



**All students will learn.
All students will sing.**

Family Handbook 2023-2024

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Mission

Our mission is to develop every child into a caring human being, full of wonder, who can work hard to reach a place where he or she can choose from many great paths that will lead to a life of purpose, happiness, and fulfillment.

At VOICE Charter School, we believe in providing a nurturing environment that supports all student autonomy and happiness. We encourage students to grow as learners in all areas of their life. We have a rich academic program that consists of many core areas of instruction, including a deep emphasis on music and the arts. Our teachers work hard to develop deep and meaningful relationships with students and their families, collaborating around each individual student's holistic growth. We hope that our elementary school builds the foundation for a fulfilling life for our students in which they are able to choose from many enriching pathways after they graduate to middle school, high school, college, and beyond.

VOICE will develop students who:

- Achieve the highest level of academic excellence that enables them to choose which competitive high schools and colleges they wish to attend;
- Become mindful, responsible, contributing participants in their education, their community, and the diverse society in which we live; and
- Apply in their daily life and continuous learning the discipline, joy, critical thinking skills, cultural engagement and creativity gained through an arts-rich education.

At the core of our academic culture is the concept of efficacy -- "Smart is not something you are. It is something you get."

Efficacy requires that our teaching be differentiated and child-centered. As Vicki Spandel observes, "Anyone can be a critic. Good teachers do something much harder: they look for the precise moment at which a writer stumbles onto her true topic. They listen for that first whisper of the writer's Voice, no matter how faint. They listen for the word or phrase too good to replace, for the rhythm of sentences that falls just right on the ear. Teachers hear the deer in the forest."

Such a belief in efficacy extends to how we interact as professionals. We believe that we can only continue to learn and raise the achievement of our children to the highest levels if we develop a professional learning community. At VOICE we believe that reflection and communication are central elements of the learning process. Authentic assessment of student work, reviewing both student and teacher progress regularly, and communicating with precision allows us to design teaching and learning practices so that they are responsive to everyone's needs.

The choral music curriculum uses the work of Zoltan Kodaly, Karl Orff and others who have written programs with specific musical goals in mind. The focus of the program will be to introduce the learner to the academic and personal fulfillment available from high-quality singing and participation in music -making and performing. The nature and the demands of music-making are closely aligned to the demands of reading and mathematics so that the program will have significance for a broad range of learning across the curriculum.

Discipline

Our approach to discipline is rooted in a belief that the learning environment is sacred. Discipline at VOICE serves two main purposes: to promote students' moral development and to create a safe (physically, emotionally, mentally, and intellectually) environment where students are empowered to learn from their own behavior. In their moral development, VOICE students respect the authority of adults, value their interpersonal relationships, and gain an autonomous understanding of right and wrong that will enable them to make independent moral decisions as adults -- beyond specific rules. Members of the VOICE community are mindful of the values that we wish to nurture. These values are taught, discussed, practiced, and articulated clearly because we believe that true success and strong character are inseparable.

We motivate students to take responsibility for and learn from their own behavior. As in academic areas, VOICE staff collaborate with students proactively to prevent challenges from becoming more severe problems requiring discipline. We are attuned to students' challenges and collaboratively implement plans to help them adapt and learn.

At VOICE discipline is primarily proactive: students understand the expectations and rationales for behavior. By connecting content to prior learning, articulating teaching points, modeling what to do (show, don't tell), and expressing the rationale for activities (why we do it), we give students a sense of agency and purpose (what we do is important) that discourages acting out.

Reactive discipline at VOICE (1) shows students what they have done, (2) gives them as much ownership of the problem as they can handle, (3) gives them options for solving the problem (4) leaves their dignity intact, and (5) is implemented with consideration for the feelings and needs of those affected by the behavior.

At VOICE mistakes are forgiven and transformed into learning opportunities. Loving relationships, restorative practices, and thoughtful procedures prevent mischief and diminish its effects on our learning community of children and adults. While mistakes and mischief are inevitable realities (these acts are not intended to do harm), the discipline system at VOICE helps to support a community of deep caring and thoughtfulness that precludes intentionally harmful acts of bullying and mayhem.

Parallel to increased academic and social responsibility, students enjoy greater leadership in enriching the school climate as they grow older. Self-monitoring, peer mediation, student initiatives in restorative justice, and independent projects on values demonstrate students' ownership of their community's discipline and learning environment.

The administrative team may solicit parent input in certain situations, but they retain all decision-making authority.

Guidelines for Student Behavior

1. You may engage in any behavior which does not create a problem for you or anyone else in the world.
2. If you find yourself with a problem, you may solve it by any means which does not cause a problem for anyone else in the world.
3. You may engage in any behavior that does not jeopardize the safety or learning of yourself or others. Unkind words and actions will not be tolerated.

We use the following principles to engage students in proper and safe behavior throughout the school day.

1. We will react without anger or haste to problem situations.

2. We will provide consequences that are not punitive but that allow the child to experience the results of a poor choice, enabling him or her to make better choices in the future.
3. We will proceed in all situations with the best interest of the child foremost in my mind- academic, social, and emotional well-being will be fostered.
4. We will guide students toward personal responsibility and the decision-making skills they will need to function in the real world.
5. We will arrange consequences for problem situations in such a way that the child will not be humiliated or demeaned.
6. Equal is not always fair. Consequences will be designed to fit the problems of individual students, and they may be different even when problems appear to be the same.
7. We will make every effort to ensure that, in each situation, the students involved understand why they are involved in consequences.
8. If I at any time act or react in a way that a child truly feels is unjust, that student need only say to me, "I'm not sure that's fair." I will arrange a private conference during which the student can express to me why he or she feels my actions were not fair. This may or may not change my course of action. I am always open to calm, rational discussion of any matter.

The Stages of Behavior Restoration

Stage 1- Accountability: At its simplest level, this means that students own what they did. Accountability is achieved when the student is able to name what they did, and describe how their actions and/or words impacted other individuals and/or community. This step is necessary regardless of original intent.

Stage 2- Restoration: The student and/or adult must fix what was impacted or damaged. For example, if a student has damaged community materials, they may need to figure out how to repair what was damaged. If a student said something to hurt another student's feeling, they need to find a way to address it and make things "right" with that student.

Stage 3- Reflection/Learnings: Our approach to behavior is tied to our belief that like with academic mistakes, reflecting on the impacts of behaviors on individuals and community offers significant learning opportunities for our students. Students often conduct research, complete readings and sometimes have either student or adult-led reflection conversations with the individuals and/or community that was impacted.

Items Not Allowed at School

Please do not allow your child to bring to school any item that would be considered unsafe or distracting. This includes laser lights (which can cause eye damage) and plastic water guns or anything that looks like or is a weapon. Students are not permitted to have toys (including attachments to backpacks), electrical devices, medicine (including cough drops), candy, or valuables in their possession. We strongly discourage these things being sent to school and we do not have the resources to retrieve lost items. The school is not responsible for lost personal possessions and we strongly discourage parents from sending children to school with these items. We have a lost and found that is designed for items that are immediately retrieved. We do not have storage to keep items for long periods of time. Our lost and found is emptied every few weeks. Any prohibited items brought to school will be kept in the main office until a parent can retrieve them. Elementary school students are not allowed to use cellphones in school or when traveling with the school (field trips). If a cell phone is seen or used during school, it will be taken from the student and held until the parent/guardian comes to the school to pick it up. For Middle School, students must keep their phones out of sight with the following exceptions: morning arrival before transitioning upstairs, lunch/recess and after school. Phones may not be out or seen during class or transitions unless a teacher or staff member have given explicit permission.

