

# Middle School Family Handbook

2021-2022



Dear Families and Guardians:

On behalf of the board of trustees, faculty, and staff of Ascend Public Charter Schools, I extend a warm welcome! We recognize that you had a choice in where to enroll your student – one of the most important decisions you will make as a parent or guardian – and we are honored that you have selected Ascend Public Charter Schools. Your choice represents your faith in us, and we are firmly committed to maintaining your trust.

We look forward to working with you to fulfill our vision of educational excellence for every student, understanding that your support is crucial to our success. Research has revealed a clear link between family involvement and students' academic performance, and we seek to leverage that power to realize each child's full potential.

As a first step to building a strong community of students, we have prepared this Family Handbook, which details our expectations, policies, and procedures. Herein you will find important information about family participation, school rules and routines, our discipline and behavior management policies, and much more.

Holding all families and Ascend staff accountable to the high expectations outlined in this Handbook is essential to creating a safe and orderly learning environment, conducive to the highest academic standards. We ask you to read the Family Handbook carefully and contact your child's school with any questions you might have about our expectations for families, students, and Ascend Public Charter Schools staff.

Again, thank you for choosing Ascend Public Charter Schools. We have an exciting and productive year ahead of us!

Sincerely,

Danique Day  
Chief Schools Officer

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## **Our mission**

The mission of Ascend Public Charter Schools is to equip every student with the knowledge, confidence, and character to succeed in college and beyond. By offering a rich liberal arts education in a supportive environment, we animate children's natural sense of curiosity and prepare students to think on their own, thrive on their own, and engage the world as informed, responsible citizens.

## **Ascend's commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion and anti-racism**

Ascend Charter Schools is intentionally situated in Brooklyn, New York. Our students, families, teachers, and staff are united in the mission of equipping students with the knowledge, confidence, and character they need to succeed in college and beyond. A focus on diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism (DEIA) is essential to achieving this mission and we seek to represent this commitment in all that we do.

We believe our staff members must be windows and mirrors for our students, reflecting both those who share our students' backgrounds as well as individuals who have different life experiences. Regardless of background, our commitment is that every member of our team is aligned on the necessity and urgency of this work so that we are well positioned to provide students with rich, thoughtful, and rigorous learning experiences that honor, reflect, and celebrate all of our identities, develop agency, and foster independent thinking so that they can thrive on their own and engage the world as informed, responsible citizens. We serve all students within our community, regardless of need, and are committed to their academic success and social-emotional development.

We know that we are most effective in our mission when we foster collaboration within our community. We seek to break down silos within the organization to tap into diverse viewpoints, navigate challenges, and support transparency. Through communication and collaboration we meaningfully engage students and families so that our choices are informed by a deep understanding of their experiences and perspectives.

We understand that our commitment to DEIA is forever-work and will require continuous growth and development. To support this growth, we are intentionally engaging in a collective learning journey, providing staff members with the training, skills, and resources they need to bring Ascend's DEIA commitment to life. Even though we all have different backgrounds and starting points, we challenge ourselves and one another to wrestle with the complexity of this work and embrace discomfort. This journey requires that we extend one another patience and grace.

We interrogate our systems and structures both within and outside of the classroom to ensure that they are equitable, inclusive, and just. We also seek to proactively disrupt the oppressive systems and structures that have historically underserved our students and families. We hold ourselves and each other accountable to be upstanders and not bystanders in our commitment to serving our students.

Our work to become a more diverse, equitable, inclusive, and anti-racist organization is ongoing, but we will know Ascend is making progress when:

- diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism are integrated into all that we do, and we have clear measurement and accountability systems and dedicated resources to further this work;
- all students, families, teachers, and staff feel a sense of community and are valued, safe, supported,

and welcomed;

- students are held to high expectations that balance accountability, respect, and love;
- the team is actively building DEIA mindsets and skills that enable them to serve and support students at the highest level and create spaces that enable students to bravely advocate for themselves;
- there is transparent and consistent communication and action; and
- all systems, processes, and policies are free of bias and reflect the diverse beliefs, voices, and experiences of the Ascend community.

As members of the Ascend team, our teachers and staff commit to this important work so that we are best positioned to achieve our mission, disrupt and dismantle systems of oppression that impact our families, and serve as agents for radical change to create better outcomes for our students.

To learn more about our commitment to DEIA and the work underway, visit our website at  
<https://www.ascendlearning.org/diversity-equity-inclusion-and-anti-racism/>

## **The learning contract**

Ascend Public Charter Schools' Learning Contract details some of the most important responsibilities of being a member of the Ascend community. For students, the contract provides an overview of what it means to be an Ascend student. For families, the contract outlines some of the ways in which you can help support your child's growth at school. The contract also details each teacher's commitment to work tirelessly to provide students with a safe and orderly learning environment in which they can achieve academic success.

### **Parent/guardian commitment**

1. Attendance. I will make every effort to ensure my child is at school every day.
2. Punctuality. I will make every effort to ensure my child arrives to school on time every day. I will make every effort to ensure that if my student takes the bus that they are at the bus stop on time.
3. Dismissal. If my child is picked up from school, I will ensure that a responsible designated adult is there to pick my child up promptly at dismissal. If my child needs to stay after school for tutoring or to go to school on a Saturday, it will be my responsibility to arrange transportation for my child to and from school.
4. Uniform and rest. I will help my child demonstrate readiness to learn and respect for themselves and the school community by sending my child to school in an Ascend uniform that is clean and complete. If my child arrives at school without parts of their uniform, I understand that I may be asked to bring my child's uniform to school or that the school may lend my child the missing uniform piece. I will make sure my child is properly rested and ready for school.
5. Homework and quiet space. I understand that my child will have homework. I will check that my child has completed their homework to the best of their ability. I will seek to provide a quiet, dedicated space for my child to study every night, with no television, video games, or distractions.

6. Daily reading. Every night, including weekends, my child will read, or I will read to them, for at least 30 minutes.
7. Communication. I will return phone calls from the school as soon as possible. I will provide the school with a working phone number and email address and will inform the school if my phone number, email address, or mailing address has changed. I will read all notices sent to me from the school and act on them promptly. I will make myself available to my child and to their teachers and school leaders.
8. Parent meetings. I will attend all required parent meetings at the school or, in the event of a scheduling conflict, notify the school and make arrangements to acquire the information through alternate means.
9. The school's values and rules. I understand the school's values and will ensure my child upholds them. I know that my child must follow the rules to protect the safety, interests, and rights of all members of the school community. I will always support the school in its efforts to enforce high standards for behavior, citizenship, and academic learning. I know that my child will lose privileges or face disciplinary consequences, including suspension or expulsion, if they violate the school's rules or fail to uphold its values.
10. Respect and support. I will respect and support all students and faculty at Ascend Public Charter Schools. I will be a model for my child by respecting and supporting each individual in the school community at all times.
11. Best effort. I will do whatever it takes for my child to learn, and I will help them, in the best way I know, to succeed in school. I will not make excuses for my child's academic work or behavior.
12. Responsibility. I will share responsibility for the success of my child with the school.

### **Teacher's commitment**

1. Attendance and punctuality. I will come to school every day on time. Every minute of instruction is precious. In instances where I must be late or absent, I will abide by procedures that support the school to ensure that every child receives excellent instruction every day.
2. Mission. I subscribe to the mission of the school and will work consistently to realize it. I am committed to preparing every student for admission to and success in college and beyond.
3. Best effort. I will always offer my students the best I have as a teacher and will do whatever it takes for them to learn. I will not make excuses for myself, my students, or my colleagues.
4. Preparation. I will always submit lesson plans and other documents on time and will be fully prepared every day for my students and colleagues.
5. Respect and support. I will appreciate, respect, and support every student. I will be a model for my students by respecting and supporting each individual in the school community at all times.
6. Communication. I will communicate regularly with parents or guardians about their children's progress and

make myself available to my students and their families in person, by email, and by telephone. I will return all phone calls, texts, and emails from families as quickly as possible.

7. The school's values and rules. I will uphold the school's values and will enforce its rules consistently and fairly.
8. Safe community. I will always protect the safety, interests, and rights of all students and members of the staff.
9. Responsibility. I will work toward the success of all my students.

#### **Student's commitment**

1. Attendance and punctuality. I will come to school on time every day. If I must be tardy or absent, I will make-up all missed assignments.
2. Best effort. My education is important to me. Learning is my job. I will always work, think, and behave in the best way I know. I will do whatever it takes to achieve. I will be the best "me" I can be at all times and will not make excuses for myself or my classmates.
3. Homework. I will finish all of my homework and reading every night to the best of my ability. I will not make excuses for failing to do so.
4. Uniform. I will wear my school uniform every day and make sure it is clean and complete.
5. Communication. I will participate in class discussions and communicate with my teachers, classmates, and school leaders clearly and respectfully. I will listen carefully and follow all directions. I will raise my hand to ask for help when I do not understand something or seek the help of my peers as appropriate.
6. The school's values and rules. I will follow the school's rules and respect the school's values. I will protect the safety, interests, and rights of all of my classmates. If I fail to honor these commitments, including if I break the school's rules, I understand that I may lose privileges at the school or face logical consequences.
7. Respect and support. I will respect every student and adult in the school community by treating them the way I want to be treated.
8. Responsibility. I am responsible for my own behavior and success. If I make a mistake, I will take responsibility for my actions and tell the truth.

## **The Ascend Public Charter Schools education**

### **A path to college**

At Ascend Public Charter Schools, your student is on a path to college from the moment they first walk into the building, for we recognize college as a critical milestone to successful adulthood. While success may be achieved via other pathways, for most, college is a necessary precursor to a rewarding career. A college degree provides the firm foundation needed to thrive in today's dynamic and global marketplace.

Getting to college is hard work, and gaining admission will require your child's full commitment, your constant support, and the expertise and guidance of their teachers. Our program is designed specifically to prepare children for college, and while the choice to enter college will be theirs to make, we will prepare them to have that choice available to them.

## **Family involvement**

Ascend is a school of choice, which means our success is dependent on family satisfaction. We recognize that you have chosen our school for your child, and thereby place your trust in us. We are dedicated to maintaining this trust by providing an outstanding education for your child and by fostering strong partnerships with you. We value the time and energy you put into your child's education and we welcome your active engagement both on-campus and off.

By embracing the high standards at the core of our program, you have taken a critical step in supporting your child's academic growth and development. We urge you to continue to support your child's learning by participating actively in the life of the school community and sharing your ideas and concerns openly.

## **Information sharing**

The school periodically sends newsletters to families, covering developments at the school, opportunities for families to get involved, and reminders of specific ways that families can support their children's academic success.

Occasional family forums are also scheduled at the school to inform parents or guardians about the school's expectations, programs, policies, and procedures; to engage families in the creation of a strong school community and vibrant culture of achievement; and to afford family members an organized forum for sharing ideas and concerns and for problem-solving.

The school is committed to ensuring the effective handling of all communication received by the school, and family input, requests for information, and concerns are given the utmost attention.

Community feedback, critiques, and complaints, whether written or verbal, are likewise taken seriously by the school administration and handled promptly. We make every attempt to return all calls within a 24-hour period, and handle calls involving emergencies immediately.

## **Measuring satisfaction**

The school administers its own family satisfaction survey at least once per year and participates in the NYCDOE learning survey environment, as a means for parents or guardians to indicate their satisfaction with the school. Also, we ask parents or guardians who choose to remove their students from the school to participate in an exit interview or to complete a survey to determine the reasons for the child's removal. We are committed to constantly improving our schools.

## **Communication, conferences, report cards**

Frequent and open communication between the home and school helps bind the student,families, teachers, and school leaders into an effective and strongly united team.

Family conferences with teachers are scheduled in the winter and spring. Parents or guardians are requested to attend all family conferences. Additional conferences may be held as needed at the request of the parent or guardian or the school.

Report cards are distributed two times a year at the end of each term, and progress reports are distributed two times a year in the middle of each term. The report card includes the student's numerical grades for each subject, attendance records, and teacher comments. In addition, it includes a summative comment regarding the student's effort, progress, and behavior.

### **School visits**

At Ascend, our hope is that family members feel welcome and at ease in the school building, and we encourage families to participate actively in the life of the school. To that end, we gladly open our doors to visits by parents and guardians so long as public health and safety protocols allow. In the case that they do not, we invite families to meet and experience our schools virtually.

As we strive for openness and partnership with families, we must balance these priorities with our need to aggressively protect instructional time, making every effort to ensure that teachers and students benefit from a learning environment that is free from distraction or interruption. So, while we welcome visits to the school at any time, we require advance scheduling if family members wish to visit a classroom while instruction is occurring, or to meet with a specific staff member, which can be done by contacting the school directly. Prior to the classroom visit, a member of the school's leadership team or operations team will welcome the family member and will review a classroom observation protocol with the family visitor.

For reasons of safety and security, adults who are not members of the school's staff who visit the school during school hours must sign in at the security desk and state their business in the school. The security officer conveys this information to the school office; if approved, each such visitor receives a visitor's badge and is escorted to their destination. Calling in advance to clear such business is advised. Adults may not wander at will around the school at any time.

### **Family Association**

The Ascend Family Association offers a range of opportunities for families to contribute their time and talents to the school, promote the school to the community, and conduct fundraising to advance the goals of the school.

The Family Association has four goals:

1. To facilitate communication between parents/guardians and the school's leadership team by planning and overseeing evenings with the principal, informal dialogues and discussions on a variety of topics planned by the Family Association.

2. To provide social, cultural, and developmental opportunities for students by fundraising to offset some of the cost of after-school, weekend, and extracurricular activities such as family field trips and out-of-school volunteer opportunities.
3. To facilitate interaction among families through social events, shared resources (i.e., carpools, emergency pick-ups, and cooperative babysitting during meetings and events).
4. To provide a structure for family volunteers in roles such as school crossing guards, after school activity coordinators, and/or recess monitors.

## Calendar for Kindergarten-8th Grade

|                |   |
|----------------|---|
| August 16-17   | Scholar Orientation; some grades (1:00 pm dismissal)      |
| August 18-20   | Scholar Orientation; all grades (1:00 pm dismissal)       |
| August 23      | Full-length school day begins (1:00 pm dismissal Fridays) |
| September 6    | No school; Labor Day                                      |
| September 17   | No students; Professional Development                     |
| October 11     | No school; Indigenous People's Day                        |
| October 22     | No students; Professional Development                     |
| November 2     | No school; Election Day                                   |
| November 4-5   | Progress Report Conferences (1:00 pm dismissal)           |
| November 11    | No school; Veterans Day                                   |
| November 24-26 | No school; Thanksgiving Holiday                           |
| December 17    | No students; Professional Development                     |
| December 20-31 | No school; Winter Break                                   |
| January 3      | No students; Professional Development                     |
| January 14     | BACS, BAMS No students; Professional Development          |
| January 17     | No school; Martin Luther King, Jr. Day                    |
| January 20-21  | Select Family Conferences (1:00 pm dismissal)             |
| January 28     | BVLS, BVMS No students; Professional Development          |
| February 4     | BWLS, BWMS No students; Professional Development          |
| February 11    | CHACS No students; Professional Development               |
| February 18    | No students; Professional Development                     |
| February 21-25 | No school; February Mid-Winter Break                      |
| March 4        | CBACS, CBAMS No students; Professional Development        |
| March 11       | CALS, CAMS No students; Professional Development          |
| March 18       | EFACS No students; Professional Development               |
| March 25       | EBACS No students; Professional Development               |
| March 29-31    | Grade 3-8 State ELA exam                                  |
| April 1        | LGACS No students; Professional Development               |
| April 11-15    | No school; Spring Break                                   |
| April 21-22    | Progress Report Conferences (1:00 pm dismissal)           |
| April 26-28    | Grade 3-8 State Math exam                                 |
| May 30         | No school; Memorial Day                                   |
| June 9         | 1:00pm dismissal  |
| June 10        | Last day of school, 1:00 pm dismissal                     |
| June 15-24     | Regents for 8 <sup>th</sup> graders (Exact dates TBD)     |

## School hours for academic year

Instruction begins promptly as outlined below, Monday through Friday. Please refer to the table below for specific site-based arrival and dismissal times.

|  | Monday-Thursday  |                | Friday   |                |
|--|--|----------------|--|----------------|
|  | Arrival time   | Dismissal time | Arrival time   | Dismissal time |
| <b>Brooklyn Ascend Middle School</b>         | Doors open:<br>7:30 AM<br><br>Class starts:<br>8:00 AM | 3:20 PM        | Doors open:<br>7:30 AM<br><br>Class starts:<br>8:00 AM | 1:00 PM        |
| <b>Brownsville Ascend Middle School</b>      | Doors open:<br>7:30 AM<br><br>Class starts:<br>8:00 AM | 3:20 PM        | Doors open<br>7:30 AM<br><br>Class starts:<br>8:00 AM  | 1:00 PM        |
| <b>Bushwick Ascend Middle School</b>         | Doors open:<br>7:40 AM<br><br>Class starts:<br>8:00 AM | 3:30 PM        | Doors open:<br>7:40 AM<br><br>Class starts:<br>8:10 AM | 1:10 PM        |
| <b>Canarsie Ascend Middle School</b>         | Doors open:<br>7:30 AM<br><br>Class starts:<br>8:00 AM | 3:20 PM        | Doors open:<br>7:30 AM<br><br>Class starts:<br>8:00 AM | 1:00 PM        |
| <b>Central Brooklyn Ascend Middle School</b> | Doors open:<br>7:30 AM<br><br>Class starts:<br>8:00 AM | 3:20 PM        | Doors open:<br>7:30 AM<br><br>Class starts:<br>8:00 AM | 1:00 PM        |

## Arrival

The school day begins with Advisory, during which homeroom teachers communicate vital information about the day ahead and engage in community building activities. It is critically important that all students are in their seats and ready to learn no later than the class start time listed above as tardiness not only impacts their own preparedness but disrupts the classroom as well.

