

**LEAD FOR
RACIAL EQUITY**

**STRIVE FOR
EXCELLENCE**

**EMBRACE
CHALLENGE**

**CARE FOR THE
WHOLE PERSON**

**CHOOSE
JOY**

**GO FURTHER
TOGETHER**

Family Handbook Addendum

2020-2021

www.achievementfirst.org



Contents

Welcome!

The Mission of Achievement First	4
Attendance	5
Tardies & Early Dismissals	7
Make-Up Work After Absence	8
Homework	8
Discipline	8
Code of Conduct	9
Cheating, Plagiarism and Copying Others Work	16
Scholar Searches	16
Transportation	18
School Bus Transportation	18
Notifying the School of Transportation Changes	18
Bus Behavior	18
Arrival and Dismissal	19
Late Pickup From School	20
Scholars Who Walk	20
After-School or Saturday Transportation	20
School Uniforms	21
Promotion to the Next Grade	21
About Promotion at Achievement First	21
Connecticut Special Services	25
Closed Campus	28
Addressing Family Concerns	30
Grievances Related to Discrimination Issues	32
School Calendar and Closings	32
School Closure Policy	32
Connecticut - Bullying	35
Connecticut - Cyberbullying	36
Campus Parent and Campus Student	37
Nursing Services and Medication	37

School Lunch Program	38
Healthy Foods Policy	38
Appendices	39
Appendix A: Reporting, Investigation, Intervention, and Prevention of Bullying and CyberBullying	39
Appendix B: Disciplinary Procedures and Due Process Rights	41
Appendix C: Discipline of Scholars with Special Needs	48
Appendix D: How to File a Grievance about Discrimination	51
Appendix E: Behavioral Support Request Form	55
Appendix F: Family Concern Form	56
Appendix G: Additional Information	57
Statement of Understanding	62
Important Attachments	
Attachment 1: School-Parent-Scholar Commitments	
Attachment 2: School Calendar	
Attachment 3: Scholar Behavior System Information	

Welcome!

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

The Mission of Achievement First

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

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

Attendance

Attendance is the most basic requirement for us to support the health and safety of scholars. We believe that despite the uncertainty of hybrid and remote learning in 20-21, it is as critical as ever that we have a high bar for making sure scholars are accessing the education that is their right. We know that poor attendance is linked to negative educational and professional outcomes, so we emphasize attendance as part of our investment in scholars' futures. We need parents' help to ensure that their child is accessing school and we promise our support and understanding for families as they navigate school during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Health and safety is our first priority. We will balance the need to make sure that school is not putting scholars at risk with our authentic belief that attendance with a strong school community is more important for our scholars now than ever.

Our school day runs from 7:45-3:10 on Monday-Thursday and 7:45-1:45 on Friday. All scholars are expected to either be in school in person or attending school remotely during these times. We will work with families to problem solve any challenges that are preventing scholars from coming to school so we can provide whatever support is needed. We will still follow up with all absent scholars as we have in previous years, because we believe the educational experience we offer is positive and powerful for scholars even during a pandemic. The school team will regularly monitor and communicate about scholar attendance.

Please note the following important attendance policies:

- ***We understand that everyone needs grace and the benefit of the doubt in these hard times.*** We commit to structuring every minute of the school day in a way that will benefit your child academically and socially. We take attendance seriously at our schools and our expectations are high. However, given the uncertainty and difficulties we're facing during the 20-21 school year, we will be emphasizing that the most important thing is to understand why scholars are missing class and problem solving what supports you need to help them access their education. We know there will be circumstances when scholars will need to miss school due to a serious illness, an emergency beyond the family's control, or a religious observance. We will mark scholars absent in these circumstances, so that we know who to follow up with to make sure each scholar is safe and able to be a part of our school community.
- ***We don't want you to come to school sick.*** In the interest of protecting our scholars' and staff's health, everyone who is scheduled to attend school in person must complete a health screening survey; anyone displaying symptoms of an infectious illness must stay home for the day. If your scholar is feeling well enough for remote learning that day,

they can always attend our remote school options until their symptoms pass. If your scholar is too sick for in person or remote school, we fully encourage them to rest instead of attending remote learning while sick.

- ***Suspensions count as absences unless the scholar attends alternative instruction.*** If a scholar is suspended from school, the family is entitled to alternative instruction as soon as practicable (one hour minimum per day at the elementary level, two hour minimum per day at the middle and high school levels). A school representative will reach out to the family to schedule alternative instruction at a mutually agreeable time. It may take a full day or more to get alternative instruction logistics set up, particular if there are safety concerns based on the conduct of the scholar. If the child does not attend this alternative instruction, the suspension will be counted as an absence.
- ***Transportation and Attendance:*** Missing the bus is not an acceptable reason to miss an entire school day on a day your scholar is scheduled to be in person. Every scholar should have a back-up plan for getting to school if he/she misses the bus. Parents/guardians should call the school immediately after the scholar misses the bus so that the school knows the situation and can help problem-solve.
- ***Ten absences to start the school year or during the school year:*** If a scholar is absent for 10 consecutive days during the school year and there has been no successful contact between the family and the school to explain the absence, that seat may be filled with another scholar from the waitlist. The school will meet state requirements for reaching out to families to confirm mandatory school attendance. In addition, a report may be filed with the appropriate child services agency.
- ***COVID-19 and quarantine:*** Families will be informed if their child was exposed to COVID-19 at school, and may be asked to quarantine at home and attend school remotely for the duration of the quarantine. Scholars will be welcomed back to their in person classroom at the end of the quarantine period if they are not displaying any symptoms.
- ***The school will track and follow up on scholar absences:*** The school will take attendance daily and for each remote class period and will maintain records of all scholar absences. If a scholar misses school or individual classes during the day, Achievement First staff will make reasonable efforts to contact the scholar's parent/guardian by telephone, writing, or in person. A member of the school leadership team will follow up with parents/guardians about recurring attendance issues.
- ***Exams and Quizzes:*** If a scholar is absent, he/she must make up any exams, quizzes, interim assessments, or other tests the day he/she returns.
- ***Fifteen Absences in a Year:*** If a scholar is absent 15 times in a year, the scholar may be considered truant. The parent/guardian will be called to for a virtual meeting with the Principal or another member of the Leadership Team to assess what academic and

social supports may be necessary to ensure the scholars' continued success in their academics and as a member of our school community. In the case that the school tries to contact the family of a scholar who is consistently absent without receiving a response, a report may be filed with the appropriate child services agency.

