

**Family Handbook**

2016-2017

[www.achievementfirst.org](http://www.achievementfirst.org)



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# Welcome!

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

# The Mission of Achievement First

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

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

# Attendance

Attendance at school is the most basic requirement for learning. In order for scholars to reach for their personal best, they must show up and make their strongest effort at school each and every day. At Achievement First, our curriculum is very rigorous and demanding, and every day is essential for scholars to keep pace. We need parents to ensure that their child is in school, and we ask that you do not allow your child to miss a day of school except for serious illness.

Achievement First considers more than three absences in a trimester or more than seven absences in a year to be excessive. Scholars should complete the school year with fewer than four absences.

Our school day runs from 7:30-4:00 Monday-Thursday and 7:30-1:00 on Friday, and all scholars are expected to be in school during these times. Parents should not bring scholars late or pick them up early unless it is an emergency. Tardies and early dismissals, like absences, compromise your child’s full educational experience. The dean of students will regularly monitor scholar attendance in order to ensure that all scholars come to school to get the education they need and deserve.

Please note the following important attendance policies:

* ***We do not differentiate between “excused” and “unexcused” absences for awards, promotion decisions, etc.:*** We commit to structuring every minute of the school day in a way that will benefit your child academically and socially. This means that any time a student misses a day of school, it has a significant impact on his/her educational experience. For this reason, any day your child does not attend school will be marked an absence. Regardless of the reason, when a child misses school, the impact on his/her education is the same: a full day of instruction was missed. We understand that there will be rare circumstances when scholars will need to miss school due to a serious illness (with a doctor’s note), a death in the family or other emergency beyond the family’s control, or a religious observance, but the child will still be marked absent for the day. By maintaining a clear policy for how we account for lost instructional time due to absence, this will enable us to most accurately make promotion decisions with your child’s best interest in mind. We will take extenuating circumstances into account when considering attendance as a factor in our decision-making. **Note:** Scholars with a documented disability (including those in the initial referral process) which adversely affects their attendance should not receive a deduction for an ***excused*** absence. Additionally, instances in which the scholar receives alternative instruction at an alternate site arranged for by the school will not count as absences for the school’s purposes, including promotion decisions.
* ***Never miss school for appointments:*** We ask that parents/guardians schedule medical appointments outside of school time. The best times are Friday afternoons (after 2:30 P.M.) or on another day when school is not in session (for example, professional development days). In the rare case that a scholar has a medical appointment at a time when school is in session, he/she should return to school after the appointment. Appointments for an existing condition or disability will be counted as an excused absence.
* ***Early Dismissal:*** Scholars are expected to stay in school until the end of the day (4:00 P.M. for regular dismissal and 1:00 P.M. on Fridays). In order to maximize time spent learning and avoid unnecessary disruptions, we ask that parents do not pick up scholars early, except in an emergency situation. Since we are intently focused on climbing the mountain to college, our policy is not to release scholars prior to the end of the school day without prior notification (a note or call before 9:00 AM). Five early dismissals in a year will be counted as one absence. We also ask that parents wait in the designated area until the 4:00 P.M. dismissal so as not to disrupt learning.
* ***Transportation and Attendance:*** Missing the bus is not an acceptable reason to miss an entire school day. Every scholar should have a back-up plan for getting to school if he/she misses the bus.Parents should call the school immediately after the scholar misses the bus so that the school knows the situation and can help problem-solve.
* ***Ten absences to start the school year or during the school year:*** If a scholar is absent for the first 10 days of school, and there has been no successful contact between the family and the school to explain his/her absences, that seat will be filled with another scholar from the waitlist. If a child is absent for 10 consecutive days during the school year, and there has been no successful contact between the family and the school to explain the absence, that seat will be filled with another scholar from the waitlist.
* ***Attendance at after-school events:*** Scholars who are absent from school cannot attend school events, dances, or other school-sponsored activities on the day of the absence, unless the school has given advance permission. Scholars must be in school for at least seven hours of the regular school day (7:30 A.M. to 4:00 P.M.) to be able to attend school events. For weekend events, scholars must be present at the school on the Friday before in order to attend the weekend event.
* ***The school will track and follow up on scholar absences:*** The school will take attendance daily and will maintain records of all scholar absences. If a scholar misses school, Achievement First staff will make reasonable efforts to contact the scholar’s parent/guardian by telephone, writing, or in person. The dean of students will follow up with parents/guardians about recurring attendance issues.
* ***Exams and Quizzes:*** If a scholar is absent, he/she must make up any exams, quizzes, interim assessments, or other tests the day he/she returns.
* ***Vacations:***We expect that families will schedule vacations when school is not in session. Parents should not take a child on a vacation during the school year.
* **Fifteen Absences in a Year:** If a scholar is absent 15 times in a year, the scholar may be considered truant and is at risk of not being promoted to the next grade. The parent/guardian will be called to the school to meet with the dean of students and/or principal. The principal reserves the right to retain any scholar who is academically unprepared for the next grade as a result of missing 15 or more days of instruction. In addition, a report may be filed with the appropriate child services agency.

## Tardies & Attendance

Getting to school on time is a key to each child’s success – at school and in life. At Achievement First, the learning begins from the moment scholars walk in the door. Tardiness leads to missed academic content as well as challenging habits that will impact a child’s future.

**Definition of Tardiness**

Our doors open at 7:15 A.M. each morning. Scholars must arrive between 7:15 A.M. and 7:30 A.M. Scholars arriving after 7:30 A.M. are considered tardy. In cases when a school bus arrives late, those scholars arriving on that bus will not be considered tardy.