Students eating breakfast at school may arrive as early as the arrival hours listed above but no later than 7:50 a.m.

The school staff members are not available before the time that doors open. Dropping off your child before the time doors open is not allowed.

## **Dismissal**

The following dismissal procedures have been designed to transition students safely and efficiently.

Monday through Friday, students who are not enrolled in an afterschool tutoring or enrichment program will be dismissed at dismissal time.

### **Picking-up students at dismissal**

For the safety of your child, the school releases students only to those people identified on the students' designated pick-up list as authorized for pick-up or to those otherwise authorized in writing by the parent/guardian prior to pick-up time. There are no exceptions to this rule.

If you would like to add to the list of individuals approved to pick-up your child, please complete the Authorized Pick-up Form, sign it and return it to the main office. Please note that students are not permitted to depart campus with an individual who does not meet the minimum age requirement of 13. Individuals may be required to show identification or proof of age.

### **Students walking home alone**

Students in grades 6 to 8 will be allowed to leave school on their own. For fifth grade students, walking home alone is allowed once the school receives written permission from a parent or guardian. Parents are required to communicate transportation arrangements and expectations to your students in advance.

### **Late pick-ups**

At the conclusion of each school day, 15 minutes after dismissal time, the teacher records the names of students who have not been picked up in the Late Pick-up Log. These students are escorted to the late pick-up area. Parents are required to sign the Late Pick-up Log in recognition of their tardiness.

Three late pick-ups within a term will require a conference with the parent/guardian to address the issue. This late pick-up policy applies to students in grades K-4 and any 5th grader who is not permitted to walk home independently. It does not apply to students in grades 6 and higher.

### **Early pick-ups**

Early pick-ups are disruptive to the learning environment and are therefore strongly discouraged. To ensure necessary order at the end of the school day, early pick-ups are not permitted during times specified by the school (i.e. while school buses are staging for dismissal). In an exceptional circumstance, please contact the school prior to arriving to remove your child from school early.

## **Attendance**

To remain firmly on the path to college, your student must maximize their opportunities to learn. Our academic program pushes students to master new material each day. Missing one day of school puts a student behind

their peers. Families must work with the school to ensure that students attend school every day and arrive on time, except in the most extraordinary circumstances. Truancy (missing school without providing a proper excuse) or chronic absenteeism jeopardizes your child's progress.

## **Expectations**

- At Ascend, we all strive for an attendance rate of 100 percent and to never be late.
- Parents and guardians will contact the school as early as possible but no later than 8:30 a.m., if their student will be late or absent.
- Absent students will return to school with documentation, which includes:
  - The date of the absence
  - The reason for the absence
  - A phone number where a parent or guardian can be reached
  - The parent's or guardian's name, relationship to the student, and signature

## **Reasons for being absent**

The following are the five valid reasons for missing school. Please note that these absences are not "excused," and will still appear on a student's attendance record.

- Death in the family.
- Illness or injury. For a medically-related absence longer than 2 days, the parents or guardians should provide a doctor's note within 24 hours of diagnosis.
- Medical appointments. Parents should try to schedule medical appointments outside of school time. The best times are on Friday (half-day dismissal), vacation days, and weekends. If an appointment must be scheduled during the school day, the student should not be absent for the entire day. It is expected that the student will come to school before and/or after the appointment.
- Religious and cultural observance.
- Educational opportunities with prior approval from the principal.

Please note that no student should ever be absent for the following reasons:

- Family vacations.
- Transportation delays or failures to make connections.
- Instances where parents or guardians share custody and the student is in the custody of the parent not normally responsible for ensuring the student attends school. It is the responsibility of parents and or guardians to ensure the student is in attendance each school day regardless of custody arrangements.

Students serving an out-of-school suspension will be marked absent only if they do not report to school or other assigned locations for at least two hours of alternative instruction.

## **Attendance communication protocol**

To help ensure that students do not accrue absences, the school has certain support policies in place, as detailed below. Please note:

- The goal of the family meetings and calls enumerated below is always to uncover the root cause for the student missing school and problem-solve in partnership ways to ensure the student is in school on time daily.
- In cases of truancy (missing school without providing a reason or context), school staff follow the guidelines below for reporting the student and/or family to the appropriate public agencies.
- Students who are absent from school may not attend or participate in any school-sponsored activities occurring on the day of the absence.

| <b>Instance</b>                               | <b>Action and Purpose</b>   |
|---|---|
| Each absence                                  | <b>Communication between the family and the school</b><br><br>The parent/guardian must report any absence via a phone call to the school by 8:30 a.m. on the day of the absence. If a student is absent without explanation, the school will contact the parent/guardian via phone by 10:00 a.m. to establish the reason for missed school and problem-solve with the family as needed.   |
| Third absence                                 | <b>Letter home</b><br><br>After three absences, the school will send a letter home detailing the student's attendance record and the consequences of lost instructional time.   |
| Sixth <b>consecutive</b> undocumented absence | <b>Report to the Administration for Children's Services (ACS)</b><br><br>If the school is unable to make contact with the family after five days of consecutive, undocumented absences, the principal in conjunction with the school's clinician or other school official conducting attendance outreach will report excessive absences and the possibility of a missing child to the Administration for Children Services (ACS). |
| Sixth absence                                 | <b>Letter home and parent/guardian conference</b><br><br>School will schedule a meeting with the parent or guardian to discuss excessive absences and collaborate around changed behaviors to support attendance. School will ensure the family is informed of the school's mandated reporting policy and practices.  |
| Ninth absence                                 | <b>Parent or guardian conference or certified letter home (signature required)</b><br><br>School will schedule a family meeting to discuss excessive absences and collaborate around changed behaviors to support attendance. School will ensure the family is informed of the school's mandated reporting policy and practices. During this meeting, a member of the school leadership team will ask the parent or guardian to   |

|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
|                   | sign a statement acknowledging the purpose and date of the meeting, and confirming comprehension of the law regarding school attendance as well as the consequences of school absences for the student.  |
| Fifteenth absence | <p><b>Evaluation of readiness for promotion</b></p> <p>The school reserves the right to retain any student who exceeds 15 absences in a year. The school will also schedule a family meeting as above to discuss excessive absences and the school's mandated reporting policy. In the event that the school is unable to make contact with the parent or guardian, the school will send a certified letter to the last known address.</p> |
| Twentieth absence | <p><b>Report to the Administration for Children's Services (ACS)</b></p> <p>The principal in conjunction with the school's clinician or other school official attempting attendance outreach will report excessive absences to the Administration for Children's Services (ACS).</p>   |

### Tardiness

Students are expected to be punctual, mindful of their responsibility to learn, and respectful of other people's time and their own learning time. Tardiness not only impacts the child's preparedness, but it also disrupts and infringes upon the rights of the whole class. Habitual tardiness is not permitted.

Our doors open as outlined in the "School hours" table above. Any student who eats breakfast at school should be in school by 7:50 a.m. By 8:00 a.m. each student should have arrived at their homeroom, unpacked, and taken a seat, prepared for instruction.

Students who enter the building after class start times listed above are considered tardy.

Please note: different clocks and watches vary. The determination of student lateness will be based on the clocks at the school to ensure consistency and fairness.

- The parent/guardian of any lower school student who arrives after 8:00 a.m. must escort the student to the security guard at the front desk. The parent/guardian must sign-in and retrieve a guest pass from the security guard, escort the student to the main office and provide an explanation for the tardiness, including any necessary doctor's notes.
- The parent/guardian should not accompany the student to their classroom. Lower school students who arrive late may not be left unaccompanied at the school entrance or with the security guard.
- The school records the student's name in the Late Arrival Log. At the time of late drop-off, the parent/guardian of any lower school student signs the log indicating that they have read and understands the school's attendance and tardiness policy.
- The school will schedule a parent/guardian meeting for any student who is tardy more than five times in a term.

## **School closings/late starts**

In case of severe weather, a power outage, or other problems requiring school closure or a late start, the school announces the closing or delay through a robocall system. Announcements typically start by 6 a.m. As a general rule, but not always, if the NYCDOE decides to close schools because of weather, Ascend Public Charter Schools will close as well. In extreme circumstances, school may be closed once students have arrived for the day. Please call the school if you are in doubt.

## **Homework policy**

Homework is an independent activity designed for practice or maintaining mastery. Homework does not take the place of classroom instruction, but rather serves as a valuable extension of each student's efforts in the classroom. All homework must be fully completed. If a student is having difficulty with a concept, please note it for the teacher.

The parent or guardian can support their child's completion of homework by seeking to provide their child with a quiet workspace to complete their homework and checking that their child completes all assigned work. It is critical that family and friends refrain from helping a student complete homework assignments as such assistance makes it difficult for teachers to determine a student's true mastery of skills and concepts.

## **Daily reading**

Students should read or listen to books read aloud for 30 minutes every night, including weekends. Studies show that reading or listening to books for 30 minutes a day can significantly improve a student's academic outcomes.

## **Uniform policy**

Student uniforms are an important aspect of our school culture. They support a culture of belonging and community. Uniforms help create balance in the school and allow students to focus on what is most important – their learning. Students must be in uniform while on school grounds and may not change out of their uniforms before dismissal. The uniform must be worn during field trips and other school-related activities as well, unless the school informs parents or guardians otherwise.

Faculty or staff check uniforms upon student arrival to school. They inform families if students arrive to school out of uniform. The school keeps some additional uniform components on hand and loans them to students when possible to ensure that they enter the classroom in perfect uniform. In the rare circumstance where the school does not have sufficient additional uniforms to loan out, the school will call the parents or guardians of students who arrive to school out of uniform and ask them to bring to school the missing uniform item(s). At the discretion of the school leadership team, disciplinary action may be taken in response to any inappropriate dress aligned to the uniform policy.

Shirts must be tucked-in, shoelaces must be tied, and velcro must be fastened at all times. If lower school students cannot tie their shoes, please focus on developing this skill at home and try to provide shoes with velcro or other non-lace fasteners for school while they are learning.

Please label all clothing with your child's name, especially items that might be removed during the day. Labels ensure that lost items are returned to their owners.

## **Uniforms**

All main uniform shirts are required to have the appropriate Ascend logo, which may be embroidered or an iron-on patch.

| School                                       | Main uniform                             | Physical education  | Optional  |
|--|--|---|---|
| <b>Brooklyn Ascend Middle School</b>         | White oxford or polo<br>Navy pants/skirt | Ascend navy t-shirt<br>Ascend navy sweatshirt<br>Ascend navy sweatpants | Navy tie/bow tie, Navy cardigan, vest or blazer |
| <b>Brownsville Ascend Middle School</b>      | White oxford or polo<br>Gray pants/skirt | Ascend navy t-shirt<br>Ascend navy sweatshirt<br>Ascend gray sweatpants | Navy tie/bow tie, Navy cardigan, vest or blazer |
| <b>Bushwick Ascend Middle School</b>         | White oxford or polo<br>Gray pant/skirt  | Ascend navy t-shirt<br>Ascend navy sweatshirt<br>Ascend navy sweatpants | Navy tie/bow tie, Navy cardigan, vest or blazer |
| <b>Canarsie Ascend Middle School</b>         | White oxford or polo<br>Gray pants/skirt | Ascend navy t-shirt<br>Ascend navy sweatshirt<br>Ascend navy sweatpants | Navy tie/bow tie, Navy cardigan, vest or blazer |
| <b>Central Brooklyn Ascend Middle School</b> | White oxford or polo<br>Navy pants/skirt | Ascend navy t-shirt<br>Ascend navy sweatshirt<br>Ascend navy sweatpants | Navy tie/bow tie, Navy cardigan, vest or blazer |

## **Shoes**

- Black sneakers (all black only – no stripes, patterns, designs, or colored laces)
- Black dress shoes or boots
- All shoes should be flat: no high heels, princess heels or wedges

During inclement weather (snow or rain), students may wear rain or snow boots but they must change into their uniform shoes upon entering class.

## **Head coverings and hair**

Students are welcome to wear head coverings that reflect their religious and/or cultural observance. Hats, caps or other head coverings not worn for religious or cultural observance may not be worn.

Students are encouraged to wear hair styles that are consistent with their cultural, ethnic and racial heritage, identity or personal style.

## **Other clothing and accessories**

- Hooded sweatshirts, zippered jackets, or non-sweater vests are not permitted to be worn in class
- Cologne/perfume is not permitted
- Jewelry
  - Jewelry is permitted.
  - For safety reasons, earrings that are larger than a quarter will be removed by students during physical education, dance, recess or anytime when students are engaged in a high level of physical movement. As there is limited and often no secure storage in gymnasiums or outdoors, we recommend that earrings larger than a quarter not be worn to school.
  - Students may be asked to remove and secure jewelry that serves as a distraction in class.
- Nails
  - Students are permitted to wear nail polish. Nails must be of a length that students are able to easily type, complete classwork and meet school-wide expectations for participation.
- Makeup
  - Makeup is permitted. Students should take care to wear makeup that does not serve as a distraction in class or school. If such a distraction exists, the school may contact the family as needed.
  - Students are not permitted to apply makeup during class or to travel to/from the bathroom for the purpose of applying makeup during class.

### **Uniform specifics**

Clothing should be sized appropriately to fit the student, recognizing that for growing children parents may at times opt to purchase uniforms that are 1-2 sizes larger. Clothes may not be overly big/baggy or too small. Students should not wear clothing with significant stains (e.g., large inkblots, food stains, etc.) or in poor condition (e.g., frayed pant cuffs).

During inclement weather, students who wish to layer clothing underneath their uniforms may do so. Clothing worn under the uniform may not hang out or be visible. If a student comes to school with a non-uniform shirt showing under their uniform, it will be treated as a uniform violation if it cannot be easily corrected, and the student would be asked to remove the non-uniform item.

Students may not alter their uniforms in any way (e.g., by writing/drawing, cutting, etc.). Items that are in disrepair for these reasons will be treated as a uniform violation and the student will be asked to remove the item and replace them with a loaner from the school.