Tardies & Early Dismissals

Attending class on time for the entire school day is key to your scholar's success and teaches important life skills. At our school, learning begins from the moment school begins. Tardiness and skipping class lead to missed academic content as well as a habit of inconsistency that will impact a child's future.

Tardiness

For scholars attending in person, our doors open at 7:15 A.M. each morning. Scholars must arrive between 7:15 A.M. and 7:45 A.M. Scholars arriving after 7:45 A.M. are considered tardy. In cases when a school bus arrives late, those scholars arriving on that bus will not be considered tardy. Every five tardies in a year will be counted as one absence.

For scholars attending remotely, our remote classes begin daily at 7:45 A.M. each morning. Scholars must arrive at each of their scheduled live online classes within the first 5 minutes. Scholars arriving after 5 minutes have passed in the period are considered tardy. Every five tardies in a year will be counted as one absence.

Early Dismissal

Scholars who attend in person are expected to stay in school until the end of the day (3:10 P.M. for regular dismissal on Mondays - Thursdays, and all scholars are completely remote on Fridays). In order to maximize time spent learning and avoid unnecessary disruptions, we ask that Parents/guardians do not pick up scholars early, except in an emergency situation. Since we are intently focused on climbing the mountain to college, our policy is not to release scholars prior to the end of the school day without prior notification (a note or call before 9:00 AM) or in exceptional circumstances. Every five early dismissals in a year will be counted as one absence. We also ask that parents wait in the designated area until 3:10 P.M. dismissal so as not to disrupt learning.

Scholars who attend remotely are expected to be live on Zoom for classes until (3:10 P.M. for regular dismissal and 1:45 P.M. on Fridays). In order to maximize time spent learning and avoid unnecessary disruptions, we ask that Parents/guardians do not pull scholars out of school early, except in an emergency situation. We will only consider absence from class an early dismissal if a parent or guardian contacts the school to let us know-- otherwise, absence from live Zoom instruction will be considered an absence from that class. Every five early dismissals in a year will be counted as one absence.

Consequences for Tardiness and Early Dismissals

Since every five tardies/early dismissals will be recorded as an absence under the school's policy, excessive tardiness and/or early dismissals becomes an attendance problem. If a scholar is absent 15 times (and some or all of these absences may actually be due to excessive tardiness/early dismissals), the scholar risks missing so much work that their grades fall low enough to endanger their promotion to the next grade.

Make-Up Work After Absence

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

In the event of a planned absence (one that you know about in advance), parents/guardians should notify teachers and the Main Office several days in advance so they can prepare work for scholars to complete during the absence.

Homework

Homework is an essential part of the Achievement First educational program: it is designed to reinforce skills taught in the classroom, to help scholars develop a deeper understanding of concepts, and to promote good study habits. Homework will be assigned *every* night at Achievement First. Homework must be completed in full and in accordance with Achievement First's high standards for quality work and professional presentation.

If a scholar's homework is late, missing, incomplete, or of poor quality, then the scholar may earn consequences. For example, the scholar may face negative grade implications and will be required to make up the work within one week to earn credit. Parents/guardians may receive a phone call if their child has missed several assignments. Making sure that your scholar completes his/her homework every night is one of the most important ways you can support college readiness!

Discipline

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

scholar behavior because we believe high standards create a safe, positive, and productive environment for our scholars.

First, teachers build strong relationships with scholars so as to challenge them to be their best selves. We use tactics to engage all scholars. We bring joy to the classroom. Teachers celebrate both the academic and character excellence of all scholars throughout the day. This is the basis of a warm-demanding classroom.

Much of the strength of our culture is rooted in the clarity, consistency and rationale guiding our high expectations. Behavior expectations are the same from classroom to classroom because we believe that consistency creates predictability, leading to a safe space that removes barriers for scholars to be their best and brightest. All Achievement First scholars learn and practice common courtesies (e.g., please, thank you, and proper greetings).

The path to college starts from Day 1 of Kindergarten. We take pride in sharing Life Skills and Core Values we embody with our scholars. We, and all scholars, also take pride in being our best selves every day. To that end, we will all hold each other accountable to being our best selves. As necessary, we will make thoughtful modifications and provide additional supports so that our scholars receiving special services have the support (consistent with their IEPs and 504 plans) they need to be successful. We recognize that all scholars are unique and have different needs to allow them to be most successful. Scholars with disabilities as well as those with behavior support plans or behavior interventions may have specific adjustments made to ensure these scholars do not receive consequences as a result of their disability.

Through the use of proactive, preventative strategies, we aim to keep all of our students in class all day, every day. While we believe deeply in the power of positive reinforcement, we also believe consequences can play an important part in encouraging scholars to make more positive choices.

If scholars make poor choices, we employ developmentally appropriate action such as writing a letter of apology of acceptable quality (as deemed by the principal or dean) based on the child's academic level.

Code of Conduct

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

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

Scholars may be removed from class and/or school immediately if the scholar's presence in school or class poses a continuing danger to persons or property, an ongoing threat of danger, or a serious disruption to the academic process. We recognize that removal from the classroom directly impacts the learning for all scholars. Removal from class is not our first mode of support for any scholar, and will only be used if a scholar continuously does not meet expectations, disrupts learning time, or poses a threat to their safety or others *after* the teacher or school staff attempts to de-escalate the scholar in the classroom. For more on classroom removal, please see [the section here](#).

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

to both rewards (*e.g.*, privileges, awards, or shout-outs) or consequences and supports (*e.g.*, loss of privileges, interventions, and/or extensions). Repeated and/or severe behavior resulting in demerits and/or extension may also lead to suspension under the Code of Conduct below.

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

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

INFRACTIONS

Violation of School Rule

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

Disrespect

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

Disruptive, distracting behavior

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

Being unprepared for class

- Missing items necessary for class such as:
 - Homework, reading materials/textbooks etc.
- Failing to complete homework or other assignment

INFRACTIONS: Range of School Responses, Interventions, and Consequences

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

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

Additional information about expectations and consequences, can be found [here](#).

