



## PARTNERSHIP ACADEMIES

Courage ▲ Justice ▲ Temperance ▲ Wisdom

### **Student & Family Handbook**

**2022-2023**



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## MESSAGE TO OUR FAMILIES AND STUDENTS

Dear students and families,

We are so thrilled that you have decided to join the Vertex Partnership Academies' community. You are a part of the history of our school. Our school building has a rich history—you might already know that Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor once walked the halls and sat at the desks in the very same classrooms you will visit and sit in. She was the valedictorian of her 8th-grade class. I have no doubt that Vertex students, too, will accomplish great things in our school building. Our goal is to equip each student socially, emotionally, and academically to also have an impact on the world around us after high school.

Vertex student scholars will be immersed in a culture of democratic discourse guided by the four cardinal virtues of Courage, Justice, Wisdom, and Temperance. This ambitious mission is made possible by Public Preparatory Network and Brilla College Prep Public Charter Schools, both authorized by SUNY to extend their charters through 12th grade and run a joint high school program.

Over the next four years, we will grow as a community of staff, students, and families. Together we will go on a journey—we will grow in size, take up more space, and create so many memories. We will undoubtedly be faced with challenges, learning curves, and growing pains. But I am confident that all the hard work will be in the service of something that you will look back on with fondness whenever you reflect on your time at our school.

Sincerely,

*Joyanet Mangual*

Founding Principal

## HANDBOOK OVERVIEW

Welcome to the Vertex Partnership Academies' community! The purpose of this handbook is to ensure that we have consistent expectations in our school. Herein, we present Vertex Partnership Academies' mission, guiding principles, procedures, and expectations.

As Vertex Partnership Academies always seeks to improve, we reserve the right to amend, modify or change the provisions of this handbook. We will, of course, provide all students and families with notice of any significant changes in the policies reflected in the following pages.

## OUR MISSION AND CORE VALUES

Vertex Partnership Academies seeks to provide every student with the opportunity to be an International Baccalaureate candidate.

We are guided by four core virtues of Courage, Justice, Temperance, and Wisdom. We dedicate ourselves to equality of opportunity, individual dignity, and our common humanity with the purpose of developing an international-minded community of lifelong learners who help to create a better and more peaceful world.

### The International Baccalaureate (IB) Learner Profile and Character Education

The aim of all IB programmes is to develop internationally minded people who, recognizing their common humanity and shared guardianship of the planet, help to create a better and more peaceful world.

As IB learners we strive to exhibit the **IB Learner Profile attributes**:

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Inquirers:</b> We nurture our curiosity, developing skills for inquiry and research. We know how to learn independently and with others. We learn with enthusiasm and sustain our love of learning throughout life. | <b>Open-minded:</b> We critically appreciate our own cultures and personal histories, as well as the values and traditions of others. We seek and evaluate a range of points of view and we are willing to grow from the experience. |
| <b>Knowledgeable:</b> We develop and use conceptual understandings, exploring knowledge across a range of disciplines. We engage with issues and ideas that have local and global significance.                        | <b>Caring:</b> We show empathy, compassion, and respect. We have a commitment to service, and we act to make a positive difference in the lives of others and in the world around us.  |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>Thinkers:</b> We use critical and creative thinking skills to analyze and take responsible action on complex problems. We exercise initiative in making reasoned, ethical decisions.</p>                                | <p><b>Courageous:</b> We approach uncertainty with forethought and determination; we work independently and cooperatively to explore new ideas and innovative strategies. We are resourceful and resilient in the face of challenges and change.</p>                               |
| <p><b>Communicators:</b> We express ourselves confidently and creatively in more than one language and in many ways. We collaborate effectively, listening carefully to the perspectives of other individuals and groups.</p> | <p><b>Balanced:</b> We understand the importance of balancing different aspects of our lives - intellectual, physical, and emotional - to achieve well-being for ourselves and others. We recognize our interdependence with other people and with the world in which we live.</p> |
| <p><b>Principled:</b> We use critical and creative thinking skills to analyze and take responsible action on complex problems. We exercise initiative in making reasoned, ethical decisions.</p>                              | <p><b>Reflective:</b> We thoughtfully consider the world and our own ideas and experience. We work to understand our strengths and weaknesses in order to support our learning and personal development.</p>   |

By developing these attributes, and others like them, at Vertex; we can help our staff and students become responsible members of local, national, and global communities.

In addition to the IB Learner Profiles, Vertex Partnership Academies' student students will be challenged and empowered to define for themselves the school's four cardinal virtues of Courage, Justice, Temperance, and Wisdom. We believe that both the cardinal virtues and the IB Learner Profiles outlined above contribute to a school culture that encourages a diversity of ideas and viewpoints in which our students can develop an understanding that other people, with their differences, can also be right. These learner profile attributes are the qualities that allow our students to demonstrate our cardinal virtues.

## VERTEX PARTNERSHIP ACADEMIES COMMUNITY AGREEMENT

We all have a responsibility to make Vertex Partnership Academies a happy and positive place. Most rules at Vertex Partnership Academies are a matter of common sense and are guided by the four cardinal virtues of Courage, Justice, Temperance, and Wisdom.

This *Community Agreement* contains some specific guidelines and expectations. In choosing to highlight these rules, the school is drawing attention to things that, if observed, provide a framework for a safe, healthy, supportive, and self-disciplined community. This school community strives to develop inquiring, knowledgeable, and caring young people who will have the courage and wisdom to make the world a better place.

### Behavior Expectations

- Be responsible: Come to school wearing the proper uniform and prepared with all school materials.
- Be here: Attend all classes on time and be ready to learn.
- Be respectful: Be considerate, polite, and helpful in all dealings with yourself and others, respect the possessions of others and care for the campus.
- Be awesome: Maintain a good working atmosphere in the classroom by participating in all class activities.

### Civility

- Vertex Partnership Academies must be a place where no one, adult or student, is subjected to discourteous, threatening, or disrespectful treatment by anyone else. There will be disagreements, but one can be passionate without being offensive and one can disagree without becoming disagreeable. Name-calling or defamatory comments are not acceptable forms of conduct.
- Vertex Partnership Academies affirms all the languages of which it is composed, and we strive to create an environment for students to develop both in English, their newly acquired language, and their home language(s). English is the common medium of communication and should be used as a common language in mixed linguistic groups.

## BASIC OPERATIONAL EXPECTATIONS

### School Calendar and Hours

All families will receive a school master calendar that details all key dates for the school year. Vertex Partnership Academies reserves the right to make changes to the calendar and will ensure all parties are made aware of such changes with notice. Additionally, the school leadership team will communicate important family event dates that are planned as the school year progresses in our school communication.

### School Day Schedule

We expect all of our students to arrive at school, classes, and events on time. At Vertex, we expect that our students demonstrate the IB Learner Profile and four cardinal virtues throughout the day in the actions that they show.

All students will take the following classes in their program: mathematics, science, language and literature, individuals and societies (history), language acquisition (Mandarin or Spanish), visual arts, media, and physical education. Our typical week will consist of half-day programming for students on Monday and full-day academic programming on Tuesday-Friday. Our school will operate on a block schedule. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, students will take the same four classes (A-day classes). On Wednesdays and Fridays, students will take the other four classes (B-day classes). All students must be in their seats with their breakfast by no later than 8:15 am to start the school day in their homeroom classes. Students will have the opportunity to eat breakfast in the classroom. At a predetermined time, all students will need to throw away all breakfast items prior to transitioning to their first class. The day will end at approximately 12 pm on Mondays and will end at 3:40 pm on Tuesdays-Fridays. Students will also have tutoring available from 3:45 pm-4:20 pm. More information about our tutoring program will be communicated throughout the school year.

|                                       | <b>Monday</b> | <b>Tuesday (A)</b> | <b>Wednesday (B)</b> | <b>Thursday (A)</b> | <b>Friday (B)</b> |
|---------------------------------------|---------------|--------------------|----------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Start time</b>                     | 8:15am        | 8:15am             | 8:15am               | 8:15am              | 8:15am            |
| <b>End time</b>                       | 11:56am       | 3:40pm             | 3:40pm               | 3:40pm              | 3:40pm            |
| <b>Tutoring/<br/>Extracurriculars</b> | N/A           | 3:45-4:20pm        | 3:45-4:20pm          | 3:45-4:20pm         | 3:45-4:20pm       |

### Attendance and Tardiness

All students are expected to be seated in their classes by 8:15 am each morning. Late students will report to the main office to receive a pass for late entry to class. Additionally, advisors will discuss any attendance issues with students and call parents to ensure that expectations are clear and the proper support is being offered. To ensure that parents are abreast of student attendance, a daily phone call may be implemented for students who are marked absent. School and class attendance—absences and tardiness—will impact a student’s ability to keep up with the coursework, which may be reflected in class grades. Excused absences are defined as those that are due to religious observance, a death in the family, or responding to a legal matter. Students will be required to provide appropriate documentation for the absence to be excused. All other absences are unexcused and will be responded to as outlined above.

If students are consistently tardy to school, they are missing key announcements for the day and risk not being prepared for their classes. Students who are frequently tardy to school will receive a phone call from a family member to assess the cause of the tardies. If a student reaches two tardies in a given week, they will serve a detention on the following Monday and will work with our school support team to create a goal to improve their attendance to school.

### **School Dismissal**

After dismissal, students are required to go directly home. Students should not remain on the school property after dismissal. Vertex Partnership Academies staff members are not available after dismissal hours to supervise students. It is important that students

Vertex Partnership Academies will help to ensure safe transportation as per state or city regulations. All requests or concerns regarding transportation must be submitted in writing. The school will provide busing for students to travel to/from school if required under an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or other circumstances.

Metrocards will be provided for all students who qualify. Our school will not always have the ability to replace lost or stolen cards as these Metrocards are distributed by the State.

### **School Closings**

If there is a weather-related emergency and the NYC Department of Education is closed, Vertex Partnership Academies will also be closed. Our school will notify families of any weather-related closings via an automated call and an alert on our school website and social media pages.

### **Student Uniform**

All students must come to school every day wearing the required general or physical education uniform on the correct days. The uniform can be purchased from French Toast. For the school uniform, students will have two options:

- Oxford dress shirt with navy blue pants
- Grey short-sleeved polo shirt with navy blue pants

Only black belts are allowed. The belts must be free of designs or logos or insignias.

The physical education uniform is navy blue cotton shirt and grey cotton pants. Black sneakers are to be worn for physical education.

For footwear, solid black (without any other colors) sneakers, dress shoes, or boots are allowed. The foot must be completely covered. Slippers, flip flops, clogs, and shoes with heels are not allowed.

A Vertex fleece is also acceptable. This can be purchased from the school.

The family coordinator can assist with any questions related to securing the school's uniform.

### **School Supplies**

All students must bring their own supplies to school every day. Students are responsible for their supplies and must maintain their materials organized and neat as established by the school staff. During the first week of school, each teacher will share the specific materials needed for their classes and discuss how the supplies will be used.

#### Required supplies

- Black or blue pens
- #2 pencils
- Pencil sharpener
- Binders (3)
- Notebooks (6)-simple lines and perforated (to rip the pages easily)
- TI-84 calculator

#### Recommended supplies

- Colored pens/pencils
- Post-it notes
- Highlighters
- Binder dividers
- Index cards

All students will be provided a laptop to use throughout the school year. Students are expected to take great care of their laptops, especially while traveling to and from school. The technology

policy and tips to care for devices will be discussed during orientation and throughout the school year.