### **Lockers**

Each student is issued a locker at the start of the year. Students are responsible for their lockers at all times. The school is not responsible for items that are lost or stolen from student lockers. Students may not share lockers. Lockers must be kept clean. Students may go to their lockers before the school day, at the end of the school day, and with permission from a staff member. Lockers remain the property of the school, and the school may inspect or access student lockers at any time. Students do not have a right to privacy with regard to the contents kept in lockers.

### **Cell phones and personal electronics**

No cell phones or other personal electronics should be used during the school day. Any electronic items should be placed in the backpack in a student's locker at the beginning of each day. If a student uses a cell phone or other personal electronic device during the school day, or if the item is discovered on their person, the item may be collected by staff and returned at the end of the day. If a student repeatedly violates this policy, they will have to check the cell phone or other electronic devices at the beginning of the school day with the assistant principal or principal and retrieve it from them at the end of the day. Please note that the school is not responsible for the loss, theft or damage to any electronic items brought to school.

## **Transportation**

At the beginning of the school year, it is critical that you tell the school of your child's transportation plans; specifically, whether your student will be picked up or take the bus. If your child's transportation plans change, please communicate these changes to the school in advance and in writing.

### **Yellow bus service – general education students**

Yellow bus service is provided by the NYCDOE Office of Pupil Transportation. Eligibility is determined by several factors, including the student's grade and the distance between the student's home and the school. Yellow busing service is only available up to grade six.

Please note:

- Students are expected to behave appropriately on the bus.
- There are no adults on the bus except for the bus driver.
- Students who misbehave on the bus receive the same consequences as students who misbehave at school and may lose bus privileges for up to a year.
- It is the parent's responsibility to ensure that there is a designated adult at the bus stop to receive the child -- not the bus driver's or the school's.
- If no responsible adult is at the stop, multiple attempts will be made to contact a parent or authorized contact to meet the bus at its intended stop. If an authorized contact cannot be reached nor a school official, the matter may result in support from the local precinct.

### **Yellow bus service – special education students**

Yellow bus service is provided by the NYCDOE Office of Pupil Transportation. Eligibility is determined by the student's Individualized Education Plan.

Please note:

- Students are expected to behave appropriately on the bus.
- It is the parent's responsibility to ensure that there is a designated adult at the bus stop to receive the child -- not the bus driver's or the school's.
- If no responsible adult is at the stop, multiple attempts will be made to contact a parent or authorized contact to meet the bus at its intended stop. If an authorized contact cannot be reached nor a school official, the matter may result in support from the local precinct.

## **Transportation for students in foster care**

In conjunction with the NYCDOE Office of Pupil Transportation, the school follows the regulation set forth under McKinney Vento to properly identify and provide transportation for those in foster care placement. If the student is not already eligible by grade and distance from the foster home address, an application is filed with OPT, which makes best efforts to find a route for students, or provide a full fare MetroCard.

In some cases, interim transportation will need to be provided while the application is being reviewed. The school will work with the Administration for Children's Services (ACS) directly to support these requests. Alternatively, if OPT issues an exception for a MetroCard but public transportation is not an appropriate option for the child, the school will also work with ACS to obtain information about their private transportation reimbursement policy.

## **Behavior on the bus**

The school's expectation that students live the core values applies to school bus transportation. Students who take the school bus are expected to act responsibly and respectfully at all times.

Certain additional rules apply to the bus. These are enumerated in the busing contract that families riding the yellow bus must sign. Students must sit in assigned seats. An administrator meets the bus at arrival every morning, and no student may exit the bus before the administrator checks with the driver regarding behavior. Behavior infractions include failing to be in the assigned seat, putting hands out of the bus, throwing things, using inappropriate language, yelling, and disobeying the bus driver. More serious misbehavior (e.g., fighting) shall be investigated and consequences applied as if such behavior happened on school grounds.

One infraction results in the loss of bus privileges for a week; two infractions result in the loss of bus privileges for a month; and three infractions result in the loss of bus privileges for the year. If an infraction is sufficiently serious, it could warrant the immediate loss of bus privileges for the year.

Families are strongly encouraged to reinforce the importance of proper bus behavior and the potential consequences of inappropriate behavior. Consequences for misconduct by special education students who are required by their Individualized Education Plans to ride transportation other than the general school bus will be handled on a case-by-case basis.

## **Meals**

Breakfast and lunch are served daily. Students who bring lunch from home may sign-up to receive milk at school. To protect the health of students with allergies, some of which are life-threatening, Ascend Public Charter Schools are nut-free schools, which means that no nut products are permitted in any of our schools at any time. When packing lunches for your child, please be aware that many processed foods contain nut products; read the labels of such foods carefully to ensure that your choices do not endanger a student with an acute allergy.

If your student has a food allergy, please contact the principal and your child's teacher immediately so they can take the necessary precautions.

## **Foods not permitted at school**

Research shows that a healthy and nutritious diet contributes to healthy academic and social learning. As such, students are not permitted to bring the following foods to school, and any such items may be sent home with the student and possibly discarded. In these instances, students will be offered the school meal as an alternative.

- Fast food (e.g., McDonald's, Burger King, Wendy's)
- Chewing gum, candy, marshmallows
- Nuts/nut products (including processed foods that contain nuts, due to allergies)
- Potato chips or cheese popcorn
- Soda, energy drinks, hot chocolate, beverages in glass bottles
- Cookies, donuts, cakes
- Artificial fruit snacks
- Other snacks with a high sugar content

Please do not send your student with food that requires warming. Additionally, do not send food to your child through a delivery service (such as GrubHub/UberEats) nor allow them to place such orders themselves. These practices do not allow for our lunch periods to operate on time and infringe on instructional time.

## **Healthy lunch or snack suggestions**

Instead of the items above, please consider sending your child with the following items as healthy and widely available substitutes.

- Yogurt
- Dried fruit
- Breakfast bars
- Baked potato chips
- Whole-grain chips (e.g., Sun Chips)
- Vegetable chips
- Plain or lightly buttered popcorn
- Pretzels
- Apples, sliced oranges, grapes, and other fruit
- Carrots, celery sticks, other vegetables
- Rice cakes

## **Enrollment, withdrawals, and repeating a grade**

### **Withdrawal and re-enrollment**

Students may withdraw from an Ascend charter school at any time based on a written request by the student's parent or guardian. Such notice will typically take the form of a records request transfer from the student's new school, or a withdrawal form. Absent a records request or withdrawal form, the school will require evidence of arrangements to enroll the student in a new school to process the withdrawal. After a student has withdrawn,

the seat is offered to another student on the waitlist. To re-enter the school, students must apply as a new student.

If the family of a student believes that the withdrawal was in error, or was involuntary, or believes another special circumstance exists, the family may make a request to the principal to re-enroll the student. The principal will make a final determination in conjunction with the network enrollment team.

### **Repeating a grade**

Schools make decisions about retaining students in grade for the following year by the month of June. The school makes every effort to communicate these decisions in person prior to the last day of school. Decisions about retention in grade are not based on State test scores or on any single data point. Students are retained only when the preponderance of student data indicates that the child is not ready for the next grade's academic program. Parents may appeal retention decisions in writing to the principal. If families still wish to appeal the decision of a child's retention, they may do so in writing to Ascend Public Charter School's chief schools officer.

## **Health policies and procedures**

### **Requirements**

Ascend Public Charter Schools complies with New York State laws governing students' health, immunization, and health records. New York State law requires every student to be vaccinated against certain diseases unless such student has a valid medical exemption in accordance with New York State law. Please note that as of June 2019, religious exemptions from school vaccination requirements have been removed from New York State law and are no longer allowed.

Each school must have on file a completed and signed Child & Adolescent Health Examination Form (CH205) completed by a New York State licensed physician, for each student, by the fourteenth (14th) day from the first day of school, unless such student has a valid medical exemption to such immunization requirements in accordance with New York State law. The principal may extend this 14-day period to thirty (30) days under limited circumstances. A student whose medical forms are not in compliance with these legal requirements will be excluded from school by the principal until such requirements are met.

Families will be asked to provide a new physical examination form (CH 205) every (1) year for elementary aged children and every two (2) years for middle and high school, even if no new immunizations are required, to ensure that schools have current information on their students' health.

### **Illness and exclusion policy**

If a student shows any symptoms of illness, such as a high temperature, nausea, diarrhea, sore throat, or rashes, they should not come to school until the seriousness of the condition has been determined or the symptoms have disappeared. Such precaution hastens the student's recovery and helps reduce the spread of infections at school.

The nurse removes any student who shows such symptoms from the regular program, and contacts the parent or guardian to make arrangements for the student to be picked-up as soon as possible. If the parent or guardian cannot be reached, the school will call the person(s) designated as the emergency contact(s). An ill or injured student must be picked up within one hour of our call.

If a student's condition warrants immediate medical attention, the school would contact the student's healthcare provider or call 911.

## **Communicable diseases**

The parent or guardian must notify the school immediately if a student has contracted a communicable disease (such as strep throat or pink eye) so that the school may take action to protect other students by notifying families of those potentially at risk. If more than one case of a communicable disease occurs in a single homeroom, the school would contact our consultant from the local health department to seek advice and ensure that appropriate actions are taken. In the event of an epidemic, special precautions or exclusion policies may be necessary.

Contact your doctor about when it is appropriate to return to school if your student has a communicable disease. The doctor's note returning the student to school should identify when the student is allowed to come back.

## **Ascend administration of medication**

Ascend Public Charter Schools does not issue any form of medication to students, including over-the-counter drugs such as aspirin or Tylenol, except as described below. As a singular exception, parents or guardians may sign a permission slip giving a school the right to administer Syrup of Ipecac to induce vomiting in case of accidental poisoning.

A nurse must administer all medication and only when the following requirements are met:

- The school has received written authorization from the parent or legal guardian for each medication in the form of a completed and signed Medical Administration Form (MAF).
- The school has received a doctor's written permission to administer prescribed medication. (For prescription medication, the pharmacy label serves as the doctor's permission.)
- The medication label states all of the following: the student's name, directions for use, the name of the drug, the physician's name, the prescribed dosage, and the expiration date.
- Medication is stored in its original container in the nurse's office and is accompanied by the signed Medical Administration Form (MAF).
- Epinephrine auto-injectors or emergency asthma medication may be stored in other locations within the school to facilitate the most effective emergency response, by prior arrangement with the assistant principal of operations and the school nurse.
- The school does its best to follow the medication instructions provided, but cannot be held responsible for forgetting or delaying the provision of medicine.

## **Self-administration of medication (grades 5-12 only)**

Ascend understands that some students may be self-directed by their physician in taking medications (i.e., be able to identify the following: that the medication is the correct one; what the medication is for; that the correct dosage or amount is being administered; when the medication is needed during the school day; describe what will happen if it is not taken).

If the child is able to self-administer the medication, the parent must initial the appropriate area on the physician-approved Medication Administration Form (MAF). Those students are then permitted to carry and self-administer ONLY those medications that are necessary during the school day without supervision; however, students are never permitted to carry controlled substances.

Parents must remember to attach a small current photograph of their child to the upper left corner of the Medication Administration Form (MAF) for proper identification.

Students may not otherwise self-medicate.

### **Reporting suspected child abuse and mandated reporting policy**

If any employee of the school has reasonable cause to suspect on the basis of their professional or other training and experience that a student enrolled at the school is being abused, the employee is required by law to call and file an oral report with state authorities. Our obligation to report includes instances of educational neglect. All members of the faculty take this responsibility seriously and are committed to executing their legal obligations accordingly.

## **Emergency procedures**

### **Emergency contacts**

Parents or guardians of all students are required to complete an emergency form that contains a medical release statement giving the school permission to seek medical attention for the student in case of an emergency. This information is kept in the main office, with the school nurse, and the homeroom teacher.

In the event of a school-wide emergency, the school uses a “one-call” system to notify families of any emergencies via phone or text. It is essential that parents or guardians notify the school immediately if their addresses or phone numbers change.

### **Accidents**

The school notifies parents or guardians immediately of any accidents involving more than minor bruises or scrapes. Such accidents are recorded in an accident report form and filed in the school office for future reference. For minor injuries, a certified staff member administers first aid on site as appropriate. If it appears the accident is more serious, first aid would be administered immediately; and a school official would contact the student’s parent, guardian, or designated emergency contact to pick-up the student for medical care. In cases where the parents or guardians or the designated emergency persons cannot be reached and immediate medical attention is needed, a school official would call 911 for treatment and/or transportation to a hospital. A staff person would accompany the student and stay until the parent or guardian arrives. In some emergency situations, the staff may contact 911 before calling the parent or guardian.

## **Discipline code**

### **Philosophy of discipline**

We expect every member of the Ascend community, whether staff member, student, or parent/guardian, to treat every other person in the school with dignity and respect.

We are dedicated to creating secure school environments in which each student’s behavior supports high-level academic achievement.

“Discipline is the refining fire by which talent becomes ability.”  
-Roy L. Smith

When many hear the word discipline, they think of punishment. At Ascend, we believe that the purpose of discipline is to teach, not punish.

We believe that all children inherently want to do the right thing and to reach meaningful goals. When they arrive in elementary school, often the goal is to please the teacher or their family, but by the time they leave us to go to college and grow into adulthood, our students have goals about career, family, college, community and more. If they are to achieve those goals, they must have the discipline to do so. Discipline is about habits. And our approach to student culture teaches the habits of discipline so that our students can reach their goals.

For positive discipline to be possible, we must be intentional about how we teach and reinforce expected behaviors and how we correct unwanted behaviors. The way we do this is the same as the way we teach academic content at Ascend: we start by planning the exemplar. Leaders and teachers thoughtfully plan for how our culture will feel, look and sound. Then, as we teach our expectations we keep the thinking work on the children. Their thinking and their voices must be part of the learning of the culture and the creation of our culture.

When we create rules at the start of the school year, we help the students organize their needs and ideas into rules that will support the community. If we are modeling expectations, we ask students what they saw us do and what impact that had on the community. If we are supporting them with planning for how to repair harm they may have done to the community, we are asking them questions that help them unpack the impact of their actions and identify ways to fix what may be broken. The thinking work stays on the students. Over time, pro-social and pro-academic habits become the norm in the community.

This student-centered inquiry-based approach to discipline does not mean we are soft or squishy with our expectations. On the contrary, our approach signals high expectations for children and our belief that they can meet them.

At Ascend, we do not use color charts or merit/demerit systems to manage behavior. We do not believe that these tools are effective when it comes to delivering on our mission or aligned to our beliefs about what children deserve. We say our students will have the knowledge, confidence and character to succeed in college and beyond. A punitive approach to discipline does not lead to knowledge of social skills, confidence, nor character. And for those reasons, systems such as those have no place at Ascend.

We believe in a student centered inquiry based approach to teaching and learning. We have found that the principles, tools and strategies employed by Responsive Classroom and Restorative Justice are aligned with our beliefs about how students learn best.

For more information on Responsive Classroom, visit [www.responsiveclassroom.org/about](http://www.responsiveclassroom.org/about).

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For more information on Restorative Justice practices, visit [Restorative Practices Parent Handbook Final](#) or scan this QR code.



We believe that a Responsive and Restorative approach to discipline is directly aligned with our vision of racial justice. Our approach centers the student—their identity, values, ideas, and the impact of their actions on the community. A punitive approach to discipline that is rooted in the command and control of one's body, words and actions is problematic; it upholds the values of white supremacy culture and views the students, who in Ascend schools are largely black and brown students, as objects to be controlled. Our students do not need to be controlled. They are and must continue to be free to think and thrive on their own.

### **Disciplinary actions**

School leaders and faculty will use their professional judgment, logical consequences and Ascend's philosophy of discipline in determining which disciplinary action(s) will be most effective in dealing with the student's misconduct, taking into account the following factors and other relevant issues:

- The student's age and maturity level
- The nature and seriousness of the infraction and the circumstances that led to the infraction
- The student's previous disciplinary record
- The effectiveness of other forms of discipline
- Information from parents or guardians, teachers and/or others, as appropriate

When a student does not meet behavioral expectations and a violation of the school's Code of Conduct has occurred, clear and consistent disciplinary action will ensue, and other consequences as further described below.