**Consequences for Tardiness**

Since every five tardies will be recorded as an absence under the school’s policy, **excessive tardiness becomes an attendance problem.** If a scholar is absent 15 times (and some or all of these absences may actually be due to excessive tardiness), **the scholar is at risk of not being promoted to the next grade (see attendance policy above).**

## Make-Up Work After Absence

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

In the event of a planned absence (one that you know about in advance), parents/guardians should notify teachers several days in advance so that they can prepare a packet of work for scholars to complete during the absence. Again, absences from school compromise a child’s academic progress. A child should only be absent in the case of serious illness or real family emergency.

# Homework

Homework is an essential part of the Achievement First educational program: it is designed to reinforce skills taught in the classroom, to help scholars develop a deeper understanding of concepts, and to promote good study habits. H**omework will be assigned *every* night at Achievement First. Homework will include at least 20 minutes of required reading every night (including weekends and holidays), for which a parent signature is required on the reading log. Homework must be completed in full an in accordance with Achievement First’s high standards for quality work and professional presentation.**

All scholars are provided with Homework Folders that include a nightly Reading Log. Homework folders are designed to teach scholars essential organizational skills. **The Reading Logs must be filled out properly with a parent/guardian signature, and all assigned homework must be completed and in the folder.** There are high standards for homework. All homework must be neat, clean, and thorough.

If a scholar’s homework is late, missing, incomplete, or of poor quality, or if the Reading Log is not completed properly, then the scholar may earn consequences. For example, the scholar may be required to make up the work during enrichment classes, breaks, meal times (the scholar will still be allowed to eat), or after school, or the scholar may be required to complete additional assignments. Moreover, since bringing all necessary books and supplies is part of homework, scholar may also face consequences if they do not bring all necessary books and supplies to school. Parents/guardians may receive a phone call if their child has missed several assignments. **Making sure that your scholar completes his/her homework every night is one of the most important ways you can support college readiness!**

# After-School Times

It can sometimes be beneficial to a scholar to remain after school, whether for disciplinary purposes, extra help with schoolwork, assistance with a school program, or other reasons. Teachers may request that a scholar stay after school whenever they believe that it will benefit the scholar.

**Required After-School Times**

Scholars may be required to go to extension, homework support, or academic intervention services from Monday through Thursday from 4:00 to 5:30pm, and XXX on Fridays or half days, and scholars may also be required to attend our Saturday academic intervention or behavior extension from 9:00 A.M. to 1:00 P.M.

Additional after-school or Saturday enrichment programs are privileges, and scholars who do not consistently follow school rules during the regular school day or during the 4:00-5:30 P.M. Monday through Thursday/ XXX on Fridays or Saturday times may not be allowed to attend the 4:00-5:30 P.M. or Saturday times.

The exact times of these programs may change slightly during the school year, and we would notify parents and scholars in the event of such changes.

# Discipline

At Achievement First, our mission is to provide our scholars with both the academic and character skills needed to succeed in college and beyond. As such, school culture and discipline are an important part of what we do every day. We have exceptionally high expectations for scholar behavior, and we “sweat the small stuff” because we believe these high standards create a safe, positive, and productive environment for our scholars.

Our teachers use a large array of strategies to create and maintain joyful, rigorous classrooms. We use positive reinforcement and teach the school’s values, give “shout outs” for exceptional conduct, write “posi-notes” (positive notes) to scholars, and more.

At Achievement First, much of the power of our culture is rooted in the clarity, consistency and rationale guiding our high expectations. Behavior expectations are the same from classroom to classroom. All Achievement First scholars learn and practice common courtesies (*e.g.*, please, thank you, and proper greetings). They sit at their desks and SLANT (Sit up straight, Listen, Ask/Answer questions, Nod, Track the speaker). They raise tall “vertical hands” when they have ideas to share with the group and speak in “loud and proud” voices so that their thoughts are heard. We enforce these expectations because they create an environment where teachers and scholars can focus on rigorous academic learning that is necessary for success in college and beyond.

From the moment our scholars board their buses and all through the day, they are expected to act in a way that befits Achievement First scholars – respectful of themselves and others. Our discipline policies hold all scholars to high standards. As necessary, we will make thoughtful modifications and provide additional supports so that our scholars receiving special services have the support (consistent with their IEPs and 504 plans) they need to be successful. See **Appendix C** for more information on Achievement First’s behavioral support of scholars with IEPs. Scholars with disabilities as well as those with behavior support plans or behavior interventions may have specific adjustments made to ensure these scholars do not receive consequences as a result of their disability.

Through the use of proactive, preventative strategies, we aim to keep all of our students in class all day, every day. While we believe deeply in the power of positive reinforcement, we also believe consequences can play an important part in encouraging scholars to make more positive choices. Moreover, consequences also help us ensure the safety of each individual child as well as the entire school community. Parents and scholars should understand that making up work or serving consequences after 4:00 P.M. on weekdays or on Saturdays is part of the regular program of the school, and the school requests cooperation from all parents to ensure that each scholar gets the help he/she needs to succeed.

If scholars make poor choices, we employ developmentally appropriate consequences such as loss of privileges (*e.g.*, attendance on a field lesson) or required attendance at afterschool or Saturday Extension. During Extension, scholars may receive additional academic help, practice building skills in the areas in which they struggled to make appropriate choices, write apology letters, talk to a teacher or administrator, or research and/or plan a solution to remedy the impact their behavior had on the school community. Scholars/families are responsible for transportation to/from home.

In the rare instance in which a scholar’s behavior requires a suspension, Achievement First staff will work with the scholar, family and teachers to support this scholar’s re-entry into school. Scholars who are suspended are asked to make appropriate amends for their actions as part of showing an understanding of the seriousness of their actions and of being welcomed back into the community. Suspended scholars will also be responsible for making up all missed work within an agreed upon timetable.

