

Family Handbook

2018-2019

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Welcome!

Welcome to Achievement First East New York Middle School. We are thrilled to be working in partnership with you to support your children's academic, social and emotional growth this year. We take the commitment we have made to you and your children very seriously; we promise to provide all scholars with the foundational K-12 education necessary to graduate from college and succeed in the world beyond. Fulfilling this promise requires a meaningful collaboration between our school and you. This Handbook outlines the key policies that will enable us all to best support your children. These policies have been carefully considered, researched and implemented over the years to ensure the academic well-being and overall safety of all our scholars. We thank you in advance for believing in our school and working together with us to best support your child's growth this year.

The Mission of Achievement First

The mission of Achievement First is to deliver on the promise of equal educational opportunity for all of America's children. We believe that all children, regardless of race or economic status, can succeed if they have access to a great education.

Achievement First schools will provide all of our scholars with the academic and character skills they need to graduate from top colleges, to succeed in a competitive world, and to serve as the next generation of leaders for our communities.

Attendance

Attendance at school is the most basic requirement for learning. In order for scholars to reach their personal best, they must show up and make their strongest effort at school each and every day. At Achievement First, our curriculum is very rigorous and demanding, and every day is essential for scholars to keep pace. We need parents to ensure that their child is in school, and we ask that you do not allow your child to miss a day of school except for serious illness.

Achievement First considers more than three absences in a trimester or more than seven absences in a year to be excessive. Scholars should complete the school year with fewer than four absences.

Our school day runs from 7:30-4:05 Monday-Thursday and 7:30-12:45 on Friday, and all scholars are expected to be in school during these times. Parents should not bring scholars late or pick them up early unless it is an emergency. Tardies and early dismissals, like absences, compromise your child's full educational experience. The dean of students will regularly monitor scholar attendance in order to ensure that all scholars come to school to get the education they need and deserve.

Please note the following important attendance policies:

- ***We do not differentiate between "excused" and "unexcused" absences for awards, promotion decisions, etc.:*** We commit to structuring every minute of the school day in a way that will benefit your child academically and socially. This means that any time a student misses a day of school, it has a significant impact on his/her educational experience. For this reason, any day your child does not attend school will be marked an absence. Regardless of the reason, when a child misses school, the impact on his/her education is the same: a full day of instruction was missed. We understand that there will be rare circumstances when scholars will need to miss school due to a serious illness (with a doctor's note), a death in the family or other emergency beyond the family's control, or a religious observance, but the child will still be marked absent for the day. By maintaining a clear policy for how we account for lost instructional time due to absence, this will enable us to most accurately make promotion decisions with your child's best interest in mind. We will take extenuating circumstances into account when considering attendance as a factor in our decision-making. **Note:** Scholars with a documented disability (including those in the initial referral process) which adversely affects their attendance should not receive a deduction for an **excused** absence. Additionally, instances in which the scholar receives alternative instruction at an alternate site arranged for by the school will not count as absences for the school's purposes, including, but not limited to, promotion decisions and attendance rewards.

- ***Never miss school for appointments:*** We ask that parents/guardians schedule appointments, including doctor visits, outside of school time. The best times are Friday afternoons or on another day when school is not in session (for example, professional development days). In the rare case that a scholar has a medical appointment at a time when school is in session, he/she should return to school after the appointment.
- ***Suspensions count as absences unless the scholar attends alternative instruction:*** If a scholar is suspended from school, the family is entitled to alternative instruction as soon as practicable (one hour minimum per day at the elementary level, two hour minimum per day at the middle and high school levels). The parent should contact the school as soon as possible upon learning of a suspension in order to schedule alternative instruction at a mutually agreeable time; it may take a full day or more to get alternative instruction logistics set up, particularly if there are safety concerns based on the conduct of the scholar. If the child does not attend this alternative instruction, the suspension will be counted as an absence.
- ***Transportation and Attendance:*** Missing the bus is not an acceptable reason to miss an entire school day. Every scholar should have a back-up plan for getting to school if he/she misses the bus. Parents should call the school immediately after the scholar misses the bus so that the school knows the situation and can help problem-solve.
- ***Ten absences to start the school year or during the school year:*** If a scholar is absent for the first 10 days of school and there has been no successful contact between the family and the school to explain his/her absences, that seat may be filled with another scholar from the waitlist. If a child is absent for 10 consecutive days during the school year and there has been no successful contact between the family and the school to explain the absence, that seat may be filled with another scholar from the waitlist. The school will meet state requirements for reaching out to families to confirm mandatory school attendance.
- ***Attendance at after-school events:*** Scholars who are absent from school cannot attend school events, dances, or other school-sponsored activities on the day of the absence, unless the school has given advance permission. Scholars must be in school for at least seven hours of the regular school day (7:30 A.M. to 4:05 P.M.) to be able to attend school events. For weekend events, scholars must be present at the school on the Friday before in order to attend the weekend event.
- ***The school will track and follow up on scholar absences:*** The school will take attendance daily and will maintain records of all scholar absences. If a scholar misses school, Achievement First staff will make reasonable efforts to contact the scholar's parent/guardian by telephone, writing, or in person. The dean of students will follow up with parents/guardians about recurring attendance issues.

- **Exams and Quizzes:** If a scholar is absent, he/she must make up any exams, quizzes, interim assessments, or other tests the day he/she returns.
- **Vacations:** We expect that families will schedule vacations when school is not in session. Parents should not take a child on a vacation during the school year.
- **Fifteen Absences in a Year:** If a scholar is absent 15 times in a year, the scholar may be considered truant and is at risk of not being promoted to the next grade. The parent/guardian will be called to the school to meet with the dean of students and/or principal. The principal may retain any scholar who is unprepared for the next grade as a result of missing 15 or more days of instruction. In addition, a report may be filed with the appropriate child services agency.

Tardies & Early Dismissals

Getting to school on time and remaining in school for the entire school day are keys to each child's success – at school and in life. At Achievement First, the learning begins from the moment scholars walk in the door. Tardiness and early dismissals lead to missed academic content as well as challenging habits that will impact a child's future.

Definition of Tardiness

Our doors open at 7:15 A.M. each morning. Scholars must arrive between 7:15 A.M. and 7:30 A.M. Scholars arriving after 7:30 A.M. are considered tardy. In cases when a school bus arrives late, those scholars arriving on that bus will not be considered tardy. Five tardies in a year will be counted as one absence.

Definition of Early Dismissal

Scholars are expected to stay in school until the end of the day (4:05 P.M. for regular dismissal and 12:45 P.M. on Fridays). In order to maximize time spent learning and avoid unnecessary disruptions, we ask that parents do not pick up scholars early, except in an emergency situation. Since we are intently focused on climbing the mountain to college, our policy is not to release scholars prior to the end of the school day without prior notification (a note or call before 9:00 AM) or in exceptional circumstances. Five early dismissals in a year will be counted as one absence.

Consequences for Tardiness and Early Dismissals

Since every five tardies/early dismissals will be recorded as an absence under the school's policy, **excessive tardiness and/or early dismissals becomes an attendance problem.** If a scholar is absent 15 times (and some or all of these absences may actually be due to excessive tardiness/early dismissals), **the scholar is at risk of not being promoted to the next grade (see attendance policy above).**

Make-Up Work After Absence

After returning from an absence, scholars are expected to complete any missed assignments. The parent must help the scholar check on missed assignments, and any missed work must be completed. The time generally allowed to complete this work will be the number of days the scholar was absent, except in the case of an extended illness. For example, if a scholar was absent for one day, then he/she will have one day to make up any missed work.

In the event of a planned absence (one that you know about in advance), parents/guardians should notify teachers and the Main Office several days in advance so they can prepare a packet of work for scholars to complete during the absence. Again, absences from school compromise a child's academic progress. A child should only be absent in cases such as serious illness or real family emergency.

Homework

Homework is an essential part of the Achievement First educational program: it is designed to reinforce skills taught in the classroom, to help scholars develop a deeper understanding of concepts, and to promote good study habits. **Homework will be assigned every night at Achievement First. Homework will include at least 20 minutes of required reading every night (including weekends and holidays), for which a parent signature is required on the reading log. Homework must be completed in full in accordance with Achievement First's high standards for quality work and professional presentation.**

All scholars are provided with Homework Folders that include a nightly Reading Log. Homework folders are designed to teach scholars essential organizational skills. **The Reading Logs must be filled out properly with a parent/guardian signature, and all assigned homework must be completed and in the folder.** There are high standards for homework. All homework must be neat, clean, and thorough.

If a scholar's homework is late, missing, incomplete, or of poor quality, or if the Reading Log is not completed properly, then the scholar may earn consequences. For example, the scholar may be required to make up the work during enrichment classes, breaks, meal times (the scholar will still be allowed to eat), or after school, or the scholar may be required to complete additional assignments. Moreover, since bringing all necessary books and supplies is part of homework, scholar may also face consequences if they do not bring all necessary books and supplies to school. Parents/guardians may receive a phone call if their child has missed several assignments. **Making sure that your scholar completes his/her homework every night is one of the most important ways you can support college readiness!**

After-School Times

It can sometimes be beneficial to a scholar to remain after school, whether for disciplinary purposes, extra help with schoolwork, assistance with a school program, or other reasons. Teachers may request that a scholar stay after school whenever they believe that it will benefit the scholar.

Required After-School Times

Scholars may be required to go to extension, homework support, or academic intervention services from Monday through Thursday from 4:05 to 5:00pm, and scholars may also be required to attend our Saturday academic intervention.

The exact times of these programs may change slightly during the school year, and we would notify parents and scholars in the event of such changes.

Discipline

At Achievement First, our mission is to provide our scholars with both the academic and character skills needed to succeed in college and beyond. As such, school culture and discipline are an important part of what we do every day. We have exceptionally high expectations for scholar behavior because we believe high standards create a safe, positive, and productive environment for our scholars.

Our teachers use a large array of strategies to create and maintain joyful, rigorous classrooms. We use positive reinforcement and teach the school's values, give "shout outs" for exceptional conduct, write "posi-notes" (positive notes) to scholars, and more.

At Achievement First, much of the power of our culture is rooted in the clarity, consistency and rationale guiding our high expectations. Behavior expectations are the same from classroom to classroom. All Achievement First scholars learn and practice common courtesies (*e.g.*, please, thank you, and proper greetings). They sit at their desks and SLANT (Sit up straight, Listen, Ask/Answer questions, Nod, Track the speaker). They raise tall "vertical hands" when they have ideas to share with the group and speak in "loud and proud" voices so that their thoughts are heard. We enforce these expectations because they create an environment where teachers and scholars can focus on rigorous academic learning that is necessary for success in college and beyond.

From the moment our scholars board their buses and all through the day, they are expected to act in a way that befits Achievement First scholars – respectful of themselves and others. Our discipline policies hold all scholars to high standards. As necessary, we will make thoughtful modifications and provide additional supports so that our scholars receiving special services have the support (consistent with their IEPs and 504 plans) they need to be successful. Scholars with disabilities as well as those with behavior support plans or behavior interventions may have specific adjustments made to ensure these scholars do not receive consequences as a result of their disability.

Through the use of proactive, preventative strategies, we aim to keep all of our students in class all day, every day. While we believe deeply in the power of positive reinforcement, we also believe consequences can play an important part in encouraging scholars to make more positive choices. Moreover, consequences also help us ensure the safety of each individual child as well as the entire school community. Parents and scholars should understand that making up work or serving consequences after 4:00 P.M. on weekdays or on Saturdays is part of the regular program of the school, and the school requests cooperation from all parents to ensure that each scholar gets the help he/she needs to succeed.

If scholars make poor choices, we employ developmentally appropriate consequences such as loss of privileges (*e.g.*, attendance on a field lesson) or required attendance at afterschool or Saturday Extension. During Extension, scholars may receive additional academic help, practice building skills in the areas in which they struggled to make appropriate choices, write apology letters, talk to a teacher or administrator, or research and/or plan a solution to remedy the impact their behavior had on the school community. Scholars/families are responsible for transportation to/from home.

In the rare instance in which a scholar's behavior requires a suspension, Achievement First staff will work with the scholar, family and teachers to support this scholar's re-entry into school. Scholars who are suspended are asked to show learning from their actions (*e.g.*, an apology) as part of showing an understanding of the seriousness of their actions and of being welcomed back into the community. Suspended scholars will also be responsible for making up all missed work within an agreed upon timetable.

In case of severe or repeated violations that endanger the welfare of scholars and/or staff, the principal may recommend that a scholar be expelled. Expulsion only takes place after a hearing with a hearing officer or panel designated by the Board of Trustees. For more information about disciplinary procedures, including hearings, and due process rights, please refer to

Appendix B.

Code of Conduct

Achievement First provides a safe and structured environment that promotes scholars' academic and social development. The school's disciplined environment is a key element of our academic success. Scholars who fail to meet our clearly defined standards for appropriate and acceptable conduct are not allowed to disrupt the education of others. Scholars are held accountable through clear consequences for violating the school's rules.

We care about our scholars' safety and conduct not simply when they are in school – but at all times, including when they are traveling to and from school or school activities. Therefore, a disciplinary offense is a violation of the school's Code of Conduct if it occurs while the scholar is at school and/or on school grounds; is participating in a school-sponsored or other related activity; is walking to or from school or a school-sponsored or other related activity; is walking to or from, waiting for, or riding on school-provided transportation; or is walking to or from, waiting for, or riding on public transportation to and from school or a school-sponsored or other related activity. School-related disciplinary offenses may also include misconduct outside the school, including through the use of an electronic device owned, leased or used by the school or actions or speech on social media, where evidence exists that the scholar's conduct had a significant impact on the educational environment and/or continued presence as a result of such conduct would have a substantial detrimental effect on the school, including the safety or rights of the scholar, other scholars, or staff members.

Scholars may be removed from class and/or school immediately if the scholar's presence in school or class poses a continuing danger to persons or property, an ongoing threat of danger, or a serious disruption to the academic process.

The school's Code of Conduct may be supplemented by teachers' rules for their classes and other school events. The school may develop a system of merits/demerits and will provide materials about this system at Scholar Orientation, Parent Orientation, or other appropriate time at the beginning of the school year. The system may change throughout the year (*e.g.*, expectations are different in the beginning of the year and the end of year and are adaptable), and the school will alert scholars about material changes (*e.g.*, certain behaviors are now demerits that previously were not). Merits/demerits are a behavior support and intervention that gives real-time feedback to scholars and regular feedback to families on how the scholar is meeting classroom and school-wide behavior expectations. The merit/demerit system can lead to both rewards (*e.g.*, privileges, awards, or shout-outs) or consequences and supports (*e.g.*,

loss of privileges, interventions, and/or extensions). Repeated and/or severe behavior resulting in demerits and/or extension may also lead to suspension under the Code of Conduct below.

Disciplinary offenses result in consequences subject to the discretion of the principal or his/her designee(s) and may include demerits, extension, school service/cleaning (if the offense is related to defacing or damaging school property), loss of school privileges, Homework Extension, Saturday Extension, in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, and/or expulsion. In determining the appropriate disciplinary action, school personnel who are authorized to impose disciplinary penalties may consider, among other things, the scholar's prior disciplinary record. Suspended scholars are not allowed to participate in school activities. Any breaches of state or federal law may be handled in cooperation with the police department or other authorities.

The following list of punishable offenses is not meant to be exhaustive, but rather provides examples of prohibited conduct and corresponding consequences. Additional violations of school rules and behaviors that compromise the school community and the learning of others will also merit consequences. Importantly, although the list is intended to provide expectations regarding the link between scholar misconduct and consequences, each scholar and each incident is different and may have a variety of mitigating (*e.g.*, first time engaging in this conduct or sincere apology and acceptance of responsibility) or aggravating factors (*e.g.*, multiple violations in one incident or repeated incidents or the severity and negative impact of the behavior). For that reason, the principal or the principal's designee may, in his/her discretion, assign a different consequence than outlined in the ranges below, provided the consequence must be in keeping with the spirit of this policy and must be consistent with applicable law. Consequences must always be reasonable and appropriate, and intended to address the specific prohibited conduct.

