



**The Exploris™ School**  
*Empowering Learners to Change the World*

**PARENT & STUDENT  
HANDBOOK**

**2017-2018**

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# 1

## INTRODUCTION TO EXPLORIS

### 1.1 Our Mission

Exploris is a learning community that engages students in a rigorous, relevant, relationship-based education. This is done through experiential, project-based learning that empowers students to build a connected, just, and sustainable world.

Exploris opened as one of the first charter schools in North Carolina in 1997. The school was attached to the Exploris Museum, an interactive museum with an international focus, and enrolled 53 sixth grade students from Wake and Johnston counties in its first year. As a Global Education school, its early mission was to help people of all ages learn to respect differences and appreciate similarities. Exploris was heralded as an adolescent-centered, self-directed learning environment that engaged students actively, taking an integrated approach to learning using major themes and projects. From its inception, the school sought to provide a nurturing and respectful atmosphere with high expectations for all learners.

Keeping Exploris’s mission at the forefront, Exploris fosters a collaborative, real-world approach to curriculum design and implementation. Using national and state standards as a jumping off point, teachers work together to create a compelling lens that drives the acquisition of content and skills. Teachers seek out university, governmental, and industry partnerships that add to the content-knowledge delivered to students. From these experts, teachers also learn of current, complex issues that help to contextualize student learning and make it relevant for students. By tackling current issues and working with experts to brainstorm solutions, students understand that they have something to offer the world. The work of Exploris students matters today.

Gone are the ringing bells, rows of desks, and fill-in-the blank worksheets. For most of the day, students and teachers are engaged in challenging learning experiences that explore a topic or theme in depth. Their studies call for intellectual inquiry, physical exploration, and community service. On any given day, these explorations may take them outside the school-building to do environmental research, conduct interviews in local businesses, or carry out other fieldwork assignments. Students work individually, in small groups, and as a member of their “crew” or class. Together they learn to draw on the strengths of a whole class.

### 1.2 Core Values

Exploris is a school founded on the principles of Global Education. According to David Selby and Graham Pike, international leaders in this approach, Global education is based upon “the interconnectedness of communities, lands, and peoples, the interrelatedness of all social, cultural and natural phenomena, links between past, present and future, and the complementary nature of the cognitive, affective, physical and spiritual dimensions of the human being. It addresses issues of development, equity, peace, social and environmental justice, and environmental sustainability. It encompasses the personal, the local, the national and the planetary.

Along with these principles, its approach to teaching and learning is experiential, interactive, children-centered [*sic*], democratic, convivial, participatory, and change-oriented.”

Exploris’s articulation of its core values ground the school in this global approach. Those values are:

**BALANCE** - To be fully human, students must be healthy in mind, in body, and in spirit. Emphasis on students’ physical and emotional health prepare them for the mental challenges necessary in achieving total success in school.

**COLLABORATION** - Learning is a democratic process that is enhanced through the sharing of different perspectives and life experiences. Collaboration results in a tapestry of learners who know they can depend on each other and work together in almost any situation. With collaboration, the end product is deeper, and Exploris students experience a collective sense of accomplishment and ownership.

**CONNECTIONS TO NATURE** - When students witness the power and elements of the natural world through adventure and stewardship, they begin to view themselves as just one species within a larger system.

**CRAFTSMANSHIP** - Producing an exemplary product is challenging. It takes attention to detail, grit, perseverance, revision, and tenacity. It takes a growth mindset and a dedication to competing with one’s own personal best.

**CURIOSITY** - True knowledge does not occur without curiosity. Students are empowered to ask questions about the world around them and to explore possible answers.

**ENGAGEMENT**- People learn best when they are exposed to meaningful, complex issues that are applicable to their own lives. Teachers engage students in current, relevant issues by solving authentic problems that are being addressed beyond the four walls of the school building. Student work is tangibly connected not only to the local community, but also to other regions of the world and to past and future events.

**INNOVATION** - In a constantly changing world, the ability to approach challenges in a new way is vital. Exploris teachers and students design projects that encourage divergent thinking, creativity, ideation, and risk-taking.

**REFLECTION** - In an ever-changing world of new ideas, the importance of reflecting on one’s own thinking and the thinking of others cannot be underestimated. Exploris values the creation of time to slow down, to reflect, and to build connections.

**RELATIONSHIPS** - A nurturing school environment is one where students are encouraged to build and maintain positive relationships with their teachers, parents, peers, and community. With a keen understanding of the unique

development of the age group that they teach, teachers are intentional about the structures and relationship-building activities that they design.

**SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT** - Students realize that they have the power to change how their world works. They know how to navigate public systems, lobby public officials, and present their research and opinions as responsible citizens.

## **2 CURRICULUM & DESIGN**

### **2.1 Project-based Learning**

The Exploris curriculum is integrated around projects. The world is not compartmentalized into neat little boxes, but instead intertwines various content matter and skills. Science, language and communication, math, and social studies work together to paint a fuller picture of our world and are thus embedded in grade level trimester-long projects, called Expeditions. Expeditions are designed to engage students in grade level standards, community outreach and involvement, extensive collaboration, and a public culminating activity.

### **2.2 Exploris Hallmarks**

- Deep learning of state and national standards through the context of current, complex issues or community needs
- Integrated use of computers and other technology to develop research and critical thinking skills
- Fieldwork allowing students to learn about and provide service to their community
- Adventure and environmental education to challenge students, foster teamwork, and nurture students' understanding of nature
- Global arts to develop critical thinking, global awareness, empathy, and craftsmanship in every learning expedition
- Student self-reflection through goal setting, student self-assessment, and student-led portfolio conferences
- Annual exchanges of middle school students and staff with students in Hiroshima, Japan and Gefrees, Germany.

### **2.3 Fieldwork and Service Learning**

Fieldwork and Service Learning are essential components of our curriculum design, and students may be off campus frequently throughout the year. We ask that parents sign one blanket field trip form (Medical Release Form) that covers permission for all trips. Your child must have this form on file to attend. Please

return this form and any medication forms in a timely manner. Parents will be notified through their class newsletter or website whenever fieldwork is planned so that parents know when their children are going off campus. Students arriving late (after class has left campus) or without a Medical Release Form will be placed in the care of another adult (either in another classroom or in the Associate Director's office).

## **2.4 Overnight Trips**

Each year, multiple classes will take an overnight trip. It will last 1-5 days, depending on the grade level. These trips are a big part of who we are as a school. They allow our crews to develop positive cultures, stretch students beyond their comfort level, and create opportunities for leadership and adventure. Students who are comfortable taking risks out of the classroom often gain the confidence to take bigger risks in the classroom, building confidence as leaders and collaborators. **Student attendance is NOT optional.** If you are not willing to let your child participate in these overnight trips, then this school is not a good match for you. Costs of overnight trips will be communicated to families as early as possible in the planning processes.

## **2.5 Academic Accountability**

Exploris strives to create an environment of academic rigor that will prepare students to excel in high school and in the world beyond schooling. Because Exploris utilizes standards-based and portfolio assessments as the primary means of evaluating student performance, it is imperative that all students complete class work and homework in a timely manner. A comprehensive collection of completed work will be necessary to ensure that students are prepared to compile a portfolio that demonstrates their academic ability.

### **Portfolio Assessment**

At Exploris, student portfolios are the place where students house evidence of intellectual achievement, academic growth, and responsibility for learning. Students use these portfolios to present their learning at student led conferences throughout the year. Teachers analyze the portfolios and other classroom assessments to determine progress toward academic targets and "Habits of a Scholarship" targets, which they share in Achievement Reports. Portfolios are a crucial tool for revealing student growth. They help teachers and students notice missing links in a child's learning and also acknowledge and celebrate a child's accomplishments.

### **Habits of Scholarship**

Character is often seen as having two facets - relational character and performance character. Relational character skills are essential for positive collaboration, ethical interaction, appropriate participation, and personal responsibility. Performance character skills are needed to obtain a standard of excellence in academic or real-world endeavors. Both types of character are essential for success in school and in life. Exploris has identified four Habits of Scholarship that work to create clear expectations for students around character. Those are: Responsibility, Collaboration, Grit (perseverance, passion, and patience), and Craftsmanship. These Habits are not graded, per se, but are used in goal-setting,

self-reflection, and form a narrative for parents during both portfolio conferences and in the Achievement Report, creating a more holistic picture of each child.

### **Achievement Reports**

Teachers will provide formal, written Achievement Reports documenting student progress in the major areas of learning and development at the end of each trimester. Instead of evaluating students using letter grades (A, B, C, D, and F), or using a number scale (1, 2, 3, or 4), we assess our student's work in terms of individual progress towards achieving a standard. You will see words such as "Beginning", "Developing", or "Accomplished". We make these evaluations using rubrics, models, and exemplars based on state standards. Standards for high quality work are discussed, and sometimes created with students, before their work begins and throughout the process.