In case of severe or repeated violations that endanger the welfare of scholars and/or staff, the principal may recommend that a scholar be suspended for a period of time in excess of 10 days (“long-term Suspension”). A long-term Suspension only takes place after a hearing with the board of trustees. For more information about disciplinary procedures, including hearings, and due process rights, please refer to **Appendix B.**

# Code of Conduct

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

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

**Scholars may be removed from class and/or school immediately if the scholar’s presence in school or class poses a continuing danger to persons or property, an ongoing threat of danger, or a serious disruption to the academic process.** For more on classroom removal, please see page 45.

The school’s Code of Conduct may be supplemented by teachers’ rules for their classes and other school events. The school may develop a system of merits/demerits and will provide materials about this system at Scholar Orientation, Parent Orientation, or other appropriate time at the beginning of the school year. The system may change throughout the year (*e.g.*, expectations are different in the beginning of the year and the end of year and are adaptable), and the school will alert scholars about material changes (*e.g.*, certain behaviors are now demerits that previously were not). Merits/demerits are a behavior support and intervention that gives real-time feedback to scholars and regular feedback to families on how the scholar is meeting classroom and school-wide behavior expectations. The merit/demerit system can lead to both rewards (*e.g.*, privileges, awards, or shout-outs) or consequences and supports (*e.g.*, loss of privileges, interventions, and/or extensions). Repeated and/or severe behavior resulting in demerits and/or extension may also lead to suspension under the Code of Conduct below.

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

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

**INFRACTIONS**

***Violation of School Rule***

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

***Disrespect***

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

***Disruptive, distracting behavior***

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

***Being unprepared for class***

* Being unprepared for class
* Failing to maintain desk or locker area as required
* Failing to have school document, homework, or exam signed
* Failing to complete homework or other assignment

**INFRACTIONS: Range of School Responses, Interventions, and Consequences**

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

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

Additional information about expectations and consequences, including merits/demerits, can be found in materials referenced on page 12 and Attachment 3.

**SERIOUS INFRACTIONS**

***Disrespect***

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

***Not being where the scholar is supposed to be***

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

***Not following consequences***

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

***Repeated misbehavior***

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

***Other serious infractions***

* Serious versions of conduct listed under the infractions category

**SERIOUS INFRACTIONS: Range of School Responses, Interventions and**

**Consequences**

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

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

**MAJOR OFFENSES
*Medication or Tobacco***

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

***Fleeing or blocking access***

* Fleeing an area, which includes, but is not limited to, running around the classroom, running in the hallways or between floors away from adults, and running out of the building
* Blocking access to any part of the school building

***Action that impairs the school’s ability to function***

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

***Abuse or Harassment***

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

***Damaging Property***

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

***Physical Aggression***

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

***Sexual Activity***

* Engaging in sexual activity or inappropriate touching
* Indecent exposure

***Gambling, Stealing, Lying, Forgery, Plagiarism***

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

***Other major offenses***

* Major versions of conduct listed under the serious infractions category

**MAJOR OFFENSES: Range of School Responses, Interventions and**

**Consequences**

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

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

**EGREGIOUS OFFENSES**

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

**EGREGIOUS OFFENSES: Range of School Responses, Interventions and Consequences**

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

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

When an egregious offense occurs, both the principal and regional superintendent should be notified immediately. Past disciplinary offenses may be considered in the school’s decision-making around consequences. If the scholar has already been found to have engaged in an egregious offense that did not result in long-term suspension earlier in the school year, the school is more likely to recommend long-term suspension upon any subsequent egregious offense.

R.I. Gen. Laws § 16-21-18 requires the Board to suspend a scholar for one year if he/she brings or possesses a weapon, as defined under 18 U.S.C. § 921(a), within school premises, premises being used for school purposes or activities, into a vehicle used for school transportation, or onto a roadway or path along which school children or teachers are walking to school. The one-year penalty also applies when the scholar aims a firearm or realistic replica of a firearm at school premises, school vehicles, or students, staff, or visitors attending school or in transit to or from school. This term of suspension may be shortened on the recommendation of the regional superintendent on a case-by-case basis, and under guidelines to be developed by the Board of Directors with broad parent, teacher, and community involvement.

## Additional Behavior Beyond the School Building

**Field Lessons**

As part of our rigorous academic program, we require outside learning experiences, such as trips to museums and college campuses. During these activities, scholars are responsible for adhering to the same behavioral expectations as within the school building. Permission slips will be sent home for each field lesson and must be signed in order for a scholar to attend. A scholar may be considered ineligible for a trip/event for reasons including, but not limited to: not returning the school-sponsored trip permission form, involvement in a disciplinary incident on a prior trip, poor school attendance, misbehavior or severe lack of academic effort in the day of or days prior to the trip, low Scholar Dollar paychecks, etc. Scholars who are considered ineligible for attending a trip will be required to attend school that day.

**Bus Behavior**

Busing for Achievement First schools is provided by the local school district. Unsafe behavior on the bus endangers our scholars, and it will not be tolerated.

Bus drivers must focus on the road to make sure all scholars arrive to school and home safely. At dismissal, scholars should go directly to their bus, greet the bus driver, and have a seat. On the bus, scholars must remain in their seats, talk quietly, and follow all directions given by the bus driver. Scholars should not communicate with scholars on other buses or any people outside the bus. Scholars who behave poorly on the bus compromise the safety of themselves and others. Poor bus behavior may result in suspension or termination of transportation services. If your child is suspended from the bus, it will be your responsibility to arrange for alternative transportation.

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

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Number of Infractions | Consequence |
| 1 Infraction | Suspension from bus for one week |
| 2 Infractions | Suspension from bus for two weeks |
| 3 Infractions | Suspension from bus for one month |
| More than 3 infractions | Suspension from bus for an additional month, up to a full year |

Infractions, if serious enough, can warrant an immediate recommendation for long-term suspension from the bus. Other consequences (*e.g.*, demerits, extensions, suspensions) may apply as well. *Families are strongly encouraged to reinforce the importance of proper bus behavior and the potential consequences for bad behavior*. Consequences for misconduct by scholars with Individualized Education Programs riding on transportation provided by their IEPs will be dealt with in accordance with federal and state law, and specifically the student’s Individual Education Plan.