INFRACTIONS

Violation of School Rule

- Being out of uniform
- Chewing gum
- Arriving late to school or class
- Mistreatment or inappropriate use of technology or school property
- Minor damage to property (*e.g.*, light pencil markings on desk)
- Possession of inappropriate property or technology or an object expressly prohibited or that impedes the learning process
- Unauthorized use of the building elevator

Disrespect

- Minor disrespect of a fellow scholar or scholars

- Minor disrespect of a faculty member, staff member, visitor, volunteer, school transportation provider, or other member of the school community

Disruptive, distracting behavior

- Disrupting class or school activity for any reason
- Horse-playing
- Running in hallways
- Making unreasonable or distracting noise
- Being off-task
- Failing to follow directions, delaying in following directions or otherwise undermining directions
- Refusing to follow directions
- Impeding vehicular or pedestrian traffic

Being unprepared for class

- Being unprepared for class
- Failing to maintain desk or locker area as required
- Failing to have school document, homework, or exam signed
- Failing to complete homework or other assignment

INFRACTIONS: Range of School Responses, Interventions, and Consequences

Summary of typical range: from warning to exclusion/removal from class

- Non-verbal warning
- Verbal warning or reprimand
- Reflecting on behavior orally and/or in writing
- Verbal or written apology
- Time out within the classroom
- Scholar-teacher conference
- Scholar-administrator conference
- Sitting in his/her seat during breaks
- Modified lunch setting and/or lunch extension
- Modified classroom participation (*e.g.*, limited partner work, etc.) to best support the scholar
- Seating arrangement changed
- Note home to parents to be signed and brought back to school
- Call home to parents
- Request meeting with parents
- Confiscation of property (if related to infraction)
- Performing extra service for the school, such as cleaning (if related to infraction)
- Paying for or replacing damaged or missing property
- Loss of classroom or other school privileges
- Missing school events, trips, or activities
- Extension
- Friday Extension
- Suspension of Transportation (if related to infraction)
- Time out outside the classroom
- Sent to dean's office, principal's office or other designated area
- Exclusion and/or removal from a particular class or event

SERIOUS INFRACTIONS

Disrespect

- Serious disrespect of a fellow scholar or scholars
- Serious disrespect of a faculty member, staff member, visitor, volunteer, school transportation provider, or other member of the school community
- Using an abusive, vulgar, or profane word or phrase

Not being where the scholar is supposed to be

- Cutting school, class, or required in-school or after-school activity (including extension, homework make-up, required tutoring, etc.)
- Departing, without permission, from class, floor, building, or school-sponsored activity or going to an unauthorized location
- Refusing to leave an area where the scholar is not supposed to be – or refusing to leave an area where the scholar is distracting others
- Obstructing or blocking vehicular or pedestrian traffic

Not following consequences

- Failing to comply with school-imposed consequences (*e.g.*, skipping or refusing to go to an extension or other consequence)
- Disrupting Friday Extension, in-school suspension, or another significant consequence through misbehavior

Repeated misbehavior

- Being removed from class/asked to report to the dean of students' office, principal's office, or other designated area during class more than one time in a given day
- Being removed from class/asked to report to the dean of students' office, principals' office, or other designated area during class more than three times in a given week
- Excessive and/or repeated afterschool extensions
- Repeated offenses for which the scholar has already earned in-school suspension or other consequences

Other serious infractions

- Serious versions of conduct listed under the infractions category

SERIOUS INFRACTIONS: Range of School Responses, Interventions and Consequences

Summary of typical range: from exclusion/removal from class to in-school suspension

- Any consequence outlined above for infractions
- Additional oral or written reflections and/or apologies
- Request formal meeting with parents
- In-school suspension
- Short-term out-of-school suspension

MAJOR OFFENSES

Medication or Tobacco

- Using or possessing over-the-counter medication inappropriately
- Using, possessing or transferring tobacco, e-cigarette or related products or accessories

Fleeing or blocking access

- Fleeing an area, which includes, but is not limited to, running around the classroom, running in the hallways or between floors away from adults, and running out of the building
- Blocking access to any part of the school building

Action that impairs the school's ability to function

- Action that seriously impairs the ability of the school to function, including, but not limited to, extreme language, refusal to move, intentionally sustained distracting behavior, or demeaning or intimidating speech
- Gross disrespect of a faculty member, staff member, visitor, volunteer, school transportation provider, or other member of the school community

Abuse or Harassment

- Committing sexual, racial, or any form of harassment or intimidation
- Bullying, cyber bullying, intimidation, hazing, threats, and/or harassment of another scholar (see bullying and cyber bullying sections for more detail)

Damaging Property

- Damaging or destroying personal or school property – or attempting to do so
- Throwing, pushing, or moving furniture/classroom objects in an aggressive or upset manner
- Gross disrespect or destruction of school property, including graffiti

Physical Aggression

- Making verbal or physical threats, empty or otherwise
- Fighting, pushing, scratching, shoving, biting, punching, grabbing, slapping, kicking or any other unwanted physical contact – or any contact with the intent to hurt, but without causing serious injury
- Any action that presents imminent threat to physical safety of self or others
- Throwing an object at another person or in the classroom

Sexual Activity

- Engaging in sexual activity or inappropriate touching
- Indecent exposure

Gambling, Stealing, Lying, Forgery, Plagiarism

- Gambling
- Lying or giving false information to, or misleading, staff member
- Stealing
- Plagiarism, cheating, altering records or forgery, including forging of parental signatures

Other major offenses

- Major versions of conduct listed under the serious infractions category

MAJOR OFFENSES: Range of School Responses, Interventions and Consequences

Summary of typical range: from in-school suspension to out-of-school suspension

- Any consequences outlined above for infractions or serious infractions
- In-school suspension
- Short-term out-of-school suspension
- Long-term out-of-school suspension

EGREGIOUS OFFENSES

- Repeated major offenses and/or fundamental disregard for school policies and procedures in a manner that presents an unsafe or abusive condition for members of the school community or seriously disrupts the educational process of the school
- Creating a hazardous or offensive condition, such as setting off false alarms, making bomb or other violent threats, or calling in threats, empty or otherwise
- Threatening a staff member or his/her family friends with serious physical harm or ongoing repeated and/or specific threats made to another member of the school community creating or intended to create an unsafe environment for the other individual
- Significant destruction or attempted significant destruction of school property, including arson
- Significant theft (*e.g.*, items valued at several hundred dollars) or stealing from a staff member, including money, wallet, credit cards, and personal possessions
- Possession, use, or transfer of drugs, alcohol, or controlled substances, including, but not limited to, illegal drugs (*e.g.*, marijuana), drug paraphernalia, prescription medication or alcohol, on school grounds or at a school-sponsored event
- Sale or distribution of drugs, alcohol, or controlled substances, including, but not limited to, illegal drugs (*e.g.*, marijuana), drug paraphernalia, prescription medication, tobacco or alcohol, on school grounds or at a school sponsored event
- Possession, use, or transfer of a firearm or weapon or mock weapon, including, but not limited to, the following: firearm, air gun, BB gun, knife, bludgeon (*e.g.*, metal knuckles), sling shot, explosives, dangerous chemicals,, any sharp pointed instrument or other dangerous instrument intended as a weapon (*e.g.*, broken glass, lighter, baseball bat, etc.)
- Assault and/or use of extreme force against or an action intended to inflict serious injury upon another scholar or scholars, school personnel, or other member(s) of the school community; actions that should have been reasonably foreseen as having the potential to inflict serious injury are included
- Sexual assault
- Physically assaulting a staff member or other adult members of the school community; this includes, but is not limited to hitting, kicking, punching, slapping, or pushing
- Scholar charged with or convicted of a felony that poses a continuing danger to persons or property or ongoing threat of serious disruption to the academic process
- Scholars with a protective order against them that is based on or involves violence, severe harassment, or threat of violence against another scholar or staff member
- Egregious versions of conduct listed under the major offenses category

EGREGIOUS OFFENSES: Range of School Responses, Interventions and Consequences

Summary of typical range: from out-of-school suspension to expulsion

- Any consequences outlined above for infractions, serious infractions or major offenses
- Short-term out-of-school suspension, usually for an extended period (*e.g.*, more than one day)
- Long-term out-of-school suspension
- Expulsion

When an egregious offense occurs, both the principal and regional superintendent should be notified immediately. Past disciplinary offenses may be considered in the school's decision-making around consequences. If the scholar has already been found to have engaged in an egregious offense that did not result in long-term suspension or expulsion earlier in the school year, the school is more likely to recommend long-term suspension or expulsion upon any subsequent egregious offense. In keeping with the Gun-Free Schools Act, it shall be the policy of the Board to suspend a student for at least one full calendar year whenever the student is in the possession of a firearm as defined in 18 U.S.C. § 921(a). The Board shall modify the term of the expulsion on a case-by-case basis.

Additional Behavior Beyond the School Building

Field Lessons

As part of our rigorous academic program, we require outside learning experiences, such as trips to museums and college campuses. During these activities, scholars are responsible for adhering to the same behavioral expectations as within the school building. Permission slips will be sent home for each field lesson and must be signed in order for a scholar to attend. A scholar may be considered ineligible for a trip/event for reasons including, but not limited to: not returning the school-sponsored trip permission form, involvement in a disciplinary incident on a prior trip, poor school attendance, misbehavior or severe lack of academic effort in the day of or days prior to the trip, etc. Scholars who are considered ineligible for attending a trip will be required to attend school that day.

Bus Behavior

Busing for Achievement First schools is provided by the local school district. Unsafe behavior on the bus endangers our scholars, and it will not be tolerated. A pattern of unsafe behavior may result in loss of bus privileges.

Bus drivers must focus on the road to make sure all scholars arrive to school and home safely. At dismissal, scholars should go directly to their bus, greet the bus driver, and have a seat. On the bus, scholars must remain in their seats, talk quietly, and follow all directions given by the bus driver. Scholars should not communicate with scholars on other buses or any people outside the bus. Scholars who behave poorly on the bus compromise the safety of themselves and others. Poor bus behavior may result in suspension or termination of transportation

services. If your child is suspended from the bus, it will be your responsibility to arrange for alternative transportation.

The Achievement First Code of Conduct and all school rules apply on school bus transportation. Scholars who take the school bus are expected to act responsibly and respectfully at all times. Certain additional rules will apply to the bus. Scholars may be given assigned seats. An administrator will meet the bus every day. No child will exit the bus before the administrator checks with the driver as to behavior. Failing to be in the assigned seat, putting hands out of the bus, throwing things, using bad language, not obeying the bus driver, are all infractions, as well as those listed throughout the Code of Conduct. More serious behavior (*e.g.*, fighting or other egregious offenses) will be investigated and assigned consequences as well just as if it happened on school grounds, up to and including out-of-school suspension or expulsion.

Number of Infractions	Consequence
1 Infraction	Loss of bus privileges for a week
2 Infractions	Loss of bus privileges for two weeks
3 Infractions	Loss of bus privileges for a month
More than 3 infractions	Loss of bus privilege for an additional month, up to a full year

Infractions, if serious enough, can warrant immediate loss of bus privileges for the year. Other consequences (*e.g.*, demerits, extensions, suspensions) may apply as well. *Families are strongly encouraged to reinforce the importance of proper bus behavior and the potential consequences for bad behavior.* Consequences for misconduct by scholars with Individualized Education Programs riding on transportation provided by their IEP will be dealt with on a case by case basis.

Cheating, Plagiarism and Copying Other's Work

Cheating on homework or exams, using resources inappropriately, and copying other people's work is not only unfair, it also means that a scholar is not actually learning the material. If scholars are unsure about an assignment, a test question, or a testing procedure, they should go to their teacher and ask for direction. Specific guidelines regarding cheating and plagiarism will be reviewed with scholars during Scholar Orientation and throughout the year. The school will determine appropriate consequences, but cheating, plagiarism, and copying other's work may result in loss of academic credit, in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, and/or other consequences.

Scholar Searches

In order to maintain the security of all its scholars, Achievement First staff reserve the right to conduct searches of scholars and their property when there is reasonable suspicion that the scholar has violated the law or a school rule. If searches are conducted, the school will make every effort to ensure that the privacy of the scholars is respected and that scholars and their families are informed of the circumstances surrounding and results of the search.

The school authorizes the principal and the principal's designee(s) to conduct searches of scholars and their belongings if the authorized school official has reasonable suspicion to believe that the search will result in evidence that the scholar violated the law or the school's Code of Conduct or otherwise constituted a threat to the health, safety, welfare, or morals of the school, other scholars, school personnel, or any other person on school property or attending a school function. Additional searches may be warranted in certain situations related to school safety. In authorizing searches, the school acknowledges both state and federal constitutional rights which are applicable to personal searches of scholars and searches of their possessions.

Reasonable individualized suspicion to conduct a search of a scholar or a scholar's possessions and the scope of the particular search shall be based upon, among other things, the scholar's age, the prevalence and seriousness of the problem to which the search is directed, the urgency necessitating an immediate search, and the probative value and reliability of information used as justification for the search.

Scholars have no reasonable expectation of privacy rights in school lockers, cubbies, desks, or other school storage places. The school exercises overriding control over such school property, which may be opened and subjected to inspection at any time by school officials.

Unannounced Scanning

In New York City, we are co-located in New York City Department of Education ("NYC DOE") facilities at most of our campuses which means that we are subject to abiding by district policies that apply to all building occupants. One specific policy that we want to make parents aware of is that we are required to participate in NYC DOE's uninitiated scanning initiative. While AF East New York Middle School itself has no metal detectors or scanners, there may be times when the NYPD conducts random scanning in order to deter prohibited and dangerous items from potentially being brought into NYC's public middle and high schools. Students in grades K-5 will not be scanned and a separate entrance must be designated for these students on the day an unannounced scanning is conducted. If and when that should occur, all students and visitors entering AF East New York Middle School may be required to submit to a metal detector scan and personal search, if necessary, to ensure that weapons are not brought into

the school building. Bags and parcels may also be searched by means of metal detecting devices, by hand, or otherwise. Any prohibited items confiscated during scanning—or taken during the school day by school officials—will be kept by school administration until a parent retrieves the item.

Transportation, Arrival, and Dismissal

School Bus Transportation

As noted above, busing for Achievement First schools is provided by the local school districts. While they determine the eligibility of a scholar for yellow school busing, Achievement First reserves the right to suspend an eligible scholar from the bus if he/she in any way threatens the safety and well-being of his/her peers.

Notifying the School of Transportation Changes

Please arrange transportation home before your child leaves for school in the morning.

Scholars will not be allowed to call home to check if they are being picked up. If you need to pick up your child from school and your child usually rides the bus, or if you must otherwise change your child's transportation for that day, please do one of the following:

- ***Be at the school at dismissal time*** – All bus riders are walked to the buses daily. If you need to pick up your child instead of them getting on the bus, you should be at the school at dismissal to be able to pick up your child as he/she is in the bus line. If you are not here by the time the buses leave, your child will be sent on the bus.
- ***Send in a note*** – Send a note to school with your child detailing the change in plans and providing a clear description of who will pick up your child.
- ***In an emergency, call the school*** – If you or your family is having a medical emergency that requires a change in your child's transportation plans, please call the school immediately to make arrangements. **The school does not accept transportation change requests by telephone except in the case of an emergency.** If your child normally rides the bus and you wish to pick him or her up from school and you have not notified the school in writing that morning, you must meet your child at the school at dismissal time.

Late Pickup From School

Scholars who are picked up by their parents or another adult after school are expected to be picked up promptly at the end of the school day (4:05 P.M. for regular dismissal and 12:45 P.M. on Fridays). Elementary scholars who ride the bus must have an approved adult meet the child at the bus stop daily. When a parent comes late to pick up their children (or is not at the bus stop at the specified time), it makes the job of our already very hard-working school staff even

harder. The school will log late pick-ups daily. Parents of scholars who have three or more late pick-ups in a trimester or six or more in a year may be required to have an in-person meeting with the principal or dean. If a parent is more than an hour late picking up his/her child, the school may need to take the child to the local police precinct for safe supervision.

Parent/Guardian Late to Pick Up from Bus Stop

Elementary School parents/guardians have the responsibility to pick up their elementary school child when the bus is at their designated school bus stop. Parents/guardians who are late to pick their children up make the bus run late and inconvenience other families. When parents/guardians of elementary schools are not present, scholars will be returned to the school. It will be the responsibility of the parents/guardians to retrieve scholars from the school once they are returned by the bus driver.

Repeated failure to pick up a child from the bus stop at the scheduled time may result in the following consequences, to be determined by the dean of students/principal: 1) for the first violation, the scholar's parent(s) and/or guardian(s) will be contacted to pick up their child from the school and will be issued a warning in writing; 2) for a second violation, the scholar's parent(s) and/or guardian(s) will be contacted to pick up their child from the school and the scholar will be suspended from the afternoon bus for a period of up to one week; 3) for a third violation, the scholar's parent(s) and/or guardian(s) will be contacted to pick up their child from the school and the scholar will be suspended from the afternoon bus for a period of up to one month; and 4) for a fourth violation, the scholar's parent(s) and/or guardian(s) will be contacted to pick up their child from the school and the scholar may be suspended from the afternoon bus for the remainder of the academic year.

Arrival/Dismissal

Scholars should not arrive at school earlier than 7:00 am.

Buses will pick up and drop off scholars next to the building. As a result, we ask that parents who are dropping off and/or picking up scholars be mindful of the tight traffic situation, arrive on time, and plan accordingly.

At dismissal, scholars should either leave the school building or attend afterschool tutoring. Scholars are never allowed to wait in any other portion of the building. They must wait in a designated afterschool location, under the supervision of a staff member. Scholars may not wait outside without staff supervision.

Scholars Who Walk

Unless parents notify the school differently, parents of middle or high school scholars have permission to walk home or take the city bus. Under rare circumstances and with parental permission, elementary school scholars may walk home or take the city bus.

For scholars who walk to and from school, and for scholars who may be walking from the public transportation stops, a number of streets must be crossed. Families should instruct scholars to use all of the appropriate crossing lights at each intersection, and to cross each intersection only when it is safe to do so within the designated crosswalks. Parents are urged to call the local police department for questions or concerns.

Scholars who walk to and from school should act as representatives of the school. The same standards of behavior outlined in this document apply while scholars are traveling to and from school.

After-School or Saturday Transportation

When a scholar remains after school, the school administration will see that the scholar's parents/guardians are given notice, and arrangements are made for the scholar's safe return home. The school does not provide transportation for most after-school or Saturday activities.

Staff Rides

Under exceptional (and rare) circumstances, with parental permission, a scholar may be driven home by a member of the Achievement First staff. More details about required documentation will be provided in these cases.

School Uniforms

All scholars must come to school in the Achievement First uniform every day. Arriving to school out of uniform is a violation of the Code of Conduct and may lead to disciplinary consequences. In these instances, the scholar's parents will be called and asked to bring in a uniform before the scholar is sent to class (provided the school will when available provide a clean and appropriate loaner item, and families should contact the director of school operations if cost of the uniform is the cause so that alternative arrangements may be made). We have a required school uniform for several very important reasons:

- **Uniforms unite us as a community.** When you look at the Achievement First uniform, it is a powerful visual statement of our community. Scholars make a commitment that when they put on the Achievement First uniform, they are agreeing to live up to the school's values.