SERIOUS INFRACTIONS

Disrespect

- Serious disrespect of a fellow scholar or scholars

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

Not being where the scholar is supposed to be

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

Not following consequences

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

Repeated misbehavior

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

Other serious infractions

- Serious versions of conduct listed under the infractions category

SERIOUS INFRACTIONS: Range of School Responses, Interventions and Consequences

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

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

MAJOR OFFENSES

Medication or Tobacco

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

Fleeing or blocking access

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

- Blocking access to any part of the school building

Action that impairs the school's ability to function

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

Abuse or Harassment

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

Damaging Property

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

Physical Aggression

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

Sexual Activity

- Engaging in sexual activity or inappropriate touching
- Indecent exposure

Gambling, Stealing, Lying, Forgery, Plagiarism

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

Other major offenses

- Major versions of conduct listed under the serious infractions category

MAJOR OFFENSES: Range of School Responses, Interventions and Consequences

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

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

EGREGIOUS OFFENSES

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

EGREGIOUS OFFENSES: Range of School Responses, Interventions and Consequences

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

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

When an egregious offense occurs, both the principal and regional superintendent should be notified immediately. Past disciplinary offenses may be considered in the school's decision-making around consequences. If the scholar has already been found to have engaged

in an egregious offense that did not result in long-term suspension or expulsion earlier in the school year, the school is more likely to recommend long-term suspension or expulsion upon any subsequent egregious offense. In keeping with the Gun-Free Schools Act, it shall be the policy of the Board to suspend a student for at least one full calendar year whenever the student is in the possession of a firearm as defined in 18 U.S.C. § 921(a). The Board shall modify the term of the expulsion on a case-by-case basis.

Cheating, Plagiarism and Copying Others Work

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

Scholar Searches

In authorizing searches, the school acknowledges both state and federal constitutional rights which are applicable to personal searches of scholars and searches of their possessions. In order to maintain the safety of all its scholars, Achievement First staff reserve the right to conduct searches of scholars and their property when there is reasonable individualized suspicion that the scholar has violated the law or a school rule. If searches are conducted, such searches will be justified at its inception, reasonable in scope, and not excessively intrusive. To that end, the school will make every effort to ensure that the privacy of the scholars is respected and that scholars and their families are informed of the circumstances surrounding and results of the search.

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

A scholar's personal items, such as backpacks and purses, are not considered school property.. However, the school may still search their property if there is individualized and reasonable suspicion that a scholar has violated the law or a school rule (e.g., an eyewitness who reports

the student to be in possession of a prohibited substance or item). At least two (2) school personnel must be present for the search of a scholar's personal belongings.

With respect to searches of a scholar's person and clothing, the school may request that a scholar empty their pockets or remove shoes or jackets. If the scholar does not comply, school personnel will not search a scholar's physical person (e.g., they will not reach into a scholar's pockets or attempt to remove a scholar's shoes or jackets). The scholar's parent or guardian will be contacted and asked to come to the school. The school may ask a scholar's parent or guardian to conduct a search of a scholar's person in the presence of school personnel.

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

Scholars have no reasonable expectation of privacy rights in school lockers, cubbies, desks, or other school storage places. The school exercises overriding control over such school property, which may be opened and subjected to inspection at any time by school officials. At least two (2) school personnel should be present for any locker search.

Identifying & Investigating Substance Use

At times, school staff may have questions about whether a scholar is under the influence of a prohibited substance due to the scholar's behavior, odor (smell of marijuana or alcohol), or affect (slurred speech).

If there is an urgent concern about the scholar's health (e.g., the scholar is throwing up), the impairment is obvious or significant, the scholar presents a safety risk to themselves or others, or if the scholar's condition worsens over time, the scholar will be sent to the nurse for immediate treatment. Investigation of the use of prohibited substances will begin or resume after the scholar receives the appropriate medical treatment from the nurse. If the scholar is determined not to be intoxicated, they will be sent back to class, unless there is another health issue that needs to be addressed by the nurse. School staff will not call the police or an ambulance unless there is an emergency that requires their assistance.

Transportation

School Bus Transportation

Busing for Achievement First schools is provided by the local school districts in New York and Connecticut, and via contract with a third-party bussing provider in Rhode Island. They determine the eligibility of a scholar for yellow school busing, in addition to routes and stops.

Notifying the School of Transportation Changes

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

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

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

Bus Behavior

We reserve the right to suspend an eligible scholar from the bus if he/she in any way threatens the safety and well-being of his/her peers. Unsafe behavior on the bus endangers our scholars, and it will not be tolerated. A pattern of unsafe behavior may result in loss of bus privileges.

Bus drivers must focus on the road to make sure all scholars arrive at school and home safely. On the bus, scholars must remain in their seats, talk quietly, and follow all directions given by the bus driver. Scholars who do not meet these expectations compromise the safety of themselves and others. This may result in suspension or termination of transportation services.

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

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

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

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

Arrival and Dismissal

Scholars should not arrive at school earlier than 7:15 A.M.

Buses will pick up and drop off scholars next to the building. As a result, we ask that parents dropping off or picking up scholars do so at 305 Greenfield St. located in front of the Hartford Public Library. Please remain mindful of the tight traffic situation, arrive on time, and plan accordingly.

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

Late Pickup From School

Scholars who are picked up at the end of the school day are expected to be picked up during dismissal (3:10 P.M. for regular dismissal Monday-Thursday). If an approved pick-up (parent/guardian/etc.) is more than an hour late picking up his/her child, the school may need to take the child to the local police precinct for safe supervision.

Scholars Who Walk

Unless parents notify the school differently, parents of high school scholars have permission to walk home or take the city bus.

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

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

After-School or Saturday Transportation

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

Ridesharing Policy

It is a violation of both [Uber](#) and [Lyft's](#) terms of service to allow minors to travel without an adult in an Uber or Lyft vehicle, largely due to the concerns that the drivers are not screened for being alone with children. **Therefore, schools will not allow students to depart school in rideshares ordered by a parent/guardian, UNLESS the student is accompanied on the ride by a parent/guardian** (this includes Uber/Lyft/other ridesharing services).

School Uniforms

- There is no uniform requirement for remote learning. Students can dress casually; students may not wear sleepwear (e.g. pajamas, undergarments, sleep bonnets/head ties, wave caps/du-rags, or bandanas) low-cut shirts (including tank tops and camisoles), cut-off/revealing bottoms that will be visible during remote learning, hats/hoods, and clothing with inappropriate or profane writing or images. Headwraps (e.g. Kente wraps). Scholars may wear cultural and religious headwear, headwraps, and hairbands; however, scholars are not allowed to wear hats, bonnets, du-rags, or sweatbands in the building during instructional time. Such items worn inside the building will be taken from scholars and stored at the front desk for parents to pick up. Scarfs/head wraps for religious purposes are permitted.

Promotion to the Next Grade

About Promotion at Achievement First

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

Within the context of COVID-19, we are revisiting our network retention policies and will share an updated policy mid-year. See promotional policies for ELLs and students with IEPs below.