## Cheating, Plagiarism and Copying Other’s Work

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

## Scholar Searches

In order to maintain the security of all its scholars, Achievement First staff reserve the right to conduct searches of scholars and their property when there is reasonable suspicion that the scholar has violated the law or a school rule. If searches are conducted, the school will make every effort to ensure that the privacy of the scholars is respected and that scholars and their families are informed of the circumstances surrounding and results of the search.

The school authorizes the principal and the principal’s designee(s) to conduct searches of scholars and their belongings if the authorized school official has reasonable suspicion to believe that the search will result in evidence that the scholar violated the law or the school’s Code of Conduct or otherwise constituted a threat to the health, safety, or welfare of the school, other scholars, school personnel, or any other person lawfully on school property or attending a school function. Additional searches may be warranted in certain situations related to school safety. In authorizing searches, the school acknowledges both state and federal constitutional rights which are applicable to personal searches of scholars and searches of their possessions.

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

Scholars have no reasonable expectation of privacy rights in school lockers, cubbies, desks, or other school storage places. The school exercises overriding control over such school property, which may be opened and subjected to inspection at any time by school officials.

# Transportation, Arrival, and Dismissal

## School Bus Transportation

Achievement First reserves the right to suspend a scholar from the bus if he/she in any way threatens the safety and well-being of his/her peers.

## Notifying the School of Transportation Changes

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

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

## Late Pickup From School

Scholars who are picked up by their parents or another adult after school are expected to be picked up promptly at the end of the school day (4:00 P.M. for regular dismissal and 1:00 P.M. on Fridays). Elementary scholars who ride the bus must have an approved adult meet the child at the bus stop daily. When a parent comes late to pick up their children (or is not at the bus stop at the specified time), it makes the job of our already very hard-working school staff even harder. The school will log late pick-ups daily. Parents of scholars who have three or more late pick-ups in a trimester or six or more in a year may be required to have an in-person meeting with the principal or dean. If a parent is more than an hour late picking up his/her child, the school reserves the right to take the child to the local police precinct for safe supervision.

## Parent/Guardian Late to Pick Up from Bus Stop

Elementary School parents/guardians have the responsibility to pick up their elementary school child when the bus is at their designated school bus stop. Parents/guardians who are late to pick their children up make the bus run late and inconvenience other families. When parents/guardians of elementary schools are not present, scholars will be returned to the school. It will be the responsibility of the parents/guardians to retrieve scholars from the school once they are returned by the bus driver.

Repeated failure to pick up a child from the bus stop at the scheduled time may result in the following consequences, to be determined by the dean of students/principal: 1) for the first violation, the scholar’s parent(s) and/or guardian(s) will be contacted to pick up their child from the school and will be issued a warning in writing; 2) for a second violation, the scholar’s parent(s) and/or guardian(s) will be contacted to pick up their child from the school and the scholar will be suspended from the afternoon bus for a period of up to one week; 3) for a third violation, the scholar’s parent(s) and/or guardian(s) will be contacted to pick up their child from the school and the scholar will be suspended from the afternoon bus for a period of up to one month; and 4) for a fourth violation, the scholar’s parent(s) and/or guardian(s) will be contacted to pick up their child from the school and the scholar may be suspended from the afternoon bus for the remainder of the academic year.

## Arrival/Dismissal

Scholars should not arrive at school earlier than 7:30 A.M.

Buses will pick up and drop off scholars next to the building. As a result, we ask that parents who are dropping off and/or picking up scholars be mindful of the tight traffic situation, arrive on time, and plan accordingly.

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

## Scholars Who Walk

Parents of middle or high school scholars may give permission to have their child walk home or take the city bus. Under rare circumstances and with parental permission, parents of elementary school scholars may walk home or take the city bus.

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

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

## After-School or Saturday Transportation

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

**Staff** Rides

Under exceptional (and rare) circumstances, with parental permission, a scholar may be driven home by a member of the Achievement First staff.

# School Uniforms

All scholars must come to school in the Achievement First uniform every day. Arriving to school out of uniform is a violation of the Code of Conduct and may lead to disciplinary consequences. In these instances, the scholar’s parents will be called and asked to bring in a uniform before the scholar is sent to class (provided the school will when available provide a clean and appropriate loaner item, and families should contact the director of school operations if cost of the uniform is the cause so that alternative arrangements may be made). We have a required school uniform for several very important reasons:

1. **Uniforms unite us as a community**. When you look at the Achievement First shirts, it is a powerful visual statement of our community. Scholars make a commitment that when they put on the Achievement First uniform, they are agreeing to live up to the school’s values.
2. **Uniforms reduce distractions and clothing competition.** Often scholars spend more time discussing and evaluating what others are wearing or not wearing than they spend focusing on learning. Wearing uniforms eliminates this distraction.
3. **Uniforms make us all equal.** Whether families have high incomes or low incomes, the scholars come to school looking the same way. No one is made to feel bad about the clothes they have or don’t have.
4. **Uniforms look professional**. Scholars look neat when they arrive to school with shirts tucked into their khaki pants. The scholars come mentally prepared for school and “dressed for work.”

General Uniform Requirements
**Shirts:** Uniform shirts must be purchased through our uniform vendor, Flynn & O’Hara. On top, scholars must wear an Achievement First collared shirt. Shirts must be in the school colors and have the Achievement First logo stitched into the fabric. The middle school shirts are dark blue, and the lower school shirts are light blue. Shirts are available in both long-sleeve and short-sleeve. If a scholar chooses to wear an undershirt, it must be white or match the uniform shirt color. Shirts should be the appropriate size, fitting the scholar without being tight. In addition, scholars must wear Achievement First shirts in the proper way – with the shirt tail tucked in.