Recess Procedures

Please note that children go out to recess everyday unless there is extreme weather that would prevent them from doing so. In order for your child not to go to recess, we must have a medical note on file from a doctor requesting for your child to stay inside for medical reasons. This medical note must have very specific reasons detailing the conditions and the date on which those restrictions should end. We will review this note to make a determination about whether it provides sufficient guidance to us in preventing your child's participation in recess and physical education.

Promoting our Deeply Caring Community

Bullying is a conscious, willful, deliberate activity intended to harm where the perpetrator(s) often get pleasure from the targeted student's pain and/or misery. It may be verbal, physical, and/or relational; may have as its overlay race, ethnicity, language, socioeconomic class, religion, beliefs, gender, sexual orientation, appearance, age, physical or mental ability; includes all forms of hazing and cyberbullying. It can be and often is continuous and repeated over time but does not have to be. Once is enough to constitute bullying. *Sexual harassment* is bullying with any sexual content. Active bystanders, those who become involved in the moral or material support of the bully, are considered bullies themselves.

By empowering students to be cognizant of their behavior and its consequences on others, we intend to develop deeply caring students who voluntarily stand up for all victims of bullying. A deeply caring community of students is the most effective safeguard against bullying.

Many are familiar with the verbal and physical forms of bullying, but less familiar with relational bullying which includes the following activities:

1. Telling children who they can be friends with.
2. Making lists of friends or people they like and distributing those lists.
3. Asking children who they are friends with.
4. Telling children who they "like."
5. Telling children who or what they are by making specific references to gender, sexual orientation, ethnic identity, skin color, socio-economic status, or religion

All of these activities are entirely unacceptable at VOICE. They cause unnecessary divisions in our community. Children who do or say any of those things are subject to the discipline code at VOICE and these activities can lead to immediate detention or suspension. We are not going to give second chances when it comes to being mean at VOICE.

No child has a right to tell other children whom they can play with or be kind to. Our classrooms are not facebook. Our children are not going to "friend" and "unfriend" each other. We need to be part of a sharing community where everyone is included.

Moreover, electronic conduct, even outside of a school day, can have a substantial impact on the educational environment. Behavior that is unacceptable in person is unacceptable online or on the phone. Students may be disciplined for behavior outside of school that impacts our deeply caring community.

What can you do?

1. Monitor your child's screentime. What apps do they use, what do they see and for how long?
2. Instead of asking another child if they are friends, encourage your child to ask kind and caring questions like the following:

- a. How are you?
- b. I want to be supportive. How can I help you?
- c. One of our classmates seems lonely. How can we make him feel included?
- d. I think that student is mad at me. Can you help me make things better? I want to get better at being a supportive and caring member of our community.
- e. What can I do, as a classmate, to make this a great day for you?

3. When they see something that is mean, tell them to become a defender. They need to call out and say "that is mean" and to tell an adult. There is a clear distinction between "telling" and "tattling." Please encourage your child to report unkindness immediately to you and to the adults at the school.

A Professional Learning Community

What We Expect from Our Staff:

Teachers, supported by our leadership team, work collaboratively to plan units, lessons, and homework that target individual student needs. Parent events and trips are coordinated across classrooms and subject areas. Teacher and assistant participation on the hiring committee has assured the quality of values and skills of the people coming to work with us and thus the quality of education provided to our children.

Our teachers and staff lead through collaboration and consensus and are thoroughly immersed and believe in the inspirational texts of VOICE (Howard, Collins, DuFour, Seuss, Heifetz, Kant, Lemov, Coloroso, Greene, and more) and the three core values of VOICE: efficacy, care, and wonder.

What We Expect from Our Parents/Guardians and Visitors:

We believe that all parents and families want the best for their children and acknowledges research showing that children do best when parents are enabled to play four key roles in their children's learning:

- Teachers (helping children at home)

- Supporters (contributing their skills to the school)
- Advocates (helping children receive fair treatment); and
- Decision-makers (participating in joint problem-solving with the school at every level).

At the school, families are respected collaborators in the educational process and:

- Are expected to be familiar with and abide by all school policies;
- Show interest in their child's work by attending parent conferences and meetings with the teachers as needed;
- Attend meetings during the year, including those organized by the school at the request of other families to help resolve issues;
- Abide by the school Parent Involvement Policy (pg.28);
- Monitor student attendance, homework completion, and television watching; and
- Participate, as appropriate, in decisions relating to the education of their children.

No-Harassment Policy

VOICE is committed to providing an environment that is free from harassment and coercion, where all members of our community can work together comfortably and productively. Harassment is unacceptable under the law and will not be tolerated. VOICE prohibits all types of harassment, including verbal harassment and threatening remarks, based on an employee's race, color, creed, sex, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, age, disability (including AIDS), marital status, military status, predisposing genetic characteristics, or any other characteristic protected by local, state, or federal law, or such actions as opposing discrimination or participating in any complaint process at the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission or other human rights agencies. Such harassment does not belong in our School or in any school-related setting outside the physical school buildings.

This prohibition applies in all relationships amongst and between employees, students, parents and guardians, visitors, guests, independent contractors and consultants. VOICE will

not tolerate such behavior and will take all necessary steps to investigate and address any allegation of harassment by any employee, student, parent, guardian, visitor, guest, independent contractor or consultants. If this policy was violated, the school will take appropriate action (as determined in its sole discretion) up to and including prohibiting entrance onto the school premises and/or, if applicable, termination of employment. A copy of the DASA (Dignity for All Students Act) is posted on our website.

School Day Procedures - Arrival

Arriving at School: 7:30-7:55 AM

Our doors open at 7:30 A.M. each morning. Students must arrive between 7:30 A.M. and 7:55 A.M. Students arriving after 7:55 A.M. are considered tardy. Children who walk to school must be escorted by an adult to the entrance door in sight of security. In cases when a school bus arrives late, those students arriving on that bus are not considered tardy. Students walk to class within the building without their families and are supervised by VOICE staff starting at 7:30 A.M.

Jaywalking is illegal. Obeying laws is intrinsic to children's moral development and necessary for becoming a responsible community member. Parents and children will only cross at the legal corners in front of the school and will not jaywalk or direct their children to jaywalk.

Buses dropping off students have right of way in front of the school building. This is to ensure the safe entry of the students on the bus who do not have parents present at drop-off to supervise their safety. If directed by staff, you must immediately move your vehicle.

Site Specific Information: Lower Campus (K-2)

The entrance and exit of VOICE Charter School is on the side of PS 111Q on 37th Avenue from 7:30 AM to 7:55 AM and from 3:37 PM to 4:00 PM. Since we share space with another school, it is necessary for safety and logistical reasons to use a separate entrance during morning arrival and afternoon dismissal. At all other times, parents and visitors must enter through the 13th Street entrance of P.S. 111Q and then report to the main office of VOICE in room 217. Parents may only bring children to designated entrances to the school and must always bring a photo ID to the school. This allows VOICE staff to keep track of students and visitors entering the building. At arrival time, all children must be brought to the door to be handed over to staff. Parents who must park cars to drop off or pick up children are asked to park in spaces that are not in the bus loading area beside the school building on 37th Avenue. If a child arrives late, the parent must sign in with security (Lower Campus only) and report to the main office to sign the child in and the child will receive a late pass. You

will need to wait until All Sing is finished before you sign in. You are not permitted to take your child to the classroom, as you will be interrupting learning. If a child arrives to school without an adult, s/he will have to wait in the main office until the parent returns to the school to sign the child in. At all times a parent must have a photo ID to enter the school building, so always bring it with you.