### **Student Led Conferences**

Student-led conferences will also be an important component of understanding your child's progress. These conferences not only tell you how your child is doing in school, but they help your child take responsibility for her/his own learning. Conferences provide an occasion for students to reflect on their progress, set goals for future work, and make a public presentation to the most important people in their lives. Students prepare for these conferences by choosing their best work, revising work, writing reflections on their learning, and practicing presentation skills. We expect parents to come with their children for every teacher/parent/student conference in the school year.

### **Standardized Testing**

As a public school, Exploris is required to administer all standardized tests mandated by the NC Department of Public Instruction. Exploris considers data gleaned from these tests as one barometer of student learning but does not consider the results of this testing as the primary factor in assessing student growth or achievement. In an effort for students to do their "personal best" on these tests, there will be some specific test review, with an emphasis on activities meant to relieve student test anxiety. There will not be a great emphasis placed on "teaching to the test" prior to administration.

## **2.6 Parent Communication**

Parents should feel comfortable contacting teachers with questions or concerns about their student's learning. Because Exploris teachers are with students for most of the day and planning instruction for the rest, please allow 48 hours for teachers to reply to emails or phone calls.

## **3 OTHER DIFFERENCES YOU'LL SEE**

A great deal of thought, research, and practice has gone into designing our school's structure. We haven't always made the same decisions that were made by the



schools in our childhoods. Some of what you see at Exploris may look unfamiliar. You may be surprised that certain school pieces are missing. You may notice some unexpected new things. This section should explain some of these surprises.

**Our Classroom Space Is Used Flexibly.**

In an Exploris classroom, work areas are arranged to help students collaborate in both small and large groups. This requires group tables, breakout spaces, and workstations as opposed to rows of individual desks.

**Our Classrooms Have Ongoing Conversations and Are Full of Movement.**

Student conversation is the center of much of our learning here. We believe that deep learning takes place when children challenge one another, ask questions, share ideas, and build on one another's knowledge verbally. Throughout the day, students will be getting out of their seats to gather materials, consult with those around them, and gather resources around the room.

**Fieldwork Is Central To Our Curriculum.**

Learning extends beyond Exploris's walls; it connects to the world. Students work in the "field" sometimes once or twice a week. The field may be a wetland, a museum, a community garden, a science lab, a courtroom, a national forest, etc. Fieldwork is deeply woven into each teacher's curriculum. Attendance is required on all fieldwork as much as it is in the classroom.

**We Use Primary Sources As Much As Possible.**

We believe children can learn authentically by using authentic resources. Although they have access to some textbooks, students more often gather information from community experts, industry leaders, non-fiction and fiction trade books, publications, and the Internet. By exploring primary sources, children gain information-gathering skills that they use to independently problem-solve and conduct research in the real world.

**Students are Responsible for Their Own Learning.**

We expect our students to be responsible for their own learning. Our teachers do not pour knowledge into passive students. Rather, they interact, question, prompt, and set up physical and intellectual environments for students. Within this context, we expect students to explore, wonder, hypothesize, create, and discuss their ideas about the world. This is hard work. We want to hear parents' perceptions about their children and their experiences at Exploris. We expect parents to check in with their children's teachers and to be interested in their learning, but we do not expect parents to complete work for students or to manage their child's learning. We want parent feedback about our projects and our culture. We expect every member of the team to actively participate in the learning experience.

**Revising Work Is a Habit Here.**

Students at Exploris normally aren't finished with a piece of work until they do multiple drafts of it. This expectation reaches across grades and disciplines. Improving on work again and again is common practice here. Teachers guide students from draft to draft. Students collaborate to assess the work of their peers.

Rubrics set high standards for finished pieces and guide students as they strive to get their work to meet these high standards.

**Learning Is Public and Collaborative.**

Our students' work is often assessed by their peers. Students read their writing out loud, solicit comments, and present project drafts for formal peer critiques. We do public work just like in the real world. Having an authentic audience keeps us on our toes, supporting quality work with high standards.

**Service and Character Development Are Part of Our Curriculum.**

We focus on character and service as well as academics. Quality academic work is mirrored by the quality of the ways in which we treat one another, our community, and our environment. Students are encouraged to be compassionate, disciplined, courageous, and responsible. For example, your child's crew may take time during the day to discuss why a crewmember has been mistreated. They may take twenty minutes to pick up litter at a neighborhood park. They may spend an hour a week visiting an aging community member. These types of activities are critical to our mission of engaging students to build a connected, just, and sustainable world.

**We Encourage Internal Rather Than External Rewards.**

We minimize rewarding our students with prizes when they succeed. We offer specific praise, encouragement, and a culture that fosters and celebrates student achievement. We believe that if children only experience extrinsic rewards, they learn to work only for those rewards and do not connect their learning to the outside world. We strive to help children make those connections, believing that the purpose of learning is to interact thoughtfully and powerfully in the world.

**We Expect Students to Behave In Ways That Are Kind, Safe, and Appropriate.**

We expect students to follow these three simple courtesies at our school. If students do not, they are held responsible for their conduct. Expectations are clear and we follow through with logical consequences appropriate to individual students.

**Students Share Responsibility for our Community Spaces.**

As part of our desire to create a stronger school culture, students share responsibility for keeping our school clean and presentable. Student crews will be assigned duties during the week to clean tables, chairs, floors, windows, and to take garbage and compost out at the end of their lunch period to get the room ready for the next group of students.

**We Are Strict About Safety.**

Your child's safety is our top priority. Exploris follows safety measures conscientiously and always errs on the conservative side. Every precaution is taken to ensure your child's safety at all times. All of our teachers and staff are experienced and vigilant about high safety standards.

**Students and Teachers Often Dress Casually.**

Because we are a hands-on school, teachers and students need to dress

appropriately for whatever activities are called for on a given day. We are often up to our elbows in goopy materials and the natural world. Appropriate dress for a visit to a museum, for science experiments and messy art projects, and for venturing to the river will vary. Parents are asked to be knowledgeable about activities on a given day by reading the weekly grade-level letters to assure that their children are dressed appropriately for the day.

### **Most of Our Staff Go By Their First Names.**

We introduce ourselves to our students with our first names. This is part of our culture, which fosters respect within relationships and not necessarily by titles. Some of our students prefer to put a Ms. or Mr. in front of our first names. We respect their desire to do so.

## **4 SCHOOL LOGISTICS**

### **4.1 School Hours**

- **Elementary 8:30 – 3:15**  
**Students can be dropped off beginning at 8:10 AM.** For students needing supervision prior to that window, a Before School Care Program is available. More information and a fee schedule can be found on the school’s website.
- **Middle 8:15 – 3:15**  
**Students can be dropped off beginning at 7:55.** For students needing supervision prior to that window, a Before School Care Program is available. More information and a fee schedule can be found on the school’s website.
- **Before/After Care**  
**Elementary Before Care: 7:15-8:10; Elementary After Care: 3:40-6:00**  
**Middle Before Care: 7:00-7:55; Middle After Care: 3:30-6:00**  
See the school website for additional details.
- **Please keep in mind that children cannot wait alone outside the school waiting for it to open since they will not be supervised. Please register your child for before school if they need to be dropped off early.**

### **4.2 Attendance & Tardies**

All students are expected to attend school all days of the established school calendar as approved annually by the Exploris Board of Directors and in compliance with the North Carolina school attendance laws. The entire process of education requires a regular continuity of instruction, classroom participation, learning experiences, and study in order to reach the goal of maximum educational benefits for each individual child. It is particularly true in a project-based environment that regular attendance is vital to achieving high academic outcomes given the rich educational discussions, fieldwork, and visiting experts that are a part of the day-to-day experience. Since many classroom activities are collaborative experiences, when one student is

absent, the whole group is affected. Students who are frequently absent find it difficult to keep up. Missing a day of school means missing a crew activity that cannot be replicated at home.

If a student is absent from school, parents should contact the office and crew teacher in writing stating the reason the child is absent and the presumed return date to school. All absences from school are considered unexcused until a written excuse is received from the parent/guardian.

In accordance with North Carolina's compulsory attendance law, G.S. 115C-378 parents will be notified after a student has accumulated 3 unexcused absences. Parents will be notified in writing when a student has accumulated 6 unexcused absences. If a student accumulates 10 unexcused absences, parents will be called to attend a Truancy Hearing.

Likewise, tardiness and early dismissals disrupt the learning process, for both the tardy student and his/her classmates. Please do all that you can to make sure your child is in class to the greatest extent possible. Please schedule family trips, appointments, etc. after school hours or during breaks as identified on the school calendar. Please Note: Three (3) unexcused tardies will count as an unexcused absence. Students arriving after the start time must sign in at the school office.