**Sweaters:** Uniform sweaters must be purchased through our uniform vendor, Flynn & O’Hara. Scholars may wear either the AF long-sleeve sweaters or the AF sweater vests with the uniform shirt underneath.

**How to Purchase Uniform Shirts & Sweaters:**

1. Mail in the order form with a money order or check. Order forms and envelopes are available at your child’s school. Your school also has a list of places nearby that issue money orders.
2. Call and order with a credit card. Call 800-441-4122.
3. Order online at [www.flynnohara.com](http://www.flynnohara.com)
4. Go to the Flynn and O’Hara store. The school maintains a list of nearby Flynn and O’Hara stores.
* **Dress Pants:** All scholars must wear plain, khaki-colored pants (with belt loops for boys). No baggy or multi-pocketed pants. The pants should fit on the hips. Scholars should wear the size of pants that would be appropriate to wear in a professional workplace. This means that very loose pants, baggy pants, or very tight pants are not acceptable. The school has the authority to determine what pants are acceptable. Pants should fit snugly on the waist without a belt, *but a plain black belt should be worn in order to ensure the pants stay snug and to look sharp*. No underwear should show.

OR

* **Plain Shorts:** During warm-weather months, the principal or dean of students will let scholars know when they can wear plain, khaki-colored shorts (with belt loops for boys) that are no shorter than one inch from the knee. This means that very loose shorts, baggy shorts, or very tight shorts are not acceptable. The school has the authority to determine what shorts are acceptable. If the shorts have belt loops, scholars must wear a belt. Belts are an essential part of the dress code. No underwear should show.

OR

* **Long Skirt**: Instead of pants, scholars may choose to wear a long, plain, khaki-colored skirt. All skirts should go at least four inches below the knee.
* **Shoes and Socks**: Scholars must also wear closed-toed shoes daily. Because scholars walk a lot during each day and have exercise time each day, we ask that scholars wear sneakers instead of dress shoes. All sneakers should be plain black without any distinctive logos or markings. Scholars should wear plain white or black socks.
* **Jackets**: Scholars may not wear jackets inside the school building. If a scholar is worried about being cold inside the building, he/she should wear a uniform sweater or a long sleeve shirt (of the color of the uniform shirt or white) under his/her uniform shirt.
* **Jewelry**: Scholars should not wear jewelry that distracts from the uniform, like large earrings, multiple chains or rings, or lots of bracelets. If a scholar chooses to wear jewelry, it must be modest. **Scholars may wear only one chain or necklace, and it must be tucked neatly under their uniform shirt. Scholars may only wear very small earrings.** Scholars may not wear “name chains” or name earrings, large belt buckles, large or heavy chains, or any piece of jewelry that is large or distracting. If a scholar wears jewelry that the dean of students or principal considers excessive, then the scholar will be asked to remove it.
* **Hats**: Scholars are not allowed to wear baseball hats, scarves, head bands, or bandanas in the building. Small clips or bands for the hair are permitted. Head-coverings for religious reasons are permitted. Hats worn inside the building will be taken from scholars and stored at the front desk for parents to pick up.
* **Make-up**: Make-up (lipstick, glitter, blush, eyeshadow, etc.) is strictly not allowed. Lip gloss is not permitted. Scholars may use Chapstick or other similar non-glossy lip moisturizers, but if the application of it becomes distracting to the learning process, the scholar will not be allowed to use it.
* **Physical Education (P.E.) Shirts**:There is no gym uniform and scholars may not change clothes for P.E. If you are concerned about wear and tear on your child’s uniform, we suggest you purchase multiple sets. Middle school scholars may wear an Achievement First P.E. shirt under their uniform shirt. Before P.E., the scholar may then take off their uniform shirt and use the t-shirt for P.E. After P.E. class, the scholar may then change back into the uniform shirt.
* **Hair, Nails, and Tattoos**:Hair colors or shades of hair other than black, brown, blond, and red are not permitted. Dyed hair or a hairstyle that serves as a distraction – at the determination of the school – will not be permitted. Any tattoos – small or large – must be covered at all times. Fingernails should not be or potentially be a distraction to others. Simple polish only is acceptable.
* **No Changing at School:** While on school property or on school transportation to and from school, scholars must wear their uniform only; while at the school, scholars may not change for events or activities later on in the day.
* **Uniforms on Field Lessons:** Because field lessons are an opportunity for AF scholars to represent their school outside of the building, all uniform standards apply for field lessons. For longer, overnight field lessons, the school may specify the dress code.
* **Dress for the Weather:** Scholars go outside to play most days, except in certain instances where it is precipitating or particularly cold. Please ensure that your child has the proper attire he/she needs to stay comfortable and warm outside.

Scholars who do not abide by all the above uniform guidelines will be subject to disciplinary consequences.

# Promotion to the Next Grade

## About Promotion at Achievement First

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

We recognize that retention is a major decision that has important ramifications for a scholar and family. We take seriously the responsibility to make good decisions regarding retention. In fact, our consideration of the long-term ramifications is what often underlies our decision to retain a scholar. When a student’s performance indicates thathe is not ready to move on, we would much rather have that scholar repeat a grade while with Achievement First so that we can provide intensive support and work in close partnership with families – as opposed to sending a scholar off to the next grade where he/she may not be set up for success. Because Achievement First’s academic and behavioral standards are more rigorous than many traditional schools, we often have different and more rigorous promotional criteria.

