees by filing the complaint in writing with the Board's designee, the Explore Schools Senior Director of Family Engagement and Community Partnerships, Q'tyashia Arrington.

Q'tyashia Arrington, the Explore Schools Senior Director of Family Engagement and Community Partnerships, can be reached in the following ways:

E-MAIL:

qarrington@explorenetwork.org

MAILING ADDRESS:

Q'tyashia Arrington, Senior Director of Family Engagement & Community Partnerships
Explore Schools Inc.
20 Jay Street, Suite 211
Brooklyn, NY 11201

The Senior Director of Family Engagement and Community Partnerships will forward the complaint to the Explore Schools Board of Trustees who shall then appoint a designee(s) from Explore Schools, Inc. who is not directly involved to review and investigate the complaint. The Board's designee(s) will provide a written response to the complainant within 45 days of receipt of the formal complaint. Along with its written response, the Board of Trustees or the Board's designee(s) shall provide the complainant with written notice that they may appeal the Board's decision to the SUNY Charter Schools Institute and will include a copy of the Institute's grievance guidelines.

If, after receiving the written response from the Board of Trustees and/or the Board's designee, the individual or group determines that the Board has not adequately addressed their complaint, the complainant may appeal the decision to the SUNY Charter Schools Institute, acting on behalf of the Board of Trustees of the State University of New York, which shall investigate and respond. The Institute can issue school remedial orders to remedy complaints. The process for bringing a complaint to the SUNY Charter Schools Institute can be found here: <https://www.newyorkcharters.org/contact-us/complaint-process-foil-requests/>

The SUNY Charter Schools Institute can be contacted in the following ways:

EMAIL:

charters@suny.edu

MAILING ADDRESS:

SUNY Charter Schools Institute
H. Carl McCall SUNY Building
353 Broadway
Albany, New York 12246

If, after the presentation of the formal complaint to the SUNY Charter Schools Institute, the individual or group determines that the Institute has not adequately addressed the complaint, the complainant may present the formal complaint to the Board of Regents of the University of the State of New York (“Board of Regents”). The Board of Regents has delegated authority to handle complaints concerning charter schools to the Commissioner of Education. The Charter School Office of the New York State Education Department, on behalf of the Commissioner, will investigate and respond to complaints concerning charter schools that have been appropriately filed. Upon completion of the investigation of a complaint brought to the Board of Regents, a decision will be issued by the Commissioner, which may include a remedial order, as appropriate.

The process for bringing a complaint to the Board of Regents can be found here:
<http://www.nysed.gov/charter-schools/complaint-process>.

The complaint may be submitted via email to the Board of Regents at charterschools@nysed.gov, or by writing to the Board of Regents at the following address:

New York State Education Department
Charter School Office
89 Washington Avenue
Room 5N Mezz
Albany, NY 12234
(518) 474-1762

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

BEHAVIORAL EXPECTATIONS OUTSIDE OF THE CLASSROOM (COMMON SPACES, FIELD TRIPS, TRANSPORTATION)

Both in and out of the classroom, students are expected to follow Explore Schools' behavioral expectations. This expectation extends to any form of transportation to and from school, as well as interactions through text, phone, or social media. Students are expected to maintain safety, for themselves and others, and respect the general learning environment. On field trips, students must uphold Explore Schools' behavioral expectations and follow the 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 in or outside of school.

BEHAVIOR INTERVENTION PROCEDURES

In the event that students are not meeting Explore Schools' behavioral expectations, families will be notified during each step of any behavior intervention process. In an effort to support and strengthen students' socio-emotional growth, a continuum of interventions is considered and implemented by the student's grade-team teachers. If a student does not respond to these interventions and continues to demonstrate behavior(s) that interferes with the learning process, the teacher may issue a consequence and the behavior will be tracked using an infraction slip and/or referral. Serious or repeated infractions will result in a mandatory family meeting aimed to support the student through strategic collaboration.

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.

INTERVENTION 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behavior Plan • Meeting with family, teacher(s) and administrator • 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
CONSEQUENCE	<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 an

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 overall behavior
- The length of time the student has spent enrolled at another school.

Additionally, prior to deciding 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	
LEVEL 1 – MINOR INFRACTIONS	
INFRACTIONS	<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 • Littering
TEACHER MOVES, INTERVENTIONS,	<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

RESTORATIONS, AND SUPPORT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 the class
CONSEQUENCES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of point (if applicable) • In-class "time away" • Loss of privileges
LEVEL 2 - ESCALATING INFRACTIONS	
INFRACTIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repeated 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 that causes loss of learning time • Dishonesty (plagiarism, copying another student's work, forgery, lying, etc.) • Electronic devices: use of cell phone or non-instructional devices during school hours • Inappropriate/threatening gestures • Unwanted physical contact with peers (pushing, play-fighting) • Leaving the classroom without permission, running away from school personal, misusing a hall pass, being in a location without permission • Weapon: playing with an object as if it is a weapon
TEACHER MOVES, INTERVENTIONS, RESTORATIONS, AND SUPPORT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student is reminded of appropriate behavior and task at hand • Student is given a verbal warning • Student-Teacher Restorative Meeting • 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 (<i>ex: asking teacher for a break, taking 10 deep breaths</i>) • Peer-to-peer meeting
CONSEQUENCES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 (<i>which includes, but is not limited to, exclusion from recess, communal lunch, enrichment activities, sports, school events, trips, or activities</i>) • After-school reflection
LEVEL 3 – SERIOUS INFRACTION	

<p>INFRACTIONS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committing a Level 2 Infraction after intervention • Repeated defiance of school authority • Disrespect of peers using profane language or gestures • Disrespect of staff using profane language or gestures • Disagreement with a peer that leads to fighting • Fire alarm, tampering with apparatus • Gambling • Inappropriate touching • 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
<p>TEACHER MOVES, INTERVENTIONS, RESTORATIONS, AND SUPPORT</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assignments/projects which require students to reflect on behavior in writing or orally (depending on grade) • Call home to family • Student-Family-Administrator Conference • Verbal or written apology to the community • Student is assigned a student or staff "buddy"/mentor • Recommendation for external counseling • Peer-to-peer meeting
<p>CONSEQUENCES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 the nature of the infraction and at the discretion of school personnel
<p>LEVEL 4 -- EGREGIOUS INFRACTIONS</p>	
<p>INFRACTIONS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committing a Level 3 Infraction after intervention • Arson • Assault and battery of school personnel • Bomb/Gun threat

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaving school grounds without permission • 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 • Bullying (physical, cyber) • Weapon/Weapon-Like Object: possession or use of
TEACHER MOVES, INTERVENTIONS, RESTORATIONS, AND SUPPORT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendation for external counseling • Assignments/projects which require students to reflect on behavior in writing or orally (depending on grade) • Student-Family-Administrator Conference • Verbal or written apology to the community • Disciplinary Committee Hearing with school officials and network representatives
CONSEQUENCES	<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 the nature of the 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. 	