If an emergency arises, and a parent needs to check a student out, it is important that (s)he communicate with the child's crew teacher in case an off-campus trip is scheduled for that day. If someone other than a parent or legal guardian is to pick up a child during the school day, the parent/guardian must provide information to the Exploris teachers in writing or on an emergency contact about whom, when, and why that person will be picking up the child. **The office will NOT send messages to students about pick-up, nor are students allowed to have cell phones on during the school day. Please make arrangements ahead of time.**

**There will be NO EARLY DISMISSAL after 2:45.** After 2:45, your child will not be dismissed until the published dismissal times. During that time, all students should be dismissed via the walk-up or carpool lines.

For more information on the Board's Absentee and Tardy policy, please go to the "Board" page on our school website.

### **4.3 Food and Snacks**

Exploris strives to promote a dining experience that includes an aesthetic conducive to enjoying both one's food and the company of others. Because Exploris has no formal lunch program, parents must provide lunch for their children on a daily basis. Exploris emphasizes the use of fruits, vegetables, or whole grains as the primary snack and water as the primary beverage. Microwaves are not available for student lunches. Please be sure to send a reusable water bottle with your child each day. Nutritious foods fuel your child's work and play; however, sweets do not. Please limit the amount of sweets that you send to the school. Carbonated beverages, gum, and candy are not to be brought onto the school's campuses. Additionally, we ask

parents not to bring in or send cupcakes, donuts, or other such treats for student birthdays. This is especially important for the safety of students with food allergies.

Parents are always welcome to eat at school with your child(ren). We ask that you send in a note to let your child's crew teacher know to expect you.

### **Waste-free Lunch**

At Exploris, all food and snack waste that is "packed in" will also be "packed out." As a U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Award Winner, Exploris is committed to environmental stewardship. As such, we strive to make waste reduction a priority.

One of the best places to start is with lunch and snack waste. A waste-free lunch program is a process of educating students, parents, and school staff about where our trash ends up and how we, as individuals, can reduce the amount of trash we generate. Waste-free lunch programs favor the use of reusable food containers, drink containers, utensils, and napkins. They discourage the use of disposable packaging, such as prepackaged foods, plastic bags, juice boxes and pouches, paper napkins, and disposable utensils.

A Waste-Free lunch not only helps to reduce waste at the school, it helps parents to be aware of their child's eating habits while at school. Please make sure to check your child's lunch box each day and talk with your child about his/her food choices. In general, Exploris has no formal lunch program that is provided by the school. Most of our students bring lunches and snacks from home on a daily basis. Our parents, through our active PTO, has worked to create a solution for parents wishing an alternative to packing daily meals.

### **PTO Lunch Program**

The school's Parent/Teacher Organization has partnered with My Hot Lunchbox (<http://www.myhotlunchbox.com/>) to provide parents a reprieve from packing lunches. This organization strives to provide nutritious, well-balanced meal options for our both our elementary and middle school programs.

## **4.4 Transportation**

At Exploris, we have chosen to focus our resources on teacher quality and a safe facility, rather than providing transportation for students on school buses. All parents who can provide transportation to and from school are asked to do so. Due to the school's limited parking and queuing lanes, **carpooling is strongly encouraged**. Exploris staff and the PTO will gladly help families form carpool groups. Watch for emails and communication on the PTO Blog beginning the week before school starts.

## **4.5 Parking**

### **ELEMENTARY CAMPUS:**

It is important that families keep in mind that the elementary campus is temporarily

located in a residential area that was not intended for heavy traffic. Please be respectful of our neighbors and help us to remain a welcome addition to the neighborhood. Please DO NOT block driveways, park facing the wrong direction, or park in a way that prevents the smooth flow of traffic. Please park in the following areas:

- Marked parking spaces in the elementary school's parking lot. Do not park along the queuing or driving lanes
- **ONLY** along the Northbound traveling (or eastern side facing NEW BERN) on S. Swain St
- In the parking lot of **Treasuring Christ Church** on Hargett St. The church staff has been nice enough to offer their lot to parents of Exploris Students.

#### MIDDLE SCHOOL CAMPUS:

There is **NO on-site parking** available for parents. Exploris's parking lots are reserved for staff parking **ONLY**. **This includes those picking up for After School Care**. Please be mindful that faculty and staff must be able to enter and leave the parking lots whenever necessary.

- Parents must park in the appropriately labeled spaces on the street or in public parking lots.

#### 4.6 Drop Off/Pick Up Safety

Exploris is an urban school in a busy neighborhood with limited parking. To keep everyone safe, to get students into their classrooms on time, and to keep traffic flowing freely, we need to work together.

- Please use the Drop Off/Pick Up directions (below) for dropping off and picking up students. **Do not pull over on the side of the street to pick up or drop off your child.**
- In order to have a smooth drop off and pick up procedure, **drivers/passengers may not get out of your car** if you are in the queuing lanes. If you need to get out of your car for any reason, please park in designated areas.
- **DO NOT USE CELL PHONES** at any time in the pick-up or drop-off lines. Cell phones distract drivers and lead to accidents. In the interest of safety, please refrain from using your phone.
- **DRIVE SLOWLY!** Watch for children walking and biking — be extra careful anywhere near the school.
- **ONLY TURN RIGHT out of school lots.** This is a city requirement! As part of the school's approved transportation plan, the city required that only right-hand turns be allowed into and out of the parking lots during peak hours.
- **USE CROSSWALKS.** Please DO NOT walk through the car lines! Exploris discourages jaywalking as it is extremely unsafe.
- **BUCKLE UP!** Before pulling away, make sure your children are either safely on the sidewalk or buckled in their seat.

## Elementary Drop-Off and Pick-up

### *Rules for Car Line*

Please make sure that all drivers who will be dropping off/picking up your child are aware of these requirements:

- The Elementary School driveway will be **one-way**. Please follow the signs indicating where to enter and exit the lot.
- **NEVER turn left** when either entering or leaving the school's property. All vehicles dropping students off in the morning should approach the school from Hargett St, turning right onto S. Swain St., right into the school driveway, and driving around to the school's administrative building entrance. Adults will be in place to greet your students in the morning.
- Whenever possible, we ask for students sitting in the back to exit from the **driver's side**. We know this is very different from what other schools do. If entering or exiting from the passenger's side, students should always walk in front of the vehicle that they are exiting or will be entering.
- Do not store backpacks or other belongings in the trunk. Students should not walk behind your vehicle to retrieve items. This is unsafe as other cars are pulling in behind you.
- Vehicles should then exit the school's drive by turning right onto S. Swain St. toward New Bern Ave.

### *Elementary Dismissal*

The elementary school has a **staggered release**. This is meant to relieve congestion in the elementary carpool line. Please carefully follow the instructions below:

- Siblings of Middle School Students will not be released until 3:35. **If you have an elementary child who has an Exploris middle school sibling, ignore what is below and coordinate your pick-up to arrive at the elementary at 3:35.**
- All other students will be dismissed as outlined below. **Siblings should report with the youngest child.**
  - **3:15** – Kindergarteners and First Graders (k/1) and any older siblings or carpool riders
  - **3:25** – Second and Third graders (2/3) and any older siblings or carpool riders
  - **3:35** – Fourth and Fifth graders (4/5), any older siblings or carpool riders, and all siblings of middle school students
- It would be helpful to display a paper with the names of the children you are picking up (first and last) typed in a font size that allows the text to take up most of the paper. A staff member will be standing in the lot with a walkie-talkie and will call your child's name to ensure your child is ready for loading.
- If you have a special circumstance and need to pick up a child or children earlier than the above posted times, please contact the elementary's front office.

**\*All elementary school students not picked up by 3:40 will be taken to After School Care in the school's multipurpose room.**

## **Middle School Drop-Off and Pick-Up**

### ***Rules for Car Line Drop Off***

- Drop off - All vehicles dropping students off in the morning should turn south onto Harrington St. from Hillsborough St., turn right into the rear parking lot of the school (next to Ugly Monkey) and pull in as far as possible before letting students out.
- Please **DO NOT** drop students off along Hillsborough St. or in the lot by the main entrance. All cars should exit the back of the parking lot by turning right onto W. Morgan St.
- Do not allow students to store backpacks or other belongings in the trunk. Students should not walk behind your vehicle to retrieve items. This is unsafe as other cars are pulling in behind you.
- Students should be prepared to get out of cars in the parking lot quickly and enter the building. No vehicles should be left unattended in the parking lot.