### **Advisory class**

Instructional and non-instructional staff will have an advisory group. The advisory structure is defined as an adult (advisor) who supports a group of students. Advisory is a Pass/Fail class that all students will take. The role of an advisor is to:

- support the development of reading and writing routines
- support academic and social-emotional needs
- supervise service as action requirements
- support preparation for student-led conferences
- supervise the student's MYP Personal Project

At Vertex Partnership Academies, the advisor is the liaison between the school and the family. It is the role of the advisor to ensure that families are informed of the students' academic progress and needs.

### **Student-led family conferences**

Vertex Partnership Academies will hold at least three student-led family conference dates. These days are non-instructional days where students, families, and advisors meet to discuss the academic progress of the student and more importantly, to set goals for the upcoming weeks. All staff and students must be present on these conference dates and 100% of conferences must be conducted during this block.

### **Food and Meals**

Vertex Partnership Academies participates in the National School Lunch Program, which provides free or reduced-priced lunches to eligible students. Each year, a family must complete the applications to determine eligibility. Students will be provided with a healthy breakfast every morning. Students are permitted to bring their own breakfasts to school and must adhere to the school rules regarding the appropriate time and place to eat such items. All students will be provided with meals regardless of their free and reduced-price lunch status. Students may bring food from home for lunch. Microwave and refrigeration will not be available to students. We recommend that students use insulated lunch bags or thermoses to keep their food warm.

During the school day, students may only drink water from a transparent water bottle. Snacks and food are not permitted outside of breakfast and lunch periods. Parents must inform the school of any allergies that their students may have during the registration process.

## **Study Hall/Tutoring**

Per the schedule, the study hall will take place after dismissal until 4:20 pm. As determined by students' needs and the availability of staff, we may implement additional time for tutoring. All students who are expected to attend study hall will be notified in advance as well as via communications to their parents. Study hall is an opportunity for students to practice academic skills and receive instructional support in a smaller setting. If a student is assigned study hall, it is the expectation that the student will attend, and we will partner with families to accommodate this additional time for learning.

## **Extracurricular Activities**

A key component of our school is ensuring that we are meeting the needs of our students. As such, we will take input from Vertex students and launch extracurricular clubs and teams for student participation under the supervision of a staff member. These activities may take place after school, during lunch periods, or even on weekends. Students must have a parent's permission to take part in these activities. Additionally, students must remain in good academic standing to be eligible for extracurricular activities. If a student is struggling academically, the advisor will work with the student and family to put together a plan to improve the student's grades before they can rejoin any extracurricular activities.

## **Field Trips**

At various points throughout the year, Vertex staff may take students on field trips. These may be local or even outside of our city or state. All trips are planned well in advance and will have an academic focus. Parents will be required to provide their permission for students to attend field trips. Parents may be invited to serve as volunteer chaperones, after going through the appropriate training. Students who have exhibited behavioral challenges in the school building may be prohibited from attending field trips.

## **Emergency and Safety Procedures**

At Vertex Partnership Academies, the health, and safety of our students, staff, families, and community members remain our number one priority. School leaders will facilitate drills to ensure that students and staff members know what to do in the event of an emergency. Parents will be informed if an emergency occurs during the school day as well as what actions were taken. Students are expected to follow all guidelines for emergency response. Additionally, as we navigate the COVID-19 pandemic and other public health challenges, students and staff may be asked to take specific safety precautions. For the health and well-being of all, we expect the entire Vertex community to do their part in ensuring that everyone remains safe.

## **STUDENT BEHAVIOR EXPECTATIONS**

### **Discipline-balanced encouragement and consequences**

Our purpose is to create an educational community dedicated to equality of opportunity, individual dignity, and our common humanity guided by the four cardinal virtues of Courage, Justice, Temperance, and Wisdom. Therefore, our expectations of students are high and are stated in our community agreement. Our school is committed to providing a safe and structured school in which our students can excel. The conduct system is not designed to penalize every minor infraction – it is, however, designed to be responsive to minor infractions that accumulate over time. The aim of this system is to deter unproductive behaviors and educate and encourage positive personal feedback.

It is the school's goal to ensure every member of the community is clear of all expectations. These will be communicated through Student Seminar Week, Family Orientations, school communications, advisory conversations, classroom directions, and ongoing informal communication and meetings with staff, students, and families.

Students are expected to respond positively by accepting justice of the case and to have the wisdom to change their behavior. They may be required to talk about the issue confidentially with the school counselor or principal. No responses to misbehaviors are intended to be automatic and mechanical. Responses will always seek to be individualized and personal – designed to take account of the nature of the misbehavior, the circumstances concerned, the student's past history, and a sense of what response is most likely to allow learning to occur.

### **Positive Reinforcement**

Throughout the academic year, ceremonies provide opportunities to formally celebrate successes and achievements and to recognize outstanding contributions to service, sport, and performing arts pursuits as well as academic endeavors and attainments. Special prizes for outstanding contributions and exemplary personal example, leadership, and service are also awarded at the end of the school year. All staff members are encouraged to look out for and to recognize positive student behavior and contributions, including:

- Acting respectfully
- Assisting someone
- Picking up and throwing away trash
- Stopping a confrontation
- Consistently being on time
- Doing what's right even when others aren't
- Cleaning up after peers in classrooms
- Helping/being kind to other students
- Any behavior that goes beyond expectations.

Students have the chance to receive positive actions where they excel and impress members of staff (e.g. an act of service, dedicated training in a sports session, excellent homework and test

results in an academic subject, impressive or virtuous behavior, and contributions during field trips). Positive actions will be recorded in ManageBac and an email will be sent to family members for each merit awarded each week. If a student accrues four merits in a term, they will be eligible for a Principal's Commendation. Principal's Commendations are awarded in community meetings.

Individual acts of exceptional personal example or work can be entered into Vertex's Book of Excellence. Students are nominated by teachers, who feel that the student's work or contribution is so impressive that it deserves very special recognition. The Book of Excellence provides a written record of all outstanding pieces of work or significant contributions to the community achieved during a student's time at Vertex Partnership Academies. Students who are nominated are invited to the Principal's Office to sign the book beside the nomination entry. A letter is sent to parents and all entries in the Book of Excellence may be listed as an honor on university applications.

While our school strives to implement our behavior system consistently, we also recognize that some students' needs may be best met through customized behavior plans. Our school staff will diagnose the students' needs at the moment and determine the appropriate action to better support the student to be successful. Our school seeks to tailor consequences to the severity and frequency of the unacceptable behavior and the student's individual circumstances. Both the severity of consequences and the scope and depth of structured, proactive support provided by the school staff to students struggling to meet behavioral expectations will increase commensurate with the severity and frequency of the violations. As the consequences become more severe, we will notify and seek the involvement of families to help design and implement response plans. Our school's response to behaviors will escalate as negative behaviors escalate, with the most serious infractions of the Code of Conduct receiving the most serious consequences. Violence directed at other students or staff will automatically lead to the most serious consequences.

In line with our community agreement and our values-based approach, we are committed to upholding the code of conduct outlined herein:

## **Code of Conduct**

### **1. Disrupting the School Environment**

- a. Arriving late to school or class: Student tardiness disrupts class, inconveniences others, and often results in academic difficulties. Students may not be late to school or class.
- b. Choosing NOT to attend required School, School functions, or school support: Students are required to attend all academic and enrichment classes, assigned consequences, and assigned support opportunities. Students are not permitted to leave the building without permission.

- c. Misbehaving on the way to or from School: Our students, while in uniform, are our ambassadors to the community and should embody the core values of Vertex Partnership Academies. Disciplinary action may result from choices made outside of the School building. students may not misbehave while traveling to or from School or while engaged in School-sponsored activities, such as field trips or after-school activities. Misbehavior includes, but is not limited to, using inappropriate language, making excessive noise, touching other students, being disrespectful to others, and instigating, encouraging, recording, or promoting others to fight and/or engage in criminal or otherwise inappropriate behavior.
- d. Access to the Building: Students are not permitted to block access to any room or part of the School building. Students may not leave the building through any exits except those officially marked.
- e. Leaving Campus Building without Permission: Once students arrive on campus, they may not leave campus without permission.
- f. Violating the Dress Code: Students must be in proper uniform. Only designated clothing items are allowed to be worn in School and must be worn appropriately (according to the School's Dress Code). Parents or guardians may be required to pick up children who are not properly dressed for School, bring the missing Dress Code item to the School, or authorize the student to return home to retrieve the necessary items.
- g. Gum, Food, and Beverages: Students may not chew or carry gum at any time at Vertex Partnership Academies. Students may not eat or drink at unauthorized times or places at Vertex Partnership Academies.
- h. Hallway Behavior: Students may not disrupt the instructional environment while in the hallway.
- i. Disrupting Class and Preventing Teaching: Vertex Partnership Academies can fulfill its mission only if classrooms are safe and teaching is uninterrupted. Students may not intentionally disrupt class with any misbehaviors that distract the teacher or other students.
- j. Arriving at Class Unprepared: When class begins, students must be prepared and have all necessary materials (books, pencils, portfolio, paper, etc.).
- k. Entering or Leaving Classrooms Without Permission: students may not enter a classroom without permission, nor may they leave a classroom without having obtained a pass. students must report to locations as directed by staff and remain in a designated location.
- l. Failing to Complete Homework: Completing homework is essential to the success of individual students and the classroom community. Students are expected to complete all of their homework assignments on time.
- m. Cheating, Plagiarism, and Copying Others' Work: Cheating or copying the work of others (or allowing other students to copy work) is unacceptable. This includes any and all talking during exams irrespective of whether the chatter is in reference to the exam. In addition to other disciplinary consequences, both the student who copied and the student who allowed the copying will receive zeros on the assignment. This offense may result in in-school suspension, long-term

suspension, or expulsion. Depending on the severity and continuation of this practice, the consequences will escalate.

- n. Forgery: Students may not forge a signature on required forms.
  - o. Using objects as Projectiles: students may not throw or kick objects inappropriately in School.
  - p. Lying to a Staff Member: Honesty is an essential element of personal character and is necessary for the School to support our core values. students are not permitted to lie or attempt to conceal the truth.
  - q. Being Disrespectful to a Staff Member: A School cannot function properly if students are permitted to be disrespectful towards adults. For that reason, students may not be disrespectful towards a staff member or any other adult associated with the School. Disrespect may include but is not limited to directing the use of foul language at an adult, name-calling, or engaging in unwanted or inappropriate communication.
  - r. Ignoring or Refusing to Follow a Staff Member's Directions: Students are expected to follow the directions of any staff member the first time and respond in a respectful manner. Ignoring, delaying, or refusing to respond to a staff member's directive is considered an act of defiance and a form of disrespect.
  - s. Being Disrespectful to a student: If students do not feel physically and emotionally safe in School, teaching and learning are made more difficult. Therefore, students may not be disrespectful toward other students. Disrespect may include, but is not limited to directing the use of foul language at another student, name-calling, or engaging in unwanted or inappropriate communication. Participating in the exchange, posting, and commenting related to another student via social media that causes a disruption to the learning environment can be considered bullying or intimidation.
  - t. Possession of Inappropriate Property: Students cannot possess any electronic music or game devices in School other than as permitted above. students may not possess any printed images, text, or lyrics that are vulgar, profane, or sexually explicit, or any other items inappropriate for School.
  - u. Gambling: Students may not bet money or wager anything on the outcome of a game, contest, or other events.
  - v. Filming and Distribution of Media Depicting Code of Conduct Violations: Students may not take, share, or post photographs, pictures, or videos depicting a violation of this Code of Conduct.
  - w. Violation of the Computer/Email/Internet Acceptable Use Policy: Students may not violate the terms of the Acceptable Use Policy set forth in this Handbook.
- 2. Physical or Verbal Harm, Inappropriate Touching, and/or Threats**
- a. Causing Bodily Harm: Students may not cause physical injury to a student, School employee, or another person. students are not permitted to harm or attempt to harm a student, School employee, or another person with or without a weapon or dangerous object.