Progressively more serious disciplinary consequences shall be imposed upon any student who repeatedly commits one or more disciplinary offenses.

The school reserves the right to consult with law enforcement when appropriate.

### **A note on academic integrity and scholastic dishonesty**

Effective teaching and learning depend upon the ability of members of the academic community to trust the integrity of work that is submitted for academic credit or review by peers or teachers.

Such an atmosphere of mutual trust fosters the free exchange of ideas and enables all members of the community to achieve their highest potential.

In all academic work, the ideas and contributions of others must be appropriately acknowledged and work that is presented as original must be, in fact, original. Faculty, students and staff all share the responsibility of ensuring the honesty and fairness of the intellectual environment at Ascend schools.

While "scholastic dishonesty" is a category 1 behavior violation as noted below (Violation 1.4 in the Code of Conduct), this should not be misunderstood to mean that Ascend does not take this action seriously. In fact, as our core mission is to prepare students to thrive in college and beyond, behaviors related to academic integrity will receive the highest levels of scrutiny, especially as students mature to high school age. Please note that depending on the age, maturity level and nature of the offense, violations in this category could lead to up to a 10-day suspension. And repeated violations could lead to longer term suspensions or expulsions from Ascend.

### **Code of Conduct**

Every student has the right to learn in a safe, orderly, respectful, and nurturing environment. The actions of one student must never be permitted to undermine the intellectual, emotional, and social development of their peers. Ascend Public Charter Schools' Code of Conduct offers students and their parents or guardians a guide to the consequences of unacceptable behaviors. Ascend school leaders, faculty, and staff rigorously enforce the Code in the interest of the entire school community.

The Code of Conduct establishes reasonable boundaries for students and provides clear, fair, and predictable consequences for breaking the rules. We expect students to avoid transgressions in the first instance, and in cases when they make mistakes, we expect them to accept responsibility and learn from the experience.

Student disciplinary offenses are those actions or inactions that violate the school's Code of Conduct or interfere with the delivery of educational services; jeopardize the health, safety, and well-being of any member of the school community; or threaten the integrity and stability of the school itself.

- A disciplinary offense may occur while the student is: at school and/or on school grounds; participating in a school-sponsored activity; walking to or from school or a school-sponsored event; walking to or from, waiting for, or riding on school-provided transportation or a yellow school bus; or walking to or from, waiting for, or riding on public transportation to and from school or a school-sponsored activity conducted off school grounds. School-related disciplinary offenses may also include misconduct outside the school, such as activity on social media or other cyber activities that reasonably could affect the school or impact the learning environment.

The following list is not exhaustive but provides examples of violations of the Code that may result in disciplinary consequences which are explained in more depth following the list of violations. The school may modify the list of behavior violations and consequences from time to time with notice to students and families.

### **Category I behavior violations**

The following behaviors may result in consequences determined by the child's teacher or additional afterschool support. Repeated Category I violations, based on severity, may be treated as Category II violations. Category I behaviors can lead to consequences up to and including suspension.

**1.1. Failure to follow directions:** Each student must follow the directions of every adult in the school, including administrators, teachers, educational assistants, secretaries, custodians, lunchroom workers, and security guards.

**1.2. Behaving in a manner which disrupts the education process:** Classroom and school rules are established to protect the integrity of the learning environment, and students must follow them at all times. Students who cause a disruption by talking, making noises, throwing objects, inappropriate displays of affection, or otherwise distracting classmates or the teacher are disrupting the education process.

**1.3. Uniform violation:** Students must wear the school uniform to school every day.

**1.4. Scholastic dishonesty:** Students must not engage in academic cheating. Cheating includes, but is not limited to, the giving or receiving of any unauthorized aid or the giving or receiving of unfair advantage on any form of academic work. Students must not engage in plagiarism, which includes the copying of language, structures, ideas and/or thoughts of another person and representing it as one's own original work. A student must not unlawfully duplicate, reproduce, retain, or use copyrighted material.

**1.5. Electronic media and communication devices:** Students may not use electronic media and/or communications devices at school. Should a student use such a device at school, in addition to other consequences deemed appropriate by school staff, the item may be confiscated and held until an adult picks it up.

**1.6. Engaging in or causing disruptive behavior on the school bus:** Students must follow the bus rules, and not engage in disruptive behavior or language. Serious behavior violations may be categorized as a Category II or III

violations and treated as such.

1.7. Failing to be in one's assigned place: Students should only be in the rooms and other areas of the school to which they have been specifically given permission.

### **Category II behavior violations**

The following behaviors may result in suspension or other disciplinary consequences, depending on the circumstances. Repeated Category II violations may be treated as Category III violations. Students who repeatedly engage in Category II behaviors or have serious offenses in Category II behaviors may also be subject to long-term suspension or expulsion.

2.1 Truancy and cutting: Any full-day or part-day absence from school that is not excused by a parent or legal guardian is considered truancy. Being absent from one or more classes during the school day without the permission of school staff is “cutting” and is not allowed.

2.2 Profanity or obscenity: Students must not say or write inappropriate words or make obscene gestures. Students must not draw or show sexually explicit pictures to anyone at school. Cursing or swearing is also strictly prohibited.

2.3 Play fighting and threatening: Students may not play fight and/or threaten others as such behavior compromises the safety of the community.

2.4 Smoking: Smoking and possession of any kind of tobacco at school, on school grounds, or at any school-related activity are prohibited.

2.5 Alcohol, drugs, and drug paraphernalia: Students must not bring alcohol, drugs, or any drug paraphernalia to school. They must not manufacture, sell, handle, possess, use, deliver, or be under any degree of influence of any alcoholic beverage, intoxicant, or drug (legal intoxication is not a requirement). Students must not inhale any substance for the purpose of becoming intoxicated or under the influence. Prescribed medication must be delivered to the school by the parent or guardian with the written authorization of a physician. All prescribed medication must be administered at school by the school nurse. As described below, the possession of narcotics with the intent to sell or distribute is a Category III violation and may lead to immediate suspension, a recommendation for expulsion, and a police referral.

2.6 Pornographic material: The possession, distribution, or creation of pornographic material is not tolerated.

2.7 Stealing: Students must not take without permission anything that does not belong to them or have in their possession anything that has been stolen.

2.8 Aggressive disruptive conduct: Students must not, by any type of conduct (including but not limited to violence, force, noise, coercion, threat, intimidation, or fear), cause the disruption, disturbance, or obstruction of any school function, activity, or event. Students may not urge other students to engage in such conduct for the purpose of causing such disruption or obstruction.

2.9 Gang activity: Gang activity is defined as an assembly of individuals who gather on a continuing basis, whose purpose the school reasonably believes is to violate school policy. Students must not wear or display any

clothing, jewelry, colors, or insignia that a teacher or administrator may reasonably perceive as evidence of membership in or affiliation with a gang or that otherwise symbolizes support of a gang. Students must not use any word, phrase, written symbol, or gesture that intentionally identifies them as members of a gang or otherwise symbolizes support of a gang, nor try to recruit others to gangs.

2.10 Defacement or destruction of property: Students must not mark, damage, break, or destroy school property or anything that belongs to someone else. Students who destroy or vandalize school property are required to pay for losses or damages, in addition to other consequences deemed appropriate by school staff.

2.11 Sexual misconduct or inappropriate touching: Students must not engage in sexual activity of any kind or touch themselves or others in an unacceptable way. "Unacceptable" is defined using the "reasonable person" standard, i.e., if a reasonable person in our community would find a given action to be rude or offensive, then it is unacceptable.

2.12 Teasing: Students must not make fun of, provoke, or disturb others playfully or maliciously.

2.13 Lookalike weapons: The possession, handling, or transmission of any object or instrument that is a "look-alike" weapon or instrument (e.g., rubber knife, or toy gun) is strictly prohibited.

2.14 Abusive or profane language or treatment: Students may not use abusive, threatening, vulgar, coarse, or degrading language (including racial epithets or sexist or homophobic remarks).

2.15 Engaging in inappropriate use of social media: Students may not engage in online conduct or communication that may harass or intimidate any members of the school community, or reasonably lead to a disruption of the educational environment.

### **Category III behavior violations**

Any student who engages in any of the behaviors in this category may be suspended or expelled from the school, and a police referral may be made.

3.1 Committing assault or assault and battery: Students may not commit assault, including sexual assault, or assault and battery on a student, school employee, or another person. Assault is an attempt or threat to physically harm another person; assault does not require physical contact. Battery is any unlawful touching of another person.

3.2 Intimidation or bullying (including cyber-bullying): Bullying is defined as a series of acts or a single negative act (depending on severity) that involves a real or perceived imbalance of power, i.e., where a more powerful (whether real or perceived) individual student harasses another student less powerful or perceived to be less powerful. Bullying can take many forms, including but not limited to: (1) physical, e.g., hitting, kicking, spitting, pushing, and taking personal belongings; (2) verbal, e.g., taunting, malicious teasing, name-calling, making threats; and (3) psychological, e.g., spreading rumors; manipulating social relationships; or engaging in social exclusion, extortion, or intimidation. Cyber-bullying involves the use of information technology, including e-mail, instant messaging, blogs, chat rooms, pagers, cell phones, and gaming systems in the deliberate harassment, threatening, or intimidation of students. Examples include sending mean, vulgar, or threatening messages or images; posting sensitive, private information about another person (including "sexting"); and impersonation.

3.3 Extortion: Students must not coerce a person – through intimidation, threat, or force – into doing anything that person does not wish to do. Students must not engage in the act of securing or attempting to secure money or other items of value from an unwilling person.

3.4 Harassment: Harassment of any type, including hazing and discriminatory harassment, is prohibited. Students must not make unwelcome sexual advances or requests for sexual favors; or engage in other verbal or physical conduct relating to a person's sex, race, color, national origin, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, height, weight, marital status, or disability (e.g., sexual or racial comments, threats or insults, or unwanted touching). Students may not engage in the harassment of students off school property under circumstances where such off-campus conduct: 1) affects the education process; 2) actually endangers the health and safety of our students; or 3) is reasonably believed to pose a danger to the health and safety of our students. This includes written and/or verbal harassment, including cyberbullying, which materially and substantially disrupts the work and discipline of the school and/or which school officials reasonably forecast as being likely to materially and substantially disrupt the academic work and culture of the school.

3.5 Actions against staff members: Harassing (verbal or written abuse or disrespect), intimidating, threatening, or physically abusing a staff member is not allowed.

3.6 Weapons: Students must not possess, handle, transmit, or use as a weapon any instrument that can be used to harm another person. Weapons include, but are not limited to:

- Firearms: Any weapon (including a starter gun) that is designed to, or may readily be converted to, expel a projectile by the action of an explosive
- Explosives: Any substance or prepared chemical that can explode or is capable of inflicting bodily injury or is reasonably likely to cause physical discomfort to another person, including fireworks and firecrackers
- Knives: Any knife or blade of any size
- Chemicals such as mace, pepper gas, or like substances
- Stun gun; brass knuckles; or blackjack
- Dangerous items: Prohibited items not designed as weapons that can be used or perceived as such, including but not limited to razors, box cutters, hammers, baseball bats, and metal combs of any length with a sharpened handle

3.7 Possession of narcotics with intent to distribute or sell: The possession of narcotics with the intent to distribute or sell may be cause for immediate suspension, a recommendation for expulsion to the school's board of trustees, and referral to law enforcement officials.

3.8 False fire alarms or bomb reports: Students must not break or pull the fire alarm at any time unless there is an emergency, nor make bomb threats.

3.9 Starting a fire: Starting a fire or conspiring to start a fire on school property is strictly prohibited.

#### **Gun-free schools act**

Federal and state laws require the expulsion from school for a period of not less than one year of a student who is determined to have brought a firearm to the school, or to have possessed a firearm at school, except that the

principal may modify such expulsion requirement for a student on a case-by-case basis, if such modification is in writing, in accordance with the Federal Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994 (as amended).

Any such expulsion must be consistent with the requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and its implementing regulations, for a student with or presumed to have disabilities.

"Firearm," as used in this law, is defined by 18 USC §921(a), and includes firearms and explosives.

The definition of "firearm" includes but is not limited to:

- Any weapon (including a starter gun) which will or is designed to or may readily be converted to expel a projectile by the action of an explosive
- The frame or receiver of any weapon described above
- Any firearm muffler or firearm silencer
- Any destructive device, which is defined as any explosive, incendiary, or poison gas, such as a bomb, grenade, rocket having a propellant charge of more than four ounces, a missile having an explosive or incendiary charge of more than one-quarter ounce, a mine, or other similar devices

The principal shall refer to the criminal justice or juvenile delinquency system any student who brings a firearm or weapon to the school. "Weapon" as used in this context shall mean any device, instrument, material, or substance that is used for or is readily capable of causing death or serious bodily injury, except that such term does not include a pocket knife with a blade of less than two and a half inches in length.

### **Classroom consequences**

When students lapse and exhibit misbehavior, teachers respond with interventions to redirect them. Continued misbehavior results in more severe consequences, including referral to the assistant principal or principal.

When students break the rules, one of the ways teachers respond is with logical consequences. Logical consequences are non punitive. They help students recognize the effects of their actions and fix any problems their actions may have caused. Logical consequences are respectful of the student, relevant to the mistake, and reasonable for the teacher to implement and the student to carry out.

There are three types of logical consequences: loss of privilege, break it/fix it and Space and Time. All logical consequences will usually fall into one of these categories--which type is used will depend not only on the situation but on what is known about the student developmentally, academically and socially.

**Loss of Privilege** – A privilege is an opportunity for students to learn to be responsible when acting autonomously, such as choosing a partner or using classroom equipment. When a student struggles to manage that responsibility the privilege is removed for a brief period of time, generally a class period or a day.

**Break It, Fix It-** This type of consequence gives students the opportunity to fix or clean up something they've broken or spilled, whether on purpose or by accident. It reinforces the fact that we all make mistakes and when we do, it's our responsibility to clean up after ourselves.

**Positive Time Out (lower schools)/Space and Time (upper schools)** – This logical consequence lets a student who is losing focus or having trouble controlling their words or actions go to a designated space in the classroom to calm down and refocus.

## **Removal from the classroom/referral to assistant principal or principal**

Egregious behaviors, including continual disruption, extreme disrespect to the teacher or others, or any physical altercation, may result in removal from the class and referral to the assistant principal or principal, followed by a phone call home and/or suspension.

## **Additional afterschool support**

At the discretion of the school, students may be assigned after school support to re-teach, practice or research expected behaviors. The afterschool support will take place following dismissal and will be assigned to students as the result of but not limited to the following:

- Excessive tardiness
- Excessive uniform violations
- Excessive incomplete or missing homework or classwork
- Category I or II behavior violations

After school support may be assigned on the same day as the infraction, but the school will notify parents/guardians prior to assigning this logical consequence. Systemic detention practices are not in place at Ascend schools; afterschool support should be individualized and targeted to the problem behavior to be effective.

## **Suspensions**

Ascend schools have dramatically reduced the number of suspensions issued over the last five years through implementing logical consequences. However, at times, student conduct has so violated the norms of the community that a period away from the community is required to support the child's eventual reintegration to the community and the repair of harm done. Suspensions at Ascend are a consequence of last resort.

### **Half-day suspension**

If a student needs to go home because of a behavioral infraction, a parent/guardian must come to the school and remove the student from school grounds. Students sent home for behavioral infractions are not dismissed unless the parent, guardian, or authorized adult has personally arrived at the school.

### **Procedures and due process for short-term suspensions**

A short-term suspension refers to the removal of a student from the school for disciplinary reasons for a period of up to ten (10) days. This includes in-school suspension and half-day suspensions.

The principal may impose a short-term suspension and shall follow due process procedures consistent with applicable federal case law. Before imposing a short-term suspension, the principal shall notify the student orally how their actions violated the code of conduct and that disciplinary action is being taken. If the student denies the misconduct, the principal must provide an explanation of what they believe occurred. The student shall be given an opportunity to deny or explain their alleged violations of the code of conduct that led to the suspension.