### ***Middle School Dismissal***

#### **Group Riders (Carpool & Middle School Siblings)**

- Pick-up all students between 3:15 and 3:30 PM in the Harrington Street (Ugly Monkey) lot.
- Vehicles for Carpool Riders should turn south onto Harrington Street and turn right into the Harrington lot. Because of the amount of traffic on Hillsborough, please **DO NOT approach from Hillsborough traveling east**. We strongly recommend that families traveling east take Peace St. to N. West to N. Harrington. Families traveling from the North, South, or West should travel to W. Edenton and then turn left on N. Harrington.
- Pull into the lot as far as possible in order to get between 3 and 4 cars into the lot at one time.
- All vehicles exiting the Harrington lot should turn right onto W. Morgan Street.

#### **Single Riders**

- Pick-up all students between 3:15 and 3:30 PM along Hillsborough St. in front of The State of Beer.
- Please approach Hillsborough by traveling east on Hillsborough. It would be helpful to display a paper with your child's last name typed in a font size that allows the text to take up most of the paper. A teacher will be standing at the corner of West and Hillsborough and will radio your child's name to insure your child is ready for loading.

**\*All middle school students not picked up by 3:30 will be taken to After School Care.**



## 4.7 Fieldwork/Field trip Transportation

We need parents' help both in transporting children on field trips and in chaperoning trips, but student safety has to remain our primary concern. Parents who agree to drive on field trips are asked to complete the **Vehicle Insurance Declaration and the Volunteer Transportation Assurance Form**, which can be found on our website under "forms." Submit these forms to your child's teacher along with a copy of your valid N.C. driver's license and insurance card. We ask that parents' cars are in good repair (with a current state inspection) and that parents have a cell phone to communicate with the school in the event of an emergency. You are encouraged to contact your insurance agent and inquire about obtaining additional coverage for transporting children other than your own.

All students must be properly restrained in cars. In January 2005, new child passenger safety laws went into effect that require the use of belt-positioning booster seats for children under the age of 8 and weighing less than 80 pounds. Additionally, all children under the age of 16 must wear their own safety belt no matter where they sit in the car. Exploris supports practices for best protection and this includes keeping children in properly fitted booster seats with lap and shoulder belts until the child is big enough for just the lap and shoulder belt. Add-on shoulder belt adjusters are not recommended and shoulder belts should never be tucked under the arm or behind the back. Children under 80 pounds should sit in the rear seats of the car.

Drivers are expected to know and follow laws and recommendations for proper restraint of children, use all cautionary measures when driving students to and from fieldwork, and **refrain from using a cell phone while driving**.

Prior to departure, all drivers will be given clear and concise directions. These directions will include:

- Step-by-step directions from the point of departure to the point of arrival
- Same directions in reverse
- Map to the point of arrival (if available)
- Contact phone number of the destination point if applicable
- Contact phone number for the Exploris leader in charge. Likewise, the chaperone should leave his/her cell phone number with the class leader.

Volunteer drivers should try to caravan as much as safety allows. Attempting to keep up with the leading vehicle through stoplights and turns may put drivers and their passengers at risk. Please make safety a priority. Drivers will have their own written directions.

We ask that volunteer drivers follow the route provided by the teacher and **DO NOT** make impromptu stops at fast-food restaurants or other such detours.

#### **4.8 Enrollment/Lottery Policy**

All students entering K-8th grade and who are residents of North Carolina are invited to apply for enrollment. Kindergarten students must have reached the age of 5 on or before August 31 of the year of enrollment. **It is important to keep in mind that all students who are not currently enrolled must apply for admissions, including siblings of currently enrolled students.**

More information on the school's lottery policy, procedures, and preference status can be found on our website in the Admissions section under the "About" tab.

#### **4.9 Class Requests**

Every year we get many questions about class requests for the following year as students move from one crew to another. Our primary consideration in developing class lists is balance. We look at the students that are moving into or leaving each crew, and attempt to balance it with regard to grade level, gender, ethnicity, economic diversity, academic and behavioral needs, student relationships, etc. This is a collaborative process involving teachers and administrative staff. Often there are many unknowns, especially the new students who will be joining us in August.

In past years our efforts to honor a request have made achieving the right balance more difficult. Multiple requests in a given classroom make the task even more complicated. Families are not aware of all issues as to placement and can't be told for reasons of confidentiality.

Requesting a classroom has several other consequences as well, including:

- When one family's request is honored, it affects other families at that grade level. To accommodate one request, many students may have to be moved. This is unfair to parents who do not make requests.
- Though class requests are confidential, inevitably teachers may learn of them, which can contribute to poor morale.
- Often a group of parents request one classroom due to student friendships. This is impossible to accommodate and may lead to negative feelings among families and toward office staff who develop the class lists. Exploris is fortunate to have incredibly talented and qualified teachers. While one teacher or classroom may seem to better "fit" a student, all of our teachers are fully capable of working with all students. Every year, classroom environments will change. One year a crew may seem ideal; and the next it may not. We all need to work together to encourage and support strong classrooms.

For the reasons given above, we strongly discourage classroom requests. Most requests will not be granted. If you feel strongly about requesting a classroom, you must submit a letter in the spring before the end of the school year. Please be sure to include your reasoning. Prior to finalizing class lists, we will consider all requests

and will inform you by mail if your request will be granted. For reasons of confidentiality, reasons for decisions will not be provided. You may be placed in the class of your choice for reasons not related to your request.

#### **4.10 Protocol for Requesting a Crew Change in Mid-Year**

Occasionally, a parent/guardian may want to request a change of crews for his/her child. Such changes are strongly discouraged by Exploris unless there are strong and compelling reasons to do so. In most circumstances there is no room in the other crew to accommodate such a change. If such a change is to be requested, the following protocol must be followed.

First, the parent/guardian must meet with the child's crew teacher to discuss concerns as to how and why the child's needs are not being met. Intervention strategies should be discussed and implemented.

After 30 days there will be a follow--up meeting between the parent/guardian and crew teacher to check in on progress. At that time there will be a decision to continue with the interventions, modify the interventions, or begin a more formal process of requesting a change of crew.

If a change of crew is still being requested, the parent, crew teacher and Associate Director will discuss issues and develop a further plan of action to resolve the situation within the current crew assignment. The new plan of action will be closely monitored for a month. If the situation is resolved, no further action will be taken. If the parent is still interested in a change of crew, there will be a meeting with the parent, crew teacher, the prospective crew teacher, and the Associate Director. This meeting would be to discuss the pros and cons of such a move. If this group decides there are enough compelling reasons to move the student, a change of placement will occur.

## **5 STUDENT HEALTH & SAFETY**

The overall health and safety of our students and staff is our first concern at Exploris. Supervision of students is a primary responsibility of our faculty, and we ask that parents support our efforts to establish and implement safety guidelines. Please report all unsafe conditions immediately to your child's Crew teacher or to the Associate Director.

### **5.1 Building Security**

In conjunction with safety goals, Exploris will enforce our security measures during the school day. All exterior doors will be locked, and remain so throughout the day. Exterior doors should never be propped open during the school day, and we ask that parents enter the building and sign in at the main front office. Students and parents will be given a passcode at the beginning of each new school year that will allow

them entry into the buildings during the school day from 8:10 AM (elem) / 7:55 AM (middle) until 6:00 PM. Parents and students should not share this code with anyone, even those who are assumed to be other Exploris families.

During the course of these normal activities for our school, accidents may occur. In the event of an accident or emergency, the school will contact you and/or your emergency contacts.

## **5.2 Emergency Contacts**

How can families assist the school in ensuring each child's safety and well-being?

- Make sure that the office has your current contact information as well as additional emergency contacts.
- Please make sure to let your contacts know that you have done this, because it is imperative that we are able to reach a responsible adult at all times when a student is involved in school activities.
- Please notify your child's teachers AND the office if any contact numbers change throughout the year.

## **5.3 Medications**

Students who need to receive medication (prescription or over-the-counter) during the school day or during a field trip must have a "Medical Release" form turned in to the office. Prescription medications must be in their original containers with dosage procedures clearly indicated. Medications should be turned in to the front office and may not be kept with the child. The only exception allowed will be for students needing asthma inhalers or epi-pens.

## **5.4 Health Forms**

Before the first day of school, all students must submit a North Carolina Health Assessment Form, signed by a physician, that identifies any health issues important for the schools to know about and certifies that your child has all required immunizations. North Carolina state law requires that documentation of immunization be provided to the school within 30 days of a student's first day of school. Parents who do not wish to have their child immunized based on religious beliefs, or advice from the doctor that immunizations poses a risk to their student's health, must submit their request for a waiver in writing, including their physician's statement. Parents also must complete the Medical and Emergency Release form for each child each year.