POSSESSION OF WEAPON (KNIFE, BOX CUTTER, TASER, PEPPER SPRAY)

At Explore Schools, our students' safety is our number one priority. As such, possession of a weapon is viewed as an egregious infraction that will result in serious consequences. Students who are suspected of having a weapon are subject to a full investigation by school personnel and search of belongings conducted by school safety agents. If a student is found with a weapon in their possession, they must go through a disciplinary hearing that may result in long-term out-of-school suspension or expulsion.

SCHOOL THREAT (BOMB, GUN)

In accordance with the New York State Department of Education, any threats of mass school violence (school shooting, bomb threat) **must be reported** to the NYPD immediately upon discovery. Explore Schools will work with the NYPD to determine if the threat is credible. All students involved in school threats are subject to disciplinary measures decided upon by the behavior matrix and school personnel which includes but is not limited to out-of-school suspensions or expulsion.

DICIPLINE POLICY FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

At our schools, we ensure that when scholars with IEPs, students in the evaluation process/students who “deemed to know”, 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 scholar 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 a scholar with a disability is suspended for more than 10 school days, the family is 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 the student’s disability or a failure to implement the IEP or 504 plan. If behaviors are a function of the student’s disability, we will adjust our consequences accordingly to ensure compliance with federal and state due process regulations. If behaviors are deemed **not** to be a function of the student’s disability, nor failure to implement the IEP, then the recommended consequence will go into effect. For scholars with IEPs and students in or entering the evaluation process, the MDR will be facilitated by the Committee on Special Education (CSE). For scholars with 504 Plans, the MDR will be facilitated by the school. You may contact the Special Populations Leader for further details.

STUDENT SAFETY AND HEALTH

CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

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 legally 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.

SAFETY

Any accident involving a student will be documented. The nurse or school staff member will contact the family; if the family cannot be reached, the nurse or school staff member will send a report home with the student. The family can also request to obtain a report by asking a member of the school’s operations team.

STUDENT SAFETY 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. The Social Worker or Counselor will conduct a risk assessment and 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. During extreme or extenuating circumstances, the school reserves the right to contact EMS in order to protect the safety and well-being of the student. This may result in EMS, along with a school staff member, transporting the student to a nearby hospital for further evaluation. 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

VACCINATION	CHILD CARE, HEAD START, NURSERY, PRE-K AND KINDERGARTEN	KINDERGARTEN – GRADE 5	GRADES 6 – 11	GRADE 12
Diphtheria , tetanus, and pertussis (DTaP)	4 Doses	5 doses or 4 doses ONLY if the fourth dose was received at age 4 years or older or 3 doses ONLY if the child is age 7 years or older and the series was started at age 1 year or older	3 doses	
Tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis booster (Tdap)			1 dose (at or after age 11 years)	
Polio (IPV or OPV)	3 Doses	4 doses or 3 doses if the third dose was received at age 4 years or older		
Measles, mumps and rubella (MMR)	1 Dose	2 Doses		
Hepatitis B	3 Doses	3 Doses	3 doses or 2 doses of adult hepatitis B vaccine (Recombivax HB®) if the doses at least 4 months apart between ages of 11 through 15 years	
Varicella (chickenpox)	1 Dose	2 Doses		
Meningococcal conjugate (MenACWY)			Grade 6: Not applicable Grades 7-11: 1 dose	Grade 12: 2 doses or 1 dose if the first dose was received at age 16 years or older
Haemophilus influenzae type b conjugate (Hib)	1 to 4 doses Depends on child's age and doses previously received			
Pneumococcal conjugate (PCV)	1 to 4 Doses Depends on child's age and doses previously received			
Influenza	1 Dose			

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, or who do not receive new immunizations within the allotted timeframe 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 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 the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene 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.

GENDER IDENTITY

At Explore Schools, as educators and leaders of students and staff with diverse needs, we embrace the unique position we have to cultivate a culture of inclusion and respect of difference within our schools. We work proactively to ensure that each child and adult feels respected, safe, and comfortable in our schools. We use age-appropriate, culturally responsive, and inclusive learning materials to ensure all students feel welcome and included in our community.

We affirm the unique identity of each student. Every student has the right to be addressed by the name and pronouns that correspond to the student's gender identity asserted at school. Explore Schools allows students to use a chosen name and gender pronouns (including gender-neutral pronouns, such as "they") that reflect their identity, regardless of whether a student has legally changed their name or gender. All school staff members and students must refer to students by their chosen names and pronouns, and schools should confirm the correct information with all their students in a manner that respects student privacy. School staff are responsible for ensuring students are referred to correctly.

CHANGES TO NAME & GENDER IDENTITY

We respect and acknowledge requests for a student to be identified by an affirmed name and/or gender identity. Students are not required to obtain parental consent or submit documentation before being addressed by the name and pronoun that they choose.

No documentation is required for a student or parent/guardian to change the student's name or gender in education records that are not part of a student's permanent file, including, but not limited to, certificates, rosters and yearbooks. A student's permanent education records, which reflect the student's name and gender on their official birth certificate, include report cards, progress reports, and records in our Student

Information Systems (Powerschool and the NYC DOE's Automate the Schools [ATS] system). Explore Schools will change a student's name on their permanent education records upon receipt of legal name change documentation (a court order, amended birth certificate, or government ID reflecting the change); or, if a student has not obtained a legal name change, the parent/guardian (or student over the age of 18) can submit a Name and Gender Change Request Form (found [here](#)) and Explore Schools will make the change. Explore Schools will change a student's gender marker on their permanent education records upon receipt of a Name and Gender Change Request Form signed by the parent/guardian (or student over the age of 18). Explore Schools will maintain the privacy of student records in accordance with applicable law.

All students have a right to privacy, and this includes the right to keep one's transgender status and gender identity private at school. We support students taking responsibility over their gender identity and will respect their privacy and preferences. When speaking with other staff members, parents, guardians, or third parties, school staff will not disclose a student's affirmed name, pronoun, or other confidential information pertaining to the student's gender identity without the student's permission.

OUR SCHOOLS' ROLES INCLUDE:

- Clarifying the school's role, and systems and structures in place that ensure we comply with applicable federal and state law.
- Prioritizing the student's health, safety, and well-being.
- Coordinating and planning support to ensure student preferences are respected and that our community is prepared to respect the student's wishes.
- Providing resources to support knowledge development.
- Supporting students & families in changing a student's name and/or gender on permanent education records as requested.
- Providing support to the student with sharing information with family and friends if desired.

ACCESS TO FACILITIES & ACTIVITIES

At Explore, students are provided access to facilities (restrooms, locker rooms, or changing rooms) that align with the student's gender identity asserted at school. No student will be required to use an alternative facility (e.g., a single-occupancy staff restroom) or a facility that conflicts with the student's gender identity asserted at school. Furthermore, any arrangements will be provided in a non-stigmatizing manner that protects student privacy and is not marginalizing or disruptive for the student.