Site Specific Information: Lena Horne wing [formerly Upper Campus] (6-8)

The entrance and exit of VOICE Charter School is open on the 12th Street side of the building from 7:30 AM to 7:55 AM and at 3:45 PM. Parents and visitors must enter through the 12th Street entrance and then report to the main office of VOICE. Parents may only bring children to designated entrances to the school and must always bring a photo ID to the school. This allows VOICE staff to keep track of students and visitors entering the building. At arrival time, all children must be brought to the door to be handed over to staff. Parents who must park cars to drop off or pick up children are asked to park in spaces that are not in the bus loading area beside the school building on 12th Street.

Site Specific Information: Upper Elementary wing (3-5)

The entrance and exit of VOICE Charter School is open on the 11th Street side of the building from 7:30 AM to 7:55 AM and at 3:45 PM. Parents and visitors must enter through the 11th Street entrance and then report to the main office of VOICE. Parents may only bring children to designated entrances to the school and must always bring a photo ID to the school. This allows VOICE staff to keep track of students and visitors entering the building. At arrival time, all children must be brought to the door to be handed over to staff. Parents who must park cars to drop off or pick up children are asked to park in spaces that are not in the bus loading area beside the school building on 11th Street.

Breakfast Program: 7:30 AM- 7:50 AM

We offer all students breakfast free of charge. Students work better and are happier when they are fed. Entry to the breakfast program ends at 7:45 AM. If your child arrives after 7:45 AM and requests breakfast, we will send you a reminder note so that you may adjust your morning schedule accordingly.

School Visitor Policy

Visitors, especially parents, are a vital part of the VOICE Charter School community. However, unannounced visits can be disruptive to our educational program. Parents who would like to visit should email or call in advance and schedule a class- visit appointment with the office. Upon arriving, all visitors must sign in within the main office of VOICE and receive a Visitor Pass. Visitors may not talk to a child or a teacher during class, although they may call the teacher after school to discuss what they observed.

If a visitor is coming to school to drop something off for a student or to leave a message, we still require that the visitor come first to the main office of VOICE. For the sake of student safety, we cannot allow unannounced visitors to walk around the building.

School Day Procedures - Dismissal

VOICE's Lower Campus:

Parents are asked to pick up their children between 3:37 and 3:45 PM every day at Lower Campus. Anyone picking up a child must be listed on the Verification Form or have prior written permission. Anyone picking up a child may be asked to show a photo ID. Parents who must park cars to pick up children are asked to park in spaces that are not in the bus loading area. Busing students will await their buses in their classrooms and will board their buses in the order they arrive.

VOICE's Lena Horne wing:

At VOICE Charter School's Lena Horne wing, all students in 6th grade and above are automatic free walkers. Middle schoolers will be released on their own every day at 3:35pm, through the 12th Street main door. Older siblings may pick up younger siblings at the Lena Horne, Lower Campus, or Upper Elementary wing if parents submit a "minor to minor" form granting permission. Busing students will be dismissed to await their buses in the gym and will board their buses in the order they arrive.

VOICE's Upper Elementary wing:

At VOICE Charter School's Upper Elementary wing, all students in 3rd grade and above have the OPTION of being a free walker, given his or her parent signs a waiver form. Free walkers will be released on their own every day at 3:35pm, through the 11th Street exit near Hour Children. Parents picking up any 3rd, 4th or 5th grade student who are not free walkers may enter the schoolyard through the outside gate to the right of the main entrance at 3:37 PM. Older siblings may pick up younger siblings at the Lena Horne, Lower Campus, or Upper Elementary wing if parents submit a "minor to minor" form granting permission. Busing students will await their buses in their classrooms and will board their buses in the order they arrive.

Early Dismissal

Students are expected to stay in school until the very end of the day. Early pickups are disruptive to the learning environment and reduce students' instructional time. Three early pickups constitute a full day absence. Parents or authorized representatives who need to pick up children before dismissal are required to notify the office in writing. Parents may send their child with a note to the main office, send the message via email to nobus@voicecharterschool.org, or text 917-780-2278 before noon. When you come in to pick them up, you must sign them out in the Main Office. You may not go to your child's classroom unless you have been given a pass in the office.

Please do not pick up children early during the following times:

- Students eat lunch between 10:45 and 2:30 depending on the grade level. If your child is at lunch/recess, you will not be allowed to pick them up during this 45 minute period. You can contact the office to find out what time your child eats lunch so you can avoid this time when making emergency appointments.
- Transition to Busing 3:20-3:45 PM.

Late Pick-up

Students who are picked up by their parents or an authorized representative are expected to be picked up promptly at the end of the school day. Pick-Up Students in 3-5 will be in their classrooms from 3:37-3:55pm each day. At 3:55 they will be brought back into the school to the late pick-up room. At that time, parents will need to enter the front door of the building to pick up their child. Students who ride the bus must have an approved adult meet the child at the bus stop daily. VOICE Charter School takes late pickups seriously. The school will log late pick-ups daily. Parents of students who have three or more late pickups in a trimester or six or more in a year may be required to have an in-person meeting with the school director. If the late pickup pattern is egregious or if a parent is more than an hour late picking up his or her child, the school reserves the right to take the child to the local police precinct for safe supervision. K-2 students who are still waiting for pick up at 4:00 PM will be brought to the Upper Elementary wing to await their parents.

Attendance and Tardiness

Attendance at school is the most basic requirement for learning. In order for students to reach their personal best, they must show up and make their strongest effort at school each and every day. Regular attendance is required, and poor attendance will not be tolerated. Our curriculum is an ambitious one; every day is essential for students to keep pace. Parents are expected to ensure that their child is in school. Please do not allow your child to miss a day of school except for serious illnesses. Getting to school on time is key to each child's success – at school and in life. At VOICE Charter School, the learning begins from the moment students walk in the door. Late students miss academics, and tardiness in general is a bad habit. One of the most common reasons that people lose their jobs is persistent tardiness.

All Absences – “Excused” and “Unexcused” – Are Still Considered Absences:

Per New York State educational code every day your child does not attend school is considered an absence. For example, missing school due to a serious illness (with a doctor’s note) or a death in the family is still considered being absent at VOICE Charter School. While we appreciate a call or note from a parent or doctor explaining the absence, the student is still considered (and marked) absent from school.

Vacations/Leaving the Country: As extended absence may affect the student's promotional status, the vacation must be discussed and approved by VOICE Charter School Administration. If you need to take your child on a vacation when school is in session, you must make an appointment to speak with a school administrator in person or on the phone. Please make the appointment before you purchase your airline tickets or any other non-changeable plans, as extended absence can affect your child’s promotional status. We also ask that you provide copies of tickets and where you will be staying once you have purchased them.

Tardiness and Early Pickups Count as Absences: Arriving late or leaving school early causes a student to miss valuable instruction time and disrupts the routine of their learning process. When a student has been late three times, this equals one day of absence. When a student is picked up from school early three times, this equals one day of absence. Please note that students may not be picked up early after field trips unless permission has been given by the teacher at least a day before the trip.

Consequences for Absence and Tardiness: We monitor attendance and tardiness closely. If your child has a record of concern, we will require you to meet with a member of the team. The Principal reserves the right to retain any student who misses more than 9 days of school. In addition, a report may be filed with the appropriate child services agency at any time.

Home-School Communication

Family-School Communication

Please check books and folders every night for work and letters sent home by the school and your child’s teacher. Remember to reach out to your child's teacher directly. The most efficient manner is by communicating with the school through Talking Points, our parent text communication system. During the school day, students and teachers may not receive

incoming phone calls or messages that require an immediate response. In the rare case of an emergency that requires immediate attention, please let the office know the nature of the call. In the event that you have tried to reach a staff member and there has been no response within 48 hours, please notify school administration, as your concerns are important to us.