- **Uniforms reduce distractions and clothing competition.** Often scholars spend more time discussing and evaluating what others are wearing or not wearing than they spend focusing on learning. Wearing uniforms eliminates this distraction.
- **Uniforms make us all equal.** Whether families have high incomes or low incomes, the scholars come to school looking the same way. No one is made to feel bad about the clothes they have or don't have.
- **Uniforms look professional.** Scholars look neat when they arrive to school with shirts tucked into their khaki pants. The scholars come mentally prepared for school and "dressed for work."

General Uniform Requirements

Shirts: Uniform shirts must be purchased through our uniform vendor, Flynn and O'Hara. On top, scholars must wear an Achievement First collared shirt. Shirts must be in the school colors and have the Achievement First logo stitched into the fabric. Upper School shirts are light blue, and the lower school shirts are orange. Shirts are available in both long-sleeve and short-sleeve. If a scholar chooses to wear an undershirt, it must be white or match the uniform shirt color. Shirts should be the appropriate size, fitting the scholar without being tight. In addition, scholars must wear Achievement First shirts with the shirt, including the shirt tail, tucked in.

Sweaters: Uniform sweaters must be purchased through our uniform vendor, Flynn & O'Hara. Scholars may wear either the AF long-sleeve sweaters or the AF sweater vests with the uniform shirt underneath.

How to Purchase Uniform Shirts & Sweaters:

1. Mail in the order form with a money order or check. Order forms and envelopes are available at your child's school. Your school also has a list of places nearby that issue money orders.
 2. Call and order with a credit card. Call 800-441-4122.
 3. Order online at www.flynnohara.com
 4. Go to the Flynn and O'Hara store. The school maintains a list of nearby Flynn and O'Hara stores.
- **Dress Pants:** All scholars must wear plain, blue pants (with belt loops for boys). No baggy or multi-pocketed pants. The pants should fit on the hips. Scholars should wear the size of pants that would be appropriate to wear in a professional workplace. This means that very loose pants, baggy pants, or very tight pants are not acceptable. The school has the authority to determine what pants are acceptable. Pants should fit snugly on the waist

without a belt, *but a plain black belt should be worn in order to ensure the pants stay snug and to look sharp.* No underwear should show.

OR

- **Plain Shorts:** During warm-weather months, the principal or dean of students will let scholars know when they can wear plain, blue shorts (with belt loops for boys) that are no shorter than one inch from the knee. This means that very loose shorts, baggy shorts, or very tight shorts are not acceptable. The school has the authority to determine what shorts are acceptable. If the shorts have belt loops, scholars must wear a belt. Belts are an essential part of the dress code. No underwear should show.

OR

- **Long Skirt:** Instead of pants, scholars may choose to wear a long, plain, blue-colored skirt. All skirts should go at least four inches below the knee.
- **Shoes and Socks:** Scholars must also wear closed-toed shoes daily. Because scholars walk a lot during each day and have exercise time each day, we ask that scholars wear sneakers instead of dress shoes. All sneakers should be plain black without any distinctive logos or markings. Scholars should wear plain white or black socks.
- **Jackets:** Scholars may not wear jackets inside the school building. If a scholar is worried about being cold inside the building, he/she should wear a uniform sweater or a long sleeve shirt (of the color of the uniform shirt or white) under his/her uniform shirt.
- **Jewelry:** Scholars should not wear jewelry that distracts from the uniform, like large earrings, multiple chains or rings, or lots of bracelets. If a scholar chooses to wear jewelry, it must be modest. **Scholars may wear only one chain or necklace, and it must be tucked neatly under their uniform shirt. Scholars may only wear very small earrings.** Scholars may not wear “name chains” or name earrings, large belt buckles, large or heavy chains, or any piece of jewelry that is large or distracting. If a scholar wears jewelry that the dean of students or principal considers excessive, then the scholar will be asked to remove it.
- **Hats:** Scholars are not allowed to wear baseball hats, scarves, head bands, or bandanas in the building. Small clips or bands for the hair are permitted. Head-coverings for religious reasons are permitted. Hats worn inside the building will be taken from scholars and stored at the front desk for parents to pick up.
- **Make-up:** Make-up (lipstick, glitter, blush, eyeshadow, etc.) is strictly not allowed. Lip gloss is not permitted. Scholars may use Chapstick or other similar non-glossy lip moisturizers,

but if the application of it becomes distracting to the learning process, the scholar will not be allowed to use it.

- **Physical Education (P.E.) Shirts:** There is no gym uniform and scholars may not change clothes for P.E. If you are concerned about wear and tear on your child's uniform, we suggest you purchase multiple sets. Middle school scholars may wear an Achievement First P.E. shirt under their uniform shirt. Before P.E., the scholar may then take off their uniform shirt and use the t-shirt for P.E. After P.E. class, the scholar may then change back into the uniform shirt.
- **Hair, Nails, and Tattoos:** Hair colors or shades of hair other than black, brown, blond, and red are not permitted. Dyed hair or a hairstyle that serves as a distraction – at the determination of the school – will not be permitted. Any tattoos – small or large – must be covered at all times. Fingernails should not be or potentially be a distraction to others. Simple polish only is acceptable.
- **No Changing at School:** While on school property or on school transportation to and from school, scholars must wear their uniform only; while at the school, scholars may not change for events or activities later on in the day.
- **Uniforms on Field Lessons:** Because field lessons are an opportunity for AF scholars to represent their school outside of the building, all uniform standards apply for field lessons. For longer, overnight field lessons, the school may specify the dress code.
- **Dress for the Weather:** Scholars go outside to play most days, except in certain instances where it is precipitating or particularly cold. Please ensure that your child has the proper attire he/she needs to stay comfortable and warm outside.

Scholars who do not abide by all the above uniform guidelines will be subject to disciplinary consequences.

Promotion to the Next Grade

About Promotion at Achievement First

Achievement First provides a rigorous, college-preparatory educational program, and the faculty, staff, and administration are committed to helping all students satisfy all requirements for promotion and graduation. *Our ultimate goal is college readiness.* We believe that in some instances it will be better for a scholar to repeat a grade in order to fully develop the skills, habits and knowledge required for the next grade and for rigorous colleges and careers.

We recognize that retention is a major decision that has important ramifications for a scholar and family. We take seriously the responsibility to make good decisions regarding retention. In fact, our consideration of the long-term ramifications is what often underlies our decision to retain a scholar. When a student's performance indicates that he/she is not ready to move on, we would much rather have that scholar repeat a grade while with Achievement First so that we can provide intensive support and work in close partnership with families – as opposed to sending a scholar off to the next grade where he/she may not be set up for success. Because Achievement First's academic and behavioral standards are more rigorous than many traditional schools, we often have different and more rigorous promotional criteria.

- The school sees it as its job to help all scholars meet promotion criteria and ultimately to be prepared for success in the next grade. There are times when a scholar simply needs another year to be able to fully tackle the work, and the school is committed to ensuring that a scholar's second year in a grade involves a clear plan to provide the scholar additional supports.
- The school will share promotion-in-doubt status with parents at multiple points in the years (*e.g.*, Report Card Nights).
- The school's administrative team (and ultimately the principal) has full authority to make all promotion decisions.
- The school does not "socially promote." That is, scholars will not be promoted to the next grade simply because they are "old enough" to be in that grade. The school may also choose to non-promote a scholar even if he/she has been retained before. Readiness for the next grade is demonstrated by mastering rigorous academic standards and behaving in a way that reflects the school's values.
- Achievement First may retain early elementary scholars (K-2) who are not meeting our rigorous standards. It has been our experience that early elementary scholars who are retained are often able to get the extra time and support they need to meet our rigorous standards, thus setting them up for long-term academic success.

Special Education

Achievement First is committed to serving all scholars who walk through our doors. We believe it is our responsibility to ensure that students who come to us can attain a great education and be on the path through college. This is why our special services program is so important; it is consistent with and necessary to our mission to serve students with disabilities and students that struggle academically and behaviorally.

Annual Information Session

We recognize that parents are important partners in their children's education. We want to make sure parents have information to help them understand special education at AF. One way AF provides this info is via a "Special Education Family Information Session" in the fall, which is open to any and all families. During this session families will receive information about special education at AF, including:

- how AF (and families) may decide to refer a student for evaluated for special education services,
- what happens during the evaluation process,
- how AF and the NYC Department of Education ("NYC DOE") work together to provide special education supports to students,
- what types of academic and behavioral supports are available at AF,
- how parents may request behavioral supports, and
- formal and informal ways that parents can communicate any concerns about special education.

Much of the information that will be discussed in the information session is also provided here, in the Family Handbook, as another resource to help families understand special education and partner with AF in support of their child.

Child Find

Under federal and state special education requirements, Achievement First is obligated to identify students who may have disabilities, and partner with the NYC DOE to evaluate students and determine whether they do, in fact, have a disability and qualify for special education. If a student has a disability recognized under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and that disability negatively impacts educational performance, that student qualifies for special education and related services. If a student has a physical or mental impairment recognized under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and that impairment substantially limits one or more major life activities, that student is entitled to special education accommodations designed to meet those students' individual educational needs as adequately as the needs of nondisabled students are met. This obligation to identify and evaluate students who may qualify for special education is called Child Find.

Child Find is important because if a student does have a disability, there are various in-school supports and services that can be provided to them (at no cost to the parent) to help them fully access their education. Many of these supports can be provided to your child at Achievement First. (For more information about the special education supports available at Achievement First, see "Special Education Supports at AF" on page 30.)

If you are concerned because your child is struggling academically, behaviorally or socio-emotionally (for example, they are overly anxious or depressed and withdrawn), you have the right to request that your child be thoroughly evaluated and considered for additional programs and/or services so that they can learn and make meaningful progress at school. You can make this

request at any time, even if AF has not raised a concern about your child's progress, either by speaking to the Special Services Leader ("SSL") at your child's school, or by writing directly to the Committee on Special Education ("CSE") that works with your child's school. The Special Services Leader can provide you with contact information for the CSE.

Response to Intervention

AF believes that providing early and robust interventions can help AF support all students, as well as help AF identify students who may qualify for special education services.

An intervention is instruction and supports which supplement and intensify classroom instruction and systems. The Response to Intervention ("RTI") process at AF starts with reviewing data to determine what areas of challenge a student may have (reading, math, behavior, etc.), and then providing targeted, research-based supports that are individualized to the student's area(s) of challenge. The next step in the RTI process is to look at data after a student has received intervention(s) for several weeks, to determine how the student is responding to the interventions; specifically, whether the student is demonstrating more success in the area of challenge (for example, developing their reading skills), or continuing to struggle.

AF has developed three "Tiers" or levels of intervention to support students. The first, Tier 1 interventions, are providing a high quality curriculum and instruction in the general education classroom. Tier 2 interventions are academic or behavioral supports beyond what is offered in the general classrooms, and include additional Guided Reading, phonics, small group math, or a behavior support plan. Tier 3 interventions are more individualized and frequent interventions for the scholars who need the most support and include Guided Reading (in a smaller group), small group math (more targeted), phonics, or a Behavior Intervention Plan.

Students who show growth and progress under interventions will continue to receive them until they are no longer demonstrating challenges in the area the intervention has been targeting. Students who are not showing growth and progress with receipt of interventions will also continue to receive interventions (and may receive more intensive/individualized interventions), and such students may also be referred for special education evaluation, to determine whether supports available through special education could help the student achieve more progress.

You have the right to request that your child be referred for special education at any time, whether or not they are receiving interventions. As explained above, this request for evaluation can be made at any time by speaking to the Special Services Leader at your child's school. You may also write to the CSE to request an evaluation of your child and appropriate programs and services. The Special Services Leader can provide you with contact information for the CSE.

Initial Referral to Special Education

A student can be referred for evaluation by recommendation of the school or request of the family. Once a student has been referred for special education, a series of steps will occur in a specified timeframe which *may* result in your child receiving special education services. Some of

these steps are taken by Achievement First staff at the school and others are taken by DOE staff at the CSE office that works with the AF school.

To begin the process, AF staff submits an initial referred request to the CSE Chairperson that includes the following information:

- 1) Data about the student, such as: academic data, attendance data, behavior data, and teacher progress reports
- 2) A letter from the school to the CSE, explaining why AF is requesting that the CSE evaluate the student
- 3) A letter from the parent explaining that the parent would like their child to be evaluated

CSE staff takes the following steps after receiving an initial referral request:

- 1) The CSE should contact you within *ten school days* about next steps. The CSE usually asks the parent to come into the CSE office to discuss the evaluation process and get your written consent to evaluate your child. The CSE will not begin evaluations until they have met with you and you have provided this “informed consent.” It is important to respond to the CSE when you hear from them because if you don’t respond within 30 days they may not evaluate your child.
- 2) Once the CSE receives your written consent, it will conduct one or more evaluations to fully assess your child’s educational difficulties and needs. Depending on the challenges your child is facing, the CSE may conduct a social history (about your child’s background), a “psycho-educational” evaluation (focusing on the mental processes needed for education), and specialized assessments about your child’s speech, coordination, motor skills, or other areas. The CSE has *60 calendar days* from when you sign the consent form to do these evaluations.
- 3) After the evaluations are completed, a team of people including you, staff from Achievement First, and staff from the CSE will meet together to decide whether your child should receive any services and supports to help your child learn. This is called an “IEP meeting” and this meeting must happen within *60 school days* from when you sign the consent form. If your child will receive supports, it is ultimately up to the CSE to decide what services and supports to give. Those services and supports will be written down in a plan, called an “IEP,” and the CSE and Achievement First will work together to give those services and supports to your child.

If you do not hear from the CSE regarding our referral to evaluate your child within 10 days, you should contact the CSE directly. You may also contact the SSL at your child’s school.

If you have other questions about the initial referral process, (including questions about whether the CSE is conducting the evaluations as quickly as they should be), you should also reach out to the CSE or to the SSL.

Section 504 Plans and IEPs: Students with disabilities requiring specialized support may qualify for a support plan under either Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act or an IEP under the IDEA. A Section 504 plan outlines individualized accommodations and services to support the scholar, which may include testing accommodation, homework accommodations, and special transportation. An IEP can include accommodations and modifications to the general curriculum, individualized goals and objectives, and services, such as special education services and related services including speech and language therapy and occupational therapy (more information below). If your child had a 504 plan or IEP at a previous school, please contact the Special Services Leader at 347-471-2570.

Special Education Supports at AF

There are a range of supports and services that a student with a disability might receive. These supports are called the “**continuum of services**” and range from very intense support to just a few services. The goal of services is to enable a student with a disability to be able to access curriculum and instruction, and participate fully within the classroom and school. AF partners with the NYC Department of Education (“DOE”) to provide some services to students with disabilities. However, district schools provide a wider array of services than AF schools.

- **General Education Classes:** instruction in the general education classroom, which may include accommodations (such as extended time on tests) or related services (such as speech therapy)
- **Special Education Teacher Support Services (“SETSS”):** interventions (targeted instruction) taught by special education teachers in a small group that may be provided in the gen ed classroom or separately, in another location (called “pull-out”)
- **Integrated Co-teaching (“ICT”):** classroom that includes students with disabilities and students who do not have disabilities who are educated together with two teachers, a general education teacher and a special education teacher, who collaborate to adapt and modify instruction and ensure that the entire class has access to the general education curriculum.
- **Self-Contained:** AF offers self-contained classes in grades 1-5 at two AF campuses. The self-contained classes are clustered at two AF schools (AF Bushwick Elementary and AF Bushwick Middle School) and serve students from across AF schools. *Only students who are currently enrolled at AF are eligible for enrollment at Empower.* If you believe your scholar needs a self-contained program, please talk to your SSL.

Related Services: Sometimes students with disabilities may need supports in areas other than just instruction. For example, if a student has been evaluated and determined to have challenges with speech, then that student should also work with a speech therapist to help them develop important skills for communicating within school. This type of service is called a *related service*, and is provided by a specialist who is trained in a specific area (for example, a speech therapist rather than a classroom teacher). AF works with the NYC DOE to provide different related services, including physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, counseling, and paraprofessional support.

When an IEP specifies a classroom setting AF does NOT offer

Sometimes, a student's IEP may mandate a classroom setting available at a DOE school, but not available at AF (such as placement in a 12:1:1 or 8:1:1 classroom). It's important for you to know that you still have a legal right to a place at AF, but you also have a right to another placement offered by the DOE. It is your decision whether you want to accept the placement at AF or accept the placement offered by the DOE. Here's what you need to know:

- Enrollment at an AF school may mean that your child will be in large classes (30 students, 1 or 2 teachers) for the majority of the day, and AF's model is to provide additional supports to support your child to meet high academic and behavioral standards.
- Every child is different. Many students with IEPs that recommend smaller settings than available at AF (for example, a 12:1:1 classroom) have been successful at AF. Other students may be better served in a more intensive, specialized classroom or school. You should talk to us and the DOE to get more information as you think carefully about what your child needs.

Finally, if you enroll your child at AF and later decide you would like to explore placement at district school, the DOE is still required to offer you another placement at that time. Requests for a change of placement require a meeting with the district to revisit your child's IEP. In this meeting, you, AF, and the NYC DOE will discuss your request, and determine what kind of placement could be appropriate for your student, using data and information about your child's academic, behavioral, and socio-emotional progress and needs.

Roles of AF and the NYC DOE

In New York, AF schools partner with the NYC DOE to manage the special education process. The DOE has created offices called Committees for Special Education (CSE) throughout the city, which are responsible for overseeing the special education practices in charter schools. AF schools currently partner with three CSE offices: 5, 6, and 8. The CSE offices have many teams and each CSE office has assigned one team to be responsible for working with AF schools.

Here is a breakdown of the different responsibilities of AF and the CSE in the special education process.