- b. Intending to Cause Physical Injury: Students may not cause or attempt to cause physical injury or behave in such a way that could reasonably cause physical injury to any student, School employee, or other members of the community.
  - c. Fighting, Unwanted Physical Contact, or Verbal Altercation: Students may not fight with other students from Vertex Partnership Academies or persons not enrolled at the School. Harassing, pushing, touching, or any form of unwanted physical contact is not tolerated regardless of the cause of the disturbance. students may not engage in verbal altercations, including but not limited to insults, yelling, or words that are reasonably likely to incite a verbal or physical confrontation.
  - d. Play-fighting and Threatening: Play-fighting and/or the use of threats harm the safety of the community. Students may not play-fight and/or threaten others playfully or with the intent of intimidating a staff member or students.
  - e. Setting off False Alarms or Making a Threat: students may not intentionally set off a false alarm or make a destructive threat.
  - f. Engaging in Sexual Activity or Inappropriate Touching: A student may not engage in sexual activity or inappropriate touching of another student or themselves in the School building or on the way to and from school.
- 3. Possession or Use of Firearms, Weapons, and/or Dangerous Objects**
- a. Possession or Use of a Firearm: Students may not possess or use a firearm.
  - b. Possession or Use of a Mock Firearm: Students may not possess or use mock firearms
  - c. Using or Possessing a Weapon or Dangerous Object: Students are not allowed to bring a weapon of any sort to School, use any object in a dangerous or threatening manner, or have an actual weapon or mock weapon on them or their property.
  - d. Arson: Students may not set a fire or possess any form of fire-making material, including lighters, matches, etc.
- 4. Possession, Use, or Distribution of Controlled Substances, Alcohol, or Tobacco**
- a. Using or Possessing Drugs or Alcohol: Students may not use, be under the influence, or possess any non-prescribed controlled substance, narcotic drug, a hallucinogenic drug, amphetamine, barbiturate, marijuana, alcoholic beverage, or intoxicant of any kind. Prescribed and over-the-counter drugs must be delivered to the nurse or trained School employee by a parent or responsible person with a doctor-signed Authorization to Dispense Medication Form. students may not be in possession of prescribed or over-the-counter drugs.
  - b. Selling, Possessing, or Transferring Drugs or Alcohol: Students may not sell, distribute, or possess with intent to sell or distribute prescribed or non-prescribed controlled substances.
  - c. Selling, Possessing, or Transferring Tobacco Products: Students may not sell, distribute, or possess with intent to sell or distribute cigarettes, chewing tobacco, or other tobacco products.
  - d. Selling or Possessing Mock Controlled Substances, Alcohol, or Tobacco: Students may not sell, distribute or possess mock controlled substances, alcohol, tobacco, or drug paraphernalia.
- 5. Harassment and Violation of Civil Rights**

- a. Violating the Civil Rights of Others: Students may not violate others' civil rights—the fundamental rights of freedom and equality that belong to everyone.
  - b. Harassment: Students may not make unwanted sexual advances towards or commit sexual harassment of any member of the School community. Harassment or intimidation of any members of the School community on the basis of their racial or ethnic background, gender, age, sexual orientation, or disability is not permitted.
  - c. Abusive or Profane Language or Treatment: Students may not use abusive, threatening, vulgar, coarse, or degrading language (including racial epithets or sexist or homophobic remarks) in speech or in writing.
  - d. Bullying and Intimidation: Students may not physically, verbally (through speech or writing), or through technology and/or social media in order to intimidate or bully or attempt to intimidate or bully any member of the School community.
- 6. Theft or Vandalism**
- a. Theft, Loss or Destruction of Personal or School Property: Students may not steal, lose, or damage property belonging to someone else or to the School.
  - b. Mistreatment or Inappropriate Use of School Technology or School Property: Students must treat computers, printers, and other technology with care. Vertex Partnership Academies does not tolerate attempts to access the School's files or other inappropriate uses of technology or the Internet. Students do not have the right to use School computers to access chat rooms or non-Vertex Partnership Academies emails or to access websites or files that contain profanity, sexually explicit language or pictures, excessively violent themes, and/or other material inappropriate for minors. Students are prohibited from using School telephones. In the event of an emergency, students may be allowed to use the School telephones without permission, but only at the discretion of School staff members. Staff members will always be the first to reach out to a parent and guardians in the event of an emergency or to inform the parent/guardian of an urgent matter. Students must not mistreat other School property including but not limited to text and reading books. Writing or marking on any desks or School property is strictly prohibited.
- 7. Gang-Related Activity:** Students may not engage in any gang-related activity, which shall be defined as any act(s) that promotes gangs or gang-related activities including, but not limited to, (1) communicating either verbally or non-verbally (hand signs, gestures, handshakes, drawings, etc.), to convey membership or affiliation with a gang; (2) defacing School or personal property with gang-related graffiti, symbols or slogans; (3) requiring payment of protection, insurance, or otherwise intimidating or threatening any person related to the gang-related activity; and (4) soliciting others for gang membership.
- 8. Failure to Comply with School-Imposed Consequences:** Students must comply with School-imposed consequences. In order for the School to maintain high expectations and a safe and respectful school environment — two vital parts of our School culture — students must comply with all consequences assigned including any suspension or disciplinary action.
- 9. Repeated Violations of the Code of Conduct:** As outlined below, repeated violations may result in consequences of greater severity or length at the discretion of the School

principal. Repeated inability to adhere to the School's rules may result in the student's removal from the Vertex Partnership Academies community.

As a community, we are committed to serving and supporting all of our students, especially those that need us the most, while protecting the strong culture that will make our academic goals possible. If a student's behavior is not in line with our Code of Conduct and Community Agreement, a student will receive a consequence. If unsafe or harmful behaviors persist, or if students have not had their needs met, more robust supports may be put in place. Potential supports for our students may include:

- Meetings with the school counselor or other member of the school staff
- Family communication and meetings
- Student written, private, or public reflection on community violation
- Restoration meetings after incidents/infractions to repair harm

Potential consequences are outlined below:

- Removal of school privileges (field trips, in school privileges, etc)
- Detention
- In school suspensions
- School/community service
- Short and long term out of school suspensions
- Removal (expulsion) from the school community

In addition to other possible consequences, students who have committed serious or regular breaches of the school rules or have fallen short of basic expectations may be required to take a checklist to all classes and activities, obtain signatures and remarks from the respective teachers or supervisors, and report to a designated staff member assigned by the Principal every day with evidence of progress.

It is our goal to keep our students in the classroom and in the school to preserve valuable instructional time. Consequences will usually be given on a scale that reflects the nature and severity of the offense. Repeat offenses will be treated more seriously: we expect a change of behavior in response to discipline the first time. When a student's actions are detracting from the ability of other students to learn in a safe, productive environment, it may be necessary to remove the student from the classroom and, in the most severe cases, removal (expulsion) from the School community. If a student's consequence involves being picked up by a family member or authorized adult, and escorted home early or suspended for any period of time, a family member may be asked to meet with a School administrator regarding the student's behavior prior to his or her return to School. Please note that suspended students who are sent to School notwithstanding the consequences outlined in their suspension letters will receive escalating consequences for violating Section 8 of the Code of Conduct.

All students facing out-of-school suspension are entitled to due process. For a short-term out-of-school suspension (i.e., a suspension for ten days or less), the student will, prior to the

suspension, be told by the principal or School leadership the basis for the suspension, the evidence supporting the consequence, and will be able to give his or her side of the story, before any suspension is imposed. For a suspension longer than ten days, a student will have the opportunity to present evidence to School leadership in a more formal hearing, will be provided the evidence supporting the suspension, and will be given the opportunity to confront the evidence against the student and to present evidence as well, before any suspension is imposed. In severe situations, the student may be removed from the School immediately if a danger to others and/or the School environment. In appropriate circumstances, the student may also be referred to law enforcement authorities.

The most serious consequence, applied only in extraordinary circumstances, will be expulsion from our school. A student facing expulsion along with his or her parents or guardians will be afforded all due process protections required under applicable laws and regulations, including a full and fair hearing.

### **Due Process Protections**

Vertex Partnership Academies holds all students to high expectations. Students with an identified disability as documented by an IEP or 504 Accommodation Plan are provided with all required accommodations. This includes accommodations that address social, emotional, and behavioral concerns. Students with disabilities have the same rights and responsibilities as other students and are afforded due process protections under the provisions of the IDEA and its implementing regulations. A student with a disability may be entitled to disciplinary measures that align with his/her needs as outlined in an IEP, 504 plan, and/or determinations from a manifestation determination review ("MDR"). Students for whom an IEP does not include specific disciplinary guidelines may be disciplined in accordance with the standard School policy. Re-entry meetings may occur when a student is removed from the environment for a severe or repetitious unproductive behavior.

When a student with an IEP has been removed from School for either 10 consecutive days or for more than 10 cumulative school days in a school year based on conduct that forms a pattern of removal and results in a change in placement as determined by the School, he or she is entitled to a prompt review of the causal relationship between his or her disability and the behavior that precipitated the School's disciplinary action.

The MDR ("Manifestation Determination Review") is led by the New York City Department of Education ("NYCDOE") through a Committee on Special Education ("CSE") and is designed to determine whether (1) the conduct in question was caused by or had a direct and substantial relationship to the student's disability; or (2) the conduct in question was the direct result of the School's failure to implement the IEP.

The MDR team will consist of School officials, the student's parent or guardian, and relevant members of the multidisciplinary team. Parents or guardians will receive written notification prior to any manifestation team meeting. This notification will inform the parent or guardian of (1) the purpose of the meeting, (2) the names of the individuals expected to attend, and (3) his or her

right to have relevant members of the multidisciplinary team participate at the parent or guardian's request.

The MDR will include a review of all relevant information in the student's file including their IEP, any teacher observations, and any relevant information provided by the parent or guardian. If the manifestation team determines that the student's conduct was a manifestation of their disability, the multidisciplinary team will (1) conduct a functional behavioral assessment and implement a behavioral intervention plan; and (2) return the student to the placement from which the student was removed, unless the parent or guardian and the School agree to a change of placement as part of the modification of the behavioral intervention plan. If the MDR team determines the conduct in question was the direct result of the School's failure to implement the IEP, the School will take immediate steps to remedy those deficiencies. Lastly, if the student's conduct is ruled not to have been a manifestation of their disability, School personnel may apply the relevant disciplinary procedures to students with disabilities in the same manner and for the same duration as the procedures would be applied to students without disabilities.

The main aims of Vertex Partnership Academies' disciplinary system are to educate students, to foster their personal growth by reflecting constructively upon their mistakes and to treat them as fairly as possible when rules are broken.

### **Harassment and bullying**

Vertex Partnership Academies defines harassment as any verbal or physical act, or written message — including those that are electronically transmitted — that has one or more of the following consequences:

- Physically harms a student or damages a student's property.
- Substantially interferes with a student's emotional growth or education
- Creates an intimidating or threatening educational environment.
- Bullying is repeated negative or intimidating behavior toward another person or persons. Hitting, name-calling, shunning, and shaming are all forms of bullying.
- Spreading rumors, gossiping and making threats are also forms of bullying.

### **Reporting Harassment/Bullying**

We expect all members of the Vertex Partnership Academies community to treat one another with civility and respect. Accordingly, Vertex Partnership Academies has enacted the following anti-bullying policy for activities on School property or sponsored by the School.