The principal shall immediately notify the parent(s) or guardian(s) in writing that the student may be suspended from school. The written notice shall be provided by personal delivery (email, by hand) or express mail delivery within 24 hours of the decision to impose suspension at the last known address(es) of the parent(s) or guardian(s). The notification shall also be provided by telephone if the school has been provided with a telephone number(s) for the purpose of contacting the parent(s) or guardian(s).

The notice shall provide a description of the incident(s) for which suspension is proposed and shall inform the parent(s) or guardian(s) of their right to request an immediate informal conference with the principal. Both the notice and informal conference shall be in the dominant language or mode of communication used by the parent(s) or guardian(s) if known by Ascend to be other than English. At the conference, the parent(s) or guardian(s) of the student and the student shall have the opportunity to present the student's version of the incident and to ask questions of observers under such procedures as the principal may establish. The notice and opportunity for an informal conference shall take place before the student is suspended unless the student's presence in school poses a continuing danger to persons or property or an ongoing threat of disruption to the academic process, in which case the notice and opportunity for an informal conference shall take place as soon as possible after the suspension as is reasonably practicable.

An appeal of the decision of the principal may be made to the chief schools officer of Ascend Learning, who will make their decision based solely upon the record before them. All appeals must be in writing and submitted to the chief schools officer within ten (10) calendar days of the date of the principal's decision unless the parent(s) or guardian(s) can show that extraordinary circumstances precluded them from doing so. The chief schools officer will issue a written decision within ten (10) business days of receiving the appeal. The final decision of the chief schools officer may be appealed to the Board of Trustees (and thereafter to the school's authorizer and then the board of regents).

### **Procedures and due process for long-term suspensions or expulsion**

A long-term suspension refers to the removal of a student from the school for disciplinary reasons for a period of more than ten (10) days. Expulsion refers to the permanent removal of a student for disciplinary reasons. This is the final level of correction.

Upon determining that a student's action warrants a possible long-term suspension or expulsion, the following procedure, consistent with applicable federal case law, will be followed:

- If necessary, the student shall immediately be removed from class and/or school.
- The principal shall verbally inform the student of how their actions violated the code of conduct and any associated evidence of those actions; where applicable, the student will have the opportunity to explain their side of the events.
- The principal shall immediately notify the parent(s) or guardian(s) of the student, in person or on the phone.
- The principal shall provide written notice that the school is going to commence a disciplinary hearing to the student and their parent(s) or guardian(s) by personal delivery or express mail delivery as soon as possible to the last known address of the parent(s) or guardian(s). Such notice shall provide a description of the incident or incidents and shall state that a formal hearing will be held on the matter which may result in a long-term suspension or expulsion. The notification provided shall be in the dominant language used by the parent(s) or guardian(s) if it is known by Ascend to be other than English. The notice will state that at the formal hearing, the student shall have the right to be represented by counsel (at the family's expense), present and question witnesses, and present

evidence.

- The school will set a date, time, and place for the formal hearing, which shall be set forth in the written notice described above.
- The school will send the parent(s) or guardian(s) the evidence on which the school intends to rely and a list of witnesses it is considering calling. The parent(s) or guardian(s) should notify the school in a reasonable time in advance of the hearing if they seek any other potentially relevant documents. The school reserves the right to make changes to both its witness list and the evidence it introduces.
- An audio transcript of the formal hearing will be created and made available to all parties upon request.

For a long-term suspension hearing, the chief schools officer or their designee, shall serve as the hearing officer and preside over the hearing. For an expulsion hearing, the hearing officer will be a board member or their designee. A written decision will be issued within five (5) school days after the formal hearing to the student and their parent(s) or guardian(s).

An appeal from the written decision may be made to the Board of Trustees, which will make its decision based solely upon the record before it. All appeals to the Board must be in writing and submitted to the Board within ten (10) calendar days of the date of the written decision unless the parent(s) or guardian(s) can show that extraordinary circumstances precluded them from doing so. The Board of Trustees will issue a written decision within ten (10) business days of receiving the appeal. The final decisions of the Board of Trustees may be appealed to the school's authorizer.

### **Provision of instruction during removal**

The school will ensure that alternative educational services are provided to a student who has been suspended or removed to help that student progress in the general curriculum of the school. Alternative instruction for suspended students will be of sufficient duration to enable a student to cover all class material, take all tests and quizzes, keep pace with other students, and progress to the next grade level. All suspended students are entitled to receive alternative instruction commencing within 24 hours of the suspension or expulsion. Alternative instruction dates and times will be listed on the student's suspension letter. All students will be provided with a minimum of two hours per day of alternative instruction.

For a student who has been expelled, alternative instruction will be provided in the same manner as a suspended student until the student enrolls in another school or until the end of the school year, whichever comes first.

Instruction will take place in one of the following locations: the student's home, a contracted facility or a suspension room at another Ascend school. One or more of the following individuals will provide instruction: teacher, teacher aide, or a tutor hired for this purpose. Please note that whoever administers this instruction will meet all certification requirements as stipulated in Section 2854(3)(a-1) of the New York State Education Law.

### **Discipline for students with disabilities**

In addition to the discipline procedures applicable to all students, the following procedures are applicable to students with disabilities. A student not specifically identified as having a disability but whose school district of residence or charter school, prior to the behavior which is the subject of the disciplinary action, has a basis of knowledge—in accordance with 34 CFR §300.534—that a disability exists shall also be disciplined in accordance with these provisions. The school shall comply with sections 300.530-300.536 of the Code of Federal Regulations and the following procedures, except that in the event that the following procedures are inconsistent with federal law and regulations, such federal law and regulations shall govern.

The school shall maintain written records of all suspensions and expulsions of students with a disability including the name of the student, a description of the behavior engaged in, the disciplinary action taken, and a record of the number of days a student has been suspended or removed for disciplinary reasons.

Students whose IEP includes a Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) will be disciplined in accordance with the BIP. If the BIP appears not to be effective or if there is a concern for the health and safety of the student or others if the BIP is followed with respect to the infraction, the matter will immediately be referred to the appropriate Committee on Special Education (CSE) for any consideration of changes.

If a student identified as having a disability is suspended during the course of the school year for a total of ten (10) days, such student will immediately be referred to the CSE of the student's district of residence for reconsideration of the student's educational placement. Such student shall not be suspended for a total of more than 10 days during the school year without the specific involvement of the CSE of the student's district of residence prior to the eleventh day of suspension, because such suspensions may be considered to be a change in placement.

In considering the placement of students referred because of disciplinary problems, the CSE of the student's district of residence is expected to follow its ordinary policies with respect to notification and involvement of the parent(s) or guardian(s).

Ascend will ensure that the special education coordinator or special education teachers and/or the general classroom teacher will attend all meetings regarding their students initiated by the CSE from the student's district of residence. These meetings could be relating to the development and implementation of behavioral intervention plans, initial referrals, change in service, or annual review, Manifestation Determination Reviews (MDRs), among other things.

### **Provision of services during removal**

The School will place students in an interim alternative educational setting as appropriate and mandated by 34 C.F.R. § 300. 531.

Students removed for a period of fewer than ten (10) cumulative days during the school year will receive all classroom assignments and a schedule to complete such assignments during the time of their suspension. Provisions will be made to permit a suspended student to make-up assignments or tests missed as a result of their suspension. The school also shall provide additional alternative instruction to assist the student, so that the student is given full opportunity to complete assignments and master curriculum, including additional instructions, phone assistance, computer instruction, and/or home visits and one-on-one tutoring.

During any subsequent removal that, combined with previous removals equals ten (10) or more school days during the school year, but does not constitute a change in placement, services must be provided to the extent determined necessary to enable the child to progress appropriately in the general curriculum and achieve the goals of their Individualized Education Program (IEP). In these cases, school personnel, in consultation with the child's special education teacher, shall make the service determination.

During any subsequent removal that does constitute a change in placement, but where the behavior is not a manifestation of the disability, the services must be provided to the extent necessary to enable the student to progress appropriately in the general curriculum and in achieving the goals of their IEP. The CSE of the student's district of residence will make the service determination.

During any removal for drug, weapon, controlled substance and/or serious bodily injury offenses pursuant to 34 CFR §300.530(g), services will be provided to the extent necessary to enable the child to progress

appropriately in the general curriculum and in achieving the goals of their IEP. These service determinations will be made by the CSE of the student's district of residence.

#### **Additional due process (manifestation determination review - MDR)**

If discipline that would constitute a change in placement is contemplated for any student with a disability, the following steps shall be taken: (1) not later than the date on which the decision to take such action is made, the parent(s) or guardian(s) of the student with a disability shall be notified by the school of that decision and provided the procedural safeguards notice described in 34 CFR §300.504; and (2) immediately, if possible, but in no case later than ten (10) school days after the date on which such decision is made, the CSE of the student's district of residence and other qualified personnel shall meet and review the relationship between the student's disability and the behavior subject to the disciplinary action.

If, upon review, it is determined that the student's behavior was not a manifestation of their disability, then the student may be disciplined in the same manner as a student without a disability, except as provided in 34 CFR §300.530(d), which relates to the provision of services to students with disabilities during periods of removal.

A student's parent(s) or guardian(s) may request a hearing to challenge the manifestation determination. Except as provided below, the student will remain in their current educational placement pending the determination of the hearing officer.

If a parent or guardian requests a hearing or an appeal to challenge the interim alternative educational setting or the manifestation determination resulting from a disciplinary action relating to weapons, drugs, or serious bodily injury, the student shall remain in the interim alternative educational setting pending the decision of the hearing officer or until the expiration of the time period provided for in the disciplinary action, whichever occurs first, unless the parent or guardian and school agree otherwise.

#### **Students with a 504 plan and “deemed to know” students**

With regard to disciplinary actions, including suspension or expulsion, the Section 504 rights of charter school students with disabilities are the same as other students with disabilities.

When addressing discipline for students with disabilities, including students with 504 plans or those who are “presumed to have a disability,” Ascend will comply with applicable legal requirements governing the discipline of a student for misconduct.

#### **Compliance with the child find requirements of IDEA**

Ascend will comply with the federal Child Find requirements (34 CFR §300.111), which require schools to have in place a process for identifying, locating and evaluating students with disabilities. Students enrolling for the first time in a New York public school will be screened by a team of teachers (including both regular and special education teachers) to identify any possible indication that the child may need a specialized or Individualized Education Program or referral to the CSE of the student's district of residence. Other students will be brought to the attention of the team if they are demonstrating difficulty within the regular classroom environment. Strategies will then be implemented to address any identified special needs of the student. Should the problems persist and a disability is suspected, the student will be referred to the CSE of the student's district of residence for an evaluation.

#### **Corporal punishment**

No employee or agent of the school shall inflict corporal punishment upon a student as a penalty for unacceptable conduct. The term "corporal punishment" means any act of physical force upon a student for the purpose of punishing that student. The term does not mean the use of reasonable physical force by a teacher to protect themselves from physical injury; to protect another person from physical injury; to protect property, or to restrain or remove a student whose behavior is interfering with the orderly exercise and performance of school functions, powers or duties, if that pupil has refused to comply with a request to refrain from further disruptive acts, and provided that alternative procedures and methods not involving the use of physical force cannot reasonably be employed to achieve these purposes.

### **Search procedures**

For the safety of students and everyone in the Ascend community, school property that is assigned to students, including lockers, coat racks, cubbies, and desks, remain the property of the school. Students, therefore, have no expectation of privacy in these areas.

The principal or their designee will make an individual search of a student's bag, desk, cubbies, lockers, and person only when there is reasonable suspicion to believe that a student is in the possession of an item which is prohibited on school property or which may be used to disrupt or interfere with the educational process.

Searches will be conducted under the authorization of the principal or their designee. At least two school staff members will be present during the search. Items that are prohibited on school property, or which may be used to disrupt or interfere with the educational process, may be removed from students' desks, bag, backpack, cubbies, lockers and person by school authorities. Parents or guardians will be informed that a search of their child will take place prior to the search when possible; otherwise, parents or guardians will be informed after the search.

Students may be subject to unannounced metal detection scanning searches from time to time in accordance with Ascend's search and seizure policy, which may be obtained by contacting the main office. This would include a metal detector scan or a scan by means of a hand-held detector.

### **Complaints**

Ascend Charter Schools is committed to resolving concerns and complaints in a manner in which all parties feel respectfully heard and understood. We encourage complainants to first contact the individual involved to give them an opportunity to respond or resolve the complaint informally. If the issue is not resolved, there are two procedures outlined below. The first procedure is for informal complaints regarding the instruction, operations or administration of the school. The second procedure is for formal complaints, i.e., if there is the belief that the school has violated a term of its charter or the law. In all cases, Ascend Public Charter Schools prohibits retaliation against complainants.

#### **Informal complaints**

Informal complaints will be defined as any issues that arise not involving the belief that a school has violated a term of its charter or the law. An individual with an informal complaint about the school should communicate the issue as follows:

- Complaints regarding daily services, such as transportation, food, or facilities, should be addressed to the assistant principal of operations.

- Complaints regarding the treatment of students by staff or fellow students should be addressed to the relevant teacher first, and then to the assistant principal for the relevant grade.
- Complaints about student grades or other instructional concerns should be addressed to the relevant teacher first, and then the assistant principal for the relevant grade.

If the concern is unresolved after these points of contact, the complainant should contact the principal. If the concern remains unresolved, the complainant should contact the chief schools officer of Ascend Public Charter Schools. If the complainant is still concerned after speaking to the chief schools officer, they may appeal to the CEO of Ascend Learning or the Ascend Charter Schools board of trustees, 205 Rockaway Parkway, Brooklyn, NY 11212 at [info@ascendlearning.org](mailto:info@ascendlearning.org). The complainant may also attend a board meeting and speak during the public comment period. Board meeting times and locations are posted on the school's website at [www.ascendlearning.org](http://www.ascendlearning.org). To reach Ascend by phone with questions about this process or for help contacting an individual, please call 347-464-7600.

### **Formal complaints**

New York Education Law provides that any individual or group who believes a charter school has violated its charter, the New York Charter Schools Act of 1998, or any other law relating to the management or operation of the charter school, can bring a complaint to the charter school's board of trustees.

The written complaint to the board of trustees must include: (1) a detailed statement of the complaint or grievance, including the law or regulation allegedly violated, names of individuals at the school who allegedly took the actions at issue, and the time, date, and place of occurrence; (2) relevant correspondence; (3) what action complainant is seeking from the board of trustees; and (4) complainant's name, address, and telephone number. The complainant may leave the complaint or grievance at the school's main office to the attention of the chair of the board of trustees or send it via email to [info@ascendlearning.org](mailto:info@ascendlearning.org).

The board of trustees must acknowledge receipt of the complaint or grievance within one week, and indicate what steps the board plans to take to investigate the allegations. Complaints and grievances will be addressed at the next board meeting unless the board chair determines that the issue is of such urgency that a special meeting needs to be called. This decision is made at the sole discretion of the chair of the board of trustees.

Prior to the board meeting, the chair of the board of trustees will attempt to collect the evidence needed to assess the merits of the complaint or grievance. At the board meeting, the chair will summarize the issue to the other board members, either during the public meeting or during the executive session, if appropriate. In some instances, a decision may be rendered at the meeting, and in other instances, additional fact-finding and due diligence will be required. The chair will conclude the discussion on the complaint or grievance by either:

- issuing a decision; or
- requiring specific further investigation, including a timeline, and assigning specific individuals to carry out the next steps. The chair will follow through by either writing a decision letter and sending it to the complainant and entering it into the board's minutes at the next meeting, or continuing and concluding the investigation as per the plan, and then issuing a decision letter.

Upon final resolution of a complaint, the board of trustees shall provide to the complainant:

- Its written determination and any remedial action.

- A written explanation of the complainant's right to appeal the determination to the school authorizer.

If, after the board of trustees' final resolution has been transmitted to the complainant, the complainant determines that the board has not adequately addressed the complaint, they may appeal to the authorizer, which shall investigate and respond.