Students have the right to participate in activities and groups in alignment with their gender identity asserted at school, including but not limited to extra-curriculars, sports, and overnight trips. We will coordinate for these circumstances on a case-by-case basis, as they arise.

All Explore Schools Charter Schools comply with the Dignity for All Students Act. Harassment, discrimination, bullying, and/or intimidation of any type will not be tolerated by any member of our student and staff

community and will be handled as outlined in the Harassment/Bullying & Misconduct policies in our handbook.

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 Foods at (877) 3 6 3 -6325.

COMMITMENT TO HEALTH & WELLNESS

At Explore Schools, we believe a healthy and balanced diet is significant and necessary for the development of the whole child. We are committed to promoting the importance of healthy meal habits across our community, including but not limited to nutrition awareness, and consuming a balanced breakfast, lunch, and snack daily. We are also committed to knowledge-building and evolving how we promote health and wellness in our community.

Through partnerships with our school meal vendors, catering services, and other related partners (i.e. vending machines, provided snacks), schools will promote healthy eating habits. Explore Schools defines healthy eating as *meals that include a healthy spread of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and include products that are lean and low in sugar, salt, and fats*. Meals should contain a balanced spread of food groups.

Explore Schools will promote the consumption of healthy food and beverages throughout our school communities, in the following ways:

SNACKS

We encourage that snacks align with the USDA Smart Snack Standards. Snacks are to contain more whole grain leading as its primary ingredient (50% or more) and or have fruits, vegetables, or protein listed as the first ingredient. Snacks are encouraged to contain at least ¼ cup of fruit and/or vegetables. Snacks should also adhere to nutrient standards for calories, sodium, sugar, and fats ([USDA/MyPlate](#)). Schools will offer healthy snacks and refreshments during community events and work.

BEVERAGES

Students will have access to and are encouraged to consume clean drinking water throughout the school day. We encourage families to avoid drinks with high sugar content during the school day.

FOOD SAFETY

When possible, foods should be packaged individually, and sharing should be discouraged. Meal areas will be sanitized for food consumption.

DIETARY RESTRICTIONS

Families should consult with the school leadership and nurse's office any allergies or other dietary concerns they may have regarding their child's eating habits at school. 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.

NUTRITIONAL KNOWLEDGE

Schools will create opportunities for students to learn and reflect on their food consumption and eating habits. Schools will partner with and create opportunities for families to learn and receive information that support their dietary choices.

BIRTHDAY/POTLUCK/COMMUNITY MEALS

We encourage schools, families, Parent Teachers Associations/Organizations, and other community members to provide healthy food and beverages for breakfast, lunch, snack or during school events. Meals should include fresh fruit, vegetables, whole grains, and water.

Food allergies are common, but serious medical condition that may have mild to severe, life-threatening impact on children.

To ensure student safety, we ask families to avoid snacks and treats that may contain the most common food allergens: milk, eggs, tree nuts, peanuts, wheat, soy, fish, and shellfish.

SEXUAL ABUSE AND MISCONDUCT PREVENTION POLICY

Explore Charter Schools of Brooklyn and Explore Schools, Inc. (Explore Schools) prohibits and does not tolerate sexual abuse or misconduct in the workplace or during any organization-related activity. Explore Schools provides procedures for employees, volunteers, board members or any other victims of sexual abuse or misconduct to report such acts. Those reasonably suspected or believed to have committed sexual abuse or misconduct will be appropriately disciplined, up to and including termination of employment or membership, as well as criminally prosecuted. No employee, volunteer, board member or other person, regardless of his or her title or position has the authority to commit or allow sexual abuse or misconduct.

DEFINITIONS AND EXAMPLES

The following definitions or examples of sexual abuse, misconduct, or harassment may apply to any or all of the following persons - employees, volunteers, or other third parties.

Sexual abuse or misconduct may include, but is not limited to:

- Child sexual abuse - any sexual activity, involvement or attempt of sexual contact with a person who is a minor (under 18 years old) where consent is not or cannot be given.
- Sexual activity with another who is legally incompetent or otherwise unable to give consent.
- Physical assaults or violence, such as rape, sexual battery, abuse, molestation, or any attempt to commit such acts.
- Unwanted and intentional physical conduct that is sexual in nature, such as touching, pinching, patting, brushing, massaging someone's neck or shoulders and/or pulling against another's body or clothes.
- Material such as pornographic or sexually explicit images, posters, calendars or objects.

- Unwelcome and inappropriate sexual activities, advances, comments, innuendoes, bullying, jokes, gestures, electronic communications or messages (e.g. email, text, social media, voicemail), exploitation, exposure, leering, stalking, or invasion of sexual privacy.
- A sexually hostile environment characterized as comments or conduct that unreasonably interferes with one's work performance or ability to do the job or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment.
- Direct or implied threats that submission to sexual advances will be a condition of employment or affiliation with the organization.

REPORTING PROCEDURE

Immediately report suspected sexual abuse or misconduct to your School Leadership Team, Karen Annette François (Executive Director), Tracy Rebe (Chief Schools Officer), Yasmin Mohsin (Managing Director of Talent) or Tiffany N. Williams (Sr. Director of Human Resources). It is not required to directly confront the person who is the source of the report, question, or complaint before notifying any of the individuals listed. Explore Schools will take every reasonable measure to ensure that those named in complaint of misconduct or who are too closely associated with those involved in the complaint, will not be part of the investigative team.

ANTI-RETALIATION AND FALSE ALLEGATIONS

Explore Schools prohibits retaliation made against any employee, volunteer, board member or other person who lodges a good faith complaint of sexual abuse or misconduct or who participates in any related investigation. Making knowingly false or malicious accusations of sexual abuse or misconduct can have serious consequences for those who are wrongly accused. Explore Schools prohibits making false or malicious sexual misconduct allegations, as well as deliberately providing false information during an investigation. Anyone who violates this rule is subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment or membership and criminal prosecution.

INVESTIGATION AND FOLLOW-UP

Explore Schools will take all allegations of sexual abuse or misconduct seriously and will promptly, thoroughly and equitably investigate whether misconduct has taken place. The organization may utilize an outside third-party to investigate misconduct. Explore Schools will cooperate fully with any investigation conducted by law enforcement or other regulatory/protective services agencies. Explore Schools will make every reasonable effort to keep the matters involved in the allegation as confidential as possible while still allowing for a prompt and thorough investigation.

REPORTING TO LAW ENFORCEMENT OR APPROPRIATE CHILD OR ADULT PROTECTIVE SERVICES

Explore Schools is committed to following the state and federal legal requirements for reporting allegations or incidents of sexual abuse or misconduct to appropriate law enforcement and child or adult protective services organizations. It is the policy of Explore Schools not to attempt to investigate or assess the validity or credibility of an allegation of sexual or physical abuse as a condition before reporting the allegation to proper law enforcement authorities or protective services organizations.