All correspondence with teachers and staff must have your child's full name and class, your daytime phone number, and the date. Please include the name of your child's teacher when you call the school, pick up your child, or write us a note. If you have children who are in different grades, separate notes must be sent for each student. This includes but is not limited to notes about bussing and parent meetings.

Teachers and staff are open to communicate with parents and students in person, via school phone, email or notes in the home folder. Please respect the privacy of teachers and staff and do not attempt to "friend" them on any social media site (such as Facebook).

Communication With Families

We want to communicate with you as effectively as possible. In addition to our Talking Points text messages, we send our Weekly Broadcast to families on Thursdays via email, although items may also be sent on other days. Please check your emails and texts every day.

Tear-off Notification Slips

Please remember when you receive a tear-off notification slip that you cut off the top of the letter for you to keep at home for the information, and you sign and return the bottom to the office in your child's home folder. If you have more than one child at VOICE, a separate notification slip needs to be submitted for each child.

Change of Address/Contact Information

Parents are required to notify the school in writing if there is any change in their address, business or home phone numbers, or individuals approved to pick up the student. We will not release your child to any adult without written permission from a parent or Guardian. In order for your address to be changed, parents must bring in two proofs of address to the Lena Horne campus office.

Supplies

Each child will need a backpack so that he or she is able to carry books and supplies to and from school. Backpacks with wheels are not allowed as they are heavy and have increased

safety risk. As we are a public school we request donations of money at the beginning of the year to ensure your child has everything they need.

Field Trips

Students have the opportunity to take field trips with their class. Family chaperones (18 or older) will be coordinated and confirmed by the classroom teachers and are subject to office approval. A student for whom a teacher has a safety concern may only be allowed to attend the trip if a chaperone agrees to attend and supervise that student. Students who are given medication by the school nurse must have a parent accompany them on trips or have “self administration” marked on the medical administration form. Guidelines for chaperones will be provided by the classroom teacher and must be abided by to ensure the safety of students. Please note that chaperones may not take students home after the trip as the instructional day continues as usual until 3:45.

Upon registration, parents will have signed a field trip consent form, meaning students will be participating in the scheduled field trip unless otherwise stated by the parent.

Consent and Policy

Please review the attached information concerning our policies and your consent. Please note that your signed acknowledgement was received upon registration.

[Consent and Policies](#)

Homework

Homework provides students an opportunity to strengthen their academic foundation. Homework is one tool to aid in the process and at VOICE we use it to reinforce previously taught skills. No child should receive homework that he or she cannot do. Homework is given daily. All teachers will send a weekly homework sheet home on Mondays. The approximate time per grade is:

- Kindergarten-10 minutes
- 1st grade-20 minutes
- 2nd grade-30 minutes
- 3rd grade-30 minutes
- 4th grade-30 minutes

- 5th grade- 30 minutes

If your child does not understand the homework or is taking a long time to complete it, please contact your child's teacher. Given our extended school day, we understand it may not always be possible to complete homework. We consider sleep of primary importance so please send a note if that has affected your child's ability to complete homework.

For Middle School families, homework of 30 minutes or more each night should be expected on a regular basis.

Independent Reading

Research shows that the best way to improve a student's reading skills is to have them READ, READ, READ. The students who read a lot outside of school are the students who are the best readers and who make steady progress on reading assessments. Supporting your child's independent reading at home is the best way to help him or her improve the speed, accuracy, vocabulary, and comprehension of his or her reading. Although students have high-quality reading time during school, they must READ, READ, READ at home every night, on the weekends, and during any vacations from school. You can support your child's reading by asking him or her to read out loud to you. Stop him or her occasionally and ask some questions about what he or she is reading. They can read along your side while you are cleaning, cooking, etc. Doing so can help ensure that your child understands what he or she is reading. Please do not sign your child's independent reading log if you have not actually seen him or her read. Amount of reading time depends on age level of child and their development so please consult with your child's teacher if you are unsure (30 minutes daily is our standard recommendation).

Performances

Since music is such a central element to our instructional program, parents must ensure that children will attend all required performances for the entire length of the performance, including those held outside of regular school hours. Failure to attend these performances can lead to disciplinary action and a student being retained. In MS, due to students being older, concert performances are considered a major assessment grade and failing to attend will result in receiving no credit for the assessment.

Report Cards

Report cards are distributed to children in grades K-8 three times a year as follows: November, March and June.

Promotion to the Next Grade

VOICE Charter School has tough standards for promotion. It is not automatically assumed that students will pass from one grade to the next. We strive to ensure that students are fully prepared for the next grade level and ready to be successful. By fully, we mean that students are prepared academically, behaviorally and socio- emotionally. Our promotional decisions are guided by our core value of efficacy. We do not see retention as a punishment or failure, but rather as another opportunity for students to demonstrate mastery of essential knowledge and skills.

We prioritize academic achievement against end of year benchmarks as the leading factor in our promotion decisions, but we also push ourselves to consider a wide variety of data, including but not limited to: attendance and lateness, behavior problems that have caused the student to miss significant learning time, student grades, student work samples, reading level, and more. A student may be retained if he or she misses more than 9 days in a school year, more than 20 tardies in a school year, or has significant behavior problems that result in missed instruction time. Students who have Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) will be promoted to the next grade based on successful completion of the goals of the IEP if they have modified promotion criteria. Students with IEPs who have significant attendance or behavioral problems unrelated to their IEPs may be retained for these reasons. Administrators will solicit information from teachers and parents about promotion decisions, but the school director retains the authority to make the final call on all promotion decisions.

Student Records

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

- **Directory Information:** Directory Information is basic information about students such as name, address, telephone number, date of birth, participation

in activities, awards received, etc. This information may be made available to others for specific use without the consent of the parent/guardian. For example, teachers may distribute class lists to everyone in the class so that students may help each other with homework.

- **Confidential Records:** Confidential Records include grades, evaluations, disciplinary actions, and health records. Confidential records will not be made available to any non-school personnel without a FERPA consent form is filled out by the parent/guardian. These forms are available in the UC Main Office.

Health and Medication

Nursing services for VOICE Charter School are provided by the nursing staff assigned to the school building by the Department of Health. The nurse treats minor injuries and advises parents about student health. We recommend, however, that parents have a doctor or health center look into any recurring health problem a child is having. If the nurse calls or sends a note that is unclear or concerning, please feel free to contact the nurse directly or the VOICE office for clarification.

The nurse is responsible for checking all health records to be certain that each student is properly immunized. The school is required by law to have a completed health form on file for every student. The health form documents the vaccinations that a child has received to date. Parents are responsible for providing the nurse and/or VOICE directly with information that is required including updates to the health form.

If your child requires medication during school hours, please contact the main office to request a Medical Administration Form (or MAF). The building nurse has the training and resources to store and administer some types of medication. However, medication cannot be administered to your child until your child's physician has completed the form. This is a requirement of the Health Department and pertains to all medicine, including aspirin, Tylenol, cough drops, and other over-the-counter medicines. You must directly turn this over to the nurse. It may not be sent in your child's backpack.

You are not permitted to send any medicine to school with your child including cough drops and cough medicine. VOICE is not able to administer any medicine to your child and your child cannot self-administer unless a 504 form has been completed and approved by the nurse. The building nurse will keep a detailed log of all medicines that are administered.