Initial Referral and Evaluations:

- **AF** identifies students who might benefit from special education services, and refers those students to the CSE. When a parent requests evaluations, AF sends those requests to the CSE. When parents refer their children directly to the CSE, AF also sends additional information to the CSE to support the parent's request.
- The **CSE** determines whether or not to formally refer the student for evaluation and then schedules and completes ALL evaluations for students.

Annual/Triennial Evaluations:

The **CSE** conducts ALL evaluations agreed to during annual IEP meetings. In addition, the CSE must consider re-evaluations at least every three years (known as triennial evaluations). The CSE conducts ALL triennial evaluations if they determine that triennial evaluations are necessary.

- **AF** notifies the CSE if the CSE has not conducted a reevaluation in the past three years.

IEPs and IEP Meetings:

- The **CSE** schedules and holds IEP meetings, makes final decisions about what supports, services, and placement should be in the student's IEP, and creates the official IEP document.
- **AF** staff participate in IEP meetings, and contribute drafts of certain IEP sections for the CSE's review.

Related Services:

Providing Services:

- For most related services (like speech and language therapy, physical therapy, and occupational therapy), the **DOE/CSE** is responsible for contracting with providers, sending them to the school, and paying them.
- **AF** coordinates with the DOE providers, gives them access to students to do their sessions, and notifies the DOE if a provider is repeatedly absent or quits.
 - o In some AF schools, AF employees may provide the related service of counseling.

Providing Paraprofessionals:

- The **DOE/CSE** also contracts with agencies to provide paraprofessionals (one-to-one helpers for students) who are sent to the school.
- **AF** supervises and trains the paraprofessionals provided by the DOE.

Providing Make-up Services:

- The **DOE/CSE** is responsible for providing make-up sessions for sessions missed by a DOE provider.
- **AF** is responsible for providing make-up sessions if an AF employee is providing counseling services and misses sessions.

Accommodations and Supports:

- **AF** is responsible for providing classroom accommodations and supports that are on a student's IEP, like testing accommodations, preferential seating, redirection and prompting, small-group instruction (called SETSS), special classrooms with a special education and a general education teacher called "Integrated Co-Taught Classrooms" (ICT), modified promotional criteria, and behavior modifications and supports.
- The **CSE** makes final decisions about what classroom accommodations and supports are in a student's IEP.

FBA's and BIP's:

Some students' IEPs call for a "Functional Behavioral Assessment" ("FBA"), which tries to identify why a student might be engaging in challenging behavior. This leads to a "Behavior Implementation Plan" ("BIP"), a detailed plan for helping the student control the behavior.

- The **CSE** is responsible for conducting formal FBAs and creating formal BIPs, with input from AF.
AF may create its own informal FBAs and BIPs for some students, but they are not the formal ones required by an IEP.

Manifestation Determination Review ("MDR"):

An MDR is a formal review of whether a student is being removed from school because of behavior that is related to his or her disability.

- **AF** notifies the CSE when the student has been removed or suspended for over 10 days, or has experienced a pattern of suspensions or removals.
- The **CSE** is responsible for scheduling and holding the MDR within ten days of being notified by AF.

504 Plans:

- **AF** is responsible for initial consideration, developing the 504 Plan, annual reviews, ending 504 Plans, conducting MDRs for students with 504 Plans, and most other aspects of 504 Plans.
- The **CSE** is responsible for providing transportation services for scholars with special transportation in their 504 Plans.

Your Procedural Rights

If you think your child is not getting a particular service or support that they need, you *always* have the right to file an "impartial hearing request," saying why you think your child is entitled to get the service or support. That begins a process where a hearing officer will independently hear from you and from the DOE (and the school if appropriate), and decide whether the DOE needs to take steps to get the support or service to your child. *For more information on this process, please see the "Due Process Complaint" section on page 16 of the "DOE's Procedural Safeguards Notice."*

When families have questions about an aspect of the special education process that is a CSE responsibility, families can reach out to the CSE directly. Below is contact info for each of the CSEs

that works with an AF school; if you do not know which CSE works with your child’s school, you can get that information from the Special Services Leader (“SSL”) at your child’s school.

AF School	CSE	Contact Information for CSE Chairperson
AF Apollo ES/MS, AF Aspire ES/MS, AF Brownsville ES/MS, AF Bushwick ES/MS, AF East Brooklyn HS, AF East New York ES/MS, AF Linden ES/MS, AF North Brooklyn ES/MS, AF University Prep HS	5	Geraldine Beauvil GBeauvil@schools.nyc.gov 718-240-3557
AF Crown Heights ES/MS, AF Brooklyn HS, AF Voyager ES/MS	6	Arlene Rosenstock Arlene ARosens3@schools.nyc.gov 718-968-6200
AF Endeavor ES/MS	8	Cherry Kang CKang2@schools.nyc.gov 718-935-4900

Requesting Behavioral Supports

When students are demonstrating behavioral challenges in school, it could be because of a variety of factors. Sometimes, students are adjusting to a new environment (*e.g.*, new to AF, or being in a new grade or classroom). Sometimes students are frustrated in a particular moment or about a specific situation. In both of these instances, students may demonstrate behaviors for a few days or few weeks, but as they adjust or resolve their frustration, the behaviors will likewise be resolved. Other times, students may demonstrate behaviors over a longer period of time and behaviors may be related to a diagnosed disability or could be symptomatic of a disability that has not yet been diagnosed. When a student is struggling with behaviors over a longer period of time, parents may be unsure what can/should happen in school to support the student.

Parents of students with disabilities may also have specific concerns about whether ongoing behaviors are related to their child’s disability, and whether the school is providing appropriate behavior supports that are responsive to both the behavior and the disability.

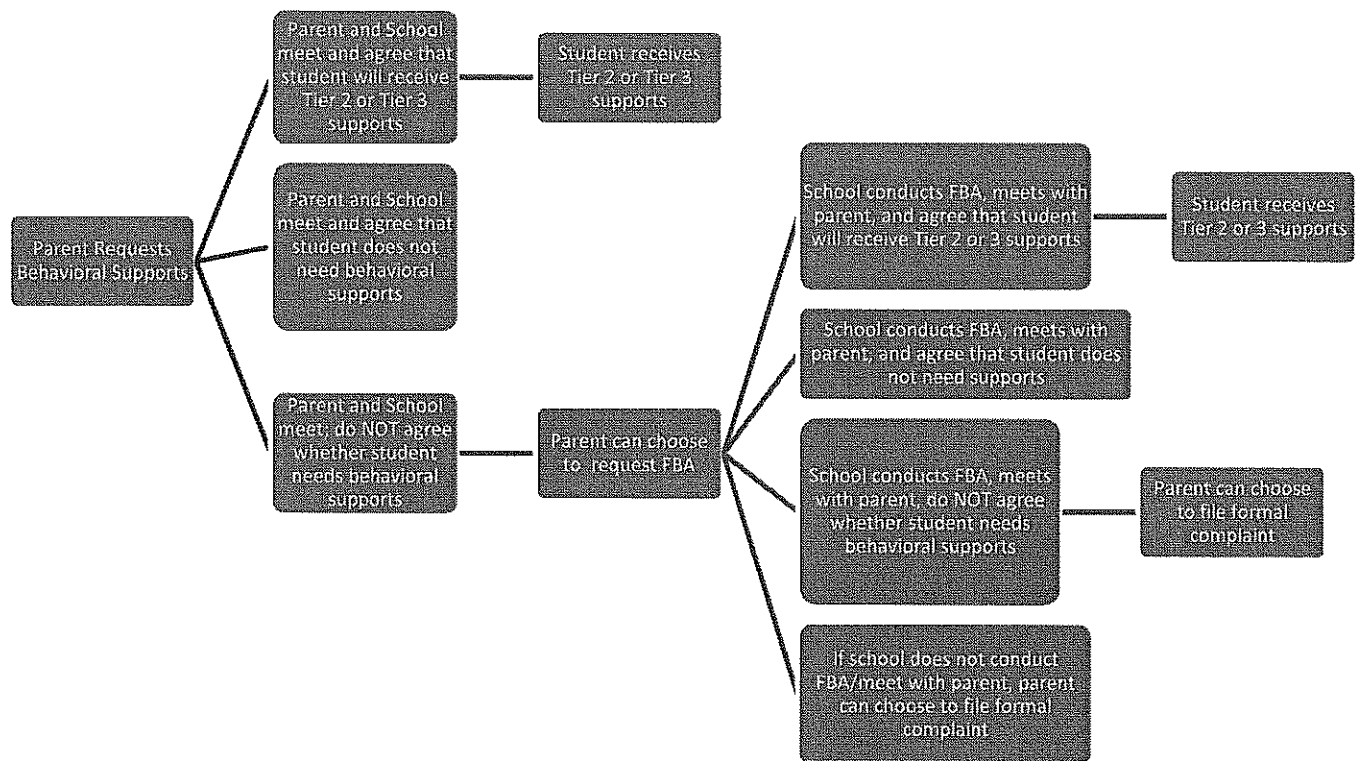
If you have concerns that your child is demonstrating behaviors in school that could be associated with your child’s disability, and/or concerns that the school is not providing appropriate behavioral supports, you may make a request for behavioral supports using “Behavioral Support Request Form” in **Appendix E**. You can also request a copy of this form from the school. After you make the request, the school will set up a meeting with you to discuss your concerns and your request.

After that meeting, you and the school may agree that the school will provide Tier 2 or Tier 3 behavioral supports to your child. However, if you and the school do not agree, and you would

still like your child to receive behavioral supports, you can request that the school conduct an evaluation called a Functional Behavioral Assessment (“FBA”). As part of the FBA, the school will conduct classroom observations of your child, and collect data including: what kinds of behaviors your child is engaging in, how frequently behaviors are happening, whether there are specific events or circumstances that may trigger the behaviors, and how long behaviors last once they start.

If you request an FBA, the school must conduct the FBA (the observations and collection of data), and schedule another meeting with you within 2-3 weeks from when you request the FBA. At the meeting with you, the school will review the FBA results and discuss whether the results indicate a need for a Tier 2 or 3 Plan.

The following chart may be helpful for understanding the process and options for requesting behavioral supports:



As you can see from the chart above, after the FBA, if you and the school still do not agree on whether your child needs behavioral supports, you may file a formal complaint, by following the complaint procedure outlined in the next section (“Concerns About Special Education”). Similarly, if the school does not conduct an FBA and meet with you within 2-3 weeks of your request for an FBA, you can also file a formal complaint by following the complaint procedure outlined in the section below.

Concerns about Special Education

Achievement First is committed to maintaining a strong partnership and ongoing dialogue between its teachers, staff, our scholars, and their families. This includes partnering around supports to students with disabilities. We hope that any concerns can be addressed in collaboration with the school, and we also recognize that at times parents may need another route to achieve resolution of their concern.

Therefore, parents at AF have the option to file a formal complaint or grievance regarding the provision of special education. Some types of concerns for which a parent may choose to file a formal complaint are: complaints that a child has been inappropriately disciplined for disability-related behaviors; complaints that a school will not provide behavioral supports for disability-related behaviors; or complaints that an IEP has not been adequately implemented. These are only examples; parents may have other types of concern related to special education for which they choose to file a formal complaint.

Process to file a Parental Grievance regarding Special Education

The process for how to file a complaint/grievance about special education is outlined in the “Addressing Family Concerns” section on page 41. Please note that for concerns or grievances regarding special education, the staff member to contact in Step 1 is the school’s Special Services Leader.

Promotion Criteria

The school will consider a student who fails to meet **ANY** of the following criteria to be at risk of non-promotion. The principal has final authority to make promotion decisions based on a scholar’s readiness for the next grade.

State and Other Test Scores

For Kindergarten – Grade 2 students:

- Below grade level on nationally normed reading assessment as determined by Achievement First

In Grades 3 – 8:

- Score of 1 on any state test (because the school does not control the timing of the release of state test scores, this promotional criteria is one of the last to be considered and can delay non-promotion decisions)

In Grades 9 – 12:

- Repeating Years Scored a <65 or lower in more than 2 regents exams; in the summer after 11th grade a student must have passed at least 2 out of 3 exams in Algebra, Geometry, and Global History and at least 1 out of 3 exams in Biology, US History, and ELA

Attendance

15 or more absences in a year (5 tardies and/or early dismissals count as one absence); there is no differentiation between excused and unexcused absences.

Course Grades (5 – 8)

- Failing two or more of the following classes: math, reading, writing, history, and science

Course Grades (9 – 12)

- Failing two or more core/required class (math, reading, writing, history, science) after the summer academy session is over OR
- Being deficient two credits from any year of high school upon entering the grade. Some examples:

Situation	Retention Decision	Reason
Scholar fails two classes in 9 th grade, successfully completes summer academy, fails one class in 10 th grade.	Will this scholar move to 11 th grade? If he/she successfully completes summer academy, YES.	After 9 th grade, he/she was behind two credits, one was made up in summer academy, he/she then failed another in 10 th grade, but if that credit is made up in summer academy, he/she will only be one credit behind.
11 th grade scholar has never failed a class before, but fails three courses in grade 11.	Will this scholar move to 12 th grade? NO.	Even if this scholar attends summer academy, he/she will be behind <u>two</u> credits and scholars cannot enter a year of school more than one credit deficient. This scholar will repeat grade 11.

Additional Non-Promotion Criteria:

The following criteria indicate promotion-in-doubt status. Promotion-in-doubt means that a student may not yet have the skills and knowledge necessary in order to be prepared for the next grade.

Kindergarten to Grade 2:

- The student scores below the 50th percentile or above on the MAP math exam

Grades 3 – 8:

- The student scores in the bottom 10% of the AF Network on Achievement First’s internal reading and math exams

Reading

- The student is below grade level on nationally normed reading assessment as determined by Achievement First

Course Grades

Grades 3 – 8

- The student is failing (grade is lower than a 70) two or more of the following classes: math, reading, writing, history, and science

Promotion for English Language Learners (ELLs):

As required by law, we evaluate the promotion of English Language Learners differently:

Grades K-7: ELLs who have been enrolled in school in the United States for 2 years or fewer are exempt from the ELA test. Instead, they must show satisfactory progress (move up one proficiency level in reading, writing, speaking, and listening) on the NYSESLAT. For mathematics, they must score a Level 2 in English or their native language.

Grade 8-12: ELLs who have been enrolled in school in the United States for less than 1 year have a 1 year exemption for the ELA test, but must show satisfactory progress on the NYSESLAT. For mathematics, they must score a Level 2 in English or their native language.

Grades K-8: ELLs who have been enrolled in the United States from 2-6 years must show satisfactory progress (defined above) in English as a Second Language on the NYSESLAT OR achieve a Level 2 on the state ELA test. For mathematics, they must score a Level 2 in English or in their native language.

Grade 8-12: ELLs in 8th grade and beyond who have been enrolled in the United States for more than 1 year but fewer than 4 years must show satisfactory progress on the NYSESLAT OR achieve a Level 2 on the state ELA test. For mathematics, they must score a Level 2 in English or in their native language.

In NY, a student must test out of ELL status in order to graduate from high school and parents are not allowed to exempt their students from ELL status.

** Limited English proficiency may not be the sole basis for retention*

Promotion for Students with IEPs:

The purpose of an IEP is to outline the support a student needs to reach an ambitious and achievable academic bar. When a student does not meet the bar, burden of proof falls on the school to demonstrate that we provided the services the student needed and the student was still not able to reach the academic bar. We do not have the same autonomy that we do in general education - our local districts oversee our special education programs. We must accomplish the following for students with IEPs:

- Ensure that all IEPs document the services the school provides and that the school has a signed copy of the IEP.

- Send home IEP progress reports as often we send home report cards (signed and returned); IEP progress reports should indicate whether or not a student is on track to meeting her/his IEP goals and should align to the student's general performance.

For students with IEPs who are held to the standard promotional criteria (NOT modified criteria):

- These students must meet the standard criteria set out for all students. In cases where a student received a 1 on a state test, the school may consider a student portfolio of work to determine if the student does meet grade level standards (including writing assignments, classwork, projects, unit tests, etc.). The school may promote this student if the portfolio indicates greater than Level 2 proficiency and demonstrates that the student is prepared for the rigors of the next grade.
- At the first sign a student with an IEP is at risk of retention, the school must ensure that robust and appropriate supports are in place in order for the student to make appropriate academic progress.
- In the rare case where a student with an IEP is at risk of a double retention, the school must consider using a portfolio of work to indicate demonstrate grade level proficiency.

For students with IEPs who have modified promotional criteria and take state assessments:

- In the rare case where a student has modified promotional criteria on the IEP, the school should clarify the exact modified criteria and the content they apply to (ELA and/or Math) at the beginning of the year, write a non-official IEP amendment, and communicate the promotional criteria to the parents. The modified criteria should explicitly outline the growth that the student will demonstrate and the way that growth will be measured (*i.e.*, "Grow 1.5 grade levels as measured by STEP").

For students with IEPs who have modified promotional criteria and take alternative assessments:

- These students reflect less than 1% of our student population and are exempt from all standard promotional criteria; in these cases, promotion is based on meeting IEP Goals.

Supporting Non-Promoted Students

When a scholar is not promoted, we will create a clear action plan for the scholar. This plan is designed to ensure that the scholar's second time in a grade is not just a repeat of the previous year. The plan will detail additional academic and social/behavioral supports, incentive systems, consequences, and other relevant information.

Informing Other Schools

It is Achievement First's policy to inform other schools of the scholar's promotion status. For example, if a third grader is not promoted to fourth grade at an Achievement First school and the parent decides to enroll the child in another school, Achievement First will inform the

school that the scholar did not meet the requirements for promotion to fourth grade and should be a third grader when enrolling in the new school.