#### Authorizer contact information

SUNY Charter Schools Institute  
SUNY Plaza  
353 Broadway  
Albany, NY 12246

If, after the presentation of the complaint to the authorizer, the complainant determines that the authorizer has not adequately addressed the complaint, they may present that complaint to the State Education Department's Board of Regents, which shall investigate and respond.

#### Contact information

New York State Education Department  
89 Washington Avenue  
Board of Regents, Room 110 EB  
Albany, New York 12234  
RegentsOffice@mail.nysed.gov

## **Acceptable use of technology and internet**

In general, acceptable use of technology means respecting the rights of computer users, the integrity of the physical facilities, and all pertinent license and contractual agreements.

Acceptable use of the network includes activities that support learning, teaching and communication. Students and faculty are encouraged to explore and develop new ways of using technology to support Ascend's teaching and learning objectives.

### **Internet usage**

Ascend Charter Schools is not liable for the actions of anyone connecting to the Internet; all users shall assume full liability, legal, financial or otherwise, for their actions. Further, each school takes no responsibility for any information or materials transferred through the Internet and makes no guarantees, implied or otherwise, regarding the reliability of the data connection. The school is not liable for any loss or corruption of data while users are on the Internet. The school reserves the right to examine all data stored in the computers with Internet capability to ensure that all users are in compliance with all applicable rules and regulations.

### **Student accounts**

Internet access at Ascend Public Charter Schools is controlled through individual accounts and passwords. It is each student's responsibility to keep credentials private and to maintain and safeguard password-protected access to both personal and confidential files and all electronic resources provided.

### **Filtering**

Ascend complies with the Children's Internet Protection Act through a CIPA compliant web filter. This filter is a technology protection measure that provides blocks to Internet sites that are deemed inappropriate in content, graphic, message, or intent (i.e. obscene websites, pornography, or harmful to minors). Although the filter is continuously updated, it is not a guaranteed security from all inappropriate sites.

### **Unacceptable use of technology**

Scholars shall only engage in appropriate, responsible, ethical, and legal use of the network's technology resources.

Unacceptable use of technology includes, but is not limited to:

- Using network credentials that belong to someone else.
- Violating the rights to privacy of students or employees of Ascend Charter Schools or others outside of the Ascend community.
- Using educational technology products that are not pre-approved by Ascend Charter Schools or approved through the review process.
- Using the network to harass or bully another individual or individuals.
- Using profane or obscene language that may be offensive to another user.
- Plagiarism and/or copying materials in violation of copyright law.
- Using the network for financial gain or for any commercial or illegal activity.
- Acting in a manner that degrades or disrupts system performance or unauthorized entry to and/or destruction of computer systems and files.
- Excessive bandwidth usage that impacts the network or Internet performance of others.
- Re-posting personal communications without the author's prior consent.
- Accessing, downloading, storing or printing files or messages that are illegal, obscene or that offend or degrade another.
- Using BitTorrent or other peer-2-peer methods as a means to unlawfully download copyrighted material such as movies, music, games, programs, etc.
- The use of any technology or device to disable, bypass, or otherwise attempt to circumvent Ascend's security policies, firewall systems or other network devices. This would include personal routers, Internet Connection Sharing, Proxies, Anonymizers, VPNs, or other devices and methods.

Parents and guardians of minors are ultimately responsible for setting and conveying the standards that their children should follow when using digital media, technology, and information sources.

### **Damage, Loss, and Theft**

Staff and scholars are stewards of Ascend technology and may be held financially responsible for damage, loss, or theft due to negligence. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Damage as a result of leaving Ascend technology in a vehicle or other location that is exposed to heat, cold, or moisture
- Damage due to spilled beverages or food or damaged from being dropped
- Theft as a result of leaving Ascend technology unattended or in an unsecured location

Ascend makes no express or implied warranty for the Internet access it provides or the resources available through the use of our network. We cannot completely eliminate access to information that is offensive or illegal and residing on networks outside of Ascend campuses. Ascend does not guarantee the availability of access to the Internet and will not be responsible for any information that may be lost, damaged, or unavailable due to technical and/or other difficulties.

### **Failure to adhere to technology guidelines**

Any use of technology or behavior that does not follow the guidelines may result in disciplinary action. Students may lose their access to the school's information resources as well as be subject to standard disciplinary procedures. Additionally, students may be billed if hardware and/or software need to be repaired, restored, or replaced due to irresponsible use. Disciplinary procedures resulting from inappropriate use of technology may include:

- Temporary or permanent revocation of access to some or all computing and networking resources and facilities;
- Disciplinary action according to Ascend's discipline code; and/or
- Individuals are also subject to federal, state and local laws governing many interactions that occur on the Internet

These policies and laws are subject to change as state and federal laws develop and change.

### **Monitoring**

Ascend may monitor any Internet activity occurring on Ascend equipment or accounts. If Ascend discovers activities that do not comply with applicable law or departmental policy, records retrieved may be used to document the wrongful content aligned with our code of conduct.

### **Reminders**

- Remember that there is no privacy online. Do not send anything that you would not be happy to see posted or shared with your parents.
- Items posted online stay there and are infinitely replicable even after you think they have been deleted. Do not post anything that you would not want future college administrators or employers to see.
- APCS cannot protect students from all inappropriate or illegal materials. If you are sent anything inappropriate, offensive, or illegal, it is your responsibility to report it to a teacher, assistant principal, or technology staff.
- When visiting sites that may be viewed by people outside of the APCS community, do not communicate your full name, age, phone number, or other personal information about yourself or others. A non-APCS email is recommended for all non-school use.
- Students should email teachers and staff through APCS email only.
- To report tech abuse, contact a school administrator, assistant principal, or email [technology@ascendlearning.org](mailto:technology@ascendlearning.org)

### **E-mail**

Over time, students may access their school's e-mail system through a universal school password; however, the system belongs to the school and all e-mail messages are school records. No student should have any expectation of privacy relative to their use of the Internet or e-mail. The school reserves the right, for legitimate school purposes, to access the contents of students' electronic communications without regard to content, and to conduct periodic, unannounced inspections of e-mail communications.

## **Social media**

Social networking has become an integral part of many lives, and we recognize and respect the value of such outlets for receiving and sharing information and developing personal and professional connections. Should students engage in social networking outside of school, they should espouse the same values and behaviors online as offline in the school building:

- Be a friend, not a bully, and keep things positive
- Be honest
- Accept responsibility for mistakes and try to make them right
- Remember that quality matters and it is difficult if not impossible to erase an online footprint fully
- Think about the consequences of your actions, including your posts

All members of the Ascend community are asked to abide by the following guidelines in the use of social media:

- Be clear that you are speaking for yourself, and not on behalf of Ascend or the school
- Respect copyright, fair use, and other disclosure laws
- Use respectful language, and be careful to avoid language that could be viewed as insulting by readers
- Do not share confidential or proprietary information of Ascend or the school
- Do not share any information about students, including photographs, contact information, names of family members, or anything else specific to any student enrolled in the network
- Do not disparage Ascend or the school community

## **General protections**

Staff members are not permitted to “friend” or “follow” students via social media.

Students should bear in mind the risks of the online realm, never share secrets online, and keep passwords and all personal information private.

There are two important federal laws designed to protect children online. The Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) was enacted in 1998 to protect students under 13 from having their personal information collected without the consent of a parent or guardian. COPPA is the reason many social networking sites require participants to be 13 or older. The Children’s Internet Protection Act (CIPA) was enacted in 2000, and it requires that schools provide Internet filtering to prevent student access to offensive content. Ascend Public Charter Schools has installed such a filter and has adopted a CIPA-compliant Internet safety policy. For a copy of the policy, please contact the school office.

## **Non-discrimination**

Ascend Public Charter Schools welcomes all students equally. All students will be treated as individuals and different treatment based on actual or perceived race, color, ethnicity, national origin, citizenship status, sex, sexual orientation, gender, disability, religion or any other characteristic protected by local, state, or federal law will not be tolerated. Anyone who feels that they have been treated differently on any such basis should speak with a counselor/social worker, who will apprise the principal of all reports. Anyone who raises any concerns of discrimination on any basis will be free from retaliation for raising such a concern.

## **Dignity for all students policy**

Ascend Public Charter Schools is committed to providing safe and productive learning environments in which all students are treated with respect and dignity. In accordance with New York State's Dignity for All Students Act, each school will promptly address all incidents of harassment and/or discrimination of or by any student enrolled at an Ascend school. This includes bullying, taunting, or intimidation in all its forms.

**Students' Rights.** No student shall be subjected to harassment or bullying by employees or students on school property or at a school function. Additionally, no student shall be subject to discrimination based on the student's actual or perceived race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender, or sex, by school employees or students on school property or at a school function. Harassment may include, among other things, the use, both on and off school property, of information technology such as email, instant messaging, blogs, chat rooms, pagers, cell phones, gaming systems and social media websites to harass or threaten others. This type of harassment is referred to as cyber bullying, and it is considered a form of harassment, like bullying.

Further, each school reserves the right to discipline students, consistent with our Code of Conduct, who engage in the harassment of students off school property under circumstances where such off-campus conduct: 1) affects the educative process; 2) actually endangers the health and safety of Ascend students; or 3) is reasonably believed to pose a danger to the health and safety of our students within the educational system. This includes written and/or verbal harassment, including cyber bullying, which materially and substantially disrupts the work and discipline of the school and/or which school officials reasonably forecast as being likely to materially and substantially disrupt the academic work and culture of the school.

**Dignity Act Coordinator (DAC).** Each school has a designated Dignity Act Coordinator (DAC). The DAC is trained to handle human relations in the areas of race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender, and sex. The DAC will be accessible to students and employees for consultation and advice. Contact information for each school's DAC will be posted on the school's website.

**Curriculum.** The school shall conduct bullying and cyberbullying education as part of its character education curriculum in every grade. The instruction is age appropriate, and is intended to support maintenance of an environment that is free of bullying, harassment, and discrimination.

**Professional Development.** Each school shall provide annual professional development to all employees on the Dignity for all Students Act and this policy, which shall address the social patterns of harassment, bullying, and discrimination, including but not 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, or sex; the identification and mitigation of harassment, bullying and discrimination; and strategies for effectively addressing problems of exclusion, bias, and aggression in educational settings.

**Reporting and Investigating.** All staff members are responsible for reporting harassment of which they have been made aware of to their immediate supervisor or the principal within one school day, and must file a written report within two school days of the notification.

Any student who believes that s/he is being subjected to harassment, as well as any other person who has knowledge of or witnesses any possible occurrence of harassment, shall report the harassment to any staff member, the DAC, or to the principal. A staff member who witnesses harassment or who receives a report of harassment shall inform the principal.

The principal shall promptly investigate the complaint and take appropriate action which may include, if necessary, referral to the board of trustees or a board designee. Follow-up inquiries, discipline, and/or

appropriate monitoring of the alleged harasser and victim shall be made to ensure that harassment has not resumed and that those involved in the investigation of allegations of harassment have not suffered retaliation.

Material incidents of discrimination and harassment on school grounds or at a school function will be reported to the State Education Department as required by law.

No Retaliation. Ascend Public Charter Schools prohibits retaliatory behavior directed against complainants, victims, witnesses, and/or any other individuals who participate in the reporting and investigation of allegations of harassment. All complainants and those who participate in the investigation of a complaint in conformity with state law and this policy, who have acted reasonably and in good faith, have the right to be free from retaliation of any kind.

## **Supporting Transgender and Gender-Expansive Students Policy**

### **Purpose**

Ascend Charter Schools (Ascend) is committed to creating a safe, inclusive, and joyful school environment for all students.

The policy aims to provide Ascend staff with guidance on how to support transgender and gender-expansive scholars so that we are creating and maintaining a safe, inclusive, and affirming school environment where all students can thrive as their authentic selves.

The policy is underpinned by legislative and policy frameworks and supports Ascend to meet its legislative requirements and commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism.

The policy should be read in conjunction with the Guide to Supporting LGBTQIA+ Students and the Dignity for All Students Policy.

### **Scope**

This policy applies to all staff and students at all Ascend Public Charter Schools.

### **Legislative framework**

Ascend has a legislative responsibility to support transgender and gender-expansive scholars. The legislative and policy frameworks that underpin this policy includes:

- [Ascend's DEIA Commitment Statement](#)
- Ascend's non-discrimination and Dignity for all Students policies in the Family Handbook
- [Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972](#)
- [Dignity for All Students Act \(DASA\)](#)
- [Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974 \(EEOA\)](#)
- [Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964](#)
- [New York State Human Rights Law](#)
- [New York City Human Rights Law](#)
- [NYC Department of Education Guidelines to Support Transgender and Gender Expansive Students](#)

- NYC Department of Education Chancellor's Regulations A-830, A-831, A-832

## **Terminology and definitions**

- **Cisgender or cis:** Or “cis” for short, refers to a person whose gender identity is aligned with the gender they were assigned at birth.
- **Gender Expansive:** Are umbrella terms that can encompass all non-cisgender identities. They convey a wider, more flexible range of gender identity and/or expression than typically associated with the binary gender system. A person who has gender characteristics and/or behaviors that do not conform to traditional or societal gender expectations.
- **Gender Expression:** The way a person presents their gender identity through social norms. This includes the way that we dress, our hair, the way we speak, our behavior, and interests etc.
- **Gender Identity:** Refers to a person’s internal, deeply felt sense of being nonbinary, female, male, both, neither, or other. Everyone has a gender identity. This identity may or may not align with the sex they were assigned at birth.
- **Intersex:** An umbrella term describing people born with reproductive or sexual anatomy, hormones, and/or a chromosome pattern that cannot be classified as typically male or female.
- **LGBTQIA+:** an umbrella term to encompass the diversity of gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, and intersex variations. The letters in the acronym stand for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual people, and the plus denotes the many other identities and ways of being that come under this acronym.
- **Transgender:** An umbrella term used to describe people whose gender identity is different than the sex they were assigned at birth or by society.

## **Policy statement**

Ascend Charter Schools is committed to providing a warm, supportive, and joyful culture where every student is valued, respected, and loved. We believe that every student should feel safe, valued, and included at school so that they can thrive as their authentic selves.

Ascend acknowledges that in many schools transgender and gender-expansive students, particularly Black and people of color transgender and gender-expansive students, are significantly more likely to feel unsafe, experience violence, discrimination, harassment, and bullying, and experience depression, anxiety, and suicidality.

Ascend recognizes and values the transgender and gender-expansive scholars in our school communities. We commit to actively and intentionally disrupt behaviors and systems that can make schools unsafe for transgender and gender-expansive students so that all of our students experience a safe, inclusive, and affirming learning environment.

## **Creating an inclusive school environment for all students**

Ascend is committed to providing an environment where all members of the Ascend community feel safe and respected and are treated with dignity. All members of the Ascend community have the right to have their sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, and gender expression recognized and respected by their school and Ascend Learning community.

Every member of the Ascend community is entitled to:

- be addressed by the name and pronoun that correspond to their gender identity that they assert at school,
- use the bathroom, locker room, and other school facilities that reflect their gender identity within Ascend buildings,
- dress in a way that reflects their gender expression, in accordance with the relevant uniform and dress code policies, and
- participate in school activities and events that are separated by gender in accordance with their gender identity.

### **Process for supporting transgender and gender-expansive scholars who affirm their gender at school**

Ascend recognizes that each person's gender affirmation process is deeply personal and unique. If a student shares that they would like to affirm their gender at school, staff should:

1. Listen to understand and without judgement
2. Demonstrate understanding, acceptance, and compassion
3. Ensure the student is safe. If the staff member is concerned that the student is at risk to themselves or others they should contact the school clinician and principal immediately
4. Connect the student with the school clinician and other support services to support the student to develop a gender affirmation plan.

The school clinician is responsible for developing the gender affirmation plan in partnership with the student. The process for how to develop the plan is outlined below.



### **Privacy and confidentiality**

Information about a student's sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and intersex status is considered private and confidential information. Staff cannot disclose this information about a student to others, including their families, without the student's consent, unless they fear for the safety of the student or the safety of others.