* The school sees it as its job to help all scholars meet promotion criteria and ultimately to be prepared for success in the next grade. There are times when a scholar simply needs another year to be able to fully tackle the work, and the school is committed to ensuring that a scholar’s second year in a grade involves a clear plan to provide the scholar additional supports.
* The school will share promotion-in-doubt status with parents at multiple points in the years (*e.g.*, Report Card Nights in December and March/April).
* The school’s administrative team (and ultimately the principal) has full authority to make all promotion decisions.
* The school does not “socially promote.” That is, scholars will not be promoted to the next grade simply because they are “old enough” to be in that grade. The school may also choose to non-promote a scholar even if he/she has been retained before. Readiness for the next grade is demonstrated by mastering rigorous academic standards, and behaving in a way that reflects the school’s values.
* Achievement First may retain early elementary scholars (K-2) who are not meeting our rigorous standards. It has been our experience that early elementary scholars who are retained are often able to get the extra time and support they need to meet our rigorous standards, thus setting them up for long-term academic success.

## Promotion Criteria

The school will consider a student who fails to meet **ANY** of the following criteria to be at risk of non-promotion. The principal has final authority to make promotion decisions based on a scholar’s readiness for the next grade.

**State and Other Test Scores**

For Kindergarten – Grade 2 students:

* Below grade level on nationally normed reading assessment as determined by Achievement First

In Grades 3 – 8:

* Score of 1 on any state test (because the school does not control the timing of the release of state test scores, this promotional criteria is one of the last to be considered and can delay non-promotion decisions)

**Attendance**

15 or more absences in a year (5 tardies and/or early dismissals count as one absence); there is no differentiation between excused and unexcused absences.

**Course Grades (5 – 8)**

* + Failing two or more of the following classes: math, reading, writing, history, and science

**Additional Non-Promotion Criteria:**

The following criteria indicate promotion-in-doubt status. Promotion-in-doubt means that a student may not yet have the skills and knowledge necessary in order to be prepared for the next grade.

Kindergarten to Grade 2:

* The student scores below the 50th percentile or above on the MAP math exam

Grades 3 – 8:

* Score of a “low 2” (defined by AF’s scaled score chart) on two (math, reading, writing) state tests (see above note regarding timing)
* The student scores in the bottom 10% of the AF Network on Achievement First’s internal reading and math exams

**Final Grades**

Grades 3 – 8

* The student’s final grade in MATH class is lower than a 70
* The student’s final grade in READING class is lower than a 70
* The student’s final grade in WRITING class is lower than a 70
* The student’s final grade in HISTORY class is lower than a 70
* The student’s final grade in SCIENCE class is lower than a 70

***Note:*** The minimum grade for a trimester is 55. This gives students the chance to pass for the year after one bad trimester. In order to pass for the year with one trimester at 55, the other two have to average at least 77.

**Promotion for English Language Learners (ELLs):**

State law requires that we evaluate the promotion of English Language Learners differently:

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

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

**Promotion for Students with IEPs:**

The purpose of an IEP is to outline the support a student needs to reach an ambitious and achievable academic bar. When a student does not meet the bar, burden of proof falls on the school to demonstrate that we provided the services the student needed and the student was still not able to reach the academic bar. We must accomplish the following for students with IEPs:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Supporting Non-Promoted Students**

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

**Informing Other Schools**

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

# Special Services

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

**Response to Intervention (RTI)**

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

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

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

If you have concerns about your student’s progress, you may refer your child to the Child Study Team by submitting a written request to the front office. If you have questions about the Child Study Team, please contact XXXXX at XXX-XXX-XXXX.

**Referral to Special Education**

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

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

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

**At any time you suspect your child has a disability, you have the right to request that your child be evaluated for special education services.** You may complete a referral form or submit your concerns in writing. An IEP meeting will be arranged, and you be notified prior to the meeting. If you have questions about the special education referral process, please contact XXXXX at XXX-XXX-XXXX.

**Section 504 Plans and IEPs:**

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

# Closed Campus

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

# Civility Code

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

While we encourage families to share any and all concerns with the appropriate school staff, the school will retain the right to end any meeting or phone conversation in which the volume, tone, or substance of the communication is rude (name-calling or frequent interruptions), profane (cursing or profane language), or threatening. Moreover, when conversations have clearly gone past the point where productive problem-solving is an option, the school reserves the right to end the conversation and schedule additional time at a later date. At the same time, families have the right to end conversations if staff members are not displaying mutual respect and should reschedule for a later date. Families also have the option of addressing the actions of a staff member during a meeting via the family concerns procedure (see **Appendix E** for Addressing Family Concerns).

The school may require parents, guardians, or community members who violate the civility code to provide written requests for meetings, outlining the nature of the concern and with whom they would like to speak. Because of the school’s commitment to ensuring the safety of scholars and staff, and maintaining a calm, productive, positive learning environment, the school reserves the right to bar an individual from the school site if there are repeated violations to the civility code. In such a case, the school staff member will meet with a parent off-campus at an agreed-upon location (*e.g.*, a public library or community center) or meet on campus 30 minutes after school ends.

# School Visitor Policy

Parents/guardians/families are a vital part of the Achievement First community. We welcome you as a partner in the education of our scholars, and you should feel free to observe regularly at the school. In order to maximize our scholar’s learning time and minimize distraction in our classrooms, we ask that you do the following:

* Please let us know in advance if you plan to visit. In the vast majority of circumstances, we can accommodate parents with advance notice, but there may be times when the school may ask to set up a different time or meet with a parent before a visit.
* Upon arriving, sign-in with the Main Office and obtain a visitor badge to wear while in the building.
* Refrain from interacting with scholars so that they are able to pay attention to their teachers at all times.
* Turn off your cell phone prior to entering the classroom.
* Sit behind all scholars (at the back of the classroom) so that you are not blocking a child’s view.
* If you would like to speak with the teacher following your visit, please contact them by phone/e-mail or call the school to set up a follow up meeting. Teachers will generally be unable to meet or talk with you during their teaching time.

If a visitor is coming to school to drop something off for a scholar or to leave a message, we still require that the visitor come first to the main office. For the sake of scholar safety, we cannot have anyone unannounced in the building.