High School Graduation Requirements

In order to ensure the integrity of the diploma graduates earn upon completion of the course of studies, the faculty, staff, and administration are committed to consistently and carefully upholding the graduation criteria. Students who do not meet the promotional criteria in a given year will not advance to the next grade and will instead be expected to repeat the same course of studies. The faculty, staff, and administration recognize that some students, depending on their educational development, will require more than four years to successfully meet the school's graduation requirements. Students who do not meet the graduation requirements within the traditional four-year period will be required to attend until they complete the remaining requirements.

Course	# of Credits - NY
Literature (9 – 12)	4
Writing (9 – 12)	4
Mathematics (to at least Pre-Calculus)	4
Science (to include Biology, Chemistry, Physics)	4
History (to include US and Global; Econ/Gov't)	4
Foundations of Leadership	2
Electives (Arts, Health, SAT, Foreign Language, and PE)	5

Non–Course Requirements	NY
Completion of approved summer program	3 credits
Enrolled in one Advanced Placement course	Yes
ELA Regents	Score of 75
Algebra Regents	Score of 75
Science Regents	Score of 65
Social Studies Regents	Score of 65
One additional Regents	Score of 65
Required Community Service hours	Yes (40 hours)

Summer Program Completion (9 – 12)

- Successful completion of an AF-approved summer program
 - Pre-College
 - Internship
 - Growth program
 - Summer Academy and/or SAT Boot Camp

Closed Campus

Achievement First takes the safety of our scholars very seriously. Except under written agreements approved and signed by the principal, scholars are not to leave the school building (or areas of the school building designated for his/her grade) or use any exit other than the ones designated by teachers for scholar use without permission. A scholar with permission to leave may only leave under the escort and supervision of an authorized adult – who has physically come to the office to sign a scholar out – unless the school has been given permission authorizing unaccompanied departure. Once scholars have entered in the morning, they may not leave the building unless a staff member escorts them.

Civility Code

Our families are partners with Achievement First staff in creating a warm and respectful environment for everyone in our team and family. We work hard to ensure that the school's values permeate all interactions with families and scholars. Therefore, school staff and families are both responsible for ensuring that all communication be mutually respectful.

While we encourage families to share any and all concerns with the appropriate school staff, the school will retain the right to end any meeting or phone conversation in which the volume, tone, or substance of the communication is rude (*e.g.*, name-calling or frequent interruptions), profane (*e.g.*, cursing), or threatening. Moreover, when conversations have clearly gone past the point where productive problem-solving is an option, the school reserves the right to end the conversation and schedule additional time at a later date. At the same time, families have the right to end conversations if staff members are not displaying mutual respect and should reschedule for a later date. Families also have the option of addressing the actions of a staff member during a meeting via the family concerns procedure (see **Appendix F** for the Family Concern Form).

The school may require parents, guardians, or community members who violate the civility code to provide written requests for meetings, outlining the nature of the concern and with whom they would like to speak. Because of the school's commitment to ensuring the safety of scholars and staff, and maintaining a calm, productive, positive learning environment, the school reserves the right to bar an individual from the school site if there are repeated violations to the civility code. In such a case, the school staff member will typically meet with a parent off-campus at an agreed-

upon location (*e.g.*, a public library or community center) or meet on campus 30 minutes after school ends.

School Visitor Policy

Parents/guardians/families are a vital part of the Achievement First community. We welcome you as a partner in the education of our scholars, and you should feel free to observe regularly at the school. In order to maximize our scholar's learning time and minimize distraction in our classrooms, we ask that you do the following:

- Please let us know in advance if you plan to visit. In the vast majority of circumstances, we can accommodate parents with advance notice, but there may be times when the school may ask to set up a different time or meet with a parent before a visit.
- Upon arriving, sign-in with the Main Office and obtain a visitor badge to wear while in the building.
- Refrain from interacting with scholars so that they are able to pay attention to their teachers at all times.
- Turn off your cell phone prior to entering the classroom.
- Sit behind all scholars (at the back of the classroom) so that you are not blocking a child's view.
- If you would like to speak with the teacher following your visit, please contact them by phone/e-mail or call the school to set up a follow up meeting. Teachers will generally be unable to meet or talk with you during their teaching time.

If a visitor is coming to school to drop something off for a scholar or to leave a message, we still require that the visitor come to the main office. For the sake of scholar safety, we cannot have anyone unannounced in the building.

Emergencies

In case of an emergency, parents or guardians should contact the school either by calling the school or in person. Under no circumstance should parents or guardians contact scholars in their classrooms, including after school, or attempt to remove scholars from the building without notifying and receiving permission from staff members in the school office.

Fire Safety and Evacuation Procedures

Please note that some procedures may change once the school year has officially begun. Scholars will be notified of and trained in any significant changes.

In case of emergency, if a scholar or staff member sees fire or smells smoke, he/she should close the door and immediately notify an administrator or teacher. Upon hearing an alarm, school staff will assemble scholars in their rooms and proceed out of the building according to the fire evacuation plan posted in each room. Scholars should follow the direction of staff members who will verify the safety of the stairwells and lead scholars outside the building to the designated locations, where school staff will line up scholars by class and take attendance.

Frequently throughout the school year, scholars and staff will participate in fire drills and safety lockdown drills to ensure that the entire school community is familiar with the appropriate response in the event of an emergency.

In case of a serious emergency, should it be necessary to evacuate our school before, during, or after the school day – and it appears that we will be unable to return to the school for an extended period of time or for the rest of the day – school staff and scholars will evacuate according to the school’s evacuation plan. Staff will line up scholars in a safe and orderly fashion on the sidewalks outside the evacuation site. After staff takes attendance, should conditions permit, all staff and scholars will return promptly to school. If the school is off limits, the school has a designated congregation point where all staff and scholars will gather. Parents/guardians will be informed as soon as possible.

Addressing Family Concerns

Achievement First is committed to maintaining a strong partnership and ongoing dialogue between its teachers, staff, our scholars, and their families. If parents, guardians or others have a concern about a school policy, academic grade, discipline decision, or anything else, we welcome your input and encourage you to contact the appropriate staff member at the school.

Procedures for Addressing Concerns

Step 1: Contact Staff Member Involved: If a parent has an issue or concern, the first step towards resolving the issue will be to contact the staff member involved by phone or email. The parent should call the school’s front desk to obtain contact information. The staff member and the parent will then set up a meeting to discuss the issue either on the phone or in-person and work to reach a resolution that satisfies both parties. (Note: if the concern is about special education, the staff member should be the Special Services Leader; see page 34.)

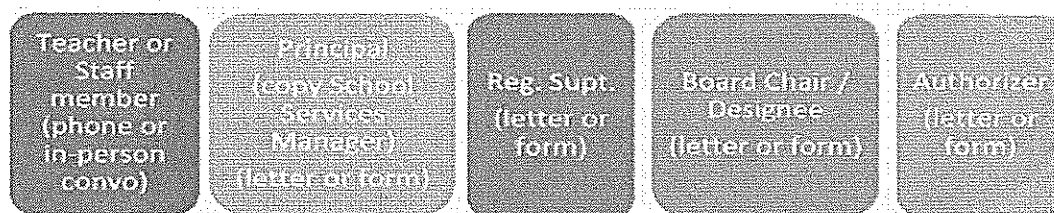
Step 2: Contact the Principal: If the issue is not resolved satisfactorily, the parent's next step is to reach out to the principal via phone or email or use the "Family Concern Form" (see Appendix F) to explain the issue in writing. Even if the issue is a problem with the principal directly, the parent should go through this step. It is important to work to resolve the issue directly first. The parent should contact the school's front desk to obtain contact information for the principal. The principal will reply within three business days, at least acknowledging the complaint has been received, and the principal may take up to five additional business days to investigate and reach a decision.

Step 3: Written Complaint sent to Principal's Supervisor: If the parent is unsatisfied with the principal's decision or response, the parent may write a letter to the regional superintendent who supports the school or use the "Family Concern Form" (see Appendix F) to explain the issue. The parent can fax, email, mail, or hand-deliver (to the school's front desk) the letter/completed form, and the office staff will ensure that the communication gets to the regional superintendent. In some instances, it may be appropriate to schedule a meeting in person or via phone. If the parent would like to reach out to the regional superintendent directly, the parent should contact the front desk of the school to get his/her contact information. The regional superintendent will reply within three business days and may take up to 10 business days to investigate and reach a decision. The regional superintendent will send a written decision to the parent within 10 business days of receiving the letter or form unless the parent and the regional superintendent agree to hold a meeting instead or the original concern is shared in a meeting. Please note that the regional superintendent will not respond to complaints that have not gone through steps 1-2. A member of the front office staff member will put a copy of the complaint form and the regional superintendent's response in the scholar's file, and the front office staff will also ensure that a summary of the complaint and resolution is logged in the school's scholar information system.

Step 4: Written Complaint to the School's Board of Trustees: If the parent is unsatisfied with the regional superintendent's decision or response, the parent may write a letter to the school's Board of Trustees or use the "Family Concern Form" (see Appendix F) to explain the issue. The parent can fax, email, mail, or hand-deliver (to the school's front desk) the letter, and the communication will go to the Board's chairperson. The parent/guardian should call the school's front desk to obtain contact information. Please note that the Board or its designee will generally refer complaints that have not gone through steps 1-3 back to the school. The Board or its designee will reply within three business days and may take up to 10 business days to investigate and reach a decision. The Board or its designee will send a written decision to the parent. Additionally, some issues may require more time to resolve than the above timeline – in such instances, the Board or its designee will inform the parent and discuss the expected timeline for a response. A member of the front office staff will put a copy of the complaint form and Board's response in the scholar's file, and the front office staff will also ensure that a summary of the complaint and resolution is logged in the school's scholar information system. 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 this complaint procedure or, as appropriate, take note of the complaint and respond based on the above timeline.

Step 5: Written Complaint to the Authorizer: If the parent is not satisfied with the Board’s decision, the parent may present their concern to the SUNY Charter Schools Institute. The parent will be provided with contact information for the authorizer with the Board’s response in step 4. (Please note that the school will ask the authorizer not respond to complaints that have not gone through steps 1-4.)

Please note that if the school gets multiple complaints on the same or a similar subject, the school may elect to consider all of the complaints in one process to ensure the process is clearly and effectively communicated to each family fairly and consistently.



The process described above is designed so that families can speak with the staff members who are most directly involved with the situation. Usually, this is the best way to resolve a concern or complaint because staff members can more quickly and efficiently address family concerns. *Parents do have the right, however, to submit concerns directly to the Board or to the authorizer. In this case, the Board will determine whether the complaint alleges a violation of the law or of the charter. If it does not, the Board will generally direct the parent back to the school level.*

Grievances Related to Discrimination Issues

Achievement First does not condone or tolerate discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation or disability in admission or access to, or treatment, or employment in its programs or activities. Families have the right, therefore, to file a formal grievance if they believe that AF has violated a discrimination law (including Section 504, Title IX, and Title VI). The grievance procedure for discrimination issues is included in **Appendix D – How to File a Grievance about Discrimination** – please review it carefully. As noted in Appendix D, the Special Services Coordinator is the Title VII, Title IX and Section 504 Coordinator and may be contacted at 347-471-2570. The purpose of this formal grievance procedure is to provide a simple and accessible process to address problems and claims of discrimination based on race,

color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation or disability. The Special Services Coordinator may designate the resolution of certain grievances to other appropriate school staff members.

School Calendar and Closings

School Closure Policy

Because we believe maximizing instructional time is critical to closing the achievement gap, Achievement First schools will only close under extreme circumstances. In such circumstances, **Achievement First will follow the lead of our host district unless you have explicitly heard otherwise from us at least 24 hours in advance.** If you have any doubt as to the status of school, please listen to local radio and television stations. Again, unless you have explicitly heard otherwise from Achievement First 24 hours in advance that we are making a different decision, if the host district announces a closure, delayed start, or early dismissal, Achievement First will do the same. To avoid parent confusion, Achievement First will not make separate closure announcements through local media outlets (*i.e.*, TV or radio). As the situation allows, Achievement First will however reiterate the delay, closure or cancellation of after-school events via auto-dialer and/or text message.

Special Circumstances

While Achievement First believes that following our host district's lead applies for 95% of all school closure scenarios, there are some highly unusual situations where Achievement First would decide to make a different decision. While it is hard to predict the exact scenarios where we would not simply follow our host district's lead, we have experienced this on several occasions on days when Achievement First schools are in session and our host district's are not (*e.g.*, AF schools typically start the school year earlier and/or finish later than our host districts.) In such instances, Achievement First will proactively reach out to all families via auto-dialer and/or text message at least 24 hours of advance notice so that families are aware and can plan accordingly.

School Closure Make-Up Plan

1. Our regular school year is generally between 183 and 190 days – at least three more days than required by the state – because we believe that scholars need more time to master our advanced curriculum. In the case of lost days, our network-wide minimum number of days is 180 days, and schools will need to make up days if they fall below this minimum.
2. In terms of timing, we make up snow days as soon as the school falls below 180 days. If we need to make up one day below 180, we plan to extend the school year by one day and hold school on Monday, June 17, 2019. If we need to make up a second day below 180, we plan to convert Monday, February 11, 2019 for Elementary and Middle Schools and Monday, April 1, 2019 for High School into an additional day of school (although these make-up days

are subject to change with advance notification). Additional days will be held immediately following the conclusion of the regular academic year.

3. Therefore families, staff and scholars are strongly encouraged to refrain from making any definite plans for these potential make-up times just in case additional school days are required.

We believe that this make-up plan is sufficient to work in 99% of all scenarios. However, in truly extreme and unforeseen circumstances (*e.g.*, if a school experiences greater than 15 days of closure during the school year), we reserve the right to adjust the make-up plan to better meet the needs of our scholars and school community.

Student Computer and Internet Use Policy

Achievement First schools uses computers (includes mobile and other electronic devices for purposes of this section), networks and Internet services, as one way of enhancing its mission to provide all of our students with the academic and character skills they need to graduate from top colleges, to succeed in a competitive world and to serve as the next generation of leaders in our communities.

The following rules are intended to provide general guidelines and examples of prohibited computer and Internet uses, but do not attempt to state all required or prohibited activities by users. Failure to comply with Achievement First's Student Computer and Internet Use Policy and these rules may result in loss of computer and Internet privileges, and/or legal and disciplinary action.

A. Use is a Privilege

Student use of Achievement First's computers, networks and Internet services is a privilege. No one will deliberately or willfully cause damage to computer equipment, network resources, or assist another in doing the same.

B. Acceptable Use

Student access to Achievement First's computers, networks and Internet services are provided for educational purposes and research consistent with the curriculum and instructional goals. The same rules and expectations govern student conduct and communication on computers and online services. Students are expected to comply with these rules and all specific instructions from staff members when accessing computers and network resources.

C. Prohibited Use

The student is responsible for his/her actions and activities involving school computers, networks and Internet services, and for his/her information, files, passwords and accounts. Examples of unacceptable uses that are prohibited include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Accessing Inappropriate Materials - Accessing, submitting, posting, publishing, forwarding, downloading, scanning or displaying materials that are defamatory, abusive, obscene, vulgar, sexually explicit, sexually suggestive, threatening, discriminatory, harassing and/or illegal
2. Illegal Activities - Using computers, networks and Internet services for any illegal activity or that violates other Achievement First policies, procedures and/or school rules
3. Violating Copyrights - Copying or downloading copyrighted material without the owner's permission
4. Plagiarism - Representing as one's own work any material obtained on the Internet
5. Copying Software/Media Files - Copying or downloading software without the authorization of the system administrator; illegally downloading music, photos, movies or other such files
6. Non-School Related Uses - Using the school unit's computers, networks and Internet services for non-school-related purposes such as private financial gain; commercial, advertising or solicitation purposes
7. Misuse of Passwords/Unauthorized Access - Sharing passwords, using other users' passwords without permission and/or accessing other user accounts
8. Malicious Use/Vandalism - Any malicious use, disruption or harm to the school unit's computers, networks and Internet services, including but not limited to hacking activities and creation/uploading of computer viruses
9. Unauthorized access to Social Networking/Chat Rooms/News Groups - Accessing social networking sites or software, chat rooms or news groups without specific authorization from the supervising teacher

D. No Expectation of Privacy

Achievement First retains control, custody, and supervision of all computers, networks and Internet services owned or leased by Achievement First. Achievement First reserves the right to monitor all computer and Internet activity by students. Students have no expectation of privacy in their use of school computers, software accounts, Internet services, email, and stored files. Each person will respect the rights of others to the protection of the files they store on a computer and will not alter or damage such files or accounts.

Bullying and Cyber Bullying

The law defines "bullying" and "harassment" as the creation of a hostile environment by conduct or by threats, intimidation or abuse, including cyberbullying, that (a) has or would have the effect of unreasonably and substantially interfering with a student's educational performance, opportunities or benefits, or mental, emotional or physical well-being; or (b) reasonably causes or would reasonably be expected to cause a student to fear for his or her physical safety; or (c)

reasonably causes or would reasonably be expected to cause physical injury or emotional harm to a student; or (d) occurs off school property and creates or would foreseeably create a risk of substantial disruption within the school environment, where it is foreseeable that the conduct, threats, intimidation or abuse might reach school property. Acts of harassment and bullying shall include, but not be limited to, those acts based on a person's actual or perceived race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or sex. For the purposes of this definition the term "threats, intimidation or abuse" shall include verbal and non-verbal actions.