Connecticut Promotion for English Language Learners (ELLs):

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

All ELL scholars shall be evaluated at least once each school year through the state's English-language proficiency test. When a scholar fails to progress appropriately within the ELL program, AF will use all other assessment procedures to determine the reason for lack of progress and shall provide appropriate instructional interventions. ELL scholars shall participate in the State Assessment Program in accordance with state policies, with progress reported as required under Connecticut state law.

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

Promotion for Students with IEPs:

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

- Ensure that all IEPs document the services the school provides and that the school has a signed copy of the IEP.
- Send home IEP progress reports as often we send home report cards (signed and returned); IEP progress reports should indicate whether or not a student is on track to meeting her/his IEP goals and should align to the student's general performance.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Supporting Non-Promoted Students

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

Informing Other Schools

It is Achievement First’s policy to inform other schools of the scholar’s promotion status. For example, if a third grader is not promoted to fourth grade at an Achievement First school and the parent decides to enroll the child in another school, Achievement First will inform the school that the scholar did not meet the requirements for promotion to fourth grade and should be a third grader when enrolling in the new school.

High School Graduation Requirements

In order to ensure the integrity of the diploma graduates earn upon completion of the course of studies, the faculty, staff, and administration are committed to consistently and carefully upholding the graduation criteria. Students who do not meet the promotional criteria in a given year will not advance to the next grade and will instead be expected to repeat the same course of study. The faculty, staff, and administration recognize that some students, depending on their current achievement and/or special services program and services, may benefit from additional support in some subjects. Depending on their needs, the leadership team will make data-driven scholar-by-scholar decisions on whether scholars will substitute intervention coursework for some course requirements.

Achievement First’s New York high school curriculum requires scholars to successfully complete **26 credits** for graduation.

Required Credits	# of Credits
Mathematics	4
Science	4
Literature	3
Seminar	3
History	4
College Readiness	1.5
Required Electives (Arts, Health, World Languages, and PE)	4.5
Other Electives	2
Total	26

Within those 26 credits, our curriculum also requires scholars to complete specific coursework in our core content areas. Scholars will have the opportunity to select advanced coursework in these subjects after completing these requirements-- for example, many of our seniors take AP Literature after AP English Language. Depending on their needs, scholars may substitute additional intervention coursework for some of these requirements. In addition to these requirements, scholars also take the required electives outlined above, and will have the opportunity to select other electives based on their interests.

Grade	History	Seminar	Literature	Science	Math - Scholars who take Alg 1 in 8th grade start in Geometry		College
9	Foundations of History	Seminar I	Literature I	Physics	Algebra I	Geometry	
10	AP World History: Modern	Seminar II	Literature II	Chemistry	Geometry	Algebra II	
11	AP US History	AP Seminar	AP English Language	Biology	Algebra II	Precalculus	Foundations of Leadership & SAT Prep
12	AP Government & Politics			AP Biology or another AP Science	AP Statistics	AP Calculus AB	Foundations of Leadership

During their high school career, scholars must pass 5 Regents exams: 1 exam (score of 65 or higher) in each content area (Literature, History, Science, and Math); plus 1 additional exam in any of the four content areas or through getting approval to substitute an approved AP Exam score of 3 or above.

In order to help scholars learn more about their interests outside the school setting and build a well-rounded college application, Achievement First also assists scholars in completing the below out-of-school graduation requirements:

Other Requirements	
Community Service	40 hours
Summer Program Completion	Completion of AF-approved summer programs after grades 9-11. Options include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Pre-college and enrichment programs ● Internships

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Summer Academy• SAT Boot Camp
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Connecticut Special Services

Achievement First is required and committed to serving all scholars enrolled in our schools, including scholars with disabilities and scholars with a history of academic and/or behavior difficulties.

Response to Intervention (RTI)

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires us (in collaboration with our partner districts to identify, locate, and evaluate students in need of special education and related services.

Our primary mechanism to identify students who may qualify for special education is the Response to Intervention (RTI.) We believe that providing early and robust interventions, that are scientifically-based, can simultaneously help us identify students who may qualify for special education services and stem the over-identification of racial minorities in special education.

RTI encompass a high quality curriculum and instruction in the general education classroom, as well as interventions Tier 2 interventions- academic or behavioral supports beyond what is offered in the general classrooms- and Tier 3 interventions- individual instruction for the scholars who need the most support. For this reason, we rely on regular progress monitoring and active Child Study Team to determine which students may require more intense interventions and/or should be referred to the IEP Team for an initial evaluation to determine eligibility for Special Education and related services.

If you have concerns about your student’s progress, you may refer your child to the Child Study Team by submitting a written request to the front office. If you have questions about the Child Study Team, please contact Director of Special Services, Carmen Martin at 860-559-4370.

Referral to Special Education

Although we rely on the RTI process to provide early interventions and identify scholars who should be evaluated for special education and related services, the lack of RTI data should never be used as the reason not to refer a student to determine his/her eligibility for special education and related services.

Once the school refers the student to a team, a series of meetings must occur in a specified timeframe to potentially evaluate the student for special education and related services:

- Referral Meeting: The first meeting is when the team decides which evaluations a student should receive. This may be a meeting or may be in the form of email communication.
- Evaluations: The team determines which evaluations a student receives. A student usually receives a social evaluation, psychological evaluation, and educational assessment; sometimes students require specialized evaluations.
- Eligibility Meeting: After the evaluations, the team reconvenes to determine if the data collected from the evaluations indicate that the student is eligible for a disability classification.
- IEP Meeting: If the team determines that the student has a disability and is eligible for special education services, then an IEP meeting is called and the team articulates the supports and services the student will require in order to be successful.

At any time you suspect your child has a disability, you have the right to refer your child to a PPT to determine if your child should be evaluated. You may complete a referral form or submit your concerns in writing. A PPT meeting will be arranged with the district, and you will be notified at least 5 days prior to the PPT meeting. If you have questions about the special education referral process, please contact Director of Special Services, Carmen Martin at 860-559-4370.

Section 504 Plans and IEPs:

Students with disabilities requiring specialized support may qualify for a support plan under either Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act or an IEP under the IDEA. A Section 504 plan outlines individualized accommodations and services to support the scholar, which may include testing accommodation, homework accommodations, and special transportation. An IEP can include accommodations and modifications to the general curriculum, individualized goals and objectives, and services, such as special education services and related services including speech and language therapy and occupational therapy. **If your child had a 504 plan or IEP at a previous school, please contact that school and have them provide a copy to the Main Office.**

Requesting Behavioral Supports

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

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

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

After that meeting, you and the school may agree that the school will provide Tier 2 or Tier 3 behavioral supports to your child. However, if you and the school do not agree, and you would still like your child to receive behavioral supports, you can request that the school conduct an evaluation called a Functional Behavioral Assessment (“FBA”). As part of the FBA, the school will conduct classroom observations of your child, and collect data including: what kinds of behaviors your child is engaging in, how frequently behaviors are happening, whether there are specific events or circumstances that may trigger the behaviors, and how long behaviors last once they start.