A visit to the dentist at least once a year is recommended for preventive dental health treatment. Doctor and dental visits are asked to be made, if possible, after school or on the weekends.

Physical education is mandated by the State Department of Education. If your child for any reason cannot take part in physical education due to a medical reason, a medical note should be sent to the teacher.

Vision screenings are for certain grades. If your child is found to have vision problems, you will be required to provide proof of a visit to a doctor. If your child wears glasses, please be sure he or she has them every day. We can provide information about low cost glasses as well as eye exams.

Crutches and stair use at VOICE

Neither VOICE campus has an elevator. Should your child become injured and require crutches, you must have a note from the doctor allowing them to climb the stairs unassisted while using crutches. Additionally, your child must be physically capable of ascending or descending the stairs by themselves as VOICE staff are prohibited from carrying children. If needed, we will arrange for an adult or another student to help carry your child's backpack and/or crutch up and down the stairs with them.

School Bus Transportation

Busing to and from VOICE Charter School is provided by private bus companies contracted by the New York City Department of Education's Office of Pupil Transportation (OPT). The Office of Pupil Transportation can be reached at 718-392-8855 for information, concerns, and complaints. VOICE has no control over bus arrival and departure times, stop locations or bus drivers.

VOICE does handle bus stop change requests in person during certain times only. Parents wanting to make bussing changes such as selecting a new stop after a move must stop by the Lena Horne Campus office after dismissal (3:45 pm – 4:15pm) at least a week before they need the change to occur to make the necessary arrangements. VOICE does not have the staffing to take care of bus change requests outside of those time frames. At the beginning of the school year VOICE does offer extended hours of bus service.

Eligibility

While the OPT determines the eligibility of a student for yellow school busing, VOICE Charter School reserves the right to suspend an eligible student from the bus if he or she in any way threatens the safety and well-being of his or her peers. We believe that the

right to free transportation is dependent on a student's good behavior while waiting for and riding the school bus.

Please note, bus eligibility changes between certain grades. Between second and third grades the minimum distance to school increases so your child may lose his or her eligibility to ride if you live too close. Yellow bus service ends after sixth grade and after that point your child may be issued a Metrocard if they live more than a mile from VOICE as determined by the Office of Pupil Transportation.

Private Bus Service

Some parents utilize private bus companies instead of the official (free) Yellow Bus company assigned to serve our school. If you choose to put your child on a privately arranged bus company bus, you must fill out a Private Bus form so that your child will be brought down to the bus during bus dismissal. VOICE cannot make any recommendations or referrals to private bus companies. If you are looking for more information on private bus service, reach out to the Parent Association for more information.

Poor Bus Behavior

Bus drivers must focus on the road to make sure all students arrive to school and home safely. On the bus, students must remain in their seats, talk quietly, and follow all directions given by the bus driver. Students who behave poorly on the bus compromise the safety of themselves and others. Poor bus behavior may result in termination of transportation services. If your child is suspended from the bus, it will be your responsibility to arrange for alternative transportation.

Arrange Transportation Before Your Child Leaves

Home (Grades K-5 only)

Elementary school students will not be allowed to call home to check and see if they are being picked up. If you need to pick up your child from school and your child usually rides the bus, or if you must otherwise change your child's transportation for that day, you must send a note to school with your child detailing the change in plans and providing a clear description of who will pick up your child. All requests for changes in transportation must be submitted to the VOICE office *in writing* before 10 a.m. on the day of the request.

Staff is not permitted to accept changes over the phone. In order to ensure students' safety and avoid miscommunication, we require written notification for student transportation changes. If someone new is picking up your child from their bus stop, you must notify the bus company directly. They will inform the bus driver and this individual will be asked to show the driver a photo ID at the bus stop.

Afternoon Events (Grades K-5 only)

If you are attending a school event and you want to cancel your child's afternoon bus service, you must indicate that to us *in writing* before 10 a.m. on the day of the event. With several adults in the position to pick up your child, we cannot assume that your attendance to an afternoon event will affect your child's bus ridership.

Bus Dismissal procedures for Middle School.

Grade Six students who ride the bus will be dismissed from their respective classes at the same time as those who are free walkers. It is their responsibility to make their way to the correct bus line-up before the bus time. Unlike with grades K-5, it is your responsibility to let your child know whether they should or should not ride the bus that day. If there is an emergency change of plans, please reach out to the Middle School team to pass a message on to your child. Unfortunately, VOICE is unable to lend or give students who missed the bus a Metrocard to get home. If you would like to switch your child to using Metrocards you will need to stop by the HC Main Office to sign a form to waive your bus service. Please note, restarting bus service after requesting a Metrocard can take up to a week. There is no Yellow Bus service for Grades 7 and 8 per city regulations.

Picking Up Your Child from the Bus

It is your responsibility to find out from the bus company and OPT the drop-off time for your child. Families have found their estimates to be a reliable plus/minus 30 minutes. Please note that if no one is at the bus stop the child may be taken to the policy precinct by the bus company. At the beginning of the school year we provide a list of parent numbers to the bus company as a courtesy but we encourage you to share your phone number with the bus driver.

We may initiate disciplinary action (such as a bus suspension) and reserve the right to hold a child from getting on the bus in the case of safety matters. The bus driver or bus company may refuse to transport a student who poses a disciplinary or pick-up issue.

Food Services

School Lunch Program

Both breakfast and lunch will be available at VOICE Charter School. As part of its participation in the School Nutrition Program (a federal program that subsidizes student meals), the school must collect completed lunch application forms for all its students. The easiest way to do this is to fill out the online form at www.applyforlunch.com and then send VOICE the online confirmation number. The data collected from the lunch application form helps determine federal funding that benefits all of our children.

Dietary Restrictions, Allergies, and Guidelines

While it is official School Foods policy to never serve pork at any cafeteria they serve, they are unable to provide specific food preparation practices or food choices. VOICE employees are not able to monitor your child's food choices.

If your child has any allergies to food or other items, please inform the school in writing as soon as possible.

Glass containers are not permitted at VOICE. Please ensure your child can open their own container and that they bring their own silverware to eat with. Gum chewing is not allowed.

Each day, K-5 students have a period known as classroom recess. During this short break, they eat a snack. Please send a snack every day with your child. You may send lunch for your child or they may eat a school lunch. If you are sending items, please make sure your child understands if the item is meant for snack or lunch or as a supplement to lunch. Since classroom recess and lunchtime are both short, please send food that a student can eat quickly and doesn't require a lot of extra time on their part (such as peeling an orange or a difficult container to open).

When sending food with your child, we ask that you avoid unhealthy drinks (e.g., sodas or juices heavy in sugar) or unhealthy snacks (snacks high in fat, calories, or sugar) to school. Snack food should not take the place of regular meals. For snack, we suggest fresh fruits, vegetables, and nuts, and products rich in whole grains (cereals, crackers, brown rice cakes, baked tortilla chips, granola bars, pretzels, etc.). Soda, coffee, candy, and fried foods are not allowed. Foods sent to school shouldn't get more than 35 percent of their calories from fat (excluding nuts, seeds, and nut butters) and more than 10 percent from saturated fat. Sugar content should be less than 35 percent of the weight. Beverages should be water, unsweetened juice and low-fat and nonfat milks. The school reserves the right not to allow students to consume unhealthy food and drinks at school. If you have a

question about what is considered a healthy food, please feel free to send a note to the office and we can help guide you.

Due to student allergies, we request that students do not share their individual food with each other.

Families are encouraged to donate snacks that fall within our guidelines to the class. Teachers will reach out throughout the year. **Families are not allowed to send in treats for birthdays or holidays without prior approval from administration.** These celebrations are planned school wide.