The law defines "cyber bullying" as the above conduct through any form of electronic communication, where it be through electronic text, photos, or videos. Examples of this behavior include, but are not limited to:

- *Sending false, cruel, or vicious messages.*
- *Creating websites that have stories, cartoons, pictures, or jokes ridiculing others.*
- *Breaking into an email account and sending vicious or embarrassing materials to others.*
- *Engaging someone in electronic communication, tricking that person into revealing sensitive personal information, and forwarding that information to others.*
- *Posting of a student picture without his/her permission.*

The online activities and technologies often used by students engaged in cyber bullying include, but are not limited to, social networking sites, chat rooms and discussion groups, instant messaging, text messaging, computers, cell phones and personal digital devices, digital cameras, cell phone cameras, and webcams. As new technologies emerge, they too may be included with the above forms of electronic communication.

Reporting and Prevention of Bullying and Cyber Bullying

The school is committed to promptly addressing and preventing incidents of bullying to the maximum extent possible. Additional information about reporting, investigation, intervention, and prevention of bullying and cyber bullying is included in **Appendix A**.

Student Cell Phone Policy

Students are not allowed to use cell phones in school, at school-sponsored activities, or on school field trips, unless specified by a staff member or chaperone in specific circumstances. If, during these times, a cell phone is used, rings, or is seen by a staff member or chaperone, it will be confiscated from the student and returned to the scholar at the end of the day or the school will request a parent to pick it up from the Main Office. The school may pursue disciplinary

consequences found in the Code of Conduct depending on how disruptive the incident is and/or if a student has had multiple violations. Cell phones brought to school must be turned off, stored away in a locker or backpack area and cannot be taken out until the student is off school grounds.

Nursing Services & Medication

Nursing services for Achievement First are provided by the nursing staff assigned to the school building. We recommend, however, that parents have a doctor or health center look into any recurring health problem a child is having.

The nurse is responsible for checking all health records to be certain that each scholar is properly immunized. The School is required by law to have a completed health form on file for every scholar within 14 days of a child attending our school. The health form documents the vaccinations that a child has received to date. If you have not received this form from the school, please contact the school's main office immediately. Students without the proper vaccinations or an approved exemption from the NYC Department of Health may be excluded from the building until proof of vaccination is provided to the school.

If your child requires medication during school hours, please contact the school's main office to request a Medical Administration Form (MAF). The building nurse has the training and resources to store and administer medication. However, medication cannot be administered to your child until your child's physician has completed the form. This is a requirement of the Health Department and pertains to all medicine, including aspirin, Tylenol, and other over-the-counter medicines.

The building nurse will keep a detailed log of all medicines that are administered.

School Lunch Program

Breakfast and lunch will be available without cost at Achievement First as part of its participation in the School Nutrition Program (a federal program that subsidizes scholar meals).

It is the policy of Achievement First to require all parents, regardless of whether the parent believes the child will qualify for free and reduced lunch, to fill out and turn in a free/reduced lunch form. This policy helps the school ensure that we maximize the reimbursements we receive from the federal government.

Parents may send lunch to school. If you are sending lunch to school with your child, we ask that you send in nutritious foods. Please do not let your child bring unhealthy drinks (*e.g.*, sodas or juices heavy in sugar) or unhealthy snacks (*e.g.*, snacks high in sugar) to school. The school reserves the right not to allow scholars to consume unhealthy food and drinks at school. Additionally, please do not send in lunches that need to be reheated or refrigerated. Please see the healthy foods policy below for more information.

Healthy Foods Policy

Scholar nutrition and health is a big concern at Achievement First schools. Poor eating habits can adversely affect scholar performance by causing, among other things, a lack of focus, low stamina, and/or behavioral outbursts – and, of course, long-term health consequences. In an effort to curb the consumption of low-nutrition foods, the following policy has been created.

Food and beverages brought to school must meet dietary guidelines and contribute to the health of scholars. The school may prohibit the consumption of foods of low nutritional value during breakfast, designated snack periods, lunch and other times scholars have access to food during the school day. Food of low nutritional value consists of:

- Chewing gum and candy
- Food and drinks containing high sugar or other sweeteners
- “Juice” or juice products containing little fruit or vegetable juice
- Foods with high fat/serving ratio (*e.g.*, cookies, Cheetos, potato chips, foods fried in oil, etc.)
- Carbonated beverages
- Cakes/cupcakes (unless this is part of a celebration approved by the teacher)

Teachers planning parties or other school-related events are encouraged to consider healthier alternatives. If scholars bring foods low in nutritional value to school, AF teachers and staff will hold them at the front desk until parents pick them up.

Candy and Snacks

Scholars may not have any candy with them at school. Teachers will take any candy from scholars and treat it like “non-academic material.” (Parents may come to pick up the candy if they want.)

Food not During Designated Times

Scholars may not eat food except during breakfast, lunch, and snack times. Scholars may not have food in their pockets or with them in any way except during snack and lunch. All snack

food must be completed during snack time – and in the classroom. Scholars may not take snacks out of the classroom (for example, to the bathroom). Teachers will take food that scholars have out during unauthorized times and treat it like “non-academic” material. (Parents may come to pick up the food if they want.)

Gum

Scholars (and teachers) should not chew gum. Scholars with gum may face a consequence, and repeated instances will result in more serious consequences.

Classroom Parties, Birthdays, and Other Events

Achievement First supports scholar’s social and emotional growth by celebrating their achievements. Most of these celebrations take the form of school-wide or grade-level events which celebrate scholar academic achievement and character growth. In addition, each class usually celebrates scholars’ birthdays by singing happy birthday and other rituals in a uniform way that is the same for and fair to all scholars. Teachers seek to make scholars feel truly special on their “special” day.

Families wishing to involve classmates in the celebration of their scholar’s birthday or other holidays can do so by inviting them to a party that occurs outside of school hours. The school can support such families by distributing a flyer to families in that scholar’s class. To avoid hurt feelings and distractions from learning, the school can only do this if every scholar in the class is invited. Families wishing to have such an invitation distributed should send it to school in the scholar’s homework folder. Invitations must be general (as in not addressed to specific scholars) and must be issued to all scholars in the class.

In order to minimize competition and distractions from learning, scholars must be in full uniform on their birthdays and other holidays.

Appendices

Appendix A: Reporting, Investigation, Intervention, and Prevention of Bullying and Cyber Bullying

Reporting Bullying and Cyber Bullying (together, “Bullying”)

- 1) If a student feels that he/she is a victim of bullying, or witnesses a student being bullied, the student should report the incident to the dean of students, the safe school climate specialist. Students may report bullying situations anonymously via written note or e-mail so long as the information is securely and privately delivered to the dean of students.
- 2) If a parent or guardian suspects bullying, they may report it via written note or e-mail to the dean of students.
- 3) Any staff member who witnesses or receives any report of bullying must notify the dean of students as soon as possible, and in any event within one school day after the staff member witnesses or receives a report of bullying.
- 4) All reports will be documented and maintained for the duration of the student’s tenure at the school.
- 5) The school will maintain a list of the number of confirmed acts of bullying, without specific names. The school will make the list available upon request and will provide the number of confirmed acts of cyber bullying as required to the State Department of Education.

Investigation

- 1) As with any situation involving a serious breach of school culture and the Code of Conduct, the dean of students will take action to investigate the report of bullying. As bullying is prohibited by the Code of Conduct, it is important to note that this applies to activity on school grounds, at a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function or program whether on or off school grounds, at a school bus stop, on a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased or used by the school, or through the use of an electronic device owned, leased or used by the school, online or otherwise outside of the school setting if the bullying creates a hostile environment at school for the scholar against whom the bullying was directed, infringes on the rights of that scholar, or substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of the school.
- 2) The dean of students will investigate, in a timely fashion, parents’ reports and will review students reports, anonymous or otherwise, to determine the proper action.
- 3) The dean of students will question the reporting student or parent about specific details, which may include date of incident, time, location, and what was said or done to the student being bullied. If the reporter is anonymous, the dean of students will question those who are listed in the report. No disciplinary action will be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous report.
- 4) The dean of students will then meet with and question the student(s) accused of bullying, as well as the student(s) being bullied.

- 5) The dean of students or his/her designee will call the parents or guardians of the students involved in verified incidents of bullying and inform them of the incident(s), the school's response, and any consequences that may result from further acts of bullying within 48 hours after the completion of the investigation. Parents or guardians of scholars against whom the bullying was directed will be invited to a meeting to discuss the measures being taken by the school to ensure the safety of their scholar and policies and procedures in place to prevent further acts of bullying. Parents or guardians of scholars who committed the bullying will be invited to a separate meeting to discuss specific interventions undertaken by the school to prevent further acts of bullying.
- 6) At the discretion of the dean of students or his/her designee, the parents of both parties may be requested to come in and meet with the dean of students and Social Worker for mediation.

Intervention and Prevention

A. Intervention

- 1) The school will promote the use of interventions that are least intrusive and most effective, and will develop case-by-case interventions for addressing repeated acts of bullying against a single individual or recurring bullying incidents perpetrated by the same individual. Intervention may include, but not limited to the following:
 - As the situation may warrant, the school may provide counseling or refer students to outside counseling to address the needs of the victim(s) of the bullying.
 - As the situation may warrant, the school may provide or refer out for counseling and support to address the behavior of the students who bully (*e.g.*, empathy training, anger management, and social skills), and will take other disciplinary measures as appropriate.
 - The school will monitor each individual situation to ensure that the bullying ceases for individual victims and on a school-wide basis.
 - Disciplinary sanctions and consequences will be commensurate with the situation.
 - The school will notify the appropriate law enforcement agency if principal or designee believes the acts of bullying constitute criminal conduct.

B. Prevention

Consistent with Achievement First's values orientation and ongoing character education, the school will send consistent messages to students throughout the school year that bullying is not part of our school's culture and will not be tolerated. Prevention may include, but it not limited to, the following:

1. The school will maintain rules prohibiting bullying, harassment and intimidation and will establish appropriate consequences for those who bully other students.
2. The school prohibits discrimination and retaliation against any individual who reports or assists in the investigation of an act of bullying.
3. As part of our regular character education program, the school will provide advisory time and age appropriate curricula for all classes to discuss bullying in school and the effects of it.

4. The school will implement an on-going cyber safety curriculum to ensure that students are knowledgeable about how to safely interact online.
5. The school will work to protect the safety and security of minors when using electronic mail, chat rooms, and other forms of direct electronic communications.
6. The school will discuss values with parents during orientations.
7. The school's Friday PD program will contain a time to discuss promoting positive school culture including character development and bullying prevention training.
8. The school will use common time with students to discuss cyber safety and cyber bullying issues with students.
9. The school will host tech sessions to teach parents how to monitor their children's behavior on the Internet and their phones.

Appendix B: Disciplinary Procedures and Due Process Rights

The discipline policy of Achievement First is an important part of how we build a learning-focused, safe, and positive school environment. However, it is important that we implement these policies in a fair and transparent way. Scholars and their families deserve and are entitled to the due process protections outlined below.

***NOTE:** Students who have previously been identified as having one or more disabilities under the IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) and/or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act may require alternative and/or additional procedures related to discipline. Specific procedures regarding disciplinary action for those students are set forth more fully below.*

Classroom Removals

- Although the goal is to keep scholars in the classroom learning as much as possible, a teacher, staff member, or school leader has the authority to remove a scholar from the classroom when the scholar's behavior poses a continuing danger to scholars or staff or an ongoing threat of disruption to the academic process.
- When a scholar is removed, the teacher must notify the dean of students or the dean's designee at once and send the scholar to a designated area.
- As soon as the child is able to have a calm conversation, the scholar will have the opportunity for an informal hearing with the dean or dean's designee to hear the reasons for the removal and have an opportunity to informally present the scholar's version of the relevant events before the staff member makes a decision whether to assign additional consequences. We think it is good practice to have an informal hearing, to the greatest extent possible, in connection with each removal.
- The overall goal is to get the scholar back on track and back in class as quickly as possible. In most cases, the scholar will be able to return to class in 20 to 60 minutes. In order to return to class, the scholar may have to complete a reflection form, not be disruptive in the removal area or other classrooms or offices, demonstrate that he/she is calm and ready to return to class, practice building skills in the areas in which he/she struggled to make appropriate choices, and have a satisfactory conversation with the dean or dean's designee about the behavior and how the scholar is to behave the rest of the day and in the future. In addition, the scholar may be required to have a discussion with and apologize to the relevant teacher or staff member before re-entering the class.
- The dean, principal, or designee will record the amount of time lost from class.

- In cases of major or egregious behavior, the principal or dean may decide that the behavior warrants additional consequences that would keep the scholar from returning to class.

In-School Suspensions

The principal or a dean of students, as a designee of the principal, also has the authority to issue in-school suspensions (ISS). An ISS involves the scholar attending school but not attending regular classes and lasts between four hours and 10 days. An ISS can only be issued by the principal or dean. When a scholar has engaged in a behavior that could warrant an in-school suspension, the following steps must take place:

- Review the evidence and ensure that the incident giving rise to the suspension is properly documented. (May be done by the principal, dean, or designee.)
- Except in cases where a scholar's behavior poses an immediate threat to the safety of scholars or staff, the principal or dean will conduct an informal hearing with the scholar. In this informal hearing, the scholar will hear the reasons for the removal from class and have an opportunity to informally present the scholar's version of the relevant events before the principal or dean makes a decision whether to assign in-school suspension.
- After the informal hearing, the principal or dean will determine the appropriate consequence and, if he/she determines an in-school suspension, the length of suspension. In determining the length of the in-school suspension, the principal or dean may receive and consider evidence of past disciplinary problems which have led previous disciplinary actions and the scholar's understanding of the seriousness of his/her actions. The decision of the principal or dean with regard to disciplinary actions up to and including in-school suspensions shall be final.
- The principal, dean or his/her designee will make reasonable attempts by telephone to immediately notify the parent/guardian of the in-school suspension, stating the cause(s) leading to the discipline, the length of in-school suspension, and what the scholar must do to re-enter the school community.
- The principal, dean or his/her designee will send written notification of the in-school suspension to the parent/guardian to the last address reported on school records (or to a newer address know to the principal, dean, or designee) stating the cause(s) leading to the suspension, the length of suspension, and what steps the scholar needs to complete for a successful re-entry into the school community.

Misbehavior during an in-school suspension may result in an out-of-school suspension or other consequence. Additionally, if a scholar has a history of not being able to successfully serve an in-school suspension, including by significantly disrupting the learning of others and/or repeatedly failing to cooperate with directions, the school may seek an out-of-school suspension consistent with the school's disciplinary policies and procedures. As necessary and appropriate, the school may require that the in-school suspension be served at a different Achievement First school.

Short-Term Out-of-School Suspensions

The principal or a dean of students, as a designee of the principal, also has the authority to issue a short-term suspension. This is an out-of-school suspension that lasts from four hours to 10 days. A short-term suspension can be issued only by the principal or dean. When a scholar has engaged in a behavior that could warrant such a suspension, the following steps must take place:

- The principal or dean will review the evidence and ensure that the incident giving rise to the suspension is properly documented.

- Except in cases where a scholar's behavior poses an immediate threat to the safety of scholars or staff, the principal or dean will conduct an informal hearing with the scholar. In this informal hearing, the scholar will hear the reasons for the removal from class and have an opportunity to informally present the scholar's version of the relevant events before the principal or dean makes a decision whether to assign additional consequences, including out-of-school suspension.
- After the informal hearing, the principal or dean will determine the appropriate consequence and if he/she determines out-of-school suspension, the length of suspension. In determining the length of the suspension, the principal or dean may receive and consider evidence of past disciplinary problems which have led to previous disciplinary actions. The decision of the principal or dean with regard to disciplinary actions up to and including short-term suspensions shall be final.
- The principal, dean, or his/her designee will make reasonable attempts by telephone to immediately notify the parent/guardian of the suspension, stating the cause(s) leading to the suspension, the length of suspension, and what the scholar must do to re-enter the school community.
- The principal, dean or his/her designee will send written notification of the short-term out-of-school suspension to the parent/guardian to the last address reported on school records (or to a newer address know to the principal, dean, or designee) stating the cause(s) leading to the suspension, the length of suspension, the time and place for alternate education (or plans to identify such time and place), and what the scholar will be asked to do to re-enter the school community, and the parent's right to request an informal conference with the principal.

Hearing Regarding Short-Term Out-of-School Suspension Decisions

When notified about a short-term out-of-school suspension decision, a parent has the right to request an informal conference with the principal and to present the scholar's version of the incident and question the complaining witnesses against the scholar. The school may limit or prohibit questioning of other scholars if there is good reason to do so (e.g., bullying, harassment, or any other situation that might impact the social, emotional, or physical well-being of a scholar). This hearing will be scheduled as soon as possible and normally within one day. The short-term out-of-school suspension will stand while the hearing is taking place, although it will be removed from the child's record if the hearing reveals that the suspension decision was made in error.

Work completion during suspension and documentation of suspensions

Scholars are responsible for completing academic work missed during the suspension. During the suspension and to the extent required by law, scholars have the right to substantially equivalent education in addition to IEP services. Families must contact the school to set-up alternative daily education during a suspension. When possible, the school will let the parent know the time and location for the alternative education in the phone call home and in the suspension letter, or the parent should call the school to discuss such logistics as soon as possible. It may take a full day or more to get alternative instruction logistics set up, particularly if there are safety concerns based on the conduct of the scholars. Please note that scholars will not be considered "present" for attendance purposes if he/she does not attend alternative education. The completed work will receive full credit if it is submitted by the deadlines in accordance with the school make-up policy. If a scholar does not

complete this work, the scholar may face standard academic consequences (*e.g.*, Homework Extension or no academic credit).