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

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

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

Concerns about Special Education

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

Therefore, parents at AF have the option to file a formal complaint or grievance regarding the provision of special education. Some types of concerns for which a parent may choose to file a

formal complaint are: complaints that a child has been inappropriately disciplined for disability-related behaviors; complaints that a school will not provide behavioral supports for disability-related behaviors; or complaints that an IEP has not been adequately implemented. These are only examples; parents may have other types of concern related to special education for which they choose to file a formal complaint.

Process to file a Parental Grievance regarding Special Education

The process for how to file a complaint/grievance about special education is outlined in the “Addressing Family Concerns” section on page 37. Please note that for concerns or grievances regarding special education, the staff member to contact in Step 1 is the school’s Special Services Leader.

Closed Campus

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

Civility Code

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

We encourage families and scholars to share concerns with school staff, and vice versa, in a manner consistent with mutual respect. As members of a shared school community, we all commit to maintaining appropriate volume, tone, and substance. This means disrespect (*e.g.*, name-calling or frequent interruptions), profanity (*e.g.*, cursing), and threatening language are unacceptable. If a conversation does not meet our shared commitment of mutual respect, either party has the right to end the conversation and schedule additional time at a later date.

Families also have the option of addressing concerns, including the actions of a staff member, via the family concerns procedure (see [Appendix F for the Family Concern Form](#)).

Our priority is to maintain a safe and respectful environment for scholars and adults alike via a calm, productive, positive learning environment. Should a family in our community violate our civility code, the school may require written requests prior to scheduling subsequent meetings. The school reserves the right to bar an individual from the school site if there are repeated violations to the civility code. Violations of the civility code by staff members will also result in consequences.

Emergencies

In case of an emergency, parents or guardians should contact the school. Because of our revised building entrance policy given the current pandemic, parents should not enter the school building. If a scholar must be dismissed early, school staff will coordinate with the parent or guardian and student to ensure their safe dismissal.

Under no circumstance should parents attempt to remove scholars from the building without notifying and receiving permission from staff members in the school office. Scholars will not be dismissed without proper advanced notification from their parent or guardian.

Fire Safety and Evacuation Procedures

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

Should it be necessary to evacuate the school building, school staff and scholars will evacuate according to the school's evacuation plan. Once attendance is taken and the school building has confirmed to be safe, staff and scholars will return promptly. If the school building is off limits, the school has a designated congregation point where all staff and scholars will gather. Parents/guardians will be informed as soon as possible.

In the case of a lockdown within the school building due to an external threat or an intruder, scholars will follow our lockdown protocol. If the school is in a lockdown, no one may exit or enter the building. Once the threat is confirmed to be removed, the lockdown will be lifted and entrances/exits will be permitted.

Addressing Family Concerns

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

Procedures for Addressing Concerns

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

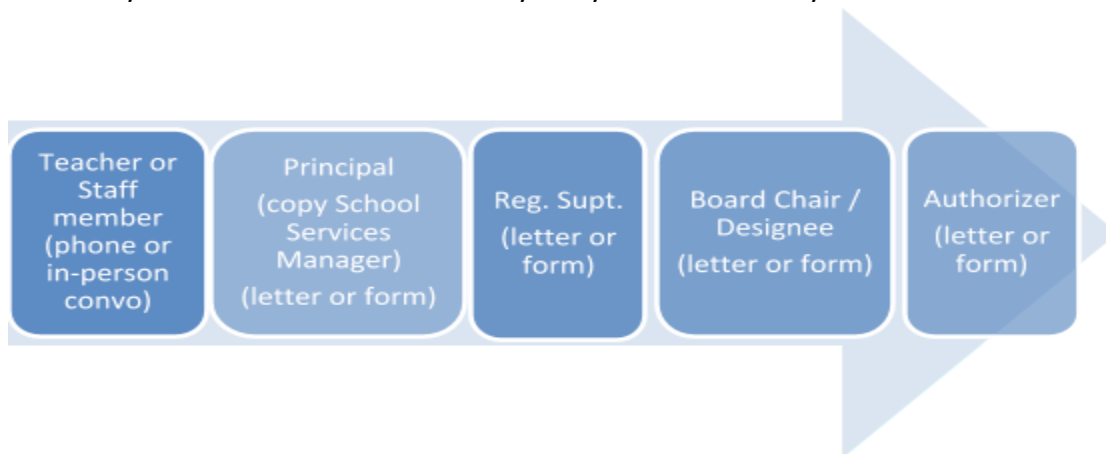
Step 2: Contact the Principal: If the issue is not resolved satisfactorily, the parent's next step is to reach out to the principal via phone or email or use the "Family Concern Form" (see Appendix F) to explain the issue in writing. Even if the issue is a problem with the principal directly, the parent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

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

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

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

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



The process described above is designed so that families can speak with the staff members who are most directly involved with the situation. Usually, this is the best way to resolve a concern or complaint because staff members can more quickly and efficiently address family concerns.

Parents do have the right, however, to submit concerns directly to the Board or to the authorizer. In this case, the Board will determine whether the complaint alleges a violation of the law or of the charter. If it does not, the Board will generally direct the parent back to the school level.

Grievances Related to Discrimination Issues

Achievement First does not condone or tolerate discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation or disability in admission or access to, or treatment, or employment in its programs or activities. Families have the right, therefore, to file a formal grievance if they believe that AF has violated a discrimination law (including Section 504, Title IX, and Title VI). The grievance procedure for discrimination issues is included in **Appendix D – How to File a Grievance about Discrimination** – please review it carefully. As noted in Appendix D, Carmen Martin is the Dean of Special Services, Title VII and Section 504 Coordinator and may be contacted at (860) 559-4370 carmenmartin@achievementfirst.org . Marrie Ayub, Director of School Operations is the Title IX Coordinator and may be reached at (203) 314-5010. The purpose of this formal grievance procedure is to provide a simple and accessible process to address problems and claims of discrimination based on race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation or disability. The Special Services Coordinator may designate the resolution of certain grievances to other appropriate school staff members.