LEGAL PROTECTIONS AND EXTERNAL REMEDIES

Sexual harassment is not only prohibited by Explore Schools but is also prohibited by state, federal, and, where applicable, local law. Aside from the internal process at Explore Schools, students/families may also choose to pursue legal remedies with the following governmental entities. While a private attorney is not required to file a complaint with a governmental agency, you may seek the legal advice of an attorney.

A complaint alleging violation of the Human Rights Law may be filed either with the Division of Human Rights (DHR) or in New York State Supreme Court. Complaints with DHR may be filed any time within one year of the harassment. If an individual did not file at DHR, they can sue directly in state court under the HRL, within three years of the alleged sexual harassment. An individual may not file with DHR if they have already filed a HRL complaint in state court. Complaining internally to Explore Schools does not extend your time to file with DHR or in court. The one year or three years is counted from the date of the most recent incident of harassment. You do not need an attorney to file a complaint with DHR, and there is no cost to file with DHR. DHR will investigate your complaint and determine whether there is probable cause to believe that sexual harassment has occurred. Probable cause cases are forwarded to a public hearing before an administrative law judge. If sexual harassment is found after a hearing, DHR has the power to award relief, which varies but may include requiring your employer to take action to stop the harassment, or redress the damage caused, including paying of monetary damages, attorney's fees, and civil fines.

DHR's main office contact information is: NYS Division of Human Rights, One Fordham Plaza, Fourth Floor, Bronx, New York 10458. You may call (718) 741-8400 or visit: www.dhr.ny.gov.

Contact DHR at (888) 392-3644 or visit www.dhr.ny.gov/complaint for more information about filing a complaint. The website has a complaint form that can be downloaded, filled out, notarized, and mailed to DHR. The website also contains contact information for DHR's regional offices across New York State.

EMPLOYEE AND WORKER SCREENING AND SELECTION

As part of its sexual abuse and misconduct prevention program, Explore Schools is committed to maintaining a diligent screening program for prospective and existing employees, volunteers and others that may interact with those employed by, associating with or serviced by Explore Schools. The organization may utilize a variety of methods of screening and selection, including but not limited to applications, personal interviews, criminal background checks and personal and professional references.

SUPERVISION OF YOUTH

To provide a safe environment for minors, Explore Schools strives that a minimum of two adult workers to supervise or be in attendance with minors during organization-related activities. The purpose is to avoid one-on-one interactions between adults and minors that are not easily observable by others. If individual meetings with a minor must be held in an office, keep the door open. Only conduct closed-door meetings when another adult is put on notice of the meeting and the door remains unlocked.

TECHNOLOGY AND INTERNET ACCEPTABLE USE POLICIES

TECHNOLOGY DEVICE-USE POLICY

Explore Charter Schools of Brooklyn may provide students with Computers (including chargers), for use at home and/ or at school.

Note: The term “computer” refers to Chromebooks, tablets, iPads, or other devices distributed to students for instructional purposes.

USAGE STANDARDS FOR COMPUTERS AND MIFI DEVICES

- All computers issued to students are the property of Explore Charter Schools of Brooklyn and are made available to students solely as tools for learning.
- Computers are for use by the student to whom they are assigned and may not be used by any other individual.
- Students must comply with Explore Charter Schools of Brooklyn computer usage standards (below), which cover procedures and requirements for using the devices, as well as with Explore Charter Schools of Brooklyn *IT Resources and Internet Acceptable Use Policy*.
- The computer assigned to a student must be returned to the school upon the student’s withdrawal or transfer, or upon the request of Explore Charter Schools of Brooklyn. Failure to return the device may result in the family being charged the full replacement cost.
- Installing unapproved applications or changing the configuration of a computer is prohibited.

USAGE STANDARDS FOR CHROMEBOOKS

- Store your Chromebooks in a safe place when not in use. Excessive scratches and scuffs to the exterior can result in repair fees.
- General hardware safety should be practiced at all times. This includes but is not limited to the following examples:
 - a. Food or drink should not be near a device.
 - b. Devices and accessories should not be used or stored near pets.
 - c. Power cords must not create a tripping hazard.
 - d. Device(s) must remain free of any writing, drawing, stickers, and labels.
 - e. Heavy objects should never be placed on top of a device.
 - f. Avoid leaving devices in extreme temperatures (e.g., outside or in a car).
 - g. Never lift a device by its screen or carry it with the screen open.
- Do not insert foreign objects (paperclips, pens, etc.) into the ports (openings) of a device.
- Make sure hands are clean before using the device. Any screen should be regularly wiped clean with a dry, clean, soft cloth. Please do NOT use spray cleaners on the screen.

- When a charger needs to be connected, be sure to line it up correctly when inserting and removing it.
- If you have problems with your device, stop using it and ask your teacher for help.

Devices should never be taken to an outside computer or IT service for any type of repairs or maintenance. Students should not attempt to repair or disassemble any part of the device. Please return your device to the Operations Team in the main office at your school for any repairs. Explore Charter Schools of Brooklyn will perform routine maintenance on all devices, as appropriate.

INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES AND INTERNET ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY

This Instructional Resources and Internet Acceptable Use Policy covers the use of Explore Charter Schools of Brooklyn instructional technology resources in school and outside of school, including at home.

Explore Charter Schools of Brooklyn may provide students with the following instructional technology resources - referred to in the policy as “IT resources”:

- computers - including Chromebooks, iPads, and tablets - for use at home and/ or at school;
- accounts for Google Apps for Education, which include Gmail email addresses and other web-based programs such as Google Classroom, Google Meet, and Google Docs; accounts for other online- learning platforms and apps, including Zoom.

Explore Charter Schools of Brooklyn provides access to these IT resources to students for educational purposes only.

Students are required to act responsibly and appropriately when using Explore Charter Schools of Brooklyn’s IT resources. Explore Charter Schools of Brooklyn maintains the same high expectations for student behavior when using our IT resources that we have for our students at all other times, and expects students to comply with the Student Behavior Expectations outlined in our Family Student Handbook when using our IT resources.

Explore Charter Schools of Brooklyn maintains the right to remotely monitor student activity on all of our IT resources, including but not limited to files downloaded on computers, student emails, student communications within applications and learning platforms, and web-browsing history. Failure to comply with this IT Resources and Internet Acceptable Use Policy may result in the loss of access privileges and/or appropriate disciplinary action. Severe violations may result in a civil or criminal action under New York State or Federal law.