When sharing information about a student's gender identity or sexual orientation without their consent staff should only share this information with people on a need to know basis. This generally means the school

clinician and principal. The school clinician and principal will work to develop a student safety plan and coordinate any other support with the student's family or caregivers.

### **Preventing and responding to discrimination, harassment, and bullying**

Every member of the school community is responsible for developing and maintaining a safe, inclusive, and welcoming school environment for all members of the community, including LGBTQIA+ students. Ascend has zero tolerance for all forms of discrimination, harassment, and bullying. Instances of discrimination, harassment, and bullying will be addressed in accordance with the non-discrimination and Dignity for All Students policies in the Family Handbook.

## **Students in temporary housing**

Ascend is committed to ensuring that students who are homeless or in temporary housing receive the same programs and services as their peers in permanent residences.

In accordance with the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act and Education Law Section §3209, a student is eligible for the supports outlined in this policy if they lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence. This includes a student who:

- Is living with a friend, relative or someone else because their family lost their housing due to economic hardship, or a similar reason, or is living in a motel, hotel, trailer park, or camping ground due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations, or
- Is living in a shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations (including commercial hotels, congregate shelters, and transitional housing for the mentally ill), or
- Is living in a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation, or
- Is living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations or similar settings.

The school McKinney-Vento liaison helps students enroll or transfer schools and obtain transportation assistance and other services for which they are eligible. Ascend takes steps to affirmatively identify all students in temporary housing, and school staff who become aware of a student in temporary housing will contact the McKinney-Vento liaison.

A student identified as living in temporary housing is entitled to the following rights as related to enrollment:

- The student may attend the school of origin (the school they attended when permanently housed or the school in which they were last enrolled) or the school of current location (the school zoned for the address at which the student is now living).
- The school will immediately enroll the student, even if the parent is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment. The school's enrollment team will assist parents in obtaining such documents. If immunization records cannot be obtained, the parent will be referred to a walk-in immunization clinic. The student will immediately be admitted to school while proof of birth, immunization, and other school records are located or verified.
- Within five days of receipt of a new school's request for school records, <> will forward, in a manner consistent with state and federal law, a complete copy of the student's records.
- If the student changes schools while in the process of a special education evaluation or review, the

school where the student is currently registered should complete the evaluation or review.

- As families move into permanent housing, students have the right to stay in their current school through the terminal grade.

A student identified as living in temporary housing is entitled to the following educational rights:

- All students living in temporary housing are eligible for free transportation.
  - Parents of students in Grades K-6 who receive a Metrocard are eligible for 14-day Metrocards to accompany their children to/from school. The Assistant Principal of Operations will provide this card to parents upon request.
- All students at Ascend receive free breakfast and lunch. Students living in temporary housing will not be asked to complete a free or reduced-price meal application.
- Regular school attendance is of paramount importance, and the school must make every effort to ensure regular attendance. If a student has sporadic attendance, the school will contact the parent to identify needed services.
- Students living in temporary housing, including students with disabilities, must be provided with services comparable to services offered to other students in the school. However, if space in a particular program has been capped for all students, exceptions will not be made for homeless students.
- Information about a student in temporary housing's living situation will be treated as a confidential student education record. It will not be deemed directory information under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

#### Dispute resolution

In the event the parent of a student in temporary housing disagrees with the school over the student's eligibility for McKinney-Vento, the student's enrollment, or the provision of transportation, the parent will be referred to the Executive Director for Borough Enrollment at the Department of Education. If the dispute cannot be resolved there, the parent will be referred to the Chief Executive of the Office of Student Enrollment for a final written determination. If the parent wants to commence an appeal to the Commissioner, the McKinney-Vento liaison will assist the parent with the appeal forms and application and submit the documentation to NYSED within 30 days of the final determination. The student will be immediately placed in the school in which enrollment is sought and transportation will be provided, pending resolution of the dispute.

#### Inquiries

Inquiries pertaining to this policy should be addressed to your school's McKinney-Vento liaison .

General questions may also be directed to:

NYS-TEACHS at (800) 388-2014 or

*Office of School and Youth Development: Students in Temporary Housing Senior Program Manager*

N.Y.C. Department of Education 52 Chambers Street – Room 218

New York, NY 10007

Telephone: 212-374-0860 / 212-374-2530

Fax: 212-374-5751

## **Distribution of materials unrelated to school**

Ascend Public Charter Schools recognizes that students have the right to express themselves on school property, which includes the right to distribute, at a reasonable time and place and in a reasonable manner, material that is not sponsored by the school. To protect these individual rights, while preserving the integrity of the educational objectives and responsibilities of the school, all parents and guardians, students, and employees must adhere to the following regulations and procedures regarding the distribution of non-school-sponsored material on school property and at school activities:

- The school administration reviews requests for distribution of materials that are not sponsored by the school on a case-by-case basis
- Distribution of materials deemed inappropriate by the school is prohibited
- The school administration determines the time, place, and manner of the distribution of materials not sponsored by the school, and such materials may not be distributed during a normal school activity

## **Board meetings and the Open Meetings Law**

All meetings of the schools' board of trustees and all committees of the boards are open to the general public. A calendar of all scheduled board meetings is posted at the school and on the website as soon as it is available.

## **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) - Notice for Directory Information**

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), a Federal law, requires that Ascend or the school, with certain exceptions, obtain your written consent prior to the disclosure of personally identifiable information from your child's education records. However, Ascend and/or the school may disclose appropriately designated "directory information" without written consent, unless you have advised Ascend or the school to the contrary, in accordance with School procedures.

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

- A playbill, showing your student's role in a drama production;
- The annual yearbook;
- Honor roll or other recognition lists;
- Graduation programs; and
- Sports activity sheets, such as for wrestling, showing weight and height of team members.

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

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

If you do not want Ascend or the School to disclose any or all of the types of information designated below as directory information from your child's education records without your prior written consent, you must notify the School in writing by October 1 of each year. A form is available in the main office.

Ascend has designated the following information as directory information:

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

## **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) - Notification of Rights**

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

1. The right to inspect and review the student's education records within 45 days after the day Ascend or the school receives a request for access.

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

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

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

3. The right to provide written consent before Ascend or the school discloses personally identifiable information (“**PII**”) from the student’s education records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without con-sent.

One exception, which permits disclosure without consent, is disclosure to School officials with legitimate educational interests. A school official is a person employed by Ascend Public Charter Schools as an ad-ministrator, supervisor, instructor, or support staff member (including health or medical staff and law enforcement unit personnel) or a person serving on the Ascend Charter School Board of Trustees. A School official also may include a volunteer, contractor or consultant who, while not employed by the school, performs an institutional service or function for which the school would otherwise use its own employees and who is under the direct control of the school with respect to the use and maintenance of PII from education records, such as an attorney, audi-tor, medical consultant, or therapist; a parent or student volunteering to serve on an official committee, such as a disciplinary or grievance committee; or a parent, student, or other volunteer assisting another School official in performing their tasks. A school official has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an educa-tion record in order to fulfill their professional responsibility.

Upon request, Ascend or the school will disclose education records without consent to officials of another school district in which a student seeks or intends to enroll, or is already enrolled if the disclosure is for purposes of the student’s enrollment or transfer; however, Ascend or the school will make a reasonable attempt to notify the parent or eligible student of the records re-quest.

4. The right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by Ascend or the school to comply with the requirements of FERPA. The name and address of the Office that administers FERPA are:

Family Policy Compliance Office  
U.S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20202

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

Ascend or the school may disclose PII from the education records of a student without obtaining the prior written consent of the parents or the eligible student:

- To other school officials, including teachers, whom Ascend or the school determines to have legitimate educational interests. This includes contractors, consultants, volunteers, or other parties to whom the school has outsourced institutional services or functions;
- To officials of another school, school system, or institution of postsecondary education where the student seeks or intends to enroll, or where the student is already enrolled if the disclosure is for purposes related to the student’s enrollment or transfer;
- To authorized representatives of the U.S. Comptroller General, the U.S. Attorney General, the U.S. Secretary of Education, or State and local educational authorities, in connection with an audit or evaluation of Federal- or State-supported education programs, or for the enforcement of or

compliance with Federal legal requirements that relate to those programs. These entities may make further disclosures of PII to outside entities that are designated by them as their authorized representatives to conduct any audit, evaluation, or enforcement or compliance activity on their behalf;

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

## **Privacy and security for student data and teacher and principal data**

This Policy addresses Ascend's responsibility to adopt administrative, technical, and physical safeguards and controls to protect and maintain the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of its data, data systems, and information technology resources. Ascend is committed to maintaining the privacy and security of student data and teacher and principal data and will follow all applicable laws and regulations for the handling and storage of this data in the school and when disclosing or releasing it to others, including third-party contractors.

Student data refers to the personally identifiable information (PII) from the student records of an educational agency. Teacher or principal data means PII from the records of an educational agency that relate to the annual professional performance reviews of classroom teachers or principals.

### Data collection transparency and restrictions

As part of its commitment to maintaining the privacy and security of student data and teacher and principal data, Ascend will take steps to minimize its collection, processing, and transmission of PII. Each school will monitor its data systems, develop incident response plans, limit access to PII to school employees, interns, volunteers, independent contractors, and third-party contractors who need such access to fulfill their professional responsibilities or contractual obligations, and destroy PII when it is no longer needed.

Additionally, Ascend will not sell PII nor use or disclose it for any marketing or commercial purpose or facilitate its use or disclosure by any other party for any marketing or commercial purpose or permit another party to do so.

Ascend will also ensure that it has provisions in its contracts with third-party contractors or in separate data sharing and confidentiality agreements that require the confidentiality of shared student data or teacher or principal data be maintained in accordance with law, regulation, and Ascend policy.

Except as required by law or in the case of educational enrollment data, Ascend will not report to NYSED the following student data elements: juvenile delinquency records; criminal records; medical and health records; and student biometric information.

#### Chief Privacy Officer

Ascend will comply with its obligation to report breaches or unauthorized releases of student data or teacher or principal data to the Chief Privacy Officer, appointed by the Commissioner of Education.

#### Data Protection Officer

The Assistant Principal of Operations at each Ascend school will serve as the school's Data Protection Officer. The Data Protection Officer is responsible for the implementation and oversight of this policy and any related procedures. The Data Protection Officer will serve as the main point of contact for the school's data privacy and security program. Ascend will ensure that the Data Protection Officer has the appropriate knowledge, training, and experience to administer these functions.

#### Data privacy and security standards

Ascend will use the National Institute for Standards and Technology Framework for Improving Critical Infrastructure Cybersecurity (Version 1.1) (the Framework) as the standard for its data privacy and security program.

Ascend will protect the confidentiality and privacy of student and teacher/principal PII while stored or transferred by:

- A. Ensuring that every use and disclosure of PII by the school benefits students and the school by considering, among other criteria, whether the use and/or disclosure will:
  - a. Improve academic achievement;
  - b. Empower parents and students with information; and/or
  - c. Advance efficient and effective school operations.
- B. Not including PII in public reports or other public documents.
- C. Using industry standard safeguards and best practices, such as encryption, firewalls, and passwords.

Ascend affords all protections under FERPA and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and their implementing regulations to parents or eligible students, where applicable.

#### Third-party contractors

### School responsibilities

Ascend will ensure that whenever it enters into a contract or other written agreement with a third-party contractor who will receive student data or teacher or principal data from the school, the agreement will require that confidentiality of shared student data or teacher or principal data be maintained in accordance with federal and state laws and regulations, and Ascend policy. In addition, Ascend will ensure that the agreement includes a signed copy of the Parents' Bill of Rights for Data Privacy and Security and the third-party contractor's data privacy and security plan. The plan must, at a minimum:

- A. Outline how the third-party contractor will implement all state, federal, and local data privacy and security contract requirements over the life of the contract, consistent with Ascend policy;
- B. Specify the administrative, operational, and technical safeguards and practices the third-party contractor has in place to protect PII that it will receive under the contract;
- C. Demonstrate that the third-party contractor complies with the requirements of 8 NYCRR Section 121.3(c);
- D. Specify how officers or employees of the third-party contractor and its assignees who have access to student data or teacher or principal data receive training on the federal and state laws and regulations governing confidentiality of this data prior to receiving access;
- E. Specify if the third-party contractor will utilize subcontractors and how it will manage those relationships and contracts to ensure PII is protected;
- F. Specify how the third-party contractor will manage data privacy and security incidents that implicate PII, including specifying any plans to identify breaches and unauthorized disclosures, and to promptly notify Ascend; and
- G. Describe whether, how, and when data will be returned to Ascend, transitioned to a successor contractor, at Ascend's option and direction, deleted or destroyed by the third-party contractor when the contract is terminated or expires.

### Third-party contractor responsibilities

Each third-party contractor that enters into a contract or other written agreement with Ascend under which the contractor will receive student data or teacher or principal data from Ascend, is required to:

- A. Adopt technologies, safeguards, and practices that align with the NIST Cybersecurity Framework;
- B. Comply with Ascend's data security and privacy policy, Education Law Section 2-d and its implementing regulations, and applicable laws impacting Ascend;
- C. Limit internal access to PII to only those employees or subcontractors that need access to provide the contracted services;
- D. Not use the PII for any purpose not explicitly authorized in its contract;
- E. Not disclose any PII to any other party without the prior written consent of the parent or eligible student:
  - a. Except for authorized representatives of the third-party contractor such as a subcontractor or assignee to the extent they are carrying out the contract and in compliance with law, regulation, and its contract with Ascend; or
  - b. Unless required by law or court order and the third-party contractor provides notice of disclosure to NYSED, the Board, or the institution that provided the information no later than the time the information is disclosed, unless providing notice of the disclosure is expressly prohibited by law or court order;
- F. Maintain reasonable administrative, technical, and physical safeguards to protect the security,

- confidentiality, and integrity of PII in its custody;
- G. Use encryption to protect PII in its custody while in motion or at rest; and
  - H. Not sell PII nor use or disclose it for any marketing or commercial purpose or facilitate its use or disclosure by any other party for any marketing or commercial purpose or permit another party to do so.

Where a third-party contractor engages a subcontractor to perform its contractual obligations, the data protection obligations imposed on the third-party contractor by state and federal laws and contract with Ascend apply to the subcontractor.

If the third-party contractor has a breach or unauthorized release of PII, it will promptly notify Ascend in the most expedient way possible without unreasonable delay but no more than seven calendar days after the breach's discovery.

#### Click-wrap agreements

Periodically, Ascend staff may wish to use software, applications, or other technologies in which the user must "click" a button or box to agree to certain online terms of service prior to using the software, application, or other technology. These are known as "click-wrap agreements" and are considered legally binding contracts or other written agreements.

School staff are prohibited from using software, applications, or other technologies pursuant to a click-wrap agreement in which the third-party contractor receives student data or teacher or principal data from Ascend unless they have received prior approval from the school's Data Protection Officer or designee.

Ascend will develop and implement procedures requiring prior review and approval for staff use of any software, applications, or other technologies pursuant to click-wrap agreements.

#### Complaints of breach or unauthorized release of student data and/or teacher or principal data

Parents/guardians have the right to submit complaints about possible breaches of student data to the Chief Privacy Officer at NYSED. In addition, Ascend has established the following procedures for parents, guardians, eligible students, teachers, principals, and other school staff to file complaints with Ascend about breaches or unauthorized releases of student data and/or teacher or principal data:

- A. All complaints must be submitted to the school's Data Protection Officer in writing, utilizing a complaint form available [here](#).
- B. Upon receipt of a complaint, the school will promptly acknowledge receipt of the complaint, commence an investigation, and take the necessary precautions to protect PII.
- C. Following the investigation of a submitted complaint, the school will provide the individual who filed the complaint with its findings. This will be completed within a reasonable period of time, but no more than 60 calendar days from the receipt of the complaint by the school.
- D. If the school requires additional time, or where the response may compromise security or impede a law enforcement investigation, the school will provide the individual who filed the complaint with a written explanation that includes the approximate date when the school anticipates that it will respond to the complaint.