# Emergencies

In case of an emergency, parents or guardians should contact the school either by calling the school or in person. Under no circumstance should parents or guardians contact scholars in their classrooms, including after school, or attempt to remove scholars from the building without notifying and receiving permission from staff members in the school office.

**Fire Safety and Evacuation Procedures**

Please note that some procedures may change once the school year has officially begun. Scholars will be notified of and trained in any significant changes.

In case of emergency, if a scholar or staff member sees fire or smells smoke, he/she should close the door and immediately notify an administrator or teacher. Upon hearing an alarm, school staff will assemble scholars in their rooms and proceed out of the building according to the fire evacuation plan posted in each room. Scholars should follow the direction of staff members who will verify the safety of the stairwells and lead scholars outside the building to the designated locations, where school staff will line up scholars by class and take attendance.

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

In case of a serious emergency, should it be necessary to evacuate our school before, during, or after the school day – and it appears that we will be unable to return to the school for an extended period of time or for the rest of the day – school staff and scholars will evacuate according to the school’s evacuation plan. Staff will line up scholars in a safe and orderly fashion on the sidewalks outside the evacuation site. After staff takes attendance, should conditions permit, all staff and scholars will return promptly to school. If the school is off limits, the school has a designated congregation point where all staff and scholars will gather.

# Addressing Family Concerns

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

**Procedures for Addressing Concerns**

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

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

**Step 3: Written Complaint sent to Principal’s Supervisor:** If the parent is unsatisfied with the principal’s decision or response, the parent may write a letter to the regional superintendent who supports the school or use the “parent concern process form” to explain the issue. The parent can fax, email, mail, or hand-deliver (to the school’s front desk) the letter/completed form, and the office staff will ensure that the communication gets to the regional superintendent. If the parent would like to reach out to the regional superintendent directly, the parent should contact the front desk of the school to get his/her contact information. The regional superintendent will reply within 3 business days and may take up to 10 business days to investigate and reach a decision. The regional superintendent will send a written decision via regular mail to the parent within 10 business days of receiving the letter or form. Please note that the regional superintendent will not respond to complaints that have not gone through steps 1-2. A member of the front office staff member will put a copy of the complaint form and the regional superintendent’s response in the scholar’s file, and the front office staff will also ensure that a summary of the complaint and resolution is logged in the school’s scholar information system.

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

**Step 5: Written Complaint to the Authorizer:** If the parent is not satisfied with the Board’s decision, the parent may present their concern to the Rhode Island Department of Education Legal Office. The parent can get contact information for the authorizer from the school’s front desk. (Please note that the school will ask the authorizer not respond to complaints that have not gone through steps 1-4.)

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

The process described above is designed so that families can speak with the staff members who are most directly involved with the situation. Usually, this is the best way to resolve a concern or complaint because staff members can more quickly and efficiently address family concerns. *Parents do have the right, however, to submit concerns directly to the Board or to the authorizer. In this case, the Board will determine whether the complaint alleges a violation of the law or of the charter. If it does not, the board will generally direct the parent back to the school level.*

## Grievances Related to Discrimination Issues

Achievement First does not condone or tolerate discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation or disability in admission or access to, or treatment, or employment in its programs or activities. Families have the right, therefore, to file a formal grievance if they believe that AF has violated a discrimination law (including Section 504, Title IX, and Title VI). The grievance procedure for discrimination issues is included in **Appendix D** – **How to File a Grievance about Discrimination** – please review it carefully**.** As noted in Appendix D, the Special Services Coordinator, [INSERT NAME] is the Title VII, Title IX and Section 504 Coordinator and may be contacted at [INSERT NUMBER AND EMAIL]. The purpose of this formal grievance procedure is to provide a simple and accessible process to address problems and claims of discrimination based on race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, sexual identity, or disability.

# School Calendar and Closings

## School Closure Policy

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

**Special Circumstances**

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

**School Closure Make-Up Plan**

1. Our regular school year is generally between 185 and 190 days, five to 10 more days than required by the state, because we believe that scholars need more time to master our advanced curriculum. In the case of lost days, our network-wide minimum number of days is 180 days, and schools will need to make up days if they fall below this minimum.
2. In terms of timing, we make up snow days as soon as the school falls bellows 180 days. If we need to make up one day below 180, we plan to extend the school year by one day and hold school on Monday, June 19, 2017. If we need to make up a second day below 180, we plan to convert Monday, February 13, 2017 for Elementary and Middle Schools and Friday, March 31, 2017 for High School into an additional day of school. Additional days will be held immediately following the conclusion of the regular academic year.
3. Therefore families, staff and scholars are strongly encouraged to refrain from making any definite plans for these potential make-up times just in case additional school days are required.

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

# Student Computer and Internet Use Policy

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

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

**A. Use is a Privilege**

Student use of Achievement First’s computers, networks and Internet services is a privilege. No one will deliberately or willfully cause damage to computer equipment, network resources, or assist another in doing the same.

**B. Acceptable Use**

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

**C. Prohibited Use**

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

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

**D. No Expectation of Privacy**

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

## Bullying and Cyber Bullying

## Bullying means the use by one or more students of a written, verbal or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof directed at a student that: (a) Causes physical or emotional harm to the student or damage to the student's property; (b) Places the student in reasonable fear of harm to himself/herself or of damage to his/her property; (c) Creates an intimidating, threatening, hostile, or abusive educational environment for the student; (d) Infringes on the rights of the student to participate in school activities; or (e) Materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school. The expression, physical act or gesture may include, but is not limited to, an incident or incidents that may be reasonably perceived as being motivated by characteristics such as: Race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression or mental, physical, or sensory disability, intellectual ability or by any other distinguishing characteristic. Bullying most often occurs as repeated behavior and often is not a single incident between the bullying/cyber‐bullying offender(s) and the bullying victim(s).