EXPLORE CHARTER SCHOOLS OF BROOKLYN RESPONSIBILITIES

As required by the Children’s Internet Protection Act (“CIPA”), Explore Charter Schools of Brooklyn actively uses internet filtering software to prevent students from accessing content - including text and pictures that are (a) obscene, (b) pornographic, or (c) harmful to minors, as well as to block unacceptable web sites. However, despite Explore Charter Schools of Brooklyn’s best efforts, it may be possible for users to access inappropriate sites. Explore Charter Schools of Brooklyn will take appropriate disciplinary action against those who attempt to disable, bypass or otherwise circumvent the content filter that has been installed in accordance with CIPA.

FAMILY EXPECTATIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Parents and guardians are responsible for monitoring their child's use of the internet and the instructional technology resources provided by Explore Charter Schools of Brooklyn when these resources are accessed and utilized during remote learning from home, or other non-school locations.

The computer and chargers assigned to students must be returned the school upon the student’s withdrawal or transfer, or upon request by the school.

If families do not wish students to access any specific materials that are part of instruction, the parent/guardian should notify their child’s teachers so that an alternative learning plan may be determined.

STUDENT EXPECTATIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Students are authorized to use Explore Charter Schools of Brooklyn IT resources to access the internet or other learning materials in accordance with the rules specified below:

- Students will use Explore Charter Schools of Brooklyn IT resources for purposes of research, education, and school-related activities, only.
- Student behavior while using Explore Charter Schools of Brooklyn IT resources is expected to follow the same high expectations we have for our students at all times, in line with the Explore Charter Schools of Brooklyn Code of Conduct; as such, students are expected and required to avoid actions that are dishonest, unkind, or invasive or otherwise violate the Explore Charter Schools of Brooklyn Code of Conduct. If a student violates this policy, appropriate disciplinary action will be taken consistent with the Code of Conduct.
- Inappropriate use of Explore Charter Schools of Brooklyn IT resources also may result in limits to or loss of use of a device.

- Students will not plagiarize works they find on the internet. Plagiarism is taking the ideas or writings of others and presenting them as if they were your own.
- Students will promptly disclose to their teacher or other school employee any message they receive that is inappropriate or makes them feel uncomfortable.
- Students are prohibited from using Explore Charter Schools of Brooklyn's IT Resources to access social media, chat sites, online video games or other content unless authorized by a teacher or school administrator for instructional purposes.
- Students are prohibited from accessing, downloading, or distributing content or materials that are not part of the curriculum.
- If a student mistakenly accesses inappropriate information, they should immediately tell their teacher.
- Students will only use the account to which they are assigned. Students are responsible for their individual accounts and will take reasonable precautions to prevent others from being able to use their account. Students will not provide their usernames or passwords to any other person except a teacher, school administrator or their parent/guardian.
- Students may not alter the configuration or functionality of their computer in anyway.
- Students may not uninstall or modify any application or the operating system from their computer in any way.
- Students may not make deliberate attempts to spread computer viruses or any other malicious software. Use of or possession of "hacking" tools are prohibited.

Explore Charter Schools of Brooklyn's IT resources - as well as any files, communications or other information the resources contain - are the property of Explore Charter Schools of Brooklyn, and are subject to control and inspection by your school's Director of Operations, leadership team members or other school designee. Students should not expect that information stored on any Explore Schools of Brooklyn IT resource is private. These IT resources and the information they contain may be accessed by Explore Charter Schools of Brooklyn without notice in order to ensure system integrity, and that students are complying with the requirements of this policy.

- Explore Charter Schools of Brooklyn may share information found in any of its IT resources with a student's parents/guardians or appropriate authorities, and will cooperate fully with local, state or federal officials in any investigation concerning or relating to any illegal activities conducted using Explore Charter Schools of Brooklyn's IT resources.
- Students shall report any security problem or misuse of Explore Charter Schools of Brooklyn's IT resources to the teacher or principal.

COMPUTER BREAKAGE POLICY, AND VIOLATIONS OF THE STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Students that violate this policy or/and repeatedly damage their Explore Schools Chromebook may lose access to the device, and face disciplinary consequences in accordance with the Explore Schools discipline policy.

Accidental damage/loss is defined as:

- Damage from routine use or accidental drops, including cracked screen or case, and broken keys
- Vandalism by others
- Loss of computer or charger in spite of reasonable care

Intentional damage is defined as:

- Theft of computer or charger in spite of reasonable care
- Any damage - partial or complete - that is determined by school administrators to be intentionally caused by the student. Examples include but are not limited to:
 - o hitting the screen or keyboard
 - o throwing the computer
 - o removing keys
 - o defacing the computer with nail polish or markers
- Any damage - partial or complete - that results from intentionally irresponsible use.

Hardware failure due to manufacturer defects or normal use is not the responsibility of the student.

All incidents of damage/loss will be reviewed individually by school administrators to determine whether accidental or intentional, and action taken as indicated below, or as deemed appropriate by school administrators.

1 OR 2 INCIDENTS OF COMPLETE OR PARTIAL ACCIDENTAL DAMAGE/LOSS IN A SCHOOL YEAR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family will be notified • Student will be assigned a working Chromebook
MORE THAN 2 INCIDENTS OF ACCIDENTAL DAMAGE/LOSS IN A SCHOOL YEAR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family will be notified • Student may be asked to develop a Chromebook care plan for him/herself • Student may lose Chromebook take-home privileges. If so, computer-based homework will be completed in school, after school hours.
1 OR 2 INCIDENTS OF COMPLETE OR PARTIAL INTENTIONAL DAMAGE IN A SCHOOL YEAR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family will be notified • Referral to dean for discipline review • Student may lose Chromebook take-home privileges. If so, computer-based homework will be completed in school, after school hours.
MORE THAN 2 INCIDENTS OF INTENTIONAL DAMAGE IN A SCHOOL YEAR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family will be notified • Referral to dean for discipline review • Student will lose Chromebook take-home privileges • Computer-based homework will be completed in school, after school hours

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.

Families will receive communication from the school each morning a student is absent or tardy. Please contact the main office or respond on ParentSquare if you think you have received an absent/tardy notification 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.

Students who have missed more than 10% of school days at any point in the year are considered chronically absent and Explore schools' staff will follow up with these students and their families to support healthy attendance habits. Attendance interventions can include family meetings, home visits, incentives, and attendance plans made in conjunction with the student/family. If excessive absences or tardies continue despite these interventions, this may be considered educational neglect and reported to the Administration for Children's Services (ACS).

TRANSPORTATION

Families will be responsible for getting their child to and from school. Students may be eligible for free transportation options through the Dept. of Education's Office of Pupil Transportation. Transportation eligibility is based on a student's grade level, walking distance between home and school, and existing accommodations based on a medical condition, housing status, or safety assessments.

YELLOW BUS SERVICE

Students eligible based on their grade level and distance from school may apply for yellow bus service. 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 must be in grades K-6.
- The student’s residence must be in the same borough.