## **5.5 Illness**

If your child contracts a communicable illness, please inform Exploris staff immediately so that we may inform other parents of their child's possible exposure and help parents make informed decisions about their child(ren)'s health.

**If your child has a fever, nausea, diarrhea or other adverse symptoms, please keep your child at home to recover for at least 24 hours. We ask that they be free of such symptoms without the aid of medication or fever reducer.** If such symptoms develop at school, you will be asked to pick up your child. Before sending your child to school, be sure he or she feels well enough to have a positive, productive day in a manner considerate of the health of others

## **5.6 Concussion**

The Exploris School involves a multidisciplinary team approach to support students suffering with concussion issues. The team at the school level includes appropriate Exploris staff, parents, student, and health care providers- all focusing on student well-being during and after the injury. Clear guidelines and procedures, based on the Gfeller Waller Concussion Awareness Act (GWCA), are outlined in The Exploris School's Health and Wellness Management Plan.

## **5.7 Lice**

If live lice are discovered on a student, the child's parent/legal guardian will be notified that day by telephone. The family is asked to pick up the child as soon as possible, treat the child's hair/scalp for lice, and remove as many nits (eggs) as possible. After treatment, the child may return to school the following day. An Exploris staff member will assist families by rechecking a child's head after proper treatment.

Exploris does not have a "no nit" policy. The American Academy of Pediatrics states that no-nit policies in schools are detrimental, causing lost time in the classroom, inappropriate allocation of the health service team's time for lice screening, and a response to infestations that is out of proportion to the medical significance. Children should not be allowed to miss valuable school time because of head lice.

Head lice should never be associated with poor hygiene, dirty hair, or lack of parental care. Washing hair does not kill head lice, as they can survive underwater for several hours. Anyone, whether their hair is long or short, clean or dirty, can get head lice.

Removing the nits and live lice with a special fine-tooth comb, though time-consuming, is the most effective way to get rid of lice. You can remove any remaining lice and nits manually with your fingernails. They do not wash out.

## **5.8 School Counselor**

The Exploris School counselor serves as a resource to students, staff, and community. The guidance counselor's duties range from counseling individual students, to working with parents and outside agencies to secure and promote the social and emotional health of our students. Additionally, the guidance counselor works closely with teachers, instructional support staff, and administrators to help identify and support students that may have unique learning needs.

## **5.9 Student Safety, Emotional Health, and Well-being**

At The Exploris School we are committed to working with families, community organizations, and law enforcement agencies to ensure student safety and well-being. In cases where a child's welfare is in question (e.g. suspected physical abuse, self-harm, substance abuse, sexual assault, suicidal ideation etc.) staff will immediately inform a school administrator. In all cases, the priority will be the child's immediate safety and taking actions in alignment with mandatory reporting laws. Once the immediate situation is diffused the school will work with families and local agencies to create an on-going support plan.

## **5.10 Drugs and Alcohol**

The possession and use of illicit substances is illegal and harmful. The Exploris School and Board of Directors prohibits the unlawful possession, use, or distribution of illicit substances on school premises or as part of any school activities. Compliance with drug and alcohol laws is mandatory for all parents, students, and staff. Clothing, buttons or hats that advocate the use or advertise alcohol, tobacco or other drugs are prohibited on school grounds. Information on drug and alcohol counseling is available to all students upon request from the guidance counselor.

## **5.11 Student Supervision**

Our faculty provides supervision of students when they are on campus during the normal school day or when they are participating in a school-related field experience. Many of the faculty are trained in basic first-aid techniques and CPR. In addition, teachers are required to carry cell phones to any off-site activity so that they can consult with the appropriate resources needed in the event of emergency.

In emergency situations, our goal is to provide immediate and appropriate care for the student by:

- Preventing further harm to the student or other students (which may include moving the student).
- Providing comfort care and urgent care in situations involving breathing or bleeding.
- Referring immediately to the parent and/or medical professionals. When an accident happens at school that results in serious injury, the school staff will use information from the Medical Release Form to contact parents or the person(s) they have designated. If needed, we will call 911 while we are still trying to reach a parent. We will make every attempt to call parents as soon as possible to involve them in the decision-making process, unless time and urgency are issues. If the injury is minor, the classroom teacher will exercise his/her judgment in making a decision to call the parent. In most cases, parents will be alerted so they will have the option of viewing the injury themselves.

## **5.12 Extended Care**

The only supervision before or after the school's official times are through the fee-based Extended Care Programs. Any students arriving to school earlier than twenty minutes before the start time or fifteen minutes after dismissal will be

escorted to the Before or After School Care rooms and parents will be billed accordingly (Please see our website for more details). We understand that occasionally circumstances arise that make it difficult to arrive at school on time to pick up your children. On these occasions, please notify the office in advance as soon as is possible.

### **5.13 Background Checks for Employees**

It is the policy of The Exploris School not to employ or to continue the employment of classified, professional, or administrative personnel who may be deemed unsuited for service by reason of arrest and/or criminal conviction. While an arrest or conviction of a crime, in and of itself, may not be an automatic bar to employment, if an arrest or conviction relates to suitability of the individual to perform duties in a particular position, such person may be denied employment or in the case of current employees, may face disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Accordingly, a criminal records check will be conducted of applicants and/or newly hired employees, including substitutes. If an applicant is hired prior to the completion of the criminal records check, the employment shall be considered conditional pending a review of the results of the check.

### **5.14 Volunteer Expectations and Confidentiality**

Exploris is a cooperative enterprise: our families, teachers, Board, and administrative staff share the responsibilities and rewards of operating our school. Our families experience firsthand the school environment, become advocates for their children, and enrich the school community with their ideas, interests, talents, and resources. There are significant opportunities for involvement: volunteering in our Explorations classes, helping with off-site fieldwork trips, serving on our PTO Board, supporting the office, chaperoning overnight trips, etc. **Our charter requires eight hours of parent volunteerism per month, defined in very broad terms, with ample opportunity for families to participate.** Enrollment at Exploris carries with it an obligation for family involvement. Please do your share!

Parents are always welcome to visit the school and join their child's class, but we ask you to plan your visit with your child's teacher. Please keep in mind that visitors can sometimes distract students and inadvertently disrupt the learning environment. It is difficult for teachers to stop and instruct/prepare for volunteers while they are teaching, and advance notification will help them make the most of your contribution.

Remember that the teacher's first responsibility during class hours is to teach students; therefore, we ask that you refrain from engaging in conversation about your child's progress when assisting in the classroom or during field experiences. If you would like to discuss your child's individual progress, teachers are happy to set up an appointment to meet with you outside of the normal school day. When you volunteer in school-related events, you will be exposed to sensitive issues involving

students and families other than your own, including academic and social/disciplinary challenges. Just as you would like for adults who interact with your child to be sensitive to issues of confidentiality, we ask that you treat information about all students with care.

If you have particular concerns about children that stem from your observations during school activities, please consult that student's classroom teacher. Always refrain from inappropriate interactions with students and other parents that breach these confidentiality guidelines.

As parent volunteers, we ask that you respect the direction and/or guidelines established by the sponsoring teacher in a given activity or the school's Executive Director. Although employees are open to the ideas and feedback of parents who are involved in an activity or outing, it is the school employee who must make a final decision in the event of an emergency or difficult situation.

Please note that we are a drug, alcohol, and tobacco-free campus. This policy applies to staff and parents volunteering or attending any school-sponsored event or trip in which students are present and is essential to our continued participation in federal grant programs.

### **5.15 Background Checks for Volunteers**

Exploris supports and encourages volunteers in our schools. Volunteers work in cooperation with the school to help in meeting the needs of children and the school staff. The school's Executive Director holds the sole responsibility for the recruitment, monitoring, and/or dismissal of community and parent volunteers. Any parent or volunteer that participates in school-related activities and may have an opportunity to be alone with a student as part of that activity may be asked to complete a Federal and State Background Check. If two or more non-related adults work together with students, or if Exploris staff continually and directly supervises the volunteer, the Executive Director may determine a Background Check unnecessary.

### **5.16 Fieldwork Chaperones**

Opportunities do exist for parents/guardians to accompany on fieldwork, and in fact, we depend on your help for safe transportation and supervision. If you have signed up to participate as a class chaperone, you will be agreeing to stay with the group, monitor children, and make decisions in the best interest and safety of the children. While we encourage your involvement, parents must keep in mind that the purpose of fieldwork is educational, not recreational, and class trips should not be a substitute for a family outing. Chaperones will be expected to remain with the class at all times and should not remove their child from the group for side trips or to leave early. Chaperones are expected to support teachers' disciplinary and behavior guidelines, to uphold grade level rules, and to treat all children with fair and equal consideration. Siblings or family pets will not be permitted on trips, so that chaperones can be fully attentive to the needs of the students and provide the safety



needed. If a trip should lend itself to involvement of siblings, this will be communicated to parents.