Re-entry from In-School Suspension or Short-Term Out-of-School Suspension

We ask all scholars who are suspended to take the following steps before they re-enter the school or classroom. We believe that the following practices are essential to set up the scholar for success. The length of a longer suspension may be reduced (at the discretion of the principal) if the following are satisfied:

- The scholar and parent meet with the principal, dean, or dean's designee
- The scholar writes a letter of apology of acceptable quality (as deemed by the principal or dean) based on the child's academic level.
- The scholar presents this letter to Achievement First staff and/or scholars.
- Scholars who are suspended two or more times may be asked to submit a reasonable and realistic plan for improvement (based on a template / guidance given by the school). This plan must be of acceptable quality, as defined by the principal or dean.
- The scholar may be asked to meet additional conditions if school staff believes these conditions will improve the likelihood of the scholar returning to school successfully.

Recommendation for Long-Term Out-of-School Suspension

A long-term suspension may be recommended by the principal. It is an out-of-school suspension (11 or more days up to one year) due to serious, major, or egregious infractions. This suspension can only be ordered by a Presiding Officer – the Board of Trustees, a regional superintendent or a Hearing Officer designated by the Board – after a formal hearing following the procedures set forth below. A scholar may appeal a long-term suspension decision to the Board of Trustees, and thereafter to the school's charter authorizer – the SUNY Charter Schools Institute.

Recommendation for Expulsion

Expulsion is defined as the permanent exclusion from the school. Expulsion is an appropriate consequence when a student engages in an alarming disregard to the safety of others, and/or where it is necessary to safeguard the well-being of other students.

When an egregious offense occurs or a sustained pattern of serious, major, and/or egregious events occurs, expulsion is an appropriate consequence when in the principal's judgment, the safety of the school community is significantly compromised. Achievement First's first responsibility is to ensure the safety of our scholars.

Hearing Procedures

Except in an emergency situation, prior to long-term discipline of a scholar, a hearing shall be conducted by a Presiding Officer (which could be the Board of Trustees, a regional superintendent, or a designated Hearing Officer), and governed by the procedures outlined below. Whenever an emergency exists, the hearing provided for above shall be held as soon as possible within the time limits set forth by law.

Written notice of the hearing must be given within a reasonable time prior to that hearing to the scholar, or if a minor, to his/her parent/guardian or person legally responsible for the scholar.

Specifically, the school shall provide written notice to the Parent or Guardian within 48 hours of the

incident of the date and time of a formal hearing, which shall occur no less than 3 days after the incident in question, but within 10 days of the incident. This timeline is subject to change in certain instances (*e.g.*, the scholar responsible for an egregious offense is not identified until after days of investigation or the hearing would occur during school vacation), but in all instances, notice shall be provided as soon as practicable and consistent with requirements set forth by law.

A parent may request to postpone the hearing beyond 10 days for a reasonable period time to allow the parent and scholar to prepare their case. If the school consents, the scholar must remain out of school while awaiting the hearing; alternative instruction will be provided by the school.

A scholar may be represented by any third party of his/her choice, including an attorney, at his/her own expense or expense of his/her parents/guardians. A scholar may be entitled to free or reduced legal services through various agencies. A parent may request information about such services from the principal or dean of students.

A scholar is entitled to the services of a translator or interpreter, to be provided by the School or the Board, whenever the scholar or his/her parent/guardian do not speak the English language or is handicapped.

The hearing will be conducted by the Presiding Officer, who will call the meeting to order, introduce the parties, Board members and counsel where applicable, and swear in any witnesses called by the administration or the scholar.

A verbatim record of the hearing will be made either by a recording or by a stenographer.

The charges will be introduced into the record by the principal/designee.

Formal rules of evidence will not be followed. The Presiding Officer has the right to accept hearsay and other evidence if he/she deems that evidence relevant or material to its determination.

Each witness for the administration will be called and sworn. After a witness has finished testifying, he/she will be subject to cross-examination by the opposite party or his/her legal counsel.

After the administration has presented its case, the scholar will be asked if he/she has any witnesses or evidence to present. If so, the witnesses will be sworn, will testify, and will be subject to cross-examination by the administration and to questioning by the Board. The scholar may also choose to make a statement at this time. If the scholar chooses to make a statement, he/she will be sworn and subject to cross-examination by the administration and questioning by the Board. Concluding statements will be made by the administration and then by the scholar and/or his/her representative. The parties may submit written position statements within 48 hours of the close of the hearing.

In cases where the scholar has denied the allegation, the Presiding Officer must determine whether the scholar committed the offense(s) as charged by the principal/designee.

If the Presiding Officers determines that the scholar committed the offense(s), the Presiding Officer must also deliberate on the disciplinary action to be imposed upon the scholar. The Presiding Officer may review the scholar's attendance record or academic record during his/her deliberations on the issue. The Board may ask the principal or designee for a recommendation as to the discipline to be

imposed.

Evidence of past disciplinary problems which have led to the removal from a classroom, suspension or expulsion of a scholar being considered for a long-term suspension or expulsion at a disciplinary hearing may be received, but may only be considered in the determination of the length of the suspension or expulsion and nature of alternative educational opportunity being offered. **Note:** Past disciplinary incidents may not be considered if they were determined in a Manifestation Determination Review to have occurred as a result of a scholar's documented disability.

Where administrators presented the case in support of the charges against the scholar, such administrative staff shall not be present during the deliberations of the Presiding Officer either on questions of evidence or on the final discipline to be imposed. The superintendent/designee may, after reviewing the incident with administrators, and reviewing the scholar's records, make a recommendation to the Presiding Officer as to the appropriate discipline to be applied.

The Presiding Officer shall make findings as to the truth of the charges, if the scholar has denied them, whether the school has followed proper procedures, and in all cases the disciplinary action, if any, to be imposed.

In keeping with the Gun-Free Schools Act, it shall be the policy of the Board to expel a scholar for one full calendar year whenever the scholar is in the possession of a firearm. The Presiding Officer shall modify the term of the expulsion on a case-by-case basis.

The Presiding Officer shall report its final decision in writing to the scholar, the Parent or Guardian, and the Board of Trustees if conducted by a Hearing Officer, within 10 days of the hearing, or if the scholar is a minor, also to the parents/guardians, stating the reasons on which the decision is based and the disciplinary action to be imposed. Said decision shall be based solely on the evidence presented at the hearing. Only the Board of Trustees, through a designated panel of trustees or the Presiding Officer authorized by the board, can expel a scholar.

Notice of expulsion and the conduct for which the scholar was expelled, shall be included on the scholar's cumulative educational record. Such notice, except for notice of an expulsion based upon the possession of a firearm or deadly weapon, shall be expunged from the cumulative educational record if the scholar graduates from high school.

When a scholar withdraws from school after having been notified that a Long-Term Suspension or Expulsion Hearing is pending, the hearing will naturally be canceled.

Achievement First will maintain written records of all suspensions and expulsions, including the name of the scholar, a description of the offending behavior, the disciplinary action taken, and a record of the number of days a scholar has been suspended or removed for disciplinary reasons.

The Scholar/Parent may appeal an Expulsion or Long-Term Suspension Decision to the full Board of Trustees within 10 days of the decision by submitting the Statement of Reasons for Appeal. The Board of Trustees shall review the record, including all documents and recordings related to the hearing, and may affirm or reverse the decision of the Presiding Officer. The Board's role is not to re-hear the evidence, but to determine based on the record whether there a) is sufficient evidence to indicate that a scholar has committed an offense or a pattern of behavior that meet this policy's definition of an expellable

offense and b) the school has followed the policies outlined in the handbook adequately. If the answers to a) and b) are yes, then the Board will validate the recommendation to expel.

The Board may order that the scholar return to the school, or may remand the case for further consideration by the Presiding Officer. The Board may also, at its discretion, request that the Scholar/Parent attend the meeting to discuss the substance of the appeal and/or answer any questions that are unresolved in the record. The Board may also preside over a full fact-finding hearing if circumstances so require.

It is important that the Scholar/Parent present all evidence to the Presiding Officer at the hearing, as new evidence and arguments generally may not be presented on appeal. Where additional information is discovered **after** the hearing, the Scholar/Parent may request permission to present said evidence to the Presiding Officer. The Presiding Officer shall have discretion to grant or deny such requests for consideration of newly discovered evidence or for a hearing to consider such evidence.

The Scholar/Parent may submit any complaint regarding this process to the school's charter authorizer – the SUNY Charter Schools Institute.

Alternative Instruction

The required alternative instruction will begin no later than two days after the final decision is rendered. The alternative instruction will occur during or after the school day at the school, the scholar's home, or the nearest public library or other public location, at the discretion of the school. This alternative instruction will continue for the duration of the time the scholar awaits disposition on his/her expulsion hearing. The school will provide alternative instruction to scholars on short and long-term suspension to the extent required by law.

Appendix C: Discipline of Scholars with Special Needs

Scholars with disabilities may be disciplined in accordance with the procedural safeguards set forth in both federal and state law and regulations under the IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) and/or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

Disciplinary procedural safeguards are also extended to scholars suspected of having a disability. A scholar is suspected of having a disability if prior to the conduct, either:

- The parent of the child expressed concerns in writing to the child's teacher or a school administrator that the child may need special education and related services;
- The parent of the child requested an evaluation for special education services, or;
- The teacher of the child, or other school personnel, have expressed specific concerns about a pattern of behavior that may be caused by disability directly to the special services leader, or other supervisory personnel.

The school must follow the same procedures when disciplining scholars with suspected disabilities, as it follows for scholars with IEPs or Section 504 plans, unless:

1. The parent did not allow the student to be evaluated;
2. The parent refused special education services, or;

3. The student was evaluated and determined not to qualify as a student with a disability.

One of these disciplinary procedural safeguards is the requirement to convene a Manifestation Determination Review (MDR). An MDR is a process to determine if a student's violation of the school's code of conduct is the result of the student's disability. An MDR must occur within 10 school days of a violation of the school's code of conduct which results in a **change of placement** for a scholar with an IEP or a 504 plan, a scholar in the initial referral process, or a scholar suspected of having a disability.

Under the IDEA, a change of placement occurs if:

1. The **removal** is for more than 10 consecutive school days; **or**,
2. Short-term removals make up a pattern because:
 - a) The current removal when added to a series of previous short-term removals totals more than 10 schools days in a school year;
 - b) The child's behavior is similar to his/her behavior that resulted in previous removal(s); and of other factors (*e.g.*, length of each removal; proximity of removals to one another). *

*At Achievement First, any time a scholar with a disability is removed from his/her educational setting for more than 10 cumulative school days, we regard this as a change of placement and require a **Manifestation Determination Review** to be held.

A **removal, under the IDEA**, is defined as any time a student is removed from his/her current placement for more than 90 minutes, unless the student receives an In-School Suspension (ISS) in which:

- The scholar is not segregated from his/her general education peers
- The scholar has continued access to the general curriculum
- The scholar continues to receive all services mandated in his/her IEP, 504 plan or Behavior Intervention Plan.

All In-School Suspensions which do not meet these standards, all Out of School Suspensions, and all Expulsions, including a 45-day removal to an Interim Alternative Educational Setting, constitutes a removal and therefore factors into the 10 cumulative day calculation to determine a change in placement.

If a change of placement occurs, an IEP or 504 team meeting shall be promptly convened to determine whether the misconduct is a manifestation of the scholar's disability.

A parent shall be informed of the need to convene a Manifestation Determination Review (MDR) meeting on the date of the decision to discipline a student, or as soon as possible thereafter. The parents of the scholar shall be provided with a copy of the Procedural Safeguards setting forth their rights under the IDEA. As soon as possible but no later than 10 school days after the date of the decision, the IEP or 504 team shall meet to determine whether the conduct is a manifestation of the child's disability or occurred due to a failure of the student's home district or the school to implement the IEP.

If, upon review, the team determines that the student's behavior is not a manifestation of his/her disability, then the child may be disciplined in the same manner as a child without a disability for that

particular behavioral event. During the duration of the removal, the student shall receive an alternative educational opportunity consistent with the student's educational needs.

If, upon review, the team determines that the student's behavior is a manifestation of his/her disability, then the scholar must return to his/her educational placement, unless the parents and school agree to a change of placement as part of the modification of the behavior intervention plan. Furthermore, the team will consider the student's misconduct; develop or review the current Functional Behavior Assessment; and revise the student's IEP/ Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) to prevent a recurrence of such misconduct and to provide for the safety of the other students and staff. If there is no current BIP, the school, in consultation with the PPT must also develop such a plan to address the behavior that led to the disciplinary action.

Additionally, each subsequent removal after the initial MDR requires a new MDR to be conducted.

Prior to a change of placement, scholars may receive disciplinary actions in accordance with the Achievement First discipline policy.

Parents may request a due process hearing to challenge the manifestation determination. Except as provided below, the child will remain in his/her current educational placement pending the determination of the hearing.

Weapons, Drugs and Serious Injury

If a child with a disability or suspected disability either:

- a) Carries or possesses a weapon at school, on school premises or at a school function;
- b) Knowingly possesses or uses illegal drugs, or sells or solicits the sale of a controlled substance at school, on school premises or at a school function; or,
- c) Inflicts serious bodily harm at school, on school premises or at a school function¹;

Then, the scholar may be removed to an interim alternative educational setting for up to 45 school days, regardless to whether the behavior is determined to be a manifestation of the child's disability. The school must hold a meeting to determine the IAES.

Expulsions and Manifestation Determination Reviews

Prior to conducting an expulsion hearing for a scholar with a disability, an IEP/504 team shall convene to determine whether the misconduct was caused by the student's disability. If it is determined that the misconduct was caused by the child's disability, the child shall not be expelled. The IEP/504 team shall reevaluate the child for the purpose of modifying the student's IEP/504 plan to address the behavior and to ensure the safety of other children and staff in the school. If it is determined that the misconduct was not caused by the child's disability, the child may be expelled following the same processes and procedures as a student without a disability. Whenever a student with a disability is expelled, an alternative

¹ IDEA defines serious bodily injury as injury which involves a substantial risk of death, extreme physical pain, protracted and obvious disfigurement, or protracted loss or impairment of the function of a bodily member, organ or mental facility.

educational opportunity, consistent with such child's educational needs shall be provided during the period of expulsion.

Achievement First maintains written records of all exclusions of ALL students. The records must include the name of the scholar, a description of the behavior infraction, the disciplinary action taken, and a record of the time or number of days of the disciplinary action.

Provisions of Services during Removal

Those scholars removed for a period fewer than 10 consecutive days will receive all classroom assignments and a schedule to complete such assignments during the time of his/her suspension. Provisions will be made to permit a suspended scholar to make up assignments or tests missed as a result of such suspension.

During any subsequent removal that, combined with previous removals, equals 10 or more school days during the year, services must be provided to the extent determined necessary to enable the child to appropriately progress in the general curriculum and in achieving the goals of his/her IEP. In these cases, school personnel, in consultation with the child's special education teacher, CSE, or 504 team, shall make the service determination.

Appendix D: How to File a Grievance about Discrimination

Non-Discrimination

Achievement First does not discriminate in admission to, access to, treatment in, or employment in its services, programs, or activities, on the basis of race, color or national origin, in accordance with Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VII); on the basis of sex, in accordance with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972; on the basis of disability, in accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504) and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA); or on the basis of age, in accordance with the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 194 (ADEA). In addition, no person shall be discriminated against in admission to Achievement First on the basis of race, sex, color, creed, ethnicity, sexual orientation, mental or physical disability, age, ancestry, athletic performance, special need, proficiency in English language or a foreign language, or prior academic achievement. No person shall be discriminated against in obtaining the advantages, privileges, or access to the courses of scholar offered by the school on the basis or race, sex, color, religion, national origin, or sexual orientation. Finally, pregnant scholars are allowed to remain in regular education classes and participate in extracurricular activities with non-pregnant scholars throughout their pregnancy, and after giving birth are permitted to return to the same academic and extracurricular program as before the leave (Title IX).

Achievement First does not condone or tolerate discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or disability in admission or access to, or treatment, or employment in its programs or activities. The purpose of this formal grievance procedure is to provide a simple and accessible process to address problems and claims of discrimination based on race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or disability. Achievement First will keep these proceedings as informal and confidential as may be appropriate at any level of the procedure. These policies do not limit the right of the complainant having a problem to discuss the matter informally with any appropriate member of the administration. Additionally, parents have the right to deliver the formal grievance directly to the Board.

Since it is important that grievances be processed as rapidly as possible, the number of days indicated at each level should be considered as a maximum, and every effort should be made to expedite the process. The time limits specified may, however, be extended by mutual agreement in writing.

If a complainant does not file a grievance in writing as provided herein within 60 days after the aggrieved person knew or should have known of the act or condition on which the grievance is based, then the grievance shall be considered waived. Achievement First reserves the right to extend the 60-day limitation to file a grievance for just cause. An Achievement First staff member will, if requested, assist in preparing any written documents described within this grievance procedure.

Internal Resolution Process:

Any student, employee, applicant to a program, or third party who feels that he/she has been discriminated against on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation or disability shall contact the Title VI, Title IX or Section 504 Coordinator within 60 calendar days of the date on which he/she knew or should have known of the alleged occurrence to discuss the nature of the complaint. For Grievances concerning allegations of a violation of school charter, the complainant shall contact the director of school operations.

The Coordinator shall maintain a written record which shall contain the following:

1. The name and address of the Complainant;
2. The full name and position of person(s) who allegedly discriminated against the complainant, if applicable;
3. A concise statement of the facts constituting the alleged discrimination; and
4. Dates of the alleged discrimination.