Any student who believes that he or she has been or is being harassed or bullied by a member of the Vertex Partnership Academies community, student or adult, or who believes that he or she has witnessed an incident of harassment or bullying, should report those observations to a teacher, staff member, dean, or any member of the administration. Teachers and staff members must notify the Leadership Team of any allegations of bullying and harassment. We ask that parents similarly notify the Senior Leadership Team and/or School counselors of any suspected incidents of harassment or bullying.

Once reported, the student will be invited to meet with a member of our counseling staff and the School Leadership Team will be informed. Throughout this entire process, the privacy and confidentiality of the student will always be maintained to the extent possible.

This process includes:

- Gathering information from the reporter.
- Gathering information from the bullied party, if different from the reporter.
- An investigation of the incident.
- Counseling for all parties involved.
- Potential disciplinary actions for the aggressor.

Whenever possible, parents and families of the bullied party will be included during this process. No person who, in good faith, reports or provides information related to suspected harassment or bullying pursuant to this policy shall suffer retaliation, harassment, or other adverse employment action. Any person who makes such a report or provides information in bad faith, or with the knowledge that it is false, shall be subject to discipline.

### Offense Levels

Offenses are broadly categorized in three levels corresponding to Vertex Partnership Academies' view of their seriousness. The following list of offenses is not intended to be comprehensive – it is intended to clearly indicate the type/seriousness of offenses falling in the various categories.

**LEVEL ONE:** The offense must be dealt with immediately by any staff member in the presence of the infraction, with any follow-up within 24 hours. Offenses must be recorded in ManageBac within 24 hours by the staff member who first identifies the behavior.

| <b>Level one type examples of damage to self or to others</b>         |   |
|---|---|
| Chewing gum on campus   | Lying   |
| Dress code violations   | Not eating breakfast or lunch in authorized areas |
| Entering or leaving a class without permission                        | Profanity   |
| First time cheating, plagiarism or collusion                          | Tardiness to school or class                      |
| First time intellectual property violation                            | Tobacco or vape use: first offense                |
| Inappropriate behavior to staff; ignoring instructions, rudeness, etc | Using objects as projectiles                      |

|   |                                    |
|---|------------------------------------|
| Insulting behavior to another student or staff member | Violation of the technology policy |
| Repeated infringements can become a Level 2 Offense   |                                    |

**POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES FOR LEVEL ONE OFFENSES**

- Apology
- Family meeting
- Making restitution (for damage)
- Meet with school counselor
- Notification to advisor
- Notification to parents
- On Report
- Removal of privileges
- Reprimand

**LEVEL TWO:** Referred as soon as possible to the administration and reported in writing to parents in ManageBac. Referral should take place by or on the next weekday.

| Level two type examples of damage to self or to others                                       |   |
|--|---|
| Alcohol and drug use: first offense  | Lying or forgery  |
| Bullying: repeated cases of physical or verbal threats or intimidation (see separate policy) | Possession of a weapon or using an object as a weapon                               |
| Fighting (between students)  | Recording, taking photos or using someone's personal information without permission |

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Film and/or distribution of media depicting Code of Conduct violations | Setting off false alarms  |
| Gambling   | Sexual harassment   |
| Gang-related activities  | Swearing/profanity, repeated or directed at an individual or group                            |
| Insulting behavior to a staff member                                   | Theft or damage to others' or school property, including offensive graffiti: serious offenses |
| IT Responsible Use offense (see separate policy)                       | Tobacco or vape use: second offense   |
| Repeated infringements will become a Level 3 Offense                   |   |

Note: Being present when the school's drug/alcohol policy is being infringed may result in disciplinary action being taken by the school. In investigating such an occurrence and determining whether or not a disciplinary stance would be adopted, the Principal will take account of the precise circumstances and context as well as any mitigating factors which might apply.

### **POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES FOR LEVEL TWO OFFENSES**

- Detention
- Dismissal from student leadership position
- Family meeting
- In-school suspensions
- Loss of general or major privileges
- Making restitution (for damage)
- Meet with school counselor
- Notification to advisor
- Notification to parents
- On report

- Removal from school teams or representative positions
- Removal of privileges
- Short and long term out of school suspensions

**LEVEL THREE:** After immediate intervention by the member of staff, the offense should be referred to the Principal. These offenses are liable for suspension. Details will be recorded in the student's record by the Principal and will be included in official references. The Principal will initiate follow-up action by the next weekday. A student returning to school after suspension will automatically be placed on conduct or full probation, depending on the reason for the suspension.

### **1. Damage to others**

- Serious acts of dishonesty/deceit
- Bullying: serious threats or physical assault
- Physical assault on another student: serious offenses
- Physical assault on a staff member
- Abusive behavior to a staff member
- Recording, taking photos or using someone's personal information without permission involving inappropriate material and/or used to bully, intimidate or threaten
- Possession or use of fireworks

### **2. Damage to oneself**

- Sexual misconduct
- Tobacco use: third and subsequent offenses
- Alcohol use: first offense – excessive consumption
- Drug abuse: possession or use of substances forbidden under drug policy
- Providing drugs or substances prescribed under the Drug Abuse policy to other students

### **3. Abuse of privilege**

- Arson
- Breaking bounds-leaving campus without permission
- IT Responsible Use Contract offenses – repeated or severe

- Sexual misconduct or activity

**4. Repeated Level Two offenses:** A student who is suspended for a Level Three offense and then repeats the offense (or other serious offense) within that or the subsequent school year will be liable for expulsion.

#### **POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES FOR LEVEL THREE OFFENSES**

- Detention
- Dismissal from student leadership position
- Family meeting
- In-school suspensions
- Loss of general or major privileges
- Making restitution (for damage)
- Meet with school counselor
- Notification to parents
- On report
- Recording in school records and references
- Removal from school teams or representative positions
- Removal of privileges
- Removal (expulsion) from the school community
- Short and long term out of school suspensions

#### **Responding to Offenses**

The following descriptions give some indication of steps the school may use to help students learn from mistakes and develop self-discipline. This list is not exhaustive and cannot be taken to limit in any way the school's responsibility to administer any discipline that it considers necessary or appropriate. It is worth repeating that we do not see punishment as an end in itself, but as a means to help us live in a community with high standards. Responses may sometimes include taking account of the following:

- Striking a balance between the removal of **free time, privilege, or responsibility** and the imposition of other restrictions or conditions designed on a case-by-case basis.

## •Restitution

- Consequences will usually be given on a scale that reflects the **nature and severity** of the offense
- Repeat offenses will be treated more seriously: we expect a **change of behavior** in response to discipline the first time.

## **Disciplinary Procedures for Major Offenses (Typically Level 3)**

The final authority for administering and determining the nature of student discipline lies with school leaders. The main aims of Vertex Partnership Academies' disciplinary system are to educate students, foster their personal growth by reflecting constructively upon their mistakes, and treat them as fairly as possible when rules are broken. Vertex Partnership Academies' disciplinary system is not intended to be a 'trial'. Rules of evidence do not apply in the way that they might in a court system. In all aspects of discipline, the Principal's authority is final.

## **Initial Communication**

In cases of a major offense, all members of staff (and, at the Principal's discretion, the whole school) will be informed that an investigation is underway. This communication to staff may include a brief account of the nature of the alleged offense and the students involved as well as some brief speaking points for what staff may share with students to quell possible gossip. The parents of the student(s) concerned will also be notified by the Principal.

## **Steps of Disciplinary Procedure**

### ***Informal, Information-gathering Process***

Evidence of an infraction of School rules that might result in suspension or expulsion must be communicated to the Principal, who will investigate the matter carefully.

This process will involve the assistance of as many people as the Principal feels are necessary. As part of the investigation process, s/he will call the student concerned for a meeting or several meetings in order to determine as accurately as possible the facts of the case. The student can request another adult from the teaching staff to be present at these meetings if so desired.

The Principal will also meet with other students as needed as part of the information-gathering process. Student(s) involved in the incident will be asked to prepare a written account of the case. The student is not obliged to implicate anyone else. Students are expected to be honest, but honesty is not necessarily a mitigating factor. A student must provide a factual statement and cooperate in the process; failure to do so may be cause for disciplinary action.

### ***Summary Removal***

If deemed necessary, the Principal may, at any time, remove a student from campus pending an investigation.

### ***Formal Disciplinary Process***

After the investigation and the preparation of written reports, the Principal will decide whether or not the matter should be considered a major disciplinary case warranting the calling of a Disciplinary Advisory Panel. In this case, the principal will convene the Disciplinary Advisory Panel.

### **Disciplinary Advisory Panel - Composition**

A Disciplinary Advisory Panel routinely consists of the following members:

- The Principal
- The Counselor
- The Advisor Teacher of the student
- The Principal may, entirely at his/her discretion, request any member of staff to be part of panel deliberation
- There may be occasions when a member of the student body (usually a student leader) is requested to attend panel discussion

### **Disciplinary Advisory Panel - Functions**

- To review the facts of the case as presented by the Principal and the part played by the student in question.
- To review any available reports/information from Counselors which may be legitimately shared in this context
- To discuss what possible action(s) might be recommended to the Principal in the way of possible sanctions, consequences, and/or possible corrective measures which might help the student to avoid breaking School rules again. Dissenting opinions/findings are welcome to be named in the recommendations.
- To pass these recommendations on to the Principal

### **Disciplinary Advisory Panel - Procedures**

- The Principal will summarize the findings of the investigation including the student's written account.
- The student's academic and disciplinary records will be reviewed.

- The student may present additional information and may wish to read a separate personal statement (distinct from the written account).
- After answering any questions from the panel, the student will leave the room.
- The student may bring an adult advocate of their choice to the meeting.
- The student may choose to submit their personal written statement to the Principal and not appear before the panel.

### **Responsibilities of the Principal**

In cases in which suspension or expulsion are under consideration, the Principal is the sole decision maker.

- The Principal is ultimately responsible for and reserves the right at any time to suspend or expel a student or impose any other discipline deemed appropriate, necessary, and in the best interests of the student and/or the School.
- To decide what disciplinary action will be taken.
- To ensure that the above procedures are fairly followed.
- To investigate the case thoroughly in the "informal" process in liaison with other staff as necessary.
- To determine whether the matter requires the calling of a Disciplinary Advisory Panel.
- If so, follow the above guidelines in the "formal" process and communicate any necessary matters to the community.

### **Communication of Decisions**

Such communications are normally conveyed by the Principal.

To the student—the Principal will immediately explain to the student what action has been decided upon.

To the student's parents—the Principal or disciplinary advisory panel member will communicate with them as appropriate and then with a follow-up letter or other appropriate means as soon as possible. A copy of the letter is placed in the student's file.

To members of the Disciplinary Advisory Panel, if one was called—the Principal will communicate actions taken personally or by means of an email.

To the staff—The Principal will communicate actions taken to the staff at a staff meeting, or by email, when necessary.

To the students—The Principal will communicate in an appropriate manner with the students, when necessary.

**Follow-up**

**Process**

After final decisions have been made, the Principal will consult with the school counselor, as needed, informing him/her of the case, sharing any appropriate written reports and actions taken, and charting a follow-up plan to be implemented by the counselor in order to assist the student in entering fully into the life of the community once again. Immediately on arrival from suspension, there should be an appointment with the IB Coordinator to assess any needs the student may have in terms of academic or social adjustment.

## **TECHNOLOGY RESOURCES AND RESPONSIBLE USE POLICY**

### **Responsible Use Policy**

Technology resources at Vertex Partnership Academies are available for students to use for the purposes of education, including class work, homework, and other school work. Other uses, including personal communication and personal internet use, are permitted if the resources are available, according to published guidelines.