All chaperones must follow school rules. On overnight trips, and at all times, chaperones must abstain from using tobacco and alcohol products. Teachers reserve the right to designate an appropriate number of chaperones for their group and to establish rules specific to the activities of the fieldwork. These rules, along with directions and emergency contact numbers, will be communicated to parents in writing in advance of the trip. Failure to adhere to these guidelines may result in a parent not being allowed to chaperone on future field-work experiences. As is the case with any classroom activity, teachers will make final decisions on chaperones and trip organization.

### **5.17 Student Sleeping Accommodations for Overnights**

In order to assure appropriate privacy during an overnight excursion, The Exploris School will take the following precautions:

1. Sleeping arrangements will be made that clearly separate male and female students. Exceptions may be made for children who are brother and sister and have an adult family member staying with them. Exceptions may also be made depending upon the programming of partner organizations (i.e. Heifer International groups students co-educationally)
2. No sleeping arrangement can be made that would place only one adult with one or more children unless all are members of the same family.
3. No sleeping arrangement can be made that would place an adult with children of the opposite sex unless they are members of the same family.

It is expected that all overnight fieldwork participants agree to act courteously and responsibly, will comply with all regular Exploris rules and policies, and comply with any additional rules set forth by the grade level team applicable to the overnight trip. Violations of these rules and policies will result in immediate dismissal from the excursion. In the event of a dismissal, parents/guardians are responsible for making transportation arrangements to pick up their child in the field.

### **5.18 FERPA**

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

1. The right to inspect and review the student's education records within 45 days after the day the [Name of school ("School")] receives a request for access.

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

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

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

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

One exception, which permits disclosure without consent, is disclosure to school officials with legitimate educational interests. A school official includes a person employed by the school as an administrator, educator, or support staff member, or a person serving on the school board. A school official also may include a volunteer, contractor, or consultant who, while not employed by the school, performs an institutional service or function for which the school would otherwise use its own employees and who is under the direct control of the school with respect to the use and maintenance of PII from education records, such as an attorney, auditor, medical consultant, or therapist. A school official typically has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record in order to fulfill his or her professional responsibility.

Upon request, the school discloses education records without consent to officials of another school or school district in which a student seeks or intends to enroll, or is already enrolled if the disclosure is for purposes of the student's enrollment or transfer. The Exploris School will forward such records on request.

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

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

## 6

## BEHAVIOR & DISCIPLINE

*“The quality of a school lies in its culture. Particular aspects of the school – budget, curriculum, teaching roles, decision making, assessment, physical layout – are elements of this culture but do not in themselves define it. The only way to understand a school culture is to understand what students experience in being part of it. Not just the motivated, mainstream students, but also the students who look or feel different. How safe do students feel, physically and emotionally? What kind of pride and intensity is encouraged for work? What values, what sense of courtesy and responsibility are modeled? A culture of quality connotes a culture of high standards for all students in all domains: standards for academic achievement, arts, physical fitness, critical thinking, and creativity, but also standards for kindness, integrity, industriousness, and responsibility.” Ron Berger, A Culture of Quality*

At Exploris, we strive to create an environment that honors the following elements:

- The physical appearance of the school building, outside and in
- The levels of physical safety and emotional safety that children and adults in the building feel
- The way routines of arrival, class transitions, lunch times, and dismissal are handled
- The ways in which authority is exercised
- The tone of courtesy, kindness, and acceptance in peer culture
- The ways in which student achievements are shared within the school community and beyond
- The aspects of the school that define it in the larger community

### 6.1 Maintaining Positive School Culture

Part of maintaining a culture of quality is taking the time as a school community (staff, families, students, greater community) to build and sustain structures, traditions, and rituals to make sure these realms of the school are positive. There are no shortcuts to building and maintaining a school community of courtesy and kindness, of integrity and responsibility. Being strict about issues of character and physical environment is essential.

Strict rules alone, however, are not the answer; they maintain order but do not guarantee that children will treat each other well or feel good about themselves.

What is necessary is a school community that not only demands the best of its students in terms of character but that models that character through school tone, routines, and practices. This work cannot be attended to with little effort, in the margins of the school day. At Exploris, these efforts are viewed as a primary and explicit priority and commitment of time, all day, every day.

## **6.2 Student Rights and Responsibilities**

Exploris aims to help students become independent learners, critical thinkers and caring and active citizens in a global society. Our environment at Exploris is designed to support the development of these characteristics. As our young people grow and develop over their years with Exploris, we ask for students', parents' and staff's full involvement and cooperation in supporting an environment conducive to joyful learning and engaging study.

## **6.3 Behavioral Expectations**

Exploris's rules and expectations are based on common sense. A standard self-check for a student should be "Is my behavior supportive of the learning environment?"

If the answer is yes, chances are, a student has exhibited appropriate behavior. Behavior should enhance one's own learning and not interfere with others' opportunities to learn. Making good choices is the key to good behavior. We believe that the guidelines below will help our school be a pleasant and productive learning environment.

- Treat each other (students, staff, visitors and parents) with dignity, courtesy, and kindness.
- Take care of our world, both the man-made and the natural.
- Wear clothing that is safe and non-disruptive.
- Walk safely and talk softly when moving through the buildings or out in the community.
- Follow all requests made by an adult.

## **6.4 Student Conflict**

Students are encouraged to work with one another, teachers, and administrators to resolve conflicts and prevent hostility. Exploris is strict about fighting, theft, extortion, and vandalism.

Bullying is also considered threatening behavior and will not be tolerated.

### **Bullying Defined**

Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behavior among school-aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time.

In order to be considered bullying, the behavior must be aggressive and include:

- **An Imbalance of Power:** Kids who bully use their power—such as physical strength, access to embarrassing information, or popularity—to control or harm others. Power imbalances can change over time and in different situations, even if they involve the same people.
- **Repetition:** Bullying behaviors happen more than once or have the potential to happen more than once.

Some specific examples of behavior that could be considered bullying include, but are not limited to; teasing, bullying slurs, innuendo, derogatory remarks, name

calling, spreading rumors, and circulating written materials or pictures that are either derogatory or insulting to an individual or group.

### **Reporting Harassing and Bullying Behavior**

1. Any student who believes that he or she has been harassed or bullied in violation of this policy should report such behavior immediately to a teacher or principal.
2. A school employee who has witnessed or has reliable information that a student has been subject to any act of harassing or bullying behavior shall report the incident.
3. Any person may report an act of harassment or bullying anonymously. However, disciplinary action may not be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

### **Investigation of Bullying**

Reports of bullying activity will be investigated by staff and the Associate Director. Parents of the participants and victims will be notified. If warranted, formal disciplinary action will be taken by the Associate Director.

### **6.5 Consequences for Unacceptable Behavior**

These consequences were developed to help students exhibiting unacceptable behavior to learn to identify behavior that is disruptive or unkind, to accept responsibility for the behavior, and to self-regulate and self-correct that behavior. Teachers, the guidance counselor, and administrators will help guide students as they learn to become increasingly responsible and caring young adults.

#### **Potential consequences at the teacher/team level**

- Verbal warning and discussion with teacher.
- Time-out/cool-down period. Student leaves the group to reflect on behavior.
- For more serious or recurrent behavior, a student may be asked to call or email home under a teacher's supervision to share his/her behavior with parents.
- Teacher and student develop logical consequence for unacceptable behavior. Student writes up a reflection outlining his/her behavior and consequences and takes this to be signed by parents.
- Teacher and student develop a behavior contract outlining specific goals and consequences.

#### **Potential consequences at the administrative level**

- If unacceptable behavior is recurrent or if behavior greatly disrupts other students, a student may be asked to leave the classroom. In this case, students must report to the office for supervision. The Associate Director may contact parents when a student is sent to the office, and the student may be asked to write reflections on his/her behavior and have this reflection signed by parents.
- If a student's social behavior does not improve or if a student is recurrently being removed from the classroom, the Associate Director will convene a student, parent, teacher conference. A behavior contract will be drafted at this conference and will be monitored by the student, teachers, and parents.

- This contract will outline specific social behavior goals and specific consequences for unacceptable behavior tailored to the student's needs.
- If, after the implementation of a behavior contract, a student's behavior remains disruptive to the learning environment, the student may be suspended.
  - Counseling session with the school guidance counselor may also be included as part of the behavior contract.