	DISTANCE CODE A: LESS THAN 0.5 MILE	DISTANCE CODE B: 0.5 MILE OR MORE, BUT LESS THAN 1 MILE	DISTANCE CODE C: 1 MILE OR MORE, BUT LESS THAN 1.5 MILES	DISTANCE D: 1.5 MILES OR MORE
GRADES: KINDERGARTEN, 1 AND 2	Not Eligible	School Bus or MetroCard	School Bus or MetroCard	School Bus or MetroCard
GRADE: 3 – 6	Not Eligible	MetroCard only	School Bus or MetroCard	School Bus or MetroCard
GRADES: 7 – 12	Not Eligible	MetroCard only	MetroCard only	MetroCard only

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 ensure you qualify and to express your interest. Yellow bus service also will be provided in accordance with a student’s IEP.

Under certain circumstances outlined below, the Department of Education may grant an exception to the eligibility requirements:

- Temporary Housing Exception including shelters, domestic violence shelters, families living with others due to economic or financial hardship (doubled-up), and transitioning to permanent housing
- Foster Care Exception
- Joint Custody Exception
- Victim of a Crime Exception
- Order of Protection Exception
- Hazard Exception

METRO CARD TRANSPORTATION

Students eligible for MetroCard transportation may be issued a Full-fare Metro Card by requesting one in the main office. Full-fare student MetroCards are provided at no cost to eligible students and are good on MTA subways and non-express buses. Student MetroCards are different from regular MetroCards. A student MetroCard has three trips and three transfers.

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.

Transportation Eligibility Exceptions: Under certain circumstances, the DOE may grant an exception to the eligibility requirements listed above. Families interested in applying for a transportation exception should reach out to their main office. The types of exceptions are:

- Medical Exception
- Temporary Housing Exception (Includes shelters, domestic violence shelters, families living with others due to economic or financial hardship [doubled-up], and transitioning to permanent housing)
- Foster Care Exception
- Joint Custody Exception
- Victim of a Crime Exception
- Order of Protection Exception
- Hazard Exception

ADDITIONAL POLICIES

APPLICATION AND ADMISSION PERIODS AND PROCEDURES

All Explore Charter School of Brooklyn schools are non-sectarian, public schools. Explore schools do not discriminate because of ethnicity, national origin, religion, gender, or disability. A school may not require any action by a student or family (such as an admissions test, interview, essay, attendance at an information session, etc.) for an applicant to either receive or apply for admission.

We accept applications and enroll students throughout the school year, once space is available in a grade/class for enrollment. Applications are available in the main office of each school site, as well as on the network website and can be completed in person, faxed, mailed, or e-mailed as an attachment. Applications are also available through the common application offered via the NYC Charter Center. Families should hear from schools within 5-days of applying for enrollment.

KINDERGARTEN LOTTERY

Each Explore Schools of Brooklyn school will hold a recruitment period for students entering the kindergarten class and for any grades where additional students may enroll due to attrition of other students. The period will last for a minimum of thirty days. Applications will be released sometime between October 1st and January 31st. Applications will be considered if received before 5 p.m. on April 1st. Students who will be five by December 31st of the current year are eligible for kindergarten. Students who will not be five by that time will not be permitted to complete an application.

WE AFFORD THE FOLLOWING ENROLLMENT PREFERENCES:

For siblings of currently enrolled students, students who reside in Community School District 17 (Explore, Empower, Exceed) or District 18 (Excel) receive second preference students whose legal parent/guardian is a staff member at Explore Schools will receive a staff preference. Explore Schools has a set-aside admissions preference, prioritizing 15% of seats for kindergarteners who are Multi Language Learners. All other students who live in New York State will receive final preference. This preference has been approved by the school's authorizer and is permissible.

If an admissions preference is checked, applicants must provide proof of eligibility upon enrolling. Families who apply with an admissions preference but fail to submit documentation upon enrollment will be moved to the bottom of the preference section of the waitlist for which they qualify. For the sibling and children of staff preferences, proof of eligibility will be required *before* the lottery.

INTRANETWORK TRANSFERS

Students enrolled within a network charter school can request a transfer to another network school under certain circumstances and upon request. There are 3 circumstances that could result in an intra-network transfer:

- School with specific special education setting - Special Education and Geographic transfers must be reviewed by Explore Schools Network Staff and school leaders.

- Another school in our network is more geographically convenient
- Student may benefit from a transfer for academic or behavioral reasons.

If a student's parent/ guardian is considering an intra-network transfer, they should:

- Notify current school leadership of interest in transferring and apply for transfer.
- In collaboration with current school leadership, student/ student's parent/ guardian needs to notify transfer school leadership of interest in transferring.
- If approved, student is granted a 1-week grace period in which to temporarily attend transfer school and determine their fit specific to meeting one of the three allowable reasons listed above.
- Upon completing the week of temporary enrollment, student's parent/ guardian needs to either confirm their desire to transfer or confirm their desire to return to original school.
- After this decision is made, student is re-enrolled in original school or officially enrolled in transfer school according to decision.

Please reach out to your school's main office with questions about these 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. All school visitors must adhere to our visitor and building entry guidelines.

HOLIDAY POLICY

In respect to all religions and to ensure one religion is not favored over another, 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

It is our policy to select each teacher's class roster at our discretion. All teachers have gone through a rigorous selection process, including a background check and professional references. Although we do not assign students based on preference for a specific teacher, we will make every effort to ensure that your student's classroom experience is safe and meaningful. 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. Please note that during the school year, the 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.

FAMILY EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS AND PRIVACY ACT (FERPA)

Notification of Rights

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) affords parents and students who are 18 years of age or older (“eligible students”) certain rights with respect to the student’s education records. These rights are:

1. The right to inspect and review the student’s education records within 45 days after the day Explore Schools or the School receives a request for access.

Parents or eligible students who wish to inspect their child’s or their education records should submit to the Director of Operations a written request that identifies the records they wish to inspect. The Director of Operations will make arrangements for access and notify the parent or eligible student of the time and place where the records may be inspected.

2. The right to request the amendment of the student’s education records that the parent or eligible student believes are inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the student’s privacy rights under FERPA.

Parents or eligible students who wish to ask Explore Schools or the School to amend their child’s or their education record should submit a written request to the Director of Operations, clearly identifying the part of the record they want changed, and specifying why it should be changed. If Explore Schools or the School decides not to amend the record as requested by the parent or eligible student, Explore Schools or the School will notify the parent or eligible student of the decision and of their right to a hearing regarding the request for amendment. Additional information regarding the hearing procedures will be provided to the parent or eligible student when notified of the right to a hearing.

3. The right to provide written consent before Explore Schools or the School discloses personally identifiable information (PII) from the student’s education records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent.