Ascend will maintain a record of all complaints of breaches or unauthorized releases of student data and their disposition in accordance with applicable data retention policies.

Reporting a breach or unauthorized release

The Data Protection Officer will report every discovery or report of a breach or unauthorized release of student data or teacher or principal data within the school to the Chief Privacy Officer without unreasonable delay, but no more than ten calendar days after the discovery.

Each third-party contractor that receives student data or teacher or principal data pursuant to an agreement with Ascend will be required to promptly notify the school of any breach resulting in an unauthorized release of the data by the contractor or its assignees. This notification will happen without unreasonable delay, but no more than seven calendar days after the discovery of the breach. In the event of notification from a third-party contractor, the school will in turn notify the Chief Privacy Officer of the breach or unauthorized release of student data or teacher or principal data no more than ten calendar days after it receives the contractor's notification.

The Chief Privacy Officer is required to investigate reports of breaches or unauthorized releases of student data or teacher or principal data by third-party contractors. Upon the belief that a breach or unauthorized release constitutes criminal conduct, the Chief Privacy Officer is required to report the breach and unauthorized release to law enforcement.

Notification of a breach or unauthorized release

The school will notify affected parents, eligible students, teachers, and/or principals in the most expedient way possible but no more than 60 calendar days after the discovery of a breach or unauthorized release of PII by the school or the receipt of a notification of a breach or unauthorized release of PII from a third-party contractor, unless that notification would interfere with an ongoing investigation by law enforcement or cause further disclosure of PII by disclosing an unfixed security vulnerability. Where notification is delayed under these circumstances, the school will notify parents, eligible students, teachers, and/or principals within seven calendar days after the security vulnerability has been remedied or the risk of interference with the law enforcement investigation ends. Notification will be directly provided to the affected parent, guardian, eligible student, teacher, or principal by first-class mail to their last known address, by email, or by telephone.

The Data Protection Officer must annually report to the Board of Education on data privacy and security activities and progress, any changes to data privacy and security measures, the number and disposition of reported breaches, if any, and a summary of any complaints submitted pursuant to Education Law 2-d.

Annual data privacy and security training

Ascend will annually provide data privacy and security awareness training to its officers and staff with access to PII. This training will include, but not be limited to, training on the applicable laws and regulations that protect PII and how staff can comply with these laws and regulations. All officers and staff who have access to PII must complete this training annually.

Parents' bill of rights for student data privacy and security

Ascend publishes its Parents' Bill of Rights for Data Privacy and Security (Bill of Rights) on its website. Additionally, Ascend will include the Bill of Rights with every contract or other written agreement it enters into with a third-party contractor under which the third-party contractor will receive student data or teacher or principal data from Ascend. The Bill of Rights will also include supplemental information for each contract the school enters into with a third-party contractor where the third-party contractor receives student data or teacher or principal data from the school.

Ascend will publish on its website the supplement to the Bill of Rights (i.e., the supplemental information described above) for any contract or other written agreement it has entered into with a third-party contractor that will receive PII from the School. The Bill of Rights and supplemental information may be redacted to the extent necessary to safeguard the privacy or security of Ascend's data and technology infrastructure.

The Bill of Rights is as follows:

Ascend Charter Schools, in recognition of the risk of identity theft and unwarranted invasion of privacy, affirms its commitment to safeguarding student personally identifiable information in educational records from unauthorized access or disclosure in accordance with State and Federal law. Ascend Charter Schools establishes the following parental bill of rights:

Student personally identifiable information will be collected and disclosed only as necessary to achieve educational purposes in accordance with State and Federal Law.

A student's personally identifiable information cannot be sold or released for any marketing or commercial purposes by Ascend or any third-party contractor. Ascend will not sell student personally identifiable information and will not release it for marketing or commercial purposes, other than directory information released by the School in accordance with School policy.

Parents have the right to inspect and review the complete contents of their child's education record, including portions of the record that are stored electronically, even when the record is maintained by a third-party contractor.

State and Federal laws, such as NYS Education Law §2-d and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, protect the confidentiality of students' personally identifiable information. Safeguards associated with industry standards and best practices, including but not limited to, encryption, firewalls, and password protection, must be in place when data is stored or transferred.

A complete list of all student data elements collected by the State Education Department is available for public review [here](#) or by writing to: to the Office of Information & Reporting Services, New York State Education Department, Room 863 EBA, 89 Washington Avenue, Albany, NY 12234

Parents have the right to have complaints about possible breaches and unauthorized disclosures of student data addressed. Complaints should be directed to Maryann Li, Chief Operating Officer, by email to [maryann.li@ascendlearning.org](mailto:maryann.li@ascendlearning.org) or by mail to 205 Rockaway Parkway, Brooklyn, NY 11212. Complaints can also be directed to the New York State Education Department online [here](#) or by mail to the Chief Privacy Officer, New York State Education Department, 89 Washington Avenue, Albany, NY 12234 or by email to

privacy@mail.nysed.gov or by telephone at 5178-474-0937.

Parents have the right to be notified in accordance with applicable laws and regulations if a breach or unauthorized release of their student's personally identifiable information occurs.

Parents can expect that all Ascend employees who handle personally identifiable information will receive annual training on applicable federal and state laws, regulations, Ascend's policies and safeguards which will be in alignment with industry standards and best practices to protect personally identifiable information.

In the event that the School engages a third-party provider to deliver student educational services, the contractor or subcontractors will be obligated to adhere to State and Federal Laws to safeguard student personally identifiable information. When these parties receive personally identifiable information from student, teacher, or principal data, our contracts will include the enclosed supplement. Parents can request information about third-party contractors by contacting Maryann Li, Chief Operating Officer, by email to maryann.li@ascendlearning.org or by mail to 205 Rockaway Parkway, Brooklyn, NY 11212 or can access the information on Ascend's website ([www.ascendlearning.org](http://www.ascendlearning.org)).

Parents' bill of rights for student data privacy and security: Third party contractor supplement

The (*insert name of contractor*) has been engaged by the (*insert name of school*) to provide services. In this capacity, the company may collect, process, manage, store or analyze student or teacher/principal personally identifiable information (PII).

The (*insert name of contractor*) will provide the School with (*describe specific purpose for which the PII will be used*).

The (*insert the name of contractor*) will ensure that subcontractors or authorized parties with which the company shares PII will abide by data protection and security requirements of Ascend policy, and state and federal law and regulations by (*describe methods/procedures to safeguard data use by subcontractors*).

PII will be stored (*describe the location in a manner that protects data security*).

Parents may challenge the accuracy of PII held by (*insert name of contractor*) by contacting Maryann Li, Chief Operating Officer, by email to maryann.li@ascendlearning.org or by mail to 205 Rockaway Parkway, Brooklyn, NY 11212.

The (*insert name of contractor*) will take reasonable measures to ensure the confidentiality of PII by implementing the following (*describe the following, as applicable*):

- Password protections
- Administrative procedures
- Encryption while PII is in motion and at rest
- Firewalls

The contractor's agreement with the School begins on (*insert date*) and ends on (*insert date*). Once the contractor has completed its service to the School, records containing student PII will be (*select one: destroyed or returned*) by (*insert date*) via the following (*insert method if destroyed or format if returned*).

## **Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) policy**

Ascend Charter Schools and each school complies with the Freedom of Information Law (FOIL). Any requests for school records or information from the school must be in writing and submitted to the school's Assistant Principal of Operations, or to Maryann Li, chief operating officer and FOIL officer for Ascend Charter Schools, at [maryann.li@ascendlearning.org](mailto:maryann.li@ascendlearning.org). Within five business days of receipt of a written request, the school, depending on the requested information, will respond 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, they may, within 30 days, appeal such denial to the Ascend Charter Schools Board of Trustees in writing at [info@ascendlearning.org](mailto:info@ascendlearning.org). The appeal should identify the date and location of requests for records; a description of the records that were denied; and the name and return address of the person denied access. Upon timely receipt of such an appeal, the Board, within ten business days of the receipt of the appeal, will inform the appellant in writing of its determination. The Board will also forward 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 appeal through an Article 78 proceeding.

The school may deny access to requested records if any of the following conditions apply:

- 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 and which, if disclosed, would meet the conditions set forth in Public Officers Law §87(2)(e)
- Such records, if disclosed, would endanger the life or safety of any person
- Such records are computer access codes
- Such records are internal materials that 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 will be no more than the fee allowed by state law. Types of records held by the school may include student health records, student immunization records, student medical records, safety records, school SAVE plan, reports of fire department inspections, school contracts, management contract records, outside contract records, personnel files, fingerprint clearance records, and certification records.

A notice with the name of the FOIL officer and appeals body will be posted in a conspicuous location wherever records are kept.

## **Title I School Parent and Family Engagement Policy**

The purpose of this policy is to encourage and facilitate involvement by parents of students participating in Ascend Title I programs in the educational programs and experiences of students. The policy shall provide the framework for organized, systematic, ongoing, informed, and timely parental involvement in relation to decisions about the Title I services within Ascend Public Charter Schools.

## **Parent and Family Engagement Policy**

Ascend Public Charter Schools invite parental participation in all aspects of Title I educational programming. Parents are involved in the following ways:

- Each school will convene an annual hearing to inform parents of their school's participation in Title I and solicit comment. The administration will post this meeting on the school website and in public locations at the school; and
- All parents will be invited to school events where the school's Title I program will be discussed. Each school will provide parents of participating children:
- Timely information about Title I programs including the types of services their children are being provided, the planned duration of service, and the goals of the services;
- The school performance profile required under section 1116(a)(3);
- The child's individual student assessment results, including an interpretation of such results. Teachers will provide these results and will go over the interpretation with the parent at parent-teacher meetings;
- Description and explanation of the curriculum in use at the school, the forms of assessment used to measure student progress, and the proficiency levels students are expected to meet. Parents will receive this information at the annual Title I hearing and the annual orientation for parents at the beginning of every school year; and
- Opportunities for a regular meeting. The school will be attentive to parents' needs, and will schedule parent meetings as requested and is feasible.

### **Policy's availability to parents and annual evaluation**

The policy will be translated into English and Spanish. Parents can access the policy at orientations and Title I meetings. The policy is also available on the school website and at the school office.

At least once each school year, a school team will meet to evaluate the content and effectiveness of the policy in increasing parent involvement. The school team will discuss ways to identify strategies for overcoming barriers to parent participation and to increase parent participation. As necessary, policy revisions will be based on the evaluation and will be incorporated into the Parent Involvement Policy.

### **Technical assistance and support**

Technical support to help parents plan and implement effective parent involvement activities is provided by the principal, assistant principals and teachers. Technical assistance will include:

- Assistance in parent outreach through mail and telephone;
- Joint planning of parent activities;
- Staff participation as presenters at Parents Association events;
- Support in preparing parent information such as reading lists, and other resources;
- Assistance in making space available for meetings and events;
- Individual teacher meetings with parents on homework, and other instructional support.

### **Title I school parent right to know**

All Ascend charter schools are Title I schools. All parents of Title I school students have the right to know the professional qualifications of the teacher(s) and instructional paraprofessional(s) providing services at their school.

In compliance with federal law, upon request, Title I schools are required to provide parents with the credentials of any educator at the school in a timely manner. Ascend Charter Schools maintains a file that lists all faculty members and their professional qualifications.

If you would like to know the professional qualification information regarding your child's teacher(s) or paraprofessional(s), please call the school to set up an appointment with the principal or principal's designee.

## Ascend Public Charter Schools Locations

### Lower Schools

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|---|--|--|
| Brooklyn Ascend Lower School<br>205 Rockaway Parkway<br>Brooklyn, New York 11212<br>347.464.7600<br><br><u>Principal</u><br>Elena Strauss<br><a href="mailto:elena.strauss@ascendlearning.org">elena.strauss@ascendlearning.org</a>           | Brownsville Ascend Lower School<br>1501 Pitkin Avenue, 1st Floor<br>Brooklyn, New York 11212<br>347.294.2600<br><br><u>Principal</u><br>Billie Quigley<br><a href="mailto:billie.quigley@ascendlearning.org">billie.quigley@ascendlearning.org</a>   | Bushwick Ascend Lower School<br>751 Knickerbocker Avenue<br>Brooklyn, New York 11221<br>347.294.2500<br><br><u>Principal</u><br>Zelda Washington<br><a href="mailto:zelda.washington@ascendlearning.org">zelda.washington@ascendlearning.org</a>   |
| Canarsie Ascend Lower School<br>9719 Flatlands Avenue<br>Brooklyn, New York 11236<br>347.713.0100<br><br><u>Principal</u><br>Justin Moorman<br><a href="mailto:justin.moorman@ascendlearning.org">justin.moorman@ascendlearning.org</a>       | Central Brooklyn Ascend Lower School<br>465 E 29th Street<br>Brooklyn, New York 11226<br>917.246.4800<br><br><u>Principal</u><br>Katherine Capella<br><a href="mailto:katherine.capella@ascendlearning.org">katherine.capella@ascendlearning.org</a> | Cypress Hills Ascend Lower School<br>396 Grant Avenue<br>Brooklyn, New York 11208<br>929.331.3373<br><br><u>Principal</u><br>Sophia Balis-Harris<br><a href="mailto:sophia.harris@ascendlearning.org">sophia.harris@ascendlearning.org</a>         |
| East Brooklyn Ascend Lower School<br>260 Shepherd Avenue<br>Brooklyn, New York 11208<br>718.714.6025<br><br><u>Principal</u><br>Shanice Sanchez<br><a href="mailto:shanice.sanchez@ascendlearning.org">shanice.sanchez@ascendlearning.org</a> | East Flatbush Ascend Lower School<br>870 Albany Avenue<br>Brooklyn, New York 11203<br>718.907.9155<br><br><u>Principal</u><br>Shannon-Re Ismael<br><a href="mailto:shannonre.ismael@ascendlearning.org">shannonre.ismael@ascendlearning.org</a>      | Lefferts Gardens Ascend Lower School<br>123 Linden Blvd<br>Brooklyn, New York 11226<br>718.744.6099<br><br><u>Principal</u><br>Nadine Rubinstein<br><a href="mailto:nadine.rubinstein@ascendlearning.org">nadine.rubinstein@ascendlearning.org</a> |

## Middle Schools

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| Brooklyn Ascend Middle School<br>123 E 98th Street<br>Brooklyn, New York 11212<br>347.289.9000<br><br><u>Principal</u><br>Richard Tucker<br><a href="mailto:richard.tucker@ascendlearning.org">richard.tucker@ascendlearning.org</a>                       | Brownsville Ascend Middle School<br>1501 Pitkin Avenue<br>Brooklyn, New York 11212<br>347.294.2650<br><br><u>Principal</u><br>Lauren Kinrich<br><a href="mailto:lauren.kinrich@ascendlearning.org">lauren.kinrich@ascendlearning.org</a>       | Bushwick Ascend Middle School<br>2 Aberdeen Street<br>Brooklyn, New York 11207<br>718.744.6100<br><br><u>Principal</u><br>Miatta Massaley<br><a href="mailto:Miatta.massaley@ascendlearning.org">Miatta.massaley@ascendlearning.org</a> |
| Canarsie Ascend Middle School<br>744 E 87th Street<br>Brooklyn, New York 11236<br>347.578.8400<br><br><u>Principal</u><br>Tracy DeOliveira-Lewis<br><a href="mailto:tracy.deoliveiralewis@ascendlearning.org">tracy.deoliveiralewis@ascendlearning.org</a> | Central Brooklyn Ascend Middle School<br>1886 Nostrand Avenue<br>Brooklyn, New York 11226<br>347.692.8960<br><br><u>Principal</u><br>Leyde St. Leger<br><a href="mailto:leyde.stleger@ascendlearning.org">leyde.stleger@ascendlearning.org</a> |   |

## High School

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| Brooklyn Ascend High School<br>1501 Pitkin Avenue<br>Brooklyn, New York 11212<br>347.294.2600<br><br><u>Principal</u><br>Livia Angiolillo<br><a href="mailto:livia.angiolillo@ascendlearning.org">livia.angiolillo@ascendlearning.org</a> |
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