School Calendar and Closings

School Closure Policy

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

Special Circumstances

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

School Closure Make-Up Plan

1. Due to the restrictions around COVID, we need to push back our start date to accommodate the constantly changing landscape that is now our new reality. For 20-21, the base of core instructional days is between 180-181 in all regions.
2. AF schools make up snow days as soon as schools fall below 180 instructional days. We plan to convert Data Days into additional days of school as long as we can provide advanced notification within two weeks. If additional days are needed, then the school year will be extended.
3. Therefore families, staff and scholars are strongly encouraged to refrain from making any definite plans for these potential make-up times just in case additional school days are required.

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

Student Technology Devices and Internet Use Policy

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

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

A. Use is a Privilege

Student use of Achievement First's computers, tablets, software tools, networks and Internet services is a privilege. No one will deliberately or willfully cause damage to computer equipment, network resources, or assist another in doing the same. No one will deliberately or willfully use their or any other Achievement First Google email account (Gmail) to create accounts on third party sites for purposes other than educational and not without the explicit permission from Achievement First personnel. No one will use their account to disrupt the learning of others.

B. Acceptable Use

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

C. Use of Google Educational Email Accounts and Services

Students are assigned a Google email (Gmail) account for educational and software identification purposes as well as to communicate with school staff with instructional goal intent. In addition to the Gmail account, Students are also provided access to the Google Suite for Education productivity tools and applications (Document, spreadsheets, powerpoint, Maps, for the purposes of this section) for the purposes research consistent with curriculum and instructional goals. All Internet access and other online services available to scholars are filtered and monitored to ensure their security and safety.

Student's personal information is protected in the creation of their software accounts and when they are using their accounts for the purposes of doing their school work. Personal information such as name, email, and password are only shared with Google and software vendors in situations involving account issues. Google and contracted software partners are prevented from sharing student's information by Achievement First and state laws.

Students are expected to use their Gmail account and its additional services in a responsible, efficient, and courteous manner that does not cause any harm to themselves or others.

D. Prohibited Use

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

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

D. No Expectation of Privacy

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

Connecticut - Bullying

The law defines "bullying" as (A) the repeated use by one or more students of a written, oral or electronic communication, directed at or referring to another student attending the school, or (B) a physical act or gesture by one or more students repeatedly directed at another student attending school in the same school district, that: (i) Causes physical or emotional harm to such student or damage to such student's property, (ii) places such student in reasonable fear of harm

to himself or herself, or of damage to his or her property, (iii) creates a hostile environment at school for such student, (iv) infringes on the rights of such student at school, or (v) substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school. “Bullying” includes, but is not limited to, a written, oral or electronic communication or physical act or gesture based on any actual or perceived differentiating characteristic, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, socioeconomic status, academic status, physical appearance, or mental, physical, developmental or sensory disability, or by association with an individual or group who has or is perceived to have one or more of such characteristics.

Connecticut - Cyberbullying

The law defines “cyber bullying” as any act of bullying through the use of the Internet, interactive and digital technologies, cellular mobile telephone or other mobile electronic devices or any electronic communications. Examples of this behavior include, but are not limited to:

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

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

Reporting and Prevention of Bullying and Cyberbullying

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

Student Cell Phone Policy

Students are not allowed to use cellphones in school, at school-sponsored activities, or on school field trips, unless specified by a staff member or chaperone in specific circumstances. This

includes any cell phone features and applications such as camera, video recorder, calculator, texting or social media. If, during these times, a cell phone is used, rings, vibrates, flashes, or is seen by a staff member or chaperone, it will be confiscated from the student. At the school's discretion, the cellphone will be returned to either the student by the end of the day or to a parent/guardian at an agreed upon time. The school may pursue disciplinary consequences found in the Code of Conduct depending on how disruptive the incident is and/or if a student has had multiple violations. Cell phones brought to school must be powered off, stored away in a locker or backpack area and cannot be taken out until the student is off school grounds.

Campus Parent and Campus Student

Achievement First uses an online student information system called Infinite Campus to track students' enrollments, contact information, attendance, grades, etc. The Campus Parent and Campus Student websites and apps allow parents and students to access the information about students' schedule, attendance, and grades that AF staff have entered in Infinite Campus. Teachers can also send parents and students messages about grades and assignments via the apps from their Infinite Campus accounts.

Schools will distribute information about accessing Campus Parent and Campus Student in August. Families can access our guide to using Campus Parent and Campus Student at:

- **English:** <https://tinyurl.com/AFCampusParent>
- **Spanish:** <https://tinyurl.com/AFCampusParentSpanish>

Nursing Services and Medication

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

We are required by law to have documentation of all vaccinations a child has received to date. This should be submitted immediately upon enrollment. Students without proper vaccinations or an approved exemption may be excluded from the building until proof of vaccination is provided to the school.

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

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

School Lunch Program

Our food service program differs across regions based upon local district and state accommodations.

- **Connecticut:** Breakfast and lunch will be available at no cost as part of our participation in the Community Eligibility Program (a federal program that subsidizes scholar meals).

Scholars have the alternative option of bringing lunch from home. Scholars do not have access to a refrigerator or microwave and are unable to refrigerate or reheat food.

Healthy Foods Policy

To support a scholar's overall health, we ask that food and beverages brought to school meet dietary guidelines and are nutritious.

Food not During Designated Times

Scholars may eat during designated meal times (breakfast, lunch, and snack).

Gum

Scholars (and teachers) should not chew gum. Scholars with gum may face a consequence.

Classroom Parties, Birthdays, and Other Events

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

We ask that scholars and families do not bring in food treats or other gift items for birthdays or holidays as the school cannot distribute them due to our Visitor's Policy. Families wishing to involve classmates in the celebration of their scholar's birthday or other holidays should do so by inviting them to a party that occurs outside of school hours. Please note that the school will not distribute invitations in school.

Appendices

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

Reporting Bullying and Cyber Bullying (together, "Bullying")

- 1) If a student feels that he/she is a victim of bullying, or witnesses a student being bullied, the student should report the incident to the dean of students, the safe school climate specialist. Students may report bullying situations anonymously via written note or e-mail to any teacher if they do not know which school leader is the safe school climate specialist, so long as the information is securely and privately delivered to the dean of students.
- 2) If a parent or guardian suspects bullying, they may report it via written note or e-mail to the dean of students.
- 3) Any staff member who witnesses or receives any report of bullying must notify the dean of students as soon as possible, and in any event within one school day after the staff member witnesses or receives a report of bullying.
- 4) All reports will be documented and maintained for the duration of the student's tenure at the school.
- 5) The school will maintain a list of the number of confirmed acts of bullying, without specific names. The school will make the list available upon request and will provide the number of confirmed acts of cyber bullying as required to the State Department of Education.