One exception, which permits disclosure without consent, is disclosure to school officials with legitimate educational interests. A school official is a person employed by Explore Schools or the School as an administrator, supervisor, instructor, or support staff member (including health or medical staff and law enforcement unit personnel) or a person serving on the Explore Schools Board of Trustees. A school official also may include a volunteer, contractor, or consultant who, while not employed by Explore Schools, performs an institutional service or function for which Explore Schools would otherwise use its own employees and who is under the direct control of Explore Schools and the School with respect to the use and maintenance of PII from education

records, such as an attorney, auditor, medical consultant, or therapist; a parent or student volunteering to serve on an official committee, such as a disciplinary or grievance committee; or a parent, student, or other volunteer assisting another school official in performing his or her tasks. A school official typically has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record in order to fulfill his or her professional responsibility.

Upon request, Explore Schools or the School discloses education records without consent to officials of another school or school district in which a student seeks or intends to enroll, or is already enrolled if the disclosure is for purposes of the student's enrollment or transfer; however, Explore Schools or the School will make a reasonable attempt to notify the parent or eligible student of the records request.

4. The right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by Explore Schools or the School to comply with the requirements of FERPA. The name and address of the Office that administers FERPA are:
Student Privacy Policy Office
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202

Disclosures that Explore Schools or the School may make without parent consent:

FERPA permits the disclosure of PII from students' education records, without consent of the parent or eligible student, if the disclosure meets certain conditions found in §99.31 of the FERPA regulations. Except for disclosures to school officials, disclosures related to some judicial orders or lawfully issued subpoenas, disclosures of directory information, and disclosures to the parent or eligible student, §99.32 of the FERPA regulations requires Explore Schools or the School to record the disclosure. Parents and eligible students have a right to inspect and review the record of disclosures.

Explore Schools or the School may disclose PII from the education records of a student without obtaining prior written consent of the parents or the eligible student:

- To other school officials, including teachers, within the educational agency or institution whom the school has determined to have legitimate educational interests. This includes contractors, consultants, volunteers, or other parties to whom the school has outsourced institutional services or functions, provided that certain conditions are met;
- To officials of another school, school system, or institution of postsecondary education where the student seeks or intends to enroll, or where the student is already enrolled if the disclosure is for purposes related to the student's enrollment or transfer, subject to certain requirements;
- To authorized representatives of the U. S. Comptroller General, the U. S. Attorney General, the U.S. Secretary of Education, or State and local educational authorities, in connection with an audit or evaluation of Federal- or State-supported education programs, or for the enforcement of or compliance with Federal legal requirements that relate to those programs. These entities may make further disclosures of PII to outside entities that are designated by them as their authorized

representatives to conduct any audit, evaluation, or enforcement or compliance activity on their behalf, if applicable requirements are met;

- In connection with financial aid for which the student has applied or which the student has received, if the information is necessary for such purposes as to determine eligibility for the aid, determine the amount of the aid, determine the conditions of the aid, or enforce the terms and conditions of the aid;
- To State and local officials or authorities to whom information is specifically allowed to be reported or disclosed by a State statute that concerns the juvenile justice system and the system's ability to effectively serve, prior to adjudication, the student whose records were released, subject to certain conditions;
- To organizations conducting studies for, or on behalf of, the Explore Schools or the School, in order to: (a) develop, validate, or administer predictive tests; (b) administer student aid programs; or (c) improve instruction, if applicable requirements are met;
- To accrediting organizations to carry out their accrediting functions;
- To parents of an eligible student if the student is a dependent for IRS tax purposes;
- To comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena, if applicable requirements are met;
- To appropriate officials in connection with a health or safety emergency, subject to certain conditions;
- Information the school has designated as "directory information", if applicable requirements are met;
- To an agency caseworker or other representative of a State or local child welfare agency or tribal organization who is authorized to access a student's case plan when such agency or organization is legally responsible, in accordance with State or tribal law, for the care and protection of the student in foster care placement; and
- To the Secretary of Agriculture or authorized representatives of the Food and Nutrition Service for purposes of conducting program monitoring, evaluations, and performance measurements of programs authorized under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act or the Child Nutrition Act of 1966, under certain conditions.

FERPA Notice for Directory Information

FERPA requires that Explore Schools or the School, with certain exceptions, obtain your written consent prior to the disclosure of personally identifiable information from your child's education records. However, Explore Schools and/or the School may disclose appropriately designated "directory information" without written consent, unless you have advised Explore Schools or the School to the contrary in accordance with School procedures.

The primary purpose of directory information is to allow Explore Schools and/or the School to include information from your child's education records in certain school publications. Examples include:

1. A playbill, showing your student's role in a drama production;
2. The annual yearbook;
3. Honor roll or other recognition lists;

4. Graduation programs; and
5. Sports activity sheets, such as for basketball, showing names and ages of team members

Directory information, which is information that is generally not considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if released, can also be disclosed to outside organizations without a parent/guardian's prior written consent. Outside organizations include, but are not limited to, companies that manufacture class rings or publish yearbooks.

In addition, two federal laws require local educational agencies (LEAs), such as Explore Schools, receiving assistance under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (ESEA), to provide military recruiters, upon request, with the following information – names, addresses and telephone listings – unless parents/guardians have advised the LEA that they do not want their student's information disclosed without their prior written consent.^[1]

If you do not want Explore Schools or the School to disclose any or all of the types of information designated below as directory information from your child's education records without your prior written consent, you must notify the School in writing **by September 15, 2023**.

Explore Schools has designated the following information as directory information:

- **Student's name**
- **Address**
- **Telephone listing**
- **Electronic mail address**
- **Photograph**
- **Date and place of birth**
- **Major field of study**
- **Dates of attendance**
- **Grade level**
- **Participation in officially recognized activities and sports**
- **Degrees, honors, and awards received**
- **The most recent educational agency or institution attended**
- **Student ID number**, user ID, or other unique personal identifier used to communicate in electronic systems but only if the identifier cannot be used to gain access to education records except when used in conjunction with one or more factors that authenticate the user's identity, such as a PIN, password, or other factor known or possessed only by the authorized user
- Student ID number or other unique personal identifier that is displayed on a **student ID badge**, but only if the identifier cannot be used to gain access to education records except when used in conjunction with one or more factors that authenticate the user's identity, such as a PIN, password, or other factor known or possessed only by the authorized user.

^[1] *These laws are: Section 9528 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (20 U.S.C. § 7908) and 10 U.S.C. § 503(c).*

PARENT'S BILL OF RIGHTS FOR DATA PRIVACY AND SECURITY

Parents (including legal guardians or persons in parental relationships) and Eligible Students (students 18 years and older) can expect the following: A student's personally identifiable information (PII) cannot be sold or released for any Commercial or Marketing purpose. PII, as defined by Education Law 2-d and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act ("FERPA"), includes direct identifiers such as a student's name or identification number, parent's name, or address; and indirect identifiers such as a student's date of birth, which when linked to or combined with other information can be used to distinguish or trace a student's identity. Please see FERPA's regulations at 34 CFR 99.3 for a more complete definition.