### **Suspension and Expulsion**

The following behaviors may result in immediate out of school suspension (suspension terms may range from 1 to 365 days depending on the severity of the offense):

- Fighting
- Intimidation or using threatening or abusive words
- Theft of money or property
- Verbal or sexual harassment
- Vandalism
- Possession of real or toy weapons of any kind
- Possession or use of tobacco products, electronic cigarretes/vaping, or other controlled substances
- Willful defiance of an adult directive
- Repeated misconduct

More serious offenses may result in recommendation for expulsion following due process procedures. Please note that under charter school law, other North Carolina public schools, including Wake County, will not accept students suspended or expelled from The Exploris School for the duration of their suspension or expulsion.

### **6.6 Dress Code**

Throughout our world, cultures set standards and norms for dress. Context is one factor that determines the appropriateness of clothing choices. The standard for what's acceptable when attending a sporting event is typically different from what's acceptable in a workplace. What's acceptable at a shopping mall is typically different from what's acceptable at a wedding or in a place of worship. In addition to being a place of learning and work, Exploris serves as a demonstration site for educators from around the world. As such, Exploris's expectations for student dress reflects that context.

Students should wear clothing that is well-suited to the school environment. Clothing should cover the torso, midriff, and backside. It should have straps or sleeves. Clothing, imagery, and accessories that display or promote negative messages are not permitted. These could include drug, weapon, alcohol, or tobacco-related information, obscenities, put-downs, innuendo, or offensive graphics/words.

If a teacher questions the appropriateness of a student's dress, the student will be referred to an administrator. If the administrator determines that the student is inappropriately dressed, the student will be given the opportunity to call a parent and have other clothing delivered. Habitual violations of dress code will be considered willful disrespect on the part of the student and formal disciplinary action will be taken by the Associate Director.

- **1st offense:** Teacher conference with student
- **2nd offense:** Associate Director conference with student
- **3rd offense:** Associate Director meets with student and parent to discuss behavior

## **6.7 Items From Home**

Students should only bring appropriate academic-related items to school. Any items that disrupt the learning environment in any way or present a safety hazard will be:

- 1) collected and returned to the student at the end of the school day on the first occasion; and
- 2) held until a parent can pick them up on the second occasion or thereafter.

Unrelated magazines, toys, trading cards, cds, etc. should remain at home.

**Cell phones must be turned off when school is in session.** Cell phones are not to be used during the school day except when requested by their teacher for educational purposes. If a cell phone is used without permission it will be collected and turned in to the Associate Director. When students bring cell phones or other personal items to school they must take full responsibility for their care and safekeeping.

## **6.8 Search and Seizure**

To maintain order and discipline in the school and to protect the health, safety and welfare of all students and school personnel, there are times that searches may be deemed necessary. School authorities may search a student's person and/or personal property, cell phone, desk area, storage area, backpack, or parent/guardian automobile whenever a school authority has reasonable suspicion to believe that a student is in possession of illegal or unauthorized materials.

Anything found in the course of a search can be used as evidence against the student. The evidence may be:

1. Seized and admitted as evidence in any suspension or recommendation for expulsion proceeding.
2. Returned to the parent or guardian of the student.
3. Destroyed, if it is of no significant value.
4. Given to a law enforcement officer.

## **6.9 Corporal Punishment / Physical Restraint**

Corporal punishment is defined as action taken by school employees to spank or otherwise physically handle a student in any way to purposely inflict punishment. No corporal punishment will be administered to students by anyone in the school. Physical restraint is reasonable and appropriate physical intervention or force by trained staff may be employed as necessary for the following purposes:

- To quell a disturbance threatening physical injury to others
- To obtain possession of weapons or other dangerous objects upon a student or within the control of a student
- For the purpose of self-defense
- For the protection of persons or property
- Any such acts are not in conflict with the legal definition of child abuse and will not be construed to constitute corporal punishment within the meaning and intention of this policy.

## **6.10 Technology Acceptable Use**

The Exploris School uses filtering mechanisms that deny access to a large amount of material that is obscene, lewd, indecent, inappropriate for, or harmful to minors. No system is foolproof in this regard. Consequently, as stated in the Acceptable Use Policy (see appendix), students are equally responsible for avoiding and reporting such material.

Exploris offers students an opportunity to access the school's network resources, school technology, and the Internet while at school. Access is provided for students to conduct research, complete assignments, and communicate with others. To use these resources students must obtain parental permission and sign the form accompanying this handbook.

## **6.11 Non-Discrimination / Non-Harassment of Students and Staff**

Exploris does not discriminate and affirms the rights of all students on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, or disability in its education programs/activities. The school also extends all programs and activity possibilities to students based upon their individual interests and potential without discrimination according to handicapping conditions. All students are to be treated with respect and to be protected from intimidation, discrimination, physical harm, and/or harassment.

Notice of Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Handicap or Disability: No person at Exploris will, on the basis of handicap/disability, be excluded from participation, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any educational programs or activities. The Board of Cooperative Educational Services, by virtue of this policy, agrees to comply with the Section 504 regulations issued May 4, 1977, which will cause no discrimination on the basis of handicap in educational programs or activities which the school operates. Any student or employee will have a ready



means of resolving any claim of discrimination on the basis of handicap in the educational programs or activities of the school.

To this end, the following policies are in effect:

- Designation of Responsible Employee: The school's Associate Director has been designated as the school's Section 504 compliance officer, the employee responsible for coordinating school compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and its administrative regulations and with the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- Grievance Procedure: In the event that a student or employee believes that there has been a violation of Section 504 of its administrative regulations, he/she will mail or deliver to the compliance officer a written statement setting out the alleged violations in specific terms, describing the incident or activity involved, the individual involved, and the dates, times and locations involved. If requested, the individual filing the written statement will have the opportunity to discuss the matter personally with the Associate Director at the school. The Associate Director will make such additional investigation as is necessary to determine the complete facts involved and will report to the Executive Director and/or The Exploris School Board his/her findings and recommendations regarding the resolution of the matter.

### **6.12 Responsibility for Personal Property**

All personal property brought to school is brought at the owner's risk. The Exploris School cannot assume responsibility for any property belonging to students. Distracting or inappropriate objects will be taken from a student and returned at the end of the day. Repeated violations will require a parent conference. Students should not bring large sums of money to school. If it is necessary to bring a large sum of money, that money should be taken to the office.

### **6.13 Telephone Policies**

In order to limit disruption to the classroom, students will not be called to the telephone except in cases of emergency.

Students **may not** use the telephone in the teacher or administrative offices without permission from a grade level teacher, **NOR MAY STUDENTS USE THEIR CELL PHONES.** Since all cell phones are to be turned off, do not call or text your child in the course of the day. In the case of an emergency, administrative staff can take a message to your child.

Telephone Directory: Exploris will publish an annual student directory that contains a listing of students, parents/guardians, home addresses, and phone numbers. The Exploris School Directory is to be used for school business only.

## **6.14 Inclement Weather / School Closings**

When there is inclement weather, Exploris will open late or close in line with the Wake County Public School System (WCPSS). Parents are asked to tune in to any of the local network TV stations for the latest school closure information. School closure information will also be available on The Exploris School website and through the school's other social media outlets.

If WCPSS closes for any reason other than inclement weather, Exploris may not follow suit, so parents should always defer to the school website and official school social media announcements.

## **APPENDICES**

### **APPENDIX 1:**

#### **The Exploris School Grievance Policy**

##### **Introduction and Values**

The Exploris School seeks to promote harmony among its employees, faculty, students, and parents and to encourage equitable solutions to problems arising among them. The School believes that most concerns and differences are best addressed through open and honest communication conducted in an informal, respectful, and civil manner and that effective resolution depends on direct, prompt and constructive dialogue.

The following procedures are adopted to meet these goals.

##### **Grievance Committee Structure and Rules**

**Composition of the Grievance Committee** – The Grievance Committee shall consist of no fewer than three members of the Board of Directors, appointed by the Chairperson of the Board of Directors and confirmed by a vote of the full Board. One member of the Grievance Committee shall be designated by the Chairperson of the Board of Directors to serve as the Chairperson of the Committee.

**Parent Liaison** – One member of the Board of Directors shall be appointed by the Chairperson of the Board of Directors and confirmed by a vote of the full Board to serve as Parent Liaison. This individual shall not sit on the Grievance Committee. His or her primary role will be to help parents understand the grievance procedures and to provide process guidance to aggrieved parents. Parents who approach other members of the Board of Directors with grievances will be referred to the Parent Liaison.

**Training** – On an annual basis, all members of the Grievance Committee and the Parent Liaison will receive training provided by an attorney or other qualified individual with regard to confidentiality, impartiality, and other topics relevant to effective execution of their duties.

**Timelines** – Failure of a parent or employee to comply with the procedural timelines listed below may result in denial of a grievance request. Extensions in timelines may be granted if the relevant decisionmaker determines there is a reasonable need for such extension. Similarly, the timelines for actions to be taken by school personnel or board members may be extended, with notice to the aggrieved party, when there is a reasonable need for extension or extension is in the best interest of an effective process.