Birthdays and Holidays

Birthday Celebrations

There will be one student birthday celebration each month for grades K-5. VOICE will be providing snacks and fun activities for the children. Please note that only VOICE children and employees attend the monthly birthday celebrations.

Birthday celebrations are held during classroom recess once per month for all children celebrating birthdays that month. August birthdays will be celebrated alongside September birthdays at a date to be decided at the beginning of the school year. June and July birthdays will be celebrated together in June. *We are excited to mark your child's special day!*

Invitations and Valentines

When students have out-of-school parties, they may only distribute invitations in school if the entire class is invited. The same is true for distributing valentines on Valentine's Day/Friendship Day. VOICE strives to be an inclusive community. Students having events that exclude students must find alternate ways to spread information about their event. Students' feelings are hurt when classmates are invited to events and they are not.

Selling Items

Except at the school store, students are not allowed to sell anything or make an offer to sell (candy, toys etc.) to any teacher, student or other school personnel. Also, no items may be traded.

Halloween

Students wear school uniforms on all school days that are not designated dress down or themed dress days, including Halloween. Recall that students are not permitted to be picked up early on holidays.

Holiday Candy

In accordance with the snack policy, students are not allowed to bring candy or other related holiday treats, including for Valentine's Day/Friendship Day and Halloween. Unopened candy will be confiscated and returned at the end of the day.

Uniform Policy

All students must come to school in the VOICE Charter School uniform every day except for designated dress down and themed dress days. If a student arrives to school out of uniform, parents will be called and asked to bring in a uniform before the student is sent to class. We have a required school uniform for several very important reasons:

- 1) Uniforms unite us as a community.** When you look at the VOICE Charter School uniform, it is a powerful visual statement of our community.
- 2) Uniforms reduce distractions and clothing competition.** Often students spend more time discussing and evaluating what others are wearing or not wearing than they spend focusing on learning. Wearing uniforms eliminates this distraction.
- 3) Uniforms make us all equal.** Whether families have high incomes or low incomes, the students come to school looking the same way. No one is made to feel bad about the clothes they have or don't have.
- 4) Uniforms reflect the professional attitude with which we approach learning.** By coming to school in their special, professional clothes, students are proudly wearing their learning-focused attitudes on their sleeves.

We will enforce the dress code. If a child is not fully compliant with the dress code, he or she may not be admitted to class or be able to attend a school event such as a field trip or a concert unless a family member brings replacement clothing.

Students may not change out of the VOICE Charter School uniform at any point during the school day. Some families have found appropriate uniform items at French Toast (www.frenchtoast.com, 1800.frenchtoast), Cookies (www.cookieskids.com, 877.942.6654), JCPenney (www.jcpenney.com), or Lands End (www.landsend.com, 1.800.963.4816). If you are unsure whether an item is appropriate, please ask the office before removing the tags so that you do not purchase items that your child will not be allowed to wear to school. We are happy to advise you on specific questions related to the uniform policy

The components of the VOICE Charter School uniform are as follows:

- **Polos:** On top, students must wear a light blue collared polo shirt. Shirts can be long or short-sleeved and must be long enough to tuck in (although tucking in is not required except for specific occasions like concerts). A blouse, t-shirt, or dress shirt is not part of our school uniform.
- **Undershirt:** If a student chooses to wear an undershirt, it must be white, black, or light blue or the polo should be buttoned all the way so that it can't be seen. Long sleeved undershirts should be worn under long sleeved polos; if they are plain white, this is acceptable until short sleeve polos. Turtlenecks of any color are not allowed.
- **Sweater:** Only a long-sleeve solid navy blue sweater (knit fabric) or sweater vest may be worn over the polos. All pieces of clothing should be free of any logos or writing larger than a quarter. We ask that students refrain from wearing sweaters with hoods which can be a distraction from learning or sweatshirts.
- **Pants:** Students may wear plain navy blue pants with zippers at the waist (elastic allowed for Kindergarten). Pants must be worn at the waist, and pants must be the correct size (fitting on the hips snugly so that undergarments are not displayed). No baggy pants, denim, cargo pants, sweatpants or pants with writing allowed. Students will not be allowed to wear casual workout pants or items with corduroy or other similar textures.
- **Skirts:** Students may wear navy skirts or jumpers with zippers or buckles. Shirts must be tucked into the skirts. Dresses are not permitted at VOICE because a polo must always be worn. Navy jumpers with a polo worn underneath are acceptable. All polo materials dresses are not allowed in any color.

- **Shorts:** Plain, navy blue shorts with zippers (elastic allowed for Kindergarten) are permitted when the weather is hot.
- **Black Sneakers:** Only close-toed, *solid* black sneakers are permitted at VOICE. Because students walk a lot during each day and have exercise time each day, we require that students wear sneakers instead of dress shoes. Sneakers must be at least 75% black including the soles. There can be no colored stripes, wheels, or lights. If your child has not learned to tie his/her sneakers at home, the sneakers must be Velcro. Dress shoes, ballet shoes, Mary Janes with the strap, boots, and any other kinds of shoes are not acceptable at VOICE. If your child wears boots in inclement weather, they must bring a pair of uniform sneakers to change into once they arrive to school.
- **Stockings/tights/Knee socks:** Those who wear skirts or jumpers must wear black or white stockings/tights only. Stockings/tights with prints or patterns are not permitted. Knee socks must be black or white.

General Clothing Requirements:

- **Minimal jewelry:** Jewelry wearing is not permitted at VOICE, except for small “stud” earrings that are solid silver, gold, white, black, or navy are permitted for the purpose of preserving the piercing. Students may have a cord to hold eyeglasses around their neck. Sunglasses should not be worn in school.
- **No make-up:** Make-up is strictly not allowed in Grades K-5. This includes facial make-up, eye liner, nail polish, fake nails or nail extensions, lip gloss, colored Chapstick, temporary tattoos, or writing on the body. Just as nail polish is prohibited, so are colored acrylic nails or nails that extend the length of the finger.
- **Accessories:** Students are not allowed to wear hats, scarves (except for religious reasons), bandanas or ties in the building.
- **Label:** Please label all children’s clothing, books bags, and lunch boxes with your child’s name and class. This will help us return any lost item. Any items that we do find are kept in the lost and found for a limited period of time. We donate these items regularly so we can encourage students and families to check for lost items as soon as they go missing.
- **Physical Education uniform:** There is no gym uniform and students may not change clothes for P.E.

- **Extra sets of clothing:** Please make sure that your child in grades K-2 has at least one extra set of school uniform clothing only (i.e. polos, pants, underwear and socks) at school in case of accidents. If your child uses this clothing, please provide a replacement. Please do not bring jeans or other non- uniform clothing to school if your child needs additional clothing. We ask that you plan your clothing purchases and laundry schedule so that uniform clothing is always available for your child. If your child lives in more than one household, there should be clean uniform clothing at both homes.

School Policy on Lice and Vermin

Head Lice:

VOICE Charter School follows a “No Live Lice” protocol similar to other NYC Schools when it comes to the handling of lice. If we observe evidence of lice we shall handle it in the following matter: The School Director’s designee shall check the student’s head for live lice;

If live lice are found we will call parent to pick up child as they are not allowed to go back to class. Please ensure that your child is treated and thoroughly checked before returning him or her to VOICE. We will do a follow up check in two weeks.

If we find only nits (lice larvae), your child will be allowed to stay in school, however we will send home a note informing you of this development. Please ensure your child is properly treated and nits removed.