Investigation

- 1) As with any situation involving a serious breach of school culture and the Code of Conduct, the dean of students will take action to investigate the report of bullying. As bullying is prohibited by the Code of Conduct, it is important to note that this applies to activity on school grounds, at a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function or program whether on or off school grounds, at a school bus stop, on a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased or used by the school, or through the use of an electronic device owned, leased or used by the school, online or otherwise outside of the school setting if the bullying creates a hostile environment at school for the scholar against whom the bullying was directed, infringes on the rights of that scholar, or substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of the school.
- 2) The dean of students will investigate, in a timely fashion, parents' reports and will review students' reports, anonymous or otherwise, to determine the proper action.

- 3) The dean of students will question the reporting student or parent about specific details, which may include date of incident, time, location, and what was said or done to the student being bullied. If the reporter is anonymous, the dean of students will question those who are listed in the report. No disciplinary action will be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous report.
- 4) The dean of students will then meet with and question the student(s) accused of bullying, as well as the student(s) being bullied.
- 5) The dean of students or his/her designee will call the parents or guardians of the students involved in verified incidents of bullying and inform them of the incident(s), the school's response, and any consequences that may result from further acts of bullying within 48 hours after the completion of the investigation. Parents or guardians of scholars against whom the bullying was directed will be invited to a meeting to discuss the measures being taken by the school to ensure the safety of their scholar and policies and procedures in place to prevent further acts of bullying. Parents or guardians of scholars who committed the bullying will be invited to a separate meeting to discuss specific interventions undertaken by the school to prevent further acts of bullying.
- 6) At the discretion of the dean of students or his/her designee, the parents of both parties may be requested to come in and meet with the dean of students and Social Worker for mediation.

Intervention and Prevention

A. Intervention

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

B. Prevention

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

1. The school will maintain rules prohibiting bullying, harassment and intimidation and will establish appropriate consequences for those who bully other students.

2. The school prohibits discrimination and retaliation against any individual who reports or assists in the investigation of an act of bullying.
3. As part of our regular character education program, the school will provide advisory time and age appropriate curricula for all classes to discuss bullying in school and the effects of it.
4. The school will implement an on-going cyber safety curriculum to ensure that students are knowledgeable about how to safely interact online.
5. The school will work to protect the safety and security of minors when using electronic mail, chat rooms, and other forms of direct electronic communications.
6. The school will discuss values with parents during orientations.
7. The school's Friday PD program will contain a time to discuss promoting positive school culture including character development and bullying prevention training.
8. The school will use common time with students to discuss cyber safety and cyber bullying issues with students.
9. The school will host tech sessions to teach parents how to monitor their children's behavior on the Internet and their phones.

Appendix B: Disciplinary Procedures and Due Process Rights

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

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

Classroom Removals

- Although the goal is to keep scholars in the classroom learning as much as possible, a teacher, staff member, or school leader has the authority to remove a scholar from the classroom when the scholar's behavior poses a continuing danger to scholars or staff or an ongoing threat of disruption to the academic process.
- When a scholar is removed, the teacher must notify the dean of students or the dean's designee at once and send the scholar to a designated area.
- As soon as the child is able to have a calm conversation, the scholar will have the opportunity for an informal hearing with the dean or dean's designee to hear the reasons for the removal and have an opportunity to informally present the scholar's version of the relevant events before the staff member makes a decision whether to assign additional consequences. We think it is good practice to have an informal hearing, to the greatest extent possible, in connection with each removal.
- The overall goal is to get the scholar back on track and back in class as quickly as possible. In most cases, the scholar will be able to return to class in 20 to 60 minutes. In order to return to class, the scholar may have to complete a reflection form, not be disruptive in the removal area

or other classrooms or offices, demonstrate that he/she is calm and ready to return to class, practice building skills in the areas in which he/she struggled to make appropriate choices, and have a satisfactory conversation with the dean or dean's designee about the behavior and how the scholar is to behave the rest of the day and in the future. In addition, the scholar may be required to have a discussion with and apologize to the relevant teacher or staff member before re-entering the class.

- The dean, principal, or designee will record the amount of time lost from class.
- In cases of major or egregious behavior, the principal or dean may decide that the behavior warrants additional consequences that would keep the scholar from returning to class.

In-School Suspensions

The principal or a dean of students, as a designee of the principal, also has the authority to issue in-school suspensions (ISS). An ISS involves the scholar attending school but not attending regular classes and lasts (CT) between 90 minutes and 10 days . An ISS can only be issued by the principal or dean. When a scholar has engaged in a behavior that could warrant an in-school suspension, the following steps must take place:

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

Misbehavior during an in-school suspension, such as significant disruption of the learning of others and/or repeatedly failing to cooperate with directions, may result in additional consequences, including out-of-school suspension and expulsion, consistent with the school's disciplinary policies and procedures. As necessary and appropriate, the school may require that the in-school suspension be served at a different Achievement First school.

Short-Term Out-of-School Suspensions

The principal or a dean of students, as a designee of the principal, also has the authority to issue a short-term suspension. This is an out-of-school suspension that lasts from 90 minutes to 10 days. A short-term suspension can be issued only by the principal or dean. When a scholar has engaged in a behavior that could warrant such a suspension, the following steps must take place:

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

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

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

Work completion during suspension and documentation of suspensions

Scholars are responsible for completing academic work missed during the suspension. During the suspension and to the extent required by law, scholars have the right to substantially equivalent education in addition to IEP services. Families must contact the school to set-up alternative daily education during a suspension. When possible, the school will let the parent know the time and location

for the alternative education in the phone call home and in the suspension letter, or the parent should call the school to discuss such logistics as soon as possible. It may take a full day or more to get alternative instruction logistics set up, particularly if there are safety concerns based on the conduct of the scholars. Please note that scholars will not be considered “present” for attendance purposes if he/she does not attend alternative education. The completed work will receive full credit if it is submitted by the deadlines in accordance with the school make-up policy. If a scholar does not complete this work, the scholar may face standard academic consequences (*e.g.*, Homework Extension or no academic credit).

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

We ask all scholars who are suspended to take the following steps before they re-enter the school or classroom. We believe that the following practices are essential to set up the scholar for success.

Recommendation for Long-Term Out-of-School Suspension

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

The length of a longer suspension may be reduced (at the discretion of the principal) if the following are satisfied:

- The scholar and parent must meet with the principal or dean of students . During this meeting a re-entry plan for the scholar will be established. Parent(s) must be present at the meeting.
- The scholar writes a letter of apology of acceptable quality (as deemed by the principal or dean) based on the child’s actions.
- The scholar delivers the apology verbally (virtually) to Achievement First staff and/or scholars.
- The scholar may be asked to meet additional conditions if school staff believes these conditions will improve the likelihood of the scholar returning to school successfully.