Students' access to Vertex Partnership Academies' technology resources is governed by the following policies:

1. Students must sign a Technology Resources Responsible Use Agreement each year at check-in and adhere to its provisions and expectations.
2. Students will recognize Vertex Partnership Academies' absolute right to prioritize the use of and access to the school's technology resources.
3. Students will not share their passwords and will report any misuse of their ID and password immediately.
4. Students will only log on to the system with their own username. Students will not attempt to log on using another person's username and password with or without their permission. Students will not attempt to access another person's files.
5. Students will not attempt to gain unauthorized access to (or 'hack') any computer system, whether in Vertex Partnership Academies or via a connection to or from Vertex Partnership Academies.
6. Students will report any breaches of security to their advisor immediately.
7. Students will comply with all international copyright laws for software and other legislation on Internet usage.
8. Students will treat all the computer equipment with respect and care. They will not tamper with, remove, exchange, or damage the computing equipment/accessories under any circumstances.
9. Students using personal laptops (or any other mobile devices) must understand that Vertex Partnership Academies will not be held responsible for any damage to their equipment or data.
10. Students will manage the allotted network resources wisely by deleting/archiving old files and emails in a timely manner.

11. Students understand that Vertex Partnership Academies may use applications/services to monitor their network activity, particularly internet browsing history, and at its discretion may block access to sites/pages deemed inappropriate.
12. Students will learn to make appropriate use of the software to which they have been given access.
13. Students will not install or run any programs, other than those installed by the IT department. Students will not copy the software onto any school computer.
14. Students will not download or upload any music/movie files using the school's Internet resources without permission.
15. Students will use their email responsibly and regularly. Students will not send any inappropriate material in an email.
16. Students will not author or forward frivolous emails (chain e-mail or jokes).
17. Students will not use offensive, derogatory, or threatening language in emails or in any other communication (including social networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, or Twitter ) on the Internet.
18. Students will not install or use peer-to-peer networks, wireless routers, VPNs, or any other unauthorized devices or services.
19. Students will not post or reveal any personal or confidential information about themselves or anyone connected with Vertex Partnership Academies via e-mail or Internet sites/forums. This includes not giving out details of or lists of students studying at Vertex Partnership Academies.
20. Students will not use the school's Internet resources to view, download, or transmit obscene or derogatory material.
21. Students will not use the school's Internet for commercial activity, political campaigning, fund-raising for charitable causes, or for illegal purposes.

The school's ability to support and run an effective computer network for all students depends on voluntary and consistent compliance with the requirements of the Technology Resources and Responsible Use Policy. This requires efficient, ethical, and legal use of technology resources and defines the standard of conduct expected from students. It covers physical equipment and hardware, software applications, document storage, e-mail, and Internet use. Abuse of the privilege through hacking, downloading inappropriate software, or other violations will be subject to disciplinary procedures in keeping with those outlined in the section on Discipline.

## **Purpose of the School's ICT Network and Services**

Vertex Partnership Academies provides students with a wide range of information and communication technology (ICT) resources through the ICT Department. It makes these resources available to support the following activities:

- Teaching and learning;
- Other program activities, and extracurricular activities;
- School administration and school business;
- Personal communication with relatives and friends through the school email address;
- Personal recreational activities (within current guidelines).

## **Student Access and Use**

- Students will have the access to computers to fulfill the requirements of their role at Vertex Partnership Academies and are expected to treat the physical equipment with care. Physical damage must be reported immediately to ICT staff.
- Vertex Partnership Academies provides appropriate desktop software on all school computers and the ICT Department is solely responsible for approving and installing all software.
- Each student is given a network account that has a student name and a password. Each account and its password are private and should not be shared with any other person, including other students and people outside of school.
- Students must only access the software, files, and information that are available through their own private accounts. Using another person's account is strictly prohibited.
- Each student is given a private place on the Vertex Partnership Academies network to store their personal files. This area must be used wisely as document storage space is limited. Students should not use this area to store music files, videos, personal photos, etc. These may be copied onto other personally-owned storage devices.
- Each student is given a private email account to use for school-related business and for personal communications with family and friends. Students are expected to use appropriate language in all email communications. Inappropriate usage, such as chain mail, is subject to disciplinary procedures.
- Vertex Partnership Academies provides connections to the Internet so that students can benefit from the wealth of educational information that is available on the internet. The school provides guidance about and sets limitations on access to certain kinds of sites in the interests of students with which students are expected to comply. The school has good web

content filtering and bandwidth management and regulation products and policies in place to prevent misuse. However, students are responsible for any possible harmful or negative effects that may arise from their use of the Internet and use this facility at their own risk.

- Students violating international or US laws may be subject to prosecution.

### **Cell Phone Rules**

1. Cell phones may be used **outside** before school and after school.
2. Cell phone use is **prohibited** in the school building- classrooms, restrooms, cafeteria and school offices unless otherwise stated by a staff member in very unique circumstances.
3. During the instructional day, cell phones and smart watches must remain out of sight and in silent mode **in student backpacks**. All accessories, including headphones or AirPods, must be stored in student backpacks. Students may not keep cell phones in their pockets.
4. School staff will be unable to charge cell phones for students. Students must charge their cell phones at home.
5. If students need to place an emergency phone call during the day, they should request to go to the main office to use an office phone.
6. Students may be subject to disciplinary action if their use of their cell phones disrupts the school's educational environment. Examples of this include, but are not limited to: cheating, bullying, harassment, unlawful recording or photographing, and violating other school rules. Based on the severity of the incident, tiered disciplinary actions will follow.
7. The school and its staff are not responsible for any damage to or theft of a student's cell phone. Students must properly secure and take care of their own phones.

It is important for our students to practice temperance and to disconnect from their cell phone or smart watches throughout the school day to focus on their academic work. If a student has a cell phone out in the building, our school staff will follow the steps outlined below:

1. If a student has a cell phone out, a staff member will redirect the student to put their cell phone away in their backpack- cell phones may not stay in a students' pocket.
2. If a staff member sees a cell phone out a second time, the student will be required to turn in the cell phone to a staff member, to be returned at the end of the day. The cell phone will be stored safely and will be returned at the end of dismissal when all students have dismissed. Parents will be notified of the repeated behavior.
3. If a student has a cell phone out soon after it has been previously confiscated, the cell phone will need to be turned into a staff member for pick up by a family member at the end of the day. Parents will be notified and the cell phone will only be issued to the family member by 4:30pm.

Students and their parents must read the cell phone policy and return a signed copy to the office at the beginning of the school year. Signing the policy acknowledges acceptance.



## VERTEX PARTNERSHIP ACADEMIES CURRICULUM

### **The International Baccalaureate (IB) Mission Statement**

The International Baccalaureate aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable, and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect.

To this end, the organization works with schools, governments, and international organizations to develop challenging programmes of international education and rigorous assessment.

These programmes encourage students across the world to become active, compassionate, and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right.

### **Teaching and learning at Vertex Partnership Academies**

Teaching and learning at Vertex Partnership Academies supports the integration of character education through its three International Baccalaureate (IB) Programmes. Vertex Partnership Academies has a broadly constructivist and student-centered IB approach to teaching and learning and emphasizes the importance of connectedness and concurrency of learning.

“What is of paramount importance in the pre-university stage is not what is learned but learning how to learn ... What matters is not the absorption and regurgitation either of fact or pre-digested interpretations of facts, but the development of powers of the mind or ways of thinking which can be applied to new situations and new presentations of facts as they arise.” (Peterson 1972)

Five key areas of pedagogical principles that influence and underpin our teaching and learning at Vertex Partnership Academies are:

- Teaching with Approaches to Learning (ATL) in mind
- Using a variety of researched methods and practices of teaching
- Using technology effectively in classroom teaching and activities
- Ensuring every IB teacher is a language teacher
- Planning with student needs and academic goals in mind

There are six key pedagogical principles that underpin all IB programmes. Teaching in IB programmes is:

- based on inquiry
- focused on conceptual understanding

- developed in local and global contexts
- focused on effective teamwork and collaboration
- differentiated to meet the needs of all learners
- informed by assessment (formative and summative).

## **Assessment at Vertex Partnership Academies**

**Purpose of assessment:** At Vertex Partnership Academies, we believe that assessment is a vital part of the school’s teaching and learning program. It provides information about student learning and development, as well as a framework for curriculum planning, instruction, self-reflection, and collaboration.

**Types of Assessments:** Students will be assessed using formative and summative assessments. Formative assessments are usually smaller form assessments (written or observed) that help inform the teacher about student progress in the class. These types of assessments help the teacher adjust the curriculum and teaching strategies to support our students as they are learning the content in the classroom. Summative assessments are the end of unit assessments (tests, projects, lab reports, etc) that measure a student’s learning. These assessments are recorded for students and families to review to determine academic progress in the class. Summative assessment scores are based on IB MYP criterion-related rubrics.

## **Calendaring Major Assignments**

Hoping to avoid unreasonable academic loads for our students each day, teachers list all major assignments on our learning management software (ManageBac) calendar, and they check this calendar in their unit planning. The definition of a “major assignment” is, of course, contextual, and varies by department, but, generally speaking, these include tests, formal essays, oral presentations, lab reports, and other tasks that will take our students more than a single night’s worth of time. These are the kinds of assignments for which students have at least a week’s notice in advance. Teachers will typically take a “first-come, first-served” approach to schedule major assessments and try to cap a student’s number of major assignments per day at two. These things said, the purpose of this system is to encourage planning and collaboration across departments, and the student students’ learning should be important in these discussions.

## **IB MYP Grading**

Students in grades 9 and 10 are graded according to the International Baccalaureate’s MYP Subject Assessment Criteria. There is no weighting, percentages, or total points. MYP

assessment at Vertex Partnership Academies is criterion-related as it is based upon predetermined achievement criteria that all students have access to. The criteria for each subject reflect the objectives of the subject group. The level of student success in reaching the objectives of each subject group is measured in terms of levels of achievement described in each assessment criterion. All grading data will be shared with families and students by the school's learning management software-Managebac.

From this, an achievement level is awarded ranging from 0-8 with 8 indicating the highest level of achievement. These criteria and achievement levels are the same for all students undertaking the MYP in schools around the world.

To learn more about the specific criteria for each subject area, visit the school's website and select the relevant grade or phase and click on the links to view the achievement level descriptors for each criterion.

Semester grades: Every semester, each objective strand and each criterion will be assessed at least twice in all classes. (See Table 1.) The teacher then determines the overall criterion scores for A, B, C, and D. The teacher totals the overall criteria scores and matches them to a grade boundary which determines a 1-7 semester achievement grade. (See Table 2.)