**Forms** – The Executive Director or Board may develop one or more grievance forms to facilitate and document the various steps of the grievance process.

## **Parent Grievance Procedures**

The Board recognizes that effective school governance requires that the primary responsibility for issues involving student discipline, curriculum, assessment and promotion and other day-to-day decisions regarding school management lies with the faculty, staff and Executive Director of the School and these individuals are best suited to resolve conflicts that arise with respect to these issues. The Board has the authority to appoint, employ, and remove the Executive Director, but primary responsibility and authority over faculty, staff and volunteer organizations of the School are vested in the Executive Director. The Board, therefore, will exercise any authority in this policy conservatively and narrowly so as not to usurp the authority granted to the Executive Director.

**Informal Procedures:** A parent should first attempt to resolve any grievance through discussion with the relevant teacher(s) or other involved persons. If the parent’s concern is not adequately addressed through an informal discussion with the teacher and/or staff involved, the parent should next attempt to resolve the grievance with the appropriate supervisor, if applicable. If a grievance cannot be resolved in an informal manner, the parent may initiate a formal grievance procedure.

**Formal Grievance Procedure:** In instances where informal means are ineffective or otherwise not feasible, the School offers these more formal grievance procedures. Grievance proceedings and information shall be kept confidential at all levels to the extent possible and permitted by law. A parent grievance is a formal written claim by a parent or group of parents identifying the concern, identifying the individual or group’s resolution attempts, and identifying any law, policy, or practice that is implicated by the concern. No one shall retaliate against a parent who files a grievance under this policy (or against a student whose parent files a grievance) in good faith.

**Level One – Supervisor Request and Conference.** A parent may, by written request, seek a formal conference with the relevant supervisor to address an unresolved grievance.

The request shall succinctly describe the specific grievance(s) and related details, and shall identify any specific policy, rule, regulation or law believed to have been violated, and shall provide other relevant information to help the supervisor adequately understand the nature of the grievance.

The request shall be filed within fifteen (15) business days of the most recent incident(s) or last informal attempt to resolve the grievance, provided that such attempt was made within ten (10) business days of the last incident.

Following receipt of the written request, the supervisor shall, whenever possible, conduct a conference with the aggrieved parent(s) within ten (10) days. Within five (5) business days following the conference, the supervisor will state in writing his or her decision with regard to the grievance and a copy will be given to the parent.

**Level Two** - Appeal to the Executive Director. If the grievance is not resolved, the parent(s) may appeal the supervisor's decision in writing to the Executive Director if the Executive Director was not involved in the Level One Conference.

The appeal must be made within five (5) business days following receipt of the supervisor's written Level One response to the grievant. The Executive Director will review the grievance and conduct an informal investigation as necessary.

The Executive Director shall issue a written response to the parent and the Level One supervisor/staff within ten (10) business days following receipt of the written appeal.

Decisions of the Executive Director are final and not subject to further appeal, except in the following instances:

- Decisions involving an alleged violation of a contractual right;
- Decisions involving an alleged violation by the School of state or federal law; or
- Decisions based on allegations of conduct by the Executive Director in violation of law or school policy.

The Board of Directors, through its Grievance Committee, retains discretion to determine whether an alleged violation involves a “final” or “appealable” decision by the Executive Director. The Grievance Committee may consider all available evidence in the record established at the time of the decision and any other evidence it deems necessary for consideration. In addition, the Grievance Committee has the authority to grant a discretionary appeal in exceptional circumstances.

**Level Three** - Appeal to the Board Grievance Committee: Appeal of Rights and Discretionary Appeals. If a parent is not satisfied with the disposition of the grievance at Level Two, the parent may, within five (5) business days of receiving notice of the decision of the Executive Director, submit a written request to the Grievance Committee Chairperson to appeal the Executive Director’s decision and to request a formal hearing.

Within five (5) business days of receiving the written request for appeal, the Grievance Committee Chairperson shall issue a written notice to the parent and the Executive Director indicating whether the Executive Director’s determination is “final” in nature or whether the Board, in its discretion or by right of appeal, shall grant a hearing. The notice shall also specify, if a hearing is granted, the time it will occur and guidelines by which it will be conducted

When a hearing is granted, a panel of the Grievance Committee consisting of at least three people shall hear the grievance within ten (10) business days of the date the Chairperson's notice is issued to the parent.

The Grievance Committee panel may affirm, reverse, or modify the decision of the Executive Director. Following the hearing, the parent and Executive Director shall be informed in writing of the panel's decision within five (5) business days after the hearing, whenever feasible.

The decision of the Grievance Committee panel is final OR the decision of the Grievance Committee panel may be appealed to the full Board of Directors.

## **APPENDIX 2:**

### **Acceptable Use Policy for School Technology**

We expect students to use all electronic resources (laptops and other handheld devices brought from home, including phones) **for educational purposes only**, as approved by the teachers while on the school's campus. Access is a privilege, not a right. As a technology user, students are expected to act in a considerate and responsible manner. Misuse of the network resources or Internet will result in consequences for the inappropriate behavior, and access may be restricted.

**Students (if able)** should read the following rules of network etiquette and then sign the last page of this handbook to show that you understand your responsibilities. **Parents** should read this section aloud to students who are unable to read it themselves.

#### **While using the Exploris network resources, technology, and the Internet on school properties,**

- I will communicate politely. I will treat others with respect. I will not harass or attack others, or use expressions of bigotry, racism, sexism, or other types of hurtful language, pictures, or expressions. I will not send, display, or use profanity, obscenities, sexually explicit, or offensive materials.
- I will use my school email account for school work and educational purposes only. I will not use that email address to set up other accounts unless given explicit direction from a teacher to do so.
- I will protect privacy and safety by not disclosing private or personal information about myself and/or others on the Internet. I will never falsify my identity.
- I will keep my password private and will not attempt to use another person's password.
- I will use the network/Internet and other school-given electronic resources for school-related, educational activities as assigned by my

teachers. This also means that I will not attempt to use the computer to buy or sell any products, for illegal activity, or for political purposes.

- I will not tamper with or change a computer file that isn't mine, copy or download files, or programs, or modify the computer's settings without permission from my teachers.
- I will recognize and respect the intellectual property of others by not plagiarizing or using copyrighted materials from the Internet without permission of the author. I will cite the source when appropriate.
- I will respect the integrity of the Exploris network system. I will enter authorized systems only. I will never try to circumvent security measures on either Exploris's network or computers at any remote site. I will not tamper with or alter the system in such a way that would disrupt the network.
- I will use equipment responsibly. I will not attempt to damage or vandalize the computer hardware, electronic systems, software, or networks.
- I will not make, or attempt to make, any malicious attempt to harm or destroy data of another user, including the uploading, downloading, or creation of computer viruses.

***Consequences for Unacceptable Use of the School Technology*** If I violate any part of this policy, the consequences will be:

**First Offense:** I will lose access to computers or other technology devices on the school's campus for one week, and the teacher will phone my parent or guardian. Any assigned computer work will be completed at home or with pen and paper using traditional resources.

**Second Offense:** I will lose access to computers or other technology devices on Exploris's campus for one month, and the teacher will phone my parent or guardian. Any assigned computer work will be completed at home or with pen and paper using traditional resources.

**Third Offense:** Computer or other technology devices use will be revoked for 12 weeks (the length of one trimester), the teacher will call my parent or guardian, and a written disciplinary form will be sent home and placed in my permanent school record.

### **APPENDIX 3: Handbook/ Technology Acceptable Use Form**

Sign this page and return to school as soon as possible. **Students may not have technology access until this agreement is on file.**

**Student's Agreement:** (read aloud by parent if necessary) I understand the Exploris Parent/ Student handbook, including the Acceptable Use Policy for School Technology, as written above, and agree to follow the procedures and rules it contains.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student's Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

#### **Parent or Guardian's Agreement**

As the parent or guardian of the above-named student, I have read the Exploris Parent/ Student Handbook, including the Acceptable Use Policy for School Technology.

I agree to follow the school's expectations and procedures and support the school in enforcing these expectations with the child named above.

Further, I understand that access to network resources/Internet for students at The Exploris School is provided for educational purposes only. I will abide by the acceptable use policy and stress that my child do the same.

I understand that employees of the school will make every reasonable effort to restrict access to all controversial material on the Internet, but I will not hold them responsible for materials my son or daughter acquires or sees as a result of the use of the Internet from school facilities. I give my permission to The Exploris School to allow my child, named above, to use the network resources/ Internet on computers or devices at the school.

I understand that my child will be assigned an Exploris email account, and a username and password which will be used when accessing the school's network of computers and the Internet.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date