At the time the alleged discrimination complaint is filed, the Coordinator shall review and explain the grievance procedures with the complainant and answer any questions. An investigation of the complaint shall begin as soon as practical, but in no case, more than 10 school days from the time the complaint was received. Within this time limit, the Coordinator shall meet separately with the complainant and the individual(s) against whom the complaint was lodged. The Coordinator and/or his or her designee shall conduct a prompt, adequate, reliable, and impartial investigation of the complaint. The Coordinator shall provide confidential counseling where advisable and shall seek an informal agreement between the parties concerned, where appropriate. Every attempt shall be made to seek a solution and resolve the alleged discrimination complaint at this level. It is important to note, however, that the informal process can be ended, by the complainant, the individual(s) against whom the complaint was lodged or by the Coordinator, at any time in order to begin a formal stage of the complaint process.

If the complainant is not satisfied with these initial informal procedures, within 20 school days from the date of the original discussion with the Coordinator, more formal procedures may be initiated by the complainant to further explore and resolve the problem

Formal Procedure:

Level One – School Principal: If a complainant is not satisfied with the disposition of the problem through informal procedures, he/she may seek review of his/her claim as a formal grievance or appeal in writing to the principal. Level One Grievances shall be submitted to the School Services Manager (SSM) on the Parent Grievance Process Form (“Grievance Form”) or by letter, who will then forward the Grievance to the principal. The SSM is responsible for monitoring the implementation and documentation of the complaint system.

The principal shall reply in writing within three school days acknowledging receipt of the Grievance to the complainant and the individual(s) against whom the complaint was lodged. The principal shall review the Coordinator’s investigation and information submitted by the complainant and may conduct additional investigation as necessary. Within 10 school days the principal will render a decision and the reasons therefore in writing to the complainant and the person who allegedly discriminated against the complainant, with a copy to the regional superintendent.

Level Two – Regional Superintendent Hearing: If the complainant or the person alleged to have discriminated against the complainant, if applicable, is not satisfied with the disposition of the grievance at Level One, or if no decision has been rendered within 10 school days after presentation of the grievance in writing, the complainant or the person alleged to have discriminated against the complainant may file a written appeal for a hearing by the regional superintendent of Schools within 10 school days. The regional superintendent shall reply in writing within three school days acknowledging receipt of the Grievance to the complainant and the individual(s) against whom the complaint was lodged. (Please note that the regional superintendent will not respond to complaints that have not, without good cause, first been addressed by the Coordinator or DSO, and the principal). Level Two Grievances shall be submitted to the SSM, who will then forward the Grievance to the regional superintendent.

Within 10 school days after receipt of the written appeal for a hearing by the regional superintendent, he/she shall conduct a hearing with the complainant and the person alleged to have committed the discrimination for the purpose of resolving the grievance. The regional superintendent shall provide the parties an opportunity to present witnesses and other evidence. A full record of such hearing shall be kept by the regional superintendent. The regional superintendent shall within 10 school days of the hearing render the decision and the reasons therefore in writing to the complainant and the person who allegedly discriminated against the complainant.

Level Three – Board of Trustees Hearing: If the complainant or the person alleged to have discriminated against the complainant, if applicable, is not satisfied with the disposition of the grievance at Level Two, or if no decision has been rendered within 10 school days after first meeting with the Superintendent, the person may file the grievance with the Board of Education within 10 school days. The Board shall reply in writing within three school days acknowledging receipt of the Grievance to the complainant and the individual(s) against whom the complaint was lodged. Level Three Grievances shall be submitted to the SSM to forward to the Board chairperson.

Within 15 school days after receiving the written appeal, the Board or an Impartial Hearing Officer designated by the Board shall meet with the complainant for the purpose of resolving the grievance. The Board or Impartial Hearing Officer shall provide an opportunity for the parties to present witnesses and other evidence. A full record of such hearing shall be kept by the Board. The decision of the Board shall be rendered in writing within 10 school days.

Level 4 – Charter Authorizer Review: If the parent is not satisfied with the Board’s decision, the parent may present their complaint to the SUNY Charter Schools Institute. Level Four Grievances shall be submitted to the School Services Manager (SSM) on the Grievance Form or by letter, who will then forward the Grievance to the Office of Charter Schools. The authorizer will investigate and respond. (Please note that the school will ask the Authorizer not respond to complaints that have not gone through Informal Resolution and Levels One through Three).

General Provisions

Title VI, Title IX and Section 504 protect complainants from retaliation for reporting allegations of discrimination and participating in an investigation. The administration will take steps to prevent retaliation and take strong responsive action should retaliation occur.

In the event that there is a finding of discrimination, the administration will take steps that are reasonably calculated to end discrimination; to prevent recurrence of any discrimination; and to correct discriminatory effects on the complainant and others, if appropriate.

The administration will contact the person raising alleged violations within a reasonable period of time following conclusion of the investigation and grievance process to assess whether there has been on-going discrimination or retaliation, and to determine whether additional supportive measures are needed.

Additional procedures for Claims Alleging Harassment or Hostile Educational Environment

The administration, when evaluating whether there is a hostile environment for a student, will consider the effects of harassment that occurred in school and those incidents that occurred outside of school that may affect the school environment.

Alleged victims of harassment will not be required to work out the problem directly with alleged perpetrators without appropriate involvement by administration. Any informal process can be ended by an alleged victim at any time in order to begin a formal stage of the complaint process.

The administration will consider providing interim measures to an alleged victim pending the outcome of the recipient's investigation, when appropriate (such as prohibiting the alleged perpetrator to contact the alleged victim; changing the alleged perpetrator's class and bus schedule to minimize contact with the alleged victim, etc.).

The administration will maintain on-going contact with the alleged victim throughout the investigation.

The administration will provide counseling and academic services, as appropriate, to the alleged victim.

Any person may also file a complaint of illegal discrimination with the Office for Civil Rights at the same time he/she files the grievance during or after use of the grievance process, or without using the grievance process at all. If a complaint is filed with the Office for Civil Rights, it must be filed in writing no later than 180 days after the occurrence of the possible discrimination.

Complaints may be filed at <https://wdcrobcolp01.ed.gov/CFAPPS/OCR/contactus.cfm>. Complainants may also contact the Regional Office for further information as follows:

New York Office
Office for Civil Rights
U.S. Department of Education
32 Old Slip, 26th Floor
New York, NY 10005-2500
Telephone: 646-428-3800
FAX: 646-428-3843; TDD: 800-877-8339
Email: OCR.NewYork@ed.gov

The Special Services Coordinator, Courtney Bethel is the Title VII, Title IX and Section 504 Coordinator and may be contacted at courtneybethel@achievementfirst.org. The Special Services Coordinator may designate the resolution of certain grievances to other appropriate school staff members.

Appendix E: Behavioral Support Request Form

If you have concerns that your child's behaviors in school are related your child's disability, and concerns about whether the school is providing appropriate behavior supports that are responsive to both the behavior and the disability, you may request that the school provide behavioral supports by completing this form and submitting to the Special Services Leader at your child's school.

Today's Date: _____

Your Name: _____ Phone Number: _____

Scholar's Name: _____ Grade: _____

Relationship to Scholar: _____

Does your scholar have an IEP or 504 plan? Yes No

What concerns do you have about your child's behaviors in school?

Do you know whether your child has received any behavior supports in the past (for example, incentive plan, behavior intervention plan, breaks)?

Is there anything else you would like the school to know?

Appendix F: Family Concern Form

Achievement First is committed to maintaining a strong partnership and ongoing dialogue between our teachers, staff, scholars, and families. If you have a concern about a school policy, academic grade, discipline decision, special education, or anything else, we welcome your input and encourage you to contact the appropriate staff member at the school. Please use this form to describe an incident/issue and submit the form to the school's principal, dean, or director of operations.

Today's Date: _____

Your Name: _____ Phone Number: _____

Scholar's Name: _____ Grade: _____

Relationship to Scholar: _____

Is your concern related to special education? Yes No

Have you discussed this issue with anyone at the school yet? Yes No

If yes, who were you in touch with?:

What was the result?

Please describe the Incident / Issue in the space below. For incidents, be sure to include the DATE of the incident and the NAMES of any people who were involved. (Please attach extra pages if you need more space).

Appendix G: Additional Information

Title I

Federal law (Every Student Succeeds Act) requires school districts that receive federal Title I funding to notify parents of their right to know the professional qualifications of the classroom teachers who instruct their child. **Achievement First East New York Middle** is a Title I school.

As a recipient of these funds, **Achievement First East New York Middle** will provide you with this information in a timely manner if you request it. Specifically, you have the right to receive the following information about each of your child's classroom teachers:

- Whether the teacher meets the state qualifications and licensing criteria for the grades and subjects he/she teaches.
- Whether the teacher is teaching under emergency or provisional status because of special circumstances.
- The teacher's college major, whether the teacher has any advanced degrees, and the field of discipline of the certification or degree.
- Whether paraprofessionals provide services to your child and, if so, their qualifications.

Achievement First East New York Middle is committed to providing quality instruction for all students and does so by employing the most qualified individuals to teach and support each student in the classroom. To request information about your child's teachers or if you have any questions, please contact the school's main office at 347-471-2570.

Public Documents / Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)

The school fully complies with the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Any requests for school records or information from the school must be in writing and submitted to the principal or to his/her designee(s). Within five business days of receipt of a written request, the school, depending on the requested information, responds by:

- Making the information available at the school itself during normal business hours to the person requesting it;
- Denying the request in writing; or
- Providing a written acknowledgment of receipt of the request that supplies an approximate date for when the request will be granted or denied.
- If the person requesting information is denied access to a record, he/she may, within 30 days, appeal such denial to the principal or to his/her designee(s). Upon timely receipt of such an appeal, the school, within 10 business days of the receipt of the appeal, fully explains the reasons for further denial or provides access to the record(s) sought. The school also forwards a copy of the appeal, as well as its ultimate determination, to the Committee on Open Government. If further denied, the person requesting information may further appeal through an Article 78 proceeding.
- The school may deny access to requested records if:
 - Such records are specifically exempted from disclosure by state or federal statute;
 - Such access would constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy;
 - Such records, if disclosed, would impair present or imminent contract awards or collective bargaining negotiations;

- Such records are trade secrets and which, if disclosed, would cause substantial injury to the competitive position of a commercial enterprise;
- Such records are compiled for law enforcement purposes for which disclosure is precluded by state or federal law;
- Such records, if disclosed, would endanger the life or safety of any person;
- Such records are computer access codes; and/or
- Such records are internal materials which are not statistical or factual tabulations of data, instructions to staff that affect the public, a final policy, nor external audits.

The school may charge a copying fee for each page requested to be copied. The fee can be no more than the fee allowed by state law.

Open Meetings Laws

1. All meetings of the Board of Trustees and all committees of the Board (“Board meetings”) will be open to the general public.
2. The school will provide notice of the time and place of any Board meeting that is scheduled more than one week in advance to the new media and shall conspicuously post such notice in one or more public locations at least 72 hours in advance of the scheduled meeting.
3. The school will provide the time and place of any Board meeting that is scheduled less than one week in advance and will conspicuously post such notice in one or more public locations at a reasonable time in advance of the scheduled meeting. Public notices will be placed on the bulletin board in the reception area. Public notices will reflect the location of Board meetings or any location changes.
4. To the extent possible, the school will publicly post notices of Board meetings immediately after each meeting date is determined.
5. For the purposes of determining a quorum, Trustees must be present at the meeting, with Directors deemed present as determined in the bylaws, which may allow for participation via videoconference; members not present may join discussions via telephonic or other means but may not vote.
6. Written minutes will be recorded of all Board meetings. Minutes will include:
 - a. The date and time of the meeting
 - b. A summary of all motions, proposals, resolutions, and other matters formally voted upon
 - c. In the case of an executive session, the minutes will include a record of the final determination of any action that was taken.
7. All executive sessions shall be conducted as part of an open meeting; they are not considered separate meetings per se. An executive session may be called via motion and majority vote by the Board; the motion must specifically identify the general area of areas to be considered.
8. All Board members may participate in the executive session, and the Board may authorize others to be present as well.
9. No public funds may be appropriated during an executive session.
10. An executive session can only be conducted by the Board for consideration of one or more of the following matters:
 - a. Matters which imperil the public safety if disclosed;
 - b. Matters related to students about which state and federal privacy laws apply;
 - c. Any matter which may disclose the identity of a law enforcement agent or informer;
 - d. Information relating to current or future investigation or prosecution of a criminal offense which would imperil effective law enforcement if disclosed;

- e. Discussions regarding proposed or pending litigation;
- f. Matters which apply to school employees or collective negotiations which are within the scope of Article 14 of the Civil Service Law;
- g. The medical, financial, credit, or employment history of a particular person or corporation, or matters leading to the appointment, employment, promotion, demotion, discipline, suspension, dismissal, or removal of a particular person or corporation;
- h. The preparation, grading, or administration of examinations; and
- i. The proposed acquisition, sale, or lease of real property or the proposed acquisition of securities, or sale or exchange of securities held by such public body, but only when publicity would substantially affect the value.

Use of Pictures & Videos of Scholars

Achievement First often takes pictures and videos of scholars during regular school activities to capture the joy and excitement of learning that takes place and to celebrate the accomplishments of our teachers and scholars. Pictures and videos taken of scholars and staff are used for many purposes. We put pictures of scholars and staff in our scholar information system so that teachers and staff can identify all scholars and call them by name (internal); we publish photo directories of scholars and staff (internal); and we post pictures of scholars and staff at the school (internal). It is AF's policy to use pictures and videos of scholars for these uses. By reading the Family Handbook, parents are consenting to allow their child's photo to be used for internal purposes. If the parent does not want his/her child's photo to be used for such purposes, he/she should let the school's director of operations know in writing.

AF also allows pictures and videos to be used for print and broadcast media purposes (external), and includes pictures and videos of scholars and staff on our website, on social media, and in promotional materials used to recruit scholars and staff and explain AF to external audiences such as charter authorizers, researchers, other educational organizations, education advocacy organization, and funders (external). By signing the Media/Publications Consent and Release form, parents are consenting to allow their child's image to be used for external purposes as well as additional internal purposes (*e.g.*, staff memos and trainings). If the parent does not want his/her child's image to be used for such purposes, he/she should not sign the media release.

Scholar Records

The school administration is responsible for all scholar records. They will discuss, explain, and/or make available to an eligible scholar (18 years old or greater) or parents/guardians any records on file. If a parent would like to examine a child's record, the parent should submit a request in writing to the principal or the director of operations. Within 10 days, the eligible scholar or parent will be allowed to inspect the file and may request a copy of some or all of the information contained in the record. There are two different types of scholar records, which will be treated differently:

1. *Directory Information:* Directory Information is basic information about scholars including name, address, telephone number, other contact information, parent/guardian name and contact information, date of birth, dates of attendance, participation in activities, awards received, etc. This information may be made available to others (internal or external) for specific use without the consent of the parent/guardian. For example, teachers may distribute class lists to everyone

in the class so that scholars may help each other with homework or the school may provide addresses to another educational organization working on a voter registration drive. If a parent/guardian would not like such information released, he/she should submit a request in writing to the director of school operations.

2. *Confidential Records*: Confidential Records include grades, evaluations, disciplinary actions, and health records. Confidential records will not be made available to any non-school personnel without consent by the parent/guardian, except as described below.

Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99) is a Federal law that protects the privacy of scholar education records. The law applies to all schools that receive funding under an applicable program of the U.S. Department of Education. FERPA gives parents certain rights with respect to their children's education records. These rights transfer to the scholar when he/she reaches the age of 18 or attends a school beyond the high school level. Scholars to whom the rights have transferred are "eligible scholars."

In accordance with FERPA law:

- Parents or scholars over 18 years of age have the right to inspect and review the scholar's education records maintained by the school.
- Parents or scholars over 18 years of age have the right to request that the school correct records which they believe to be inaccurate or misleading. If the school decides not to amend the record, the parent or eligible scholar then has the right to a formal hearing. The issue will first be heard by the superintendent of Achievement First or the superintendent's designee. If the parent or eligible scholar is still not satisfied with the decision of the superintendent or the superintendent's designee, a hearing with the Board of Trustees or a designated subcommittee of the board may be requested. The decision of the Board of Trustees or its designated subcommittee is final.
- The school may disclose, without consent, "directory" information such as a scholar's name, address, telephone number, parent/guardian name and contact information, date of birth, honors and awards, and dates of attendance (see list above under Scholar Records). Any parent who does not want such directory information included should submit a request in writing to the director of school operations.
- This listing in the Family Handbook serves as the school's annual notification of parents and eligible scholars of their rights under FERPA.
- Generally, the school must have written permission from the parent or eligible scholar in order to release any information from a scholar's education record. However, the school may disclose those records, without consent, to the following parties or under the following conditions (34 CFR § 99.31):
 - School officials with legitimate educational interest;
 - Other schools to which a scholar is transferring;
 - Specified officials for audit or evaluation purposes;
 - Appropriate parties in connection with financial aid to a scholar;
 - Organizations conducting certain studies for or on behalf of the school;
 - Accrediting organizations;
 - To comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena;
 - Appropriate officials in cases of health and safety emergencies; and

- State and local authorities, within a juvenile justice system, pursuant to specific State law.

Statement of Understanding

By signing this, scholars indicate that they have received and read a copy of Achievement First's Family Handbook and understand and agree to the rules, regulations, and procedures of the school. Scholar signatures further show that scholars understand that if they ever have any questions regarding school policies, they can always ask their parent/guardian or other member of the school community for a further explanation.

By signing this, parents indicate that they have received and read a copy of Achievement First's Family Handbook and understand and agree to the rules, regulations, and procedures of the school. Parent signatures further show that parents understand that if they ever have any questions regarding school policies, they can always ask a teacher or staff member for further clarification.

Scholar Name

Parent / Guardian Name

Scholar Signature

Parent / Guardian Signature

Date

Date

A signed copy of the Statement of Understanding is due one week after receipt of the Handbook.

We thank you for your cooperation and look forward to partnering with you as a member of the Achievement First community.