**Table 1: Semester Example of MYP Summative Tasks**

| Summative Tasks  | Criterion A | Criterion B | Criterion C | Criterion D |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| 1st summative  | 5           |             | 7           |             |
| 2nd summative  |             | 5           | 7           |             |
| 3rd summative  | 6           | 5           |             | 8           |
| 4th summative  |             | 6           |             | 8           |
| Overall Criterion Score  | <b>6</b>    | <b>5</b>    | <b>7</b>    | <b>8</b>    |
| Overall Semester grade: $6 + 5 + 7 + 8 = 26$<br>(With IB Boundary guidelines, 26 converts to a final Semester <b>IB MYP Grade of 6</b> ) |             |             |             |             |

**Table 2: Grades, Grade Boundaries, and Descriptors**

| Grades | Grade Boundary | Descriptors |
|--------|----------------|-------------|
|        |                |             |

|   |       |   |
|---|-------|---|
| 1 | 1-5   | Produces work of very limited quality. Conveys many significant misunderstandings or lacks understanding of most concepts and contexts. Very rarely demonstrates critical or creative thinking. Very inflexible, rarely using knowledge or skills.  |
| 2 | 6-9   | Produces work of very limited quality. Expresses misunderstandings or significant gaps in understanding of many concepts and contexts. Infrequently demonstrates critical or creative thinking. Generally inflexible in the use of knowledge and skills, infrequently applying knowledge and skills.  |
| 3 | 10-14 | Produces work of acceptable quality. Communicates basic understandings of many concepts and contexts, with occasionally significant misunderstandings or gaps. Begins to demonstrate some basic critical or creative thinking. Is often inflexible in the use of knowledge and skills, requiring support even in familiar classroom situations. |
| 4 | 15-18 | Produces good-quality work. Communicates secure understandings of many concepts and contexts with few significant misunderstandings or minor gaps. Often demonstrates basic critical or creative thinking. Uses knowledge and skills with some flexibility in familiar classroom situations, but requires support in unfamiliar situations.     |
| 5 | 19-23 | Produces generally high-quality work. Communicates secure understandings of concepts and contexts. Demonstrates critical or creative thinking, sometimes with sophistication. Uses knowledge and skills in familiar classroom and real-world situations and, with support, some unfamiliar real-world situations.                               |
| 6 | 24-27 | Produces high-quality, occasionally innovative work. Communicates extensive understandings of concepts and contexts. Demonstrates critical or creative thinking, frequently with sophistication. Uses knowledge and skills in familiar and unfamiliar classroom and real-world situations, often with independence.                             |
| 7 | 28-32 | Produces high-quality, frequently innovative work. Communicates comprehensive, nuanced understandings of concepts and contexts. Consistently demonstrates sophisticated critical or creative thinking. Frequently transfers knowledge and skills with independence and expertise in a variety of complex classroom and real-world situations.   |

**Effort & Behavior levels of achievement:**

Effort levels are marked regularly for students in Grades 9-10 according to the following rubric:

| Descriptor | Outcomes for Effort |
|------------|---------------------|
|------------|---------------------|

|                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| <b>3 Excellent</b>         | The student demonstrates good effort towards producing <b>thoughtful and accurate</b> work, completing assignments <b>thoroughly and coherently</b> , and by meeting <b>all</b> deadlines over the brief marking period. |
| <b>2 Expected</b>          | The student demonstrates adequate effort towards producing <b>accurate</b> work, completing assignments <b>clearly and coherently</b> , meeting <b>most</b> deadlines over the brief marking period.                     |
| <b>1 needs improvement</b> | The student demonstrates <b>little effort</b> towards producing work, completing assignments, and meeting deadlines over a brief marking period.   |

Behavior levels are marked regularly in Grades 9-10 according to the following rubric:

| <b>Descriptor</b>          | <b>Outcomes for Behavior</b>   |
|----------------------------|--|
| <b>3 Excellent</b>         | The student demonstrates <b>consistent</b> respectful behavior towards other students, the teacher, and/or things that belong to others over the brief marking period. |
| <b>2 Satisfactory</b>      | The student demonstrates <b>mostly</b> respectful behavior towards other students, the teacher and/or things that belong to others over the brief marking period.      |
| <b>1 Needs Improvement</b> | The student demonstrates <b>limited</b> respectful behavior towards other students, the teacher, and/or things that belong to others over the brief marking period.    |

### **Honor Roll for Grades 9-10**

Students' who demonstrate the **wisdom** to learn and the **courage** to persevere through their studies, while helping to make a just community will receive recognition as an Honor Roll Student each semester. The honor roll is based on a student's semester report, which includes their IB MYP Final Grades, Overall Effort Score, and Overall Behavior Score.

1. No Final Grade less than **5** for a semester in all subjects (Knowledgeable, Principled & Thinkers)
2. Effort Score – Excellent (Reflective & Caring)
3. Behavior Score– Excellent (Principled & Caring)

| <b>Category</b> | <b>Benchmark for Honor Roll</b> | <b>IB Learner Profile</b> |
|-----------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
|-----------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------|

|                        |                                 |   |
|------------------------|---------------------------------|---|
| Academic Final Grade   | 5 or above in all subject areas | Knowledgeable, Principled, and Thinkers |
| Overall Effort Score   | Excellent                       | Reflective and Caring                   |
| Overall Behavior Score | Excellent                       | Principled and Caring                   |

**Assessment and Special Needs Requirements**

Vertex Partnership Academies’ policy for access and implementation of assessment accommodations has been written in accordance with United States Federal law, the State of New York, and International Baccalaureate (IB) policy. Vertex Partnership Academies believes that all students should be assessed under conditions that are fair and appropriate. The external test bodies, SAT, ACT, and IB, all have their own separate application process. Qualifying for accommodations on internal assessments does not guarantee approval for the same accommodations from any external testing bodies. The IB Diploma or Career-related Programme Coordinator along with the Special Educational Needs teachers will provide support to families seeking accommodations on external tests.

**504 Policy**

Vertex Partnership Academies and its affiliate schools recognize that all qualified persons with disabilities enrolled in one of the Schools are entitled to a free and appropriate public education (“FAPE”) under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

The Section 504 regulations define a person with a disability as any person who (i) has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, (ii) has a record of such an impairment, or (iii) is regarded as having such an impairment.

A "physical or mental impairment" may include:

(A) Any physiological disorder or condition, cosmetic disfigurement, or anatomical loss affecting one or more of the following body systems: neurological; musculoskeletal; special sense organs; respiratory; including speech organs; cardiovascular; reproductive; digestive; genito-urinary; hemic and lymphatic; skin; and endocrine; or (B) any mental or psychological disorder, such as mental retardation, organic brain syndrome, emotional or mental illness, and specific learning disabilities.

Per the United States Office for Civil Rights (OCR) guidance regarding “Protecting Students with Disabilities”, the regulations “do not set forth an exhaustive list of specific diseases and conditions that may constitute physical or mental impairments.”

"Major life activity" may include functions such as caring for one's self, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, and working. According to the OCR, this list is also not exhaustive.

A qualified person with a disability is a person with a disability who is of an age during which it is mandatory under state law to provide such services to persons with disabilities; of an age during which persons without disabilities are provided such services; or a person for whom a state is required to provide a free appropriate public education under IDEA 2004.

All school-age children who are individuals with disabilities as defined by Section 504 are entitled to FAPE.

According to the OCR, an appropriate education includes education services designed to meet the individual education needs of students with disabilities as adequately as the needs of nondisabled students are met; the education of each student with a disability with nondisabled students, to the maximum extent appropriate to the needs of the student with a disability; evaluation and placement procedures established to guard against misclassification or inappropriate placement of students, and a periodic reevaluation of students who have been provided special education or related services; and establishment of due process procedures that enable parents and guardians to receive required notices, review their child's records, and challenge identification, evaluation and placement decisions, and that provide for an impartial hearing with the opportunity for participation by parents and representation by counsel, and a review procedure.

To be appropriate, education programs for students with disabilities must be designed to meet their individual needs to the same extent that the needs of nondisabled students are met. An appropriate education may include general or special education and related aids and services to accommodate the needs of individuals with disabilities.

The quality of education services provided to students with disabilities must equal the quality of services provided to nondisabled students. Teachers of students with disabilities must be trained in the instruction of individuals with disabilities. Facilities and classrooms must be comparable, and appropriate materials and equipment must be available.

Students with disabilities may not be excluded from participating in nonacademic services and extracurricular activities on the basis of disability. Persons with disabilities must be provided an opportunity to participate in nonacademic services that is equal to that provided to persons without disabilities. These services may include physical education and recreational athletics, transportation, health services, recreational activities, special interest groups or clubs sponsored by the school, and referrals to agencies that provide assistance to persons with disabilities and employment of students.

Students with disabilities and students without disabilities must be placed in the same setting, to the maximum extent appropriate to the education needs of students with disabilities.

A person with a disability must be placed in a general education environment unless it is demonstrated that the student's needs cannot be met satisfactorily with the use of supplementary aids and services. Students with disabilities must participate with nondisabled students in both academic and nonacademic services to the maximum extent appropriate to their individual needs.

As necessary, specific related aids and services must be provided for students with disabilities to ensure an appropriate educational setting. Supplementary aids may include interpreters for students who are deaf, readers for students who are blind, and equipment to make physical accommodations for students with mobility impairments to the extent required in a cyber setting.

Section 504 requires the use of evaluation and placement procedures.

An individual evaluation must be conducted before any action is taken with respect to the initial placement of a child who has a disability, or before any significant change in that placement.

The school's special education coordinator or his/her designee must establish standards and 2 procedures for initial and continuing evaluations and placement decisions regarding persons who, because of a disability, need or are believed to need special education or related services. Procedures must ensure that tests and other evaluation materials: have been validated for the specific purpose for which they are used, and are administered by trained personnel in conformance with the instructions provided by their producer; are tailored to assess specific areas of educational need, and are not designed merely to provide a single general intelligence quotient; and are selected and administered so as best to ensure that, when a test is administered to a student with impaired sensory, manual, or speaking skills, the test results accurately reflect the student's aptitude or achievement level or whatever other factor the test purports to measure, rather than reflecting the student's impaired sensory, manual, or speaking skills (except where those skills are the factors that the test purports to measure).

The school's special education coordinator or his/her designee is directed to draw upon a variety of sources in the evaluation and placement process so that the possibility of error is minimized. All significant factors related to the learning process must be considered. These sources and factors include aptitude and achievement tests, teacher recommendations, physical condition, social and cultural background, and adaptive behavior. Information from all sources must be documented and considered by a group of knowledgeable persons, and procedures must ensure that the student is placed with nondisabled students to the greatest extent appropriate. Periodic reevaluation is required. The school's special education coordinator clearly or his/her designee must have in effect procedural safeguards regarding the identification, evaluation, or educational placement of persons who, because of disability, need or are believed to need special instruction or related services. Parents must be told about these procedures. In addition, parents or guardians must be notified of any evaluation or placement actions and must be allowed to examine the student's records. The due process procedures must allow the parents or guardians of students to challenge evaluation and placement procedures and decisions. If parents or guardians disagree with the school's decisions, they must be afforded an impartial hearing. A review procedure also must be available to parents or guardians who disagree with the hearing decision. It is the policy of Vertex to provide a FAPE to each qualified disabled student at the

Schools, regardless of the nature or severity of the disability. Consequently, it is the intent of Vertex to ensure that students who are disabled within the definition of Section 504 are identified, evaluated, and provided with appropriate educational services.

## PROCEDURES

Students who are in need or are believed to be in need of services under Section 504 may be referred for evaluation by a parent/guardian, teacher, or other certified School employee. Requests should be directed to the specific school's special education coordinator clearly at the addresses below:

1160  
Bronx, NY 10472

Beach

Avenue

The School will consider the referral, and based upon a review of the student's records, including academic, social, testing, and behavioral records, determine whether an evaluation is appropriate. Any student, who, because of a disability, needs or is believed to need special services, will be referred for evaluation. If a request for evaluation is denied, the School will inform the parents or guardian of this decision and of their procedural rights.

## EVALUATION

The purpose of a student evaluation shall be to determine eligibility for accommodations as a disabled person under Section 504. Vertex's Section 504 evaluation procedures must ensure that: Evaluation materials have been validated for the specific purpose for which they are used and are interpreted and/or administered by trained personnel in conformance with the instructions provided by their producer. Tests and the evaluation materials include those tailored to assess specific areas of educational need and not merely those which are designed to provide a single general intelligence quotient.