VOICE will also notify all students in the affected classroom when lice are found on a student or a parent informs us that their child has lice and is being treated at home. If we discover a live bug in your child’s class we will check all students in the class. To reduce and prevent the spread of lice, remind your child of the importance of not sharing their hats or external clothing with others and promptly notifying us if you find lice on your children at home and following through with treatment medication and cleaning of bedding.

Other Pests:

As a New York City resident, there are times when certain pests enter our common spaces. This includes your child’s school. Both locations have licensed pest control services and skilled employees on staff to attend to pest issues. We have found over the years, many insects hitch rides to school in the backpacks and clothing of children (particularly winter wear) and then spread to other locations including fellow student bags and jackets.

The most frequent pest we see this with is bed bugs although roaches have done this as well. While we continually monitor the classrooms to prevent an infestation from starting in the building, in the event a bug or bugs are sighted we will take the following steps to inform and protect your household.

- Send home a letter informing you of what was sighted and where
- Steps we are taking to prevent spread in the classroom
- Steps you can take to prevent spread at home.

If we find a live bed bug or other bug on your child's body or clothing or our nurse observes characteristic bite mark patterns we will reach out to you via telephone or in person to notify that we found a live insect and that your family should check household for infestation and take appropriate measures if needed. Unlike with lice, we do not require you to pick up your child if we find bedbugs or other pests on them.

To significantly reduce the risk that your child brings home a bug, you may want to keep backpacks and jackets in plastic bags and away from bedrooms and living rooms, where bugs are most likely to hide. Please check the bedding, furnishing and clothing in your household to make sure there is no sign of a bed bug infestation. The most common location where they live is on mattresses. Check along the seams for dried blood stains, discoloration or bugs themselves which are usually the size of an apple seed or smaller.

If you have any questions regarding bed bugs found in your home, refer to NYC.GOV's web page on bed bugs at: <http://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/health/health-topics/bedbugs.page>.

Appropriate Use of Technology Policy

Students may only use VOICE Computer technology, including but not limited to computer equipment, the internet and wireless access, under the direct supervision of faculty or staff. Unless at the specific direction of a VOICE faculty or staff member, at no time may a student use a personal device to access the Internet (wirelessly or otherwise) while on the VOICE premises.

VOICE recognizes that students may use technology and internet resources after school hours. Student's online behavior should be carefully monitored. A student's inappropriate use

of text messaging, SnapChats, email and/or social networking sites (such as TikTok or Instagram) can negatively affect fellow students and disrupt learning in classroom. VOICE will not tolerate incidents of “cyber bullying” by a student any more than it would actual bullying on school grounds. Students will be held accountable for online actions between students (even if it occurred outside of school) with punishment ranging up to and including suspension.

Parent Involvement Policy

The Board recognizes parents/guardians are full partners with educators, administrators, and the Board to achieve the best possible learning experience for each child. A strong program of communication between home and school must be encouraged, continually evaluated and maintained so the school and community are connected in meaningful and productive ways. In order to institute and maintain this program of communication with parents and to facilitate and maintain active parental involvement, the school will:

- Continue to involve parents in the joint development of the plan under No Child Left Behind Part A — Improving Basic Programs Operated by Local Educational Agencies Subpart 1 — Basic Program Requirements Sec.1112, LEA Plans commonly referred to as the Consolidated Application and the process of school review and improvement under Sec. 1116, Academic Assessment and LEA and School Improvement. If the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Consolidated Application (section 1112) is not satisfactory to the parents of participating children, the school will submit any parent comments with such Consolidated Application when it submits the Consolidated Application to the New York State Education Department.
- Plan, implement, assess and, as necessary, revise effective parent involvement activities to improve student academic achievement and school performance.
- Build the school’s and parents' capacity for strong parental involvement through collaborative school-parent planning, ongoing parent-school communication and integration of parents into professional development and other school activities.

- Coordinate and integrate parental involvement strategies under Title I, Title II and Title IV with parental involvement strategies under such programs as the Head Start program, Reading First program, Early Reading First program, Even Start program, Parents as Teachers program, the Home Instruction Programs for Preschool Youngsters and public preschool and other programs, and conduct other activities, such as parent resource centers, that encourage and support parents in more fully participating in the education of their children
- Conduct, with the involvement of parents, an annual evaluation of the content and effectiveness of the parent involvement policy in improving the academic quality of the school, including identifying barriers to greater participation by parents in authorized activities (with particular attention to parents who are economically disadvantaged, are disabled, have limited English proficiency, have limited literacy, or are of any racial or ethnic minority background). The findings of such evaluation will be published and made available for review by parents, and will be used to design strategies for more effective parental involvement, and to revise, if necessary, the parental involvement policy.

The school will distribute the Parent Involvement Policy to parents of all of its students. The Principal of the school will develop a School Plan for Parental Involvement that will explain the means by which the bulleted items above will be implemented and maintained. The Principal will convene a separate panel comprised of parents and school personnel for the purpose of developing the School Plan for Parental Involvement. Parents

will be notified of the Policy and Plan via letter written in an easily understandable and uniform format. The school will also provide such notice in languages other than English to parents who require it. The Policy and Plan will also be made available to the local community through the school's website and will be updated periodically to meet the changing needs of parents and the school. As a component of the School Plan for Parental Involvement, the school will jointly develop with parents of all children served by programs described in the Consolidated Application a school-parent/student compact that outlines how parents, the entire school staff, and students will share the responsibility for improved student academic achievement and the means by which the school and parents will build and

develop a partnership to help children achieve New York State's high standards.

The compact will:

1. Describe the school's responsibility to provide high-quality curriculum and instruction in a supportive and effective learning environment that enables the children to meet the State's student academic achievement standards, and the ways in which each parent will be responsible for supporting their children's learning;
2. Address the importance of communication between teachers and parents on an ongoing basis through:
 - a. Parent-teacher conferences at least bi-annually, during which the compact shall be discussed as the compact relates to the individual child's achievement;
 - b. Frequent reports to parents on their children's progress; and
 - c. Reasonable access to staff, opportunities to volunteer and participate in their child's class, and observation of classroom activities;
3. Be reviewed and updated annually. In addition, the school will:
 - a. Convene an annual meeting, at a convenient time, to which all parents will be invited and encouraged to attend, to: i) inform parents of the school's participation in programs described in the NCLB legislation; ii) explain the requirements of these programs; and iii) explain and answer questions about the rights of parents to be informed about and involved in these programs;
 - b. Offer meetings throughout the year, to which all parents will be invited, to promote parent- school communication and increased parent involvement in their children's education. These meetings will be scheduled at times that are convenient to parents, including mornings and evenings. To the degree practicable and permitted by law, the school will use NCLB program funds to provide transportation, child care, or home visits, as such services relate to parental involvement;
 - c. Involve parents, in an organized, ongoing, and timely way, in the planning, review, and improvement of programs under NCLB including the planning, review, and improvement of the school parental involvement policy and the joint development of plans required by the NCLB;

4. Provide parents:
 - a. timely information about programs supported by NCLB and included in the Consolidated Application;
 - b. a description and explanation of the curriculum in use at the school, the forms of academic assessment used to measure student progress, and the proficiency levels students are expected to meet; and
 - c. if requested by parents, opportunities for regular meetings to formulate suggestions and to participate, as appropriate, in decisions relating to the education of their children, and respond to any such suggestions as soon as practicably possible;
5. Provide assistance to parents, as appropriate, in understanding such topics as the State's academic content standards and State student academic achievement standards, State and local academic assessments, the requirements of the Consolidated Application, and how to monitor a child's progress and work with educators to improve the achievement of their children;
6. Provide materials and training to help parents to work with their children to improve their children's achievement, such as literacy training and using technology, as appropriate, to foster parental involvement;
7. Educate the school staff, with the assistance of parents, in the value and utility of contributions of parents, to reach out to, communicate with, and work with parents as equal partners, implement and coordinate parent programs, and build ties between parents and the school;
8. Adopt and implement model approaches to improving parental involvement; and
9. Provide other reasonable support for parental involvement activities as parents may request.