1. The right to inspect and review the complete contents of the student's education record stored or maintained by Explore Charter Schools of Brooklyn. This right may not apply to Parents of an Eligible Student.
2. State and federal laws such as Education Law 2-d; the Commissioner of Education's Regulations at: 8 NYCRR Part 121, FERPA at 12 U.S.C. 1232g (34 CFR Part 99); Children's Online Privacy Protection Act ("COPPA") at 15 U.S.C. 6501-6502 (16 CFR Part 312); Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment ("PPRA") at 20 U.S.C. 1232h (34 CFR Part 98); and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act ("IDEA") at 20 U.S.C. 1400 et seq. (34 CFR Part 300); protect the confidentiality of a student's identifiable information.
3. Safeguards associated with industry standards and best practices including, but not limited to, encryption, firewalls and password protection must be in place when student PII is stored or transferred.
4. A complete list of all student data elements collected by NYSED is available at www.nysed.gov/data-privacy-security/student-data-inventory and by writing to: Chief Privacy Officer, New York State Education Department, 89 Washington Avenue, Albany, NY 12234. The right to have complaints about possible breaches and unauthorized disclosures of PII addressed. (i) Complaints should be submitted to your child's school's Data Protection Officer - see table below; (ii) Complaints may also be submitted to the NYS Education Department at www.nysed.gov/data-privacy-security/report-improper-disclosure, by mail to: Chief Privacy Officer, New York State Education Department, 89 Washington Avenue, Albany, NY 12234; by email to privacy@nysed.gov; or by telephone at 518-474-0937.

5.

SCHOOL	INFORMATION	SCHOOL	INFORMATION
Explore Lower Charter School	Email: Dpo_explore_lower@explorenetwork.org Phone: 718-703-4484 Address: 655 Parkside Ave, Brooklyn	Explore Upper Charter School	Email: Dpo_explore_upper@explorenetwork.org Phone: 718-703-4484 Address: 655 Parkside Ave, Brooklyn
Empower Lower Charter School	Email: Dpo_empower_lower@explorenetwork.org Phone: 718-771-2090 Address: 188 Rochester Ave, Brooklyn	Empower Upper Charter School	Email: Dpo_empower_upper@explorenetwork.org Phone: 718-771-2090 Address: 188 Rochester Ave, Brooklyn
Excel Lower Charter School	Email: Dpo_excel_lower@explorenetwork.org Phone: 347-902-1758 Address: 1077 Remsen Ave, Brooklyn	Excel Upper Charter School	Email: Dpo_excel_upper@explorenetwork.org Phone: 347-289-9555 Address: 956 E 82nd St, Brooklyn, NY
Exceed Lower Charter School	Email: Dpo_exceed_lower@explorenetwork.org Phone: 718-989-6702 Address: 443 St. Marks Ave, Brooklyn	Exceed Upper Charter School	Email: Dpo_exceed_upper@explorenetwork.org Phone: 347-689-0200 Address: 46 McKeever Place, Brooklyn

1. To be notified in accordance with applicable laws and regulations if a breach or unauthorized release of PII occurs.
2. Explore Charter Schools of Brooklyn staff that handle PII will receive training on applicable state and federal laws, policies, and safeguards associated with industry standards and best practices that protect PII.
3. Explore Charter Schools of Brooklyn contracts with vendors that receive PII will address statutory and regulatory data privacy and security requirements.

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.

TITLE I MCKINNEY VENTO STATEMENT

Schools can support families with ensuring stability and constancy through challenging events and experiences. At Explore Schools, we take seriously our role in providing services that can support student attendance and academic success. The McKinney-Vento Act provides a safeguard and framework to ensure schools can meet the needs of children experiencing homelessness. The McKinney-Vento Act states that children and youth who lack "a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence" will be considered as experiencing homelessness. Students experiencing homelessness are entitled to:

- receive a free, appropriate public education.
- enroll in school immediately, even if lacking documents normally required for enrollment, or having missed application or enrollment deadlines during any period of homelessness.
- enroll in school and attend classes while the school gathers needed documents.
- continue attending the school of origin or enroll in the local attendance area school if attending the school of origin is not in the best interest of the student or is contrary to the request of the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth.
- receive transportation to and from the school of origin, if requested by the parent or guardian, or by the local liaison on behalf of an unaccompanied youth; and
- receive educational services comparable to those provided to other students, according to each student's need.

To assess a student and family's housing and residency, schools request that families complete the Housing & Residency Questionnaire annually, so that students experiencing homelessness can be identified. Schools

furthermore encourage families to notify schools if they are experiencing homelessness so that we can provide resources to support student and family well-being, and their ability to receive uninterrupted education. Under Title I, Part A, schools reserve funds “... to provide services comparable to those provided to children in schools under this part to serve homeless children and youths, including providing educationally related support services to children in shelters and other locations where they may live” [20 U.S.C. § 6313(c)(3)(A)(i)].

Each school is required to have a designated McKinney-Vento Liaison to serve as the primary contact between families experiencing homelessness and school and district staff, and other service providers. The liaison coordinates services to ensure that children experiencing homeless can seamlessly enroll in school. McKinney Vento Liaisons can be found at <https://www.nysteachs.org/homeless-liaison-contact-list>.

SCHOLARSHIPS

Explore Charter Schools of Brooklyn schools offers scholarships to families and students on a provisional basis so that families and students can focus on the educational experience instead of challenges related to *transportation, uniforms, afterschool programming and other needs related to student well-being*.

Explore Schools are tuition-free public charter schools and these scholarships are for additional funds to support short-term and or high-need provisions to support student and family well-being. Scholarships are awarded on a first-come first-serve basis, and contingent upon school budget. Families are required to complete an application for services for scholarship award letters.

The scholarship application is a process that can take 3-4 weeks to process. Families should be prepared to pay out of pocket for initial costs and will be reimbursed for costs paid prior to the award, upon submission of receipts, or coordinate with their provider for an extended deadline to submit payment. For extreme circumstances where families are unable to cover costs and this impact their student’s ability to come to school, families should coordinate with their school’s Director of Operations/Principal. Families can submit a physical or electronic scholarship application. Scholarship applications must be completed and submitted to the school’s Director of Operations upon completion for review and approval. Scholarships are confirmed once approved by the school’s DOO and a signed scholarship agreement, Parent/Vendor Photo ID & W-9 is submitted by the parent. Families are responsible for identifying and managing relationships with vendors they are committing to partner with for the provision of transportation. Families can review the ParentSquare Resource Hub or contact their school’s main office to initiate the process.

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:

As the guardian of _____, I hereby give my consent to the above.

As the guardian of _____, I DONOT give my consent to the above.

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 _____

NETWORK-WIDE FAMILY POLICIES SIGN-OFF PAGE

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

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

Technology and Internet Acceptable Use Policies – I have read the Explore Schools Technology and Internet acceptable use policy in this handbook and agree to the terms of the policies.

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.

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.	
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 main office.*