The eligibility determining team will take into account all records, test results, evaluations, teacher input, and counselor input and consider the following when discussing eligibility and possible accommodations:

1. Determine if there are reasonable accommodations that can enable the student to participate in learning in the school environment.
2. Do not provide different or separate aid unless it is necessary to make benefits or services as effective as those being provided to all other students in the class.
3. Do not require the identical result or level of achievement as other students; rather, provide equal opportunity.
4. If the education of a person, in a regular environment with the use of reasonable supplementary aids, cannot be achieved satisfactorily, then the implementation of an IEP may be considered.

5. Other students' educational rights may not be significantly impaired by the accommodations.
6. The accommodations must be reasonable, and must not fundamentally alter the school program, or present an undue burden to the school.
7. The accommodations being considered are for the child's current placement only.

No final determination of whether the student is a disabled individual within the meaning of Section 504 will be made without informing the parent or guardian of the student concerning the determination. With regard to a student who is determined to be disabled under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, but who is not determined to be disabled under IDEA, the School shall periodically conduct a reevaluation of the student as required by law.

The school's special education coordinator or his/her designee is directed to develop procedures necessary to implement this policy in a school setting.

### **Internal Extra Time and Accommodations Protocol for Students**

1. Qualifying for Accommodations in School. Vertex Partnership Academies will honor the recommendations for accommodations made in a student's psycho-educational evaluation or IEP/504 Plan. Vertex Partnership Academies requires that the documentation on file be current within five (5) years for students. Students will receive the testing accommodations as outlined in the IEP/504 plan.
2. All staff will have access to the list of students who are entitled to accommodations and modifications.
3. Where possible, students will be allowed to use their lunch period or study hall to take extra time. In cases where the student has the test after lunch, he/she may need to come in at lunch to start the test early or agree to stay after school.
4. Extra time must be taken on the same day of the assessment.
5. Students should not miss time in other classes to take their extra time for the class where the test is being given.
6. On testing days, a teacher will be provided and designated as the "extra time" proctor. We will have a quiet section of the school specifically for this purpose should a student not complete his/her test in the allotted class time. Tests must be turned in to the proctor of the exam.

### **Academic Honesty**

Academic honesty and integrity speak to the core values of education and reflect Vertex Partnership Academies' guiding principles of embodying our students with courage, justice, temperance, and wisdom. The International Baccalaureate (IB) Learner Profile demands principled action by all members of the community. This policy will reflect the mission and vision

of Vertex Partnership Academies and that of the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) to ensure our commitment to acting with integrity, honesty and respect towards ourselves and others in the school.

### **What is academic misconduct at Vertex Partnership Academies?**

Academic misconduct is a behavior that results in or may result in, the student or any other student gaining an unfair advantage (or behavior that disadvantages other students) in one or more assessment components.

### **Key Definitions under categories of “academic misconduct” in Vertex Partnership Academies**

- **Intellectual property:** Products of the mind, including ideas, opinions, judgments, hypotheses, artistic creations, and more. They are owned by the creator.
- **Plagiarism:** The use of another person’s intellectual property without proper, clear, and explicit acknowledgment. The use of translated materials, unless indicated and acknowledged, is also considered plagiarism.
- **Collusion:** Supporting academic malpractice by another student, for example allowing one’s work to be copied or submitted for assessment by another.
- **Misconduct:** Any behavior that gains an unfair advantage for a candidate or that affects the results of another. For example, taking unauthorized materials into the room, during an IB examination, disruptive behavior, and communicating with others, during the examination.
- **Duplication:** Presentation of the same work for different assessment components and/or Diploma Programme requirements.
- Communication about the content of an examination 24 hours before or after the examination with others outside their school community is also considered a breach of IB regulations.
- Unethical behavior such as the inclusion of inappropriate material in any assessment materials or the breach of ethical guidelines when conducting research.
- Any other behavior that gains an unfair advantage for a candidate or that affects the results of another candidate (for example, falsifying a CAS record, disclosure of information to and receipt of information from candidates about the content of an examination paper within 24 hours after a written examination via any form of communication/media).

### **Homework**

Vertex Partnership Academies’ Homework Policy aims to help students establish a healthy balance between commitments in school, after school, and at home.

Vertex Partnership Academies believes that homework provides reinforcement for the day’s lesson and assists teachers in evaluating mastery of course content. Homework encompasses a range of activities but in general, refers to subject work to be completed by students outside of class. This includes tasks such as reviewing their notes after each class, study time for reviews, quizzes, tests, etc. Students should be aware that assessment activities that have been

scheduled well in advance, such as a test, may require some additional preparation time in addition to regular homework time.

Studies such as Cooper, Robinson, and Patall (2006) have examined the causal relationship between homework and student achievement by comparing experimental (homework) and control (no homework) groups. The research suggests that the relationship between the amount of student homework and achievement is positive and statistically significant. Vertex Partnership Academies believes that well-prepared homework tasks can stimulate creativity, critical thinking, and awareness that learning can take place outside of the classroom. As indicated below, students, parents, and teachers all have responsibilities for the success of homework.

The Vertex Partnership Academies expects students to:

- Write down and organize homework assignments as soon as they are assigned.
- Set aside a regular time for studying.
- Work on homework independently whenever possible, so that it reflects their true ability
- Make the effort to produce quality work.
- Abide by the Vertex Partnership Academies' Academic Honesty Policy in relation to plagiarism.
- Ensure all assignments are completed according to the given instructions and completed on time.

The Vertex Partnership Academies expects teachers to:

- Assign relevant, challenging, and meaningful homework that reinforces classroom learning.
- Give clear instructions and ensure students understand the purpose.
- Give timely feedback and/or correct homework.
- Communicate with other teachers.
- Involve parents and contact them if a pattern of late or incomplete homework develops.
- Make sure assignments are done according to the given instructions and completed on time.
- Publish major assignments and tests on internal calendars for all grades so teachers can coordinate assignments. .

With these expectations in mind, and following recent educational research, we have established the following guidelines regarding homework in each grade level. Please note that the hours of

work listed here are recommended on the belief that they are uninterrupted and focused. Long-term assignments (over two to three weeks or more) also require careful planning and forethought.

All IB MYP students are required to have their Vertex Partnership Academies-issued laptop along with a graphing calculator for class each day. In addition to completing specific assignments, students are expected to review the key content of each course nightly.

The following times are meant to serve as guidelines for the amount of time IB MYP students should be spending on homework. Individual needs should be taken into consideration. Any problems or concerns should be communicated to the subject teacher or head of the department for that subject.

On average, uninterrupted total homework time:

- **Grade 9: 2 hours per day**
- Grade 10: 2 hours per day

Vertex Partnership Academies recognizes the importance of winter and spring breaks for familial relationships and religious celebrations. To that end, homework assignments in the IB MYP will be limited to approximately two nights' worth of assignments. Exceptions may occur:

- Where remediation cases are considered for IB MYP students during winter and spring breaks.
- Where IB MYP students are working on extended assignments such as the Grade 10 Personal Project.

All IB Diploma Programme (DP) and IB Career-related Programme (CP) students are required to have their Vertex Partnership Academies-issued laptops along with a graphing calculator. In addition to completing specific assignments, students are expected to review the key content of each course nightly.

The following times are meant to serve as guidelines for the amount of time IB DP and IB CP students should be spending on homework. Individual needs should be taken into consideration. Any problems or concerns should be communicated to the subject teacher or head of the department for that subject.

On average, uninterrupted homework time:

- Grade 11: 2.5-3 hours per day
- Grade 12: 2.5-3 hours per day

Because of the rigors of the IB Diploma Programme and IB Careers-related Programme, eleventh and twelfth-grade student students in DP or CP classes may be assigned coursework over winter and spring vacation that will help them meet IB requirements.

## COMPLAINTS

It is our goal to address any family concerns promptly and focus on resolving the issue in a professional and respectful manner. Families are encouraged to follow the guidance provided below when presenting complaints.

### Informal Complaints

Complaints that are not violations of law or charter (i.e., teacher or class assignment) are considered to be informal and handled at the school level. Families with informal complaints should:

1. Make the informal complaint directly to the student's teacher.
2. If the issue is not resolved at the teacher level, then it may be taken to a member of the Family Affairs team depending on the nature of the concern.
3. If the issue is not resolved at the previous level, then the complaint may be taken to the Principal.
4. If the issue is not resolved with the Principal, the complaint may be brought to the attention of the Vertex CEO. Families may email [FamilyAffairs@vertexacademies.org](mailto:FamilyAffairs@vertexacademies.org).

Issues involving a violation of the law or charter may also be resolved informally and you may wish to use this avenue before making a formal complaint. Using the informal route does not prevent you from using the formal complaint process.

### Formal Complaints

A Formal Complaint is a complaint made when the law or charter is violated. If the law or charter is not violated, the formal complaint process is not the appropriate avenue to seek a solution and families should refer to the informal complaint process above.

Complaints that are regarding violation of law or charter must be addressed to the Chairman of the Board Trustees c/o Vertex Partnership Academies (may be emailed to [FamilyAffairs@vertexacademies.org](mailto:FamilyAffairs@vertexacademies.org) or via U.S. mail 1160 Beach Avenue, Bronx, NY 10472. Complaints received at least five business days in advance of a board meeting will be addressed at that meeting; those complaints not received within that time period will be dealt with at the next regularly scheduled board meeting.

Every effort will be made to respectfully address the matter to the satisfaction of the individual or group who presented the complaint. The Board, as necessary, shall direct the Principal or other responsible parties to act upon the complaint and report to the Board. The Board shall render a determination in writing, as necessary.

### Appeal

If, after the presentation of the complaint to the Board of Trustees, you determine that the Board has not adequately addressed the complaint, you may present the complaint to our authorizer, the SUNY Charter School Institute (CSI). CSI will require the complainant to submit the school's

decision on the complaint. Families may complete the SUNY Formal Complaint Form and email it to [charters@suny.edu](mailto:charters@suny.edu) or mail it to the Institute at: 353 Broadway, Albany, NY 12246.

If CSI as the authorizer of the school does not satisfactorily resolve a formal complaint, families can appeal CSI's written determination to the New York State Board of Regents through the New York State Education Department by submitting written appeals by mail to:

Charter Schools Office  
Room #5N EB  
Mezzanine  
89 Washington Avenue  
Albany, NY 12234

## THE FAMILY EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS AND PRIVACY ACT (“FERPA”)

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) affords parents and students who are eighteen (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 forty-five (45) days after the day Vertex receives a request for access. Parents or eligible students should submit to the Director of Operations a written request that identifies the records they wish to inspect. The Director of Operations 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 School to amend a record should submit a written request to the Director of Operations clearly identifying the part of the record they want to be changed, and specifying 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 is a person employed by the School as an administrator, supervisor, instructor, or support staff member (including health or medical staff and law enforcement unit personnel) or a person serving on the Vertex Board of Trustees. A school official also may include a volunteer, contractor, or consultant who, while not employed by the School, performs an institutional service or function for which the School would otherwise use its own employees and who is under the direct control of the School with respect to the use and maintenance of PII from education records, such as an attorney, auditor, medical consultant, or therapist; a parent or student volunteering to serve on an official committee, such as a disciplinary or grievance committee; or a parent, student, or other volunteer assisting another School official in performing his or her tasks. A School official 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 in which a student seeks or intends to enroll, or is already enrolled if the disclosure is for purposes of the student's enrollment or transfer; however, the School will make a reasonable attempt to notify the parent or eligible student of the records request.
4. The right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by Vertex to comply with the requirements of FERPA. The name and address of the Office that administers FERPA are:

Family  
U.S.  
400  
Washington, DC 20202

Policy  
Department  
Maryland

Compliance  
of  
Avenue,

Office  
Education  
SW

## Disclosures that Vertex may make without parental consent

FERPA permits the disclosure of PII from students' education records, without consent of the parent or eligible student, if the disclosure meets certain conditions found in §99.31 of the FERPA regulations. Except for disclosures to School officials, disclosures related to some judicial orders or lawfully issued subpoenas, disclosures of directory information, and disclosures to the parent or eligible student, §99.32 of the FERPA regulations requires the School to record the disclosure. Parents and eligible students have a right to inspect and review the record of disclosures. Vertex may disclose PII from the education records of a student without obtaining the prior written consent of the parents or the eligible student:

- To other School officials, including teachers, whom the School determines to have legitimate educational interests. This includes contractors, consultants, volunteers, or other parties to whom the School has outsourced institutional services or functions;
- To officials of another school, school system, or institution of postsecondary education where the student seeks or intends to enroll, or where the student is already enrolled if the disclosure is for purposes related to the student's enrollment or transfer;
- To authorized representatives of the U.S. Comptroller General, the U.S. Attorney General, the U.S. Secretary of Education, or State and local educational authorities, in connection with an audit or evaluation of Federal or State-supported education programs, or for the enforcement of or compliance with Federal legal requirements that relate to those programs. These entities may make further disclosures of PII to outside entities that are designated by them as their authorized representatives to conduct any audit, evaluation, or enforcement or compliance activity on their behalf;
- In connection with financial aid for which the student has applied or which the student has received, if the information is necessary to determine eligibility for the aid, determine the amount of the aid, determine the conditions of the aid, or enforce the terms and conditions of the aid;
- To State and local officials or authorities to whom information is specifically allowed to be reported or disclosed by a State statute that concerns the juvenile justice system and the system's ability to effectively serve, prior to adjudication, the student whose records were released;
- To organizations conducting studies for or on behalf of the School, in order to develop, validate, or administer predictive tests; administer student aid programs; or improve instruction;
- To accrediting organizations to carry out their accrediting functions;
- To parents of an eligible student if the student is a dependent for IRS tax purposes;
- To comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena;
- To appropriate officials in connection with a health or safety emergency;

- Information the School has designated as “directory information”;
- To an agency caseworker or other representative of a State or local child welfare agency or tribal organization who is authorized to access a student’s case plan when such agency or organization is legally responsible, in accordance with State or tribal law, for the care and protection of the student in foster care placement; and
- To the Secretary of Agriculture or authorized representatives of the Food and Nutrition Service for purposes of conducting program monitoring, evaluations, and performance measurements of programs authorized under the National School Lunch Act or the Child Nutrition Act, under certain conditions.

#### Notice for Directory Information

FERPA requires that Vertex, with certain exceptions, obtain your written consent prior to the disclosure of personally identifiable information from your child’s education records. However, Vertex may disclose appropriately designated “directory information” without written consent, unless you have advised the School to the contrary in accordance with School procedures. The primary purpose of directory information is to allow Vertex to include this type of information from your child’s education records in certain school publications. Examples include:

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

Directory information, which is information that is generally not considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if released, can also be disclosed to outside organizations without a parent’s prior written consent. Outside organizations include, but are not limited to, companies that manufacture class rings or publish yearbooks. In addition, two federal laws require local educational agencies (LEAs), such as Vertex, to receive assistance under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended to provide military recruiters, upon request, with the following information – names, addresses and telephone listings – unless parents have advised the LEA that they do not want their student’s information disclosed without their prior written consent. Vertex has designated the following information as directory information:

- Student’s name
- Address
- Telephone listing
- Electronic mail address
- Photograph
- Date and place of birth
- Major field of study
- Dates of attendance
- Grade level
- Participation in officially recognized activities and sports

- Weight and height of member of athletic teams
- Degrees, honors, and awards received
- The most recent educational agency or institution attended
- Student ID number, user ID, or other unique personal identifier used to communicate in electronic systems but only if the identifier cannot be used to gain access to education records except when used in conjunction with one or more factors that authenticate the user's identity, such as a PIN, password, or other factor known or possessed only by the authorized user. (A student's SSN, in whole or in part, cannot be used for this purpose.)
- A student ID number or other unique personal identifiers that are displayed on a student ID badge, but only if the identifier cannot be used to gain access to education records except when used in conjunction with one or more factors that authenticate the user's identity, such as a PIN, password, or other factor known or possessed only by the authorized user.

If you do not want Vertex to disclose any or all of the types of information designated above as directory information from your child's education records without your prior written consent, you must notify the School in writing.

## **NY FREEDOM OF INFORMATION LAW (“FOIL”)**

It is our policy as required by the Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) to furnish to the public the information and records maintained by the Vertex Partnership Academies. A “record” is any information kept, held, filed, produced, or reproduced by, with, or for Vertex in any physical form whatsoever, including, but not limited to reports, statements, examinations, memoranda, opinions, folders, files, books, manuals, pamphlets, forms, papers, designs, drawings, maps, photos, letters, electronic documents, rules, regulations, or codes. A complete listing of FOIL policy and procedures may be requested from the School’s main office.

### **Teacher Qualifications (FOIL Related Requests)**

Our school goes to great lengths to recruit and retain excellent teachers. Teaching candidates submit detailed applications, are interviewed at least twice, are observed teaching a model lesson, and are fingerprinted by the New York City Charter Center and Department of Education. Only the highest caliber candidates are offered jobs at our school. In compliance with the New York Freedom of Information Law (FOIL), families have the right to request information regarding the professional qualifications of their child’s classroom teachers, including information regarding certification and academic degrees. Upon written request to the Principal/Director of Operations, this information will be provided to the requesting family in a timely manner. If you have a question or concern about your child’s teacher, please initially speak to the teacher directly before directing your concern to the administration.

## **NY OPEN MEETINGS LAW**

In accordance with the Open Meetings Law, meetings of the Board of Trustees of Brilla College Preparatory Charter Schools and Public Prep Academies (the schools that feed into Vertex) are open to families. Additionally, meeting dates, times, and locations will be listed on the respective websites, [www.brillaschools.org](http://www.brillaschools.org) and [www.publicprep.org](http://www.publicprep.org). All requests for meeting documents and minutes will be available within five business days upon request of the Director of Operations.

### **REPORTING ALLEGATIONS OF CHILD ABUSE AND MALTREATMENT**

The Vertex Partnership Academies community is a safe place for children to grow and learn, and we take accusations of child abuse and maltreatment very seriously. We respond to these accusations in an expeditious, child-centered manner.

Under New York State law, all school officials (including administrators, teachers, guidance counselors, school psychologists, nurses, teaching assistants, and any other licensed personnel) are mandated reporters and must report suspicions of child abuse and maltreatment when they have reasonable cause to suspect that a parent or legal guardian of a child coming before them in their official or professional capacity has abused or maltreated the child. Officials may make mandated reports by telephone or in writing.

Failure by mandated reporters to report reasonable suspicions of abuse and maltreatment is punishable as a Class A misdemeanor, which can result in a penalty of up to a year in jail, a fine of up to \$1,000, or both. Failure to report may also result in a civil lawsuit for monetary damages. For more information about New York State-mandated reporting laws, please see [www.nysmandatedreporter.org](http://www.nysmandatedreporter.org).

Members of the Vertex Partnership Academies community who are not mandated reports (including student students and parents) may make a report of suspected child abuse or maltreatment by calling the general public hotline at 1-800-342-3720.

If you have any questions about this policy or the mandated reporting laws, please contact the Principal or another member of the School Leadership Team.

## **MAINTAINING PROFESSIONAL STAFF/STUDENT BOUNDARIES**

We expect all Vertex Partnership Academies staff members to maintain the highest professional, moral, and ethical standards in interactions with student students, and we are proud to be a community in which students trust their teachers and other staff members. To foster this trust, all staff members are required to preserve an atmosphere conducive to learning through fairly applied policies and clear professional boundaries. They must also understand the importance of maintaining appropriate boundaries between adults and students in and outside of the educational setting.

Examples of inappropriate boundary invasions by staff members include but are not limited to the following:

- Addressing student students or permitting student students to address staff members with personalized terms of endearment, pet names, or otherwise in an overly familiar manner;
- Using banter, allusions, jokes, or innuendos of a sexual or otherwise inappropriate nature with student students;
- Disclosing personal, sexual, family, employment concerns, or other private matters to one or more student students;
- Maintaining personal contact with a student outside of school by phone, email, Instant Messenger, Internet chat rooms, social networking websites, or letters (beyond homework or other legitimate school business) without including the parent/guardian;
- Sending student students on personal errands unrelated to any educational purpose;
- Singling out a particular student or student students for personal attention and friendship beyond the professional staff-student student relationship;
- Socializing or spending time with student students (including but not limited to activities such as going out for beverages, meals or movies, shopping, traveling, and recreational activities) outside of school-sponsored events, except as participants in organized community activities;
- Socializing where student students are consuming alcohol, drugs, or tobacco.

Employees whose conduct violates this policy may face discipline and/or termination.

### **The appearance of Impropriety**

The appearance of inappropriate behavior can be almost as damaging to a healthy community as impropriety itself. The following activities are boundary invasions and can create an actual impropriety or the appearance of impropriety. Whenever possible, staff members must avoid these situations:

- Being alone with individual student students out of the view of others;

- Inviting or allowing individual student students to visit the staff member's home;
- Visiting a student's home or other locations outside of school for non-educational purposes;
- Using social networking websites with student students for non-educational purposes or using email accounts other than Vertex Partnership Academies' for student-staff member communications.

### **Reporting Violations**

Students and their families are strongly encouraged to notify the Principal or another member of the School Leadership Team if they believe a teacher or other staff member may be engaging in conduct that violates this policy.

Staff members are required to promptly notify the Principal or another member of the School Leadership Team if they become aware of a situation that may constitute a violation of this policy.

## HANDBOOK ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS

We all have a responsibility to make Vertex Partnership Academies a positive and productive environment. Most rules at Vertex Partnership Academies are a matter of common sense and are guided by the four cardinal virtues of Courage, Justice, Temperance, and Wisdom.

This *Community Agreement* contains some specific guidelines and expectations. In choosing to highlight these rules, the school is drawing attention to things that, if observed, provide a framework for a safe, healthy, supportive, and self-disciplined community. This school community strives to develop inquiring, knowledgeable, and caring young people who will have the courage and wisdom to make the world a better place.

### Behavior Expectations

- Be responsible: Come to school wearing the proper uniform and prepared with all school materials.
- Be here: Attend all classes on time and be ready to learn.
- Be respectful: Be considerate, polite, and helpful in all dealings with yourself and others, respect the possessions of others and care for the campus.
- Be awesome: Maintain a good working atmosphere in the classroom by participating in all class activities.

### Civility

- Vertex Partnership Academies must be a place where no one, adult or student, is subjected to discourteous, threatening, or disrespectful treatment by anyone else. There will be disagreements, but one can be passionate without being offensive and one can disagree without becoming disagreeable. Name-calling or defamatory comments are not acceptable forms of conduct.
- Vertex Partnership Academies affirms all the languages of which it is composed, and we strive to create an environment for students to develop both in English, their newly acquired language, and their home language(s). English is the common medium of communication and should be used as a common language in mixed linguistic groups.

Families and students understand that the cell phone policies are created to maintain a focus on learning during the school day at Vertex. Signing below demonstrates a commitment to following the handbook policies in this handbook.

Technology resources at Vertex Partnership Academies are available for students to use for the purposes of education, including class work, homework, and other school work. Other uses, including personal communication and personal internet use, are permitted if the resources are available, according to published guidelines. Vertex families understand that they may be held responsible for lost or damaged technology provided to students by the school.

Student's name:

\_\_\_\_\_

Parent's name:

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature:

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature:

\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_