Recommendation for Expulsion

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

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

Hearing Procedures

Except in an emergency situation, prior to long-term discipline of a scholar, a hearing shall be conducted by a Presiding Officer (which could be the Board of Trustees, a regional superintendent, or a designated

Hearing Officer), and governed by the procedures outlined below. Whenever an emergency exists, the hearing provided for above shall be held as soon as possible within the time limits set forth by law.

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

Specifically, the school shall provide written notice to the Parent or Guardian within 48 hours of the incident of the date and time of a formal hearing, which shall occur no less than 3 days after the incident in question, but within 10 days of the incident. This timeline is subject to change in certain instances (*e.g.*, the scholar responsible for an egregious offense is not identified until after days of investigation or the hearing would occur during school vacation), but in all instances, notice shall be provided as soon as practicable and consistent with requirements set forth by law.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Alternative Instruction

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

Appendix C: Discipline of Scholars with Special Needs

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

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

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

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

1. The parent did not allow the student to be evaluated;
2. The parent refused special education services, or;
3. The student was evaluated and determined not to qualify as a student with a disability.

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

Under the IDEA, a change of placement occurs if:

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

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

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

- The scholar is not segregated from his/her general education peers
- The scholar has continued access to the general curriculum

- The scholar continues to receive all services mandated in his/her IEP, 504 plan or Behavior Intervention Plan.

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

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

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

If, upon review, the team determines that the student's behavior is not a manifestation of his/her disability, then the child may be disciplined in the same manner as a child without a disability for that particular behavioral event. During the duration of the removal, the student shall receive an alternative educational opportunity consistent with the student's educational needs.

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

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

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

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

Weapons, Drugs and Serious Injury

If a child with a disability or suspected disability either:

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

- c) Inflicts serious bodily harm at school, on school premises or at a school function¹
;

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

If you have questions about the disciplinary guidelines for students with disabilities, please contact Dean of Special Services, Carmen Martin is the Title VII, Title IX and Section 504 Coordinator and may be contacted at 860.559.4370 carmenmartin@achievementfirst.org

Expulsions and Manifestation Determination Reviews

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

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

Provisions of Services during Removal

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

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

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

Appendix D: How to File a Grievance about Discrimination

Non-Discrimination

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

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

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

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

Internal Resolution Process:

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

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

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

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

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

Formal Procedure:

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

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

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

Grievances shall be submitted to the SSM, who will then forward the Grievance to the regional superintendent.

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

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

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

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

General Provisions

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

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

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

Additional procedures for Claims Alleging Harassment or Hostile Educational Environment

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

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

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

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

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

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

Complaints may be filed at <https://wdcrobcop01.ed.gov/CFAPPS/OCR/contactus.cfm>. Complainants may also contact the Regional Office for further information as follows:

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

Carmen Martin, Dean of Special Services, is the Title VII and Section 504 Coordinator and may be contacted at 860.559.4370 or via email carmenmartin@achievementfirst.org. The Special Services Coordinator may designate the resolution of certain grievances to other appropriate school staff members. Marrie Ayub, Director of School Operations, is the Title IX Coordinator and may be contacted at 203.314.5010 or via email marrieayub@achievementfirst.org.

Appendix E: Behavioral Support Request Form

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

Today's Date: _____

Your Name: _____ Phone Number: _____

Scholar's Name: _____ Grade: _____

Relationship to Scholar: _____

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

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

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

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

Appendix F: Family Concern Form

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

Today's Date: _____

Your Name: _____ Phone Number: _____

Scholar's Name: _____ Grade: _____

Relationship to Scholar: _____

Is your concern related to special education? Yes No

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

If yes, who were you in touch with?:

What was the result?

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

Appendix G: Additional Information

Title I

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

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

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

Achievement First Hartford High School is committed to providing quality instruction for all students and does so by employing the most qualified individuals to teach and support each student in the classroom. To request information about your child's teachers or if you have any questions, please contact the school's main office at 860-695-6685.

Public Documents / Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)

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

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

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

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

Open Meetings Laws

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

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

Use of Pictures & Videos of Scholars

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

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

Scholar Records: Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act

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

1. *Directory Information:* Directory Information is basic information about scholars including name, address, telephone number, other contact information, parent/guardian name and contact information, date of birth, dates of attendance, participation in activities, awards received, etc.

This information may be made available to others (internal or external) for specific use without the consent of the parent/guardian. For example, teachers may distribute class lists to everyone in the class so that scholars may help each other with homework or the school may provide addresses to another educational organization working on a voter registration drive. If a parent/guardian would not like such information released, he/she should submit a request in writing to the director of school operations.

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

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

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

In accordance with FERPA law:

- **Parents or scholars over 18 years of age have the right to inspect and review the scholar's education records maintained by the school.**

Parents or scholars over 18 years of age have the right to request that the school correct records which they believe to be inaccurate or misleading. If the school decides not to amend the record, the parent or eligible scholar then has the right to a formal hearing. The issue will first be heard by the superintendent of Achievement First or the superintendent's designee. If the parent or eligible scholar is still not satisfied with the decision of the superintendent or the superintendent's designee, a hearing with the Board of Trustees or a designated subcommittee of the board may be requested. The decision of the Board of Trustees or its designated subcommittee is final.

- The school may disclose, without consent, "directory" information such as a scholar's name, address, telephone number, parent/guardian name and contact information, date of birth, honors and awards, and dates of attendance (see list above under Scholar Records). Any parent who does not want such directory information included should submit a request in writing to the director of school operations.
- This listing in the Family Handbook serves as the school's annual notification of parents and eligible scholars of their rights under FERPA.
- Generally, the school must have written permission from the parent or eligible scholar in order to release any information from a scholar's education record. However, the school may disclose those records, without consent, to the following parties or under the following conditions (34 CFR § 99.31):
 - School officials with legitimate educational interest;
 - Other schools to which a scholar is transferring;
 - Specified officials for audit or evaluation purposes;
 - Appropriate parties in connection with financial aid to a scholar;
 - Organizations conducting certain studies for or on behalf of the school;
 - Accrediting organizations;
 - To comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena;
 - Appropriate officials in cases of health and safety emergencies; and

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

Statement of Understanding

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

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

Scholar Name

Parent / Guardian Name

Scholar Signature

Parent / Guardian Signature

Date

Date

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

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