Cyber bullying means bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communications. Examples of this behavior include, but are not limited to:

* *Sending false, cruel, or vicious messages*
* *Creating websites that have stories, cartoons, pictures, or jokes ridiculing others.*
* *Breaking into an email account and sending vicious or embarrassing materials to others.*
* *Engaging someone in electronic communication, tricking that person into revealing sensitive personal information and forwarding that information to others.*
* *Posting of a student picture without his/her permission.*

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

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

# Student Cell Phone Policy

Students are not allowed to use cell phones in school, at school-sponsored activities, or on school field trips, unless specified by a staff member or chaperone in specific circumstances. If, during these times, a cell phone is used, rings, or is seen by a staff member or chaperone, it will be confiscated from the student and returned to the scholar at the end of the day or the school will request a parent to pick it up from the Main Office. The school may pursue disciplinary consequences found in the Code of Conduct depending on how disruptive the incident is and/or if a student has had multiple violations. Cell phones brought to school must be turned off, stored away in a locker or backpack area and cannot be taken out until the student is off school grounds.

# Nursing Services & Medication

# Nursing Services & Medication

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

The nurse is responsible for checking all health records to be certain that each scholar is properly immunized. The School is required by law to have a completed health form on file for every scholar upon initial entry to the school. The health form documents the vaccinations that a child has received to date. If you have not received this form from the school, please contact the school’s director of operations immediately.

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

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

# School Lunch Program

Breakfast and lunch will be available without cost at Achievement First as part of its participation in the School Nutrition Program (a federal program that subsidizes scholar meals).

It is the policy of Achievement First to require all parents, regardless of whether the parent believes the child will qualify for free and reduced lunch, to fill out and turn in a free/reduced lunch form. This policy helps the school ensure that we maximize the reimbursements we receive from the federal government.

Parents may send lunch to school. If you are sending lunch to school with your child, we ask that you send in nutritious foods. Please do not let your child bring unhealthy drinks (*e.g.*, sodas or juices heavy in sugar) or unhealthy snacks (*e.g.*, snacks high in sugar) to school. The school reserves the right not to allow scholars to consume unhealthy food and drinks at school. Additionally, please do not send in lunches that need to be reheated or refrigerated. Please see the healthy foods policy below for more information.

# Healthy Foods Policy

Scholar nutrition and health is a big concern at Achievement First schools. Poor eating habits can adversely affect scholar performance by causing, among other things, a lack of focus, low stamina, and/or behavioral outbursts – and, of course, long-term health consequences. In an effort to curb the consumption of low-nutrition foods, the following policy has been created.

Food and beverages brought to school must meet dietary guidelines and contribute to the health of scholars. The school will prohibit the consumption of foods of low nutritional value during breakfast, designated snack periods, lunch and other times scholars have access to food during the school day. Food of low nutritional value consists of:

* Chewing gum and candy
* Food and drinks containing high sugar or other sweeteners
* “Juice” or juice products containing little fruit or vegetable juice
* Foods with high fat/serving ratio (*e.g.*, cookies, Cheetos, potato chips, foods fried in oil, etc.)
* Carbonated beverages
* Cakes/cupcakes (unless this is part of a celebration approved by the teacher)

Teachers planning parties or other school-related events are encouraged to consider healthier alternatives. If scholars bring foods low in nutritional value to school, AF teachers and staff will hold them at the front desk until parents pick them up.

**Candy and Snacks**

Scholars may not have any candy with them at school. Teachers will take any candy from scholars and treat it like “non-academic material.” (Parents may come to pick up the candy if they want.)

**Food not During Designated Times**

Scholars may not eat food except during breakfast, lunch, and snack times. Scholars may not have food in their pockets or with them in any way except during snack and lunch. All snack food must be completed during snack time – and in the classroom. Scholars may not take snacks out of the classroom (for example, to the bathroom). Teachers will take food that scholars have out during unauthorized times and treat it like “non-academic” material. (Parents may come to pick up the food if they want.)

**Gum**

Scholars (and teachers) should not chew gum. Scholars with gum may face a consequence, and repeated instances will result in more serious consequences.

**Classroom Parties, Birthdays, and Other Events**

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

To maintain the structure and consistency of the school day as well as to preserve sacred learning time, Achievement First does not allow individual celebrations of birthdays or other holidays during the school day. Families should not bring in food treats or other gift items for birthdays or holidays as the school cannot commit teacher or other staff time to distributing them and because such items can distract scholars from their learning.

Families wishing to involve classmates in the celebration of their scholar’s birthday or other holidays can do so by inviting them to a party that occurs outside of school hours. The school can support such families by distributing a flyer to families in that scholar’s class. To avoid hurt feelings and distractions from learning, the school can only do this if every scholar in the class is invited. Families wishing to have such an invitation distributed should send it to school in the scholar’s homework folder. Invitations must be general (as in not addressed to specific scholars) and must be issued to all scholars in the class.

In order to minimize competition and distractions from learning, scholars must be in full uniform on their birthdays and other holidays.

# Statement of Understanding

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

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

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Scholar Name Parent / Guardian Name

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Scholar Signature Parent / Guardian Signature

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Date  Date

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

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

# Appendices

## Appendix A: Reporting, Investigation, Intervention, and Prevention of Bullying and Cyber Bullying

**Reporting Bullying and Cyber Bullying (together, “Bullying”)**

1. If a student feels that he/she is a victim of bullying, or witnesses a student being bullied, the student should report the incident to the dean of students, the safe school climate specialist. Students may report bullying situations anonymously via written note or e-mail so long as the information is securely and privately delivered to the dean of students.
2. If a parent or guardian suspects bullying, they may report it via written note or e-mail to the dean of students.
3. Any staff member who witnesses or receives any report of bullying must notify the dean of students as soon as possible, and in any event within one school day after the staff member witnesses or receives a report of bullying.
4. All reports will be documented and maintained for the duration of the student’s tenure at the school.
5. The school will maintain a list of the number of confirmed acts of