School-Parent/Student Compact

This agreement is between the school staff, the parents and students.

Teacher Expectations

The school teachers are highly qualified and:

- provide high quality instruction based on the NYS Standards and the school's curriculum;
- provide a rigorous education with high expectations for all students;
- adhere to pacing charts for the core curriculums;
- prepare weekly lesson plans using the school lesson plan format;
- communicate learning objectives to students and keeping students on task;
- demonstrate that the students are meeting lesson objectives through student work and curriculum based assessments, rubrics, tests, work samples, projects;
- provide immediate and ongoing feedback to students;
- provide meaningful homework;
- provide assessment documentation to the Leadership Team according to the assessment calendar;
- work collaboratively with other teachers and mentors to plan and present the curriculum;
- teach students Responsive Classroom behavior management skills;
- keep parents informed about student progress
- abide by the school Parent Involvement Policy

Parent Expectations

At the school, families are respected collaborators in the educational process and:

- are familiar with and abide by all school policies;
- show interest in their child's work by attending parent conferences and meetings with the teachers as needed

- attend meetings during the year
- abide by the school Parent Involvement
- monitor student attendance, homework completion, and television watching;
- participate, as appropriate, in decisions relating to the education of their children

Student Expectations

At the school, students are respected collaborators in the educational process and:

- contribute to and maintain a safe, kind and orderly school environment which is conducive to learning and is characterized by respect for all persons and proper use of school property
- are familiar with and abide by school policies, expectations and regulations dealing with student conduct
- attend school every day unless legally excused; be present in class on time and prepared to learn
- work to the best of their ability in all academic and extracurricular pursuits and strive toward their highest level of achievement possible
- respond to direction given by teachers, administrators and other school personnel in a respectful, positive manner
- work to develop ways to manage or otherwise appropriately express their anger
- ask questions when they do not understand directions or classroom instruction
- seek help in solving problems that might lead to conflicts or physical confrontations
- wear the school uniform and dress appropriately at all school functions

VOICE Complaint Policy

The process for making complaints, with contact information, is available at the school website. Any public or nonpublic school parent or teacher, other interested person, or agency may file a complaint.

Please refer to this location [Handbook/School Policies — VOICE Charter School](#) for the most up to date Complaint Policy and steps to be taken.

[www.https://www.voicecharterschool.org/family-handbook](https://www.voicecharterschool.org/family-handbook)

Appeal to the NYCDOE

If after your appeal you are not satisfied with the Board of Trustees' decision, and if your complaint involves a violation of either the school's policies or its charter, you may submit a formal complaint to the Charter Authorization Team at the NYCDOE via email, CharterOversight@schools.nyc.gov.

Appeal to the New York State Board of Regents

If you are still not satisfied with the outcome after going through the other levels of the complaint process, you may write to:

The NY State Board of Regents
NY State Education Department
Charter School Office, Room 465 EBA
[89 Washington Avenue,](#)
[Albany, NY 12234](#)
518-474-1762

Or send an email to charterschools@nysed.gov (subject line should include the name of the school and the word "Complaint").

If you'd like to reach out to VOICE's Board of Trustees, please email board@voicecharterschool.org

Homeless Student Policy

The student population at VOICE Charter School (“VOICE”) comes from a number of community school districts within New York City. The identification and accommodation of homeless children, children in temporary housing and unaccompanied youth who are enrolled in VOICE is an important part of ensuring appropriate services and transportation are provided to these students.

- VOICE is not responsible for identifying homeless children, children in temporary housing and unaccompanied youth who are not enrolled in the School. The identification and accommodation of these students is, in the first instance, the New York City Department of Education’s (“DOE”) responsibility. However, if and when students who are homeless, in temporary housing or are unaccompanied youth enroll in VOICE, the School applies available Title I funds for all applicable services so as to provide these students with appropriate accommodations and aids, and VOICE does not discriminate on the basis of homelessness or any other basis in applying Title I funds where appropriate.
- As part of the initial registration at VOICE, and annually thereafter, VOICE offers each student a residency questionnaire to describe his or her living arrangements, which is intended to identify students who are homeless, in temporary housing or are unaccompanied youth under the McKinney- Vento Homeless Assistance Act. The residency questionnaire is included each year in the first day packet along with this handbook.
- Transportation of VOICE students remains the DOE’s responsibility and VOICE will refer all suspected homeless or unaccompanied children to the DOE for their transportation needs.
- VOICE has a Homeless Liaison who is responsible for overseeing and identifying the needs of VOICE’s homeless students and families as well as coordinating the resources that are available to such students and families through VOICE and the DOE. The Homeless Liaison will be able to define the resources with which VOICE can support the homeless student and family and refer them to the DOE for all other services. VOICE’s designated Homeless Liaison is Karina Chalas.

EDUCATION LAW § 2-D BILL OF RIGHTS FOR DATA PRIVACY AND SECURITY

Parents (includes legal guardians or persons in parental relationships) and

Eligible Students (students 18 years and older) can expect the following:

1. A student's personally identifiable information (PII) cannot be sold or released for- any commercial purpose. PII, as defined by Education Law § 2 d and FERPA, includes direct identifiers such as a student's name or identification number, parent's name, or address; and indirect identifiers such as a student's date of birth, which when linked to or combined with other information can be used to distinguish or trace a student's identity. Please see FERPA's regulations at 34 CFR 99.3 for a more complete definition.

2. The right to inspect and review the complete contents of the student's education record stored or maintained by an educational agency. This right may not apply to parents of an Eligible Student.

3. State and federal laws such as Education Law § 2-d; the Commissioner of Education's Regulations at 8 NYCRR Part 121, the

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act ("FERPA") at 12

U.S.C. 1232g (34 CFR Part 99);- Children's Online Privacy Protection Act ("COPPA") at 15 U.S.C. 6501 6502 (16CFR Part 312); Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment ("PPRA") at 20 U.S.C. 1232h (34 CFR Part 98); the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act ("IDEA") at 20 U.S.C. 1400 et seq. (34 CFR Part 300); protect the confidentiality of a student's identifiable information.

4. Safeguards associated with industry standards and best practices including but not limited to encryption, firewalls and password protection must be in place when student PII is stored or transferred.

5. A complete list of all student data- elements- collected by NYSED is available at www.nysed.gov/data privacy security, and by writing to: Chief Privacy Officer, New York State Education Department, 89 Washington Avenue, Albany, NY 12234.

6. The right to have complaints about possible breaches and unauthorized disclosures of PII addressed. Complaints-- may be submitted to NYSED at [www.nysed.gov/data privacy security](http://www.nysed.gov/data_privacy_security); by mail to: Chief Privacy Officer, New York State Education Department, 89 Washington Avenue, Albany, NY 12234; by -email- to privacy@nysed.gov; or by telephone at 518 474 0937.

7. To be notified in accordance with applicable laws and regulations if a breach or unauthorized release of PII occurs.

8. Educational agency workers that handle PII will receive training on applicable state and federal laws, policies, and safeguards associated with industry standards and best practices that protect PII.

9. Educational agency contracts with vendors that receive PII will address statutory and regulatory data privacy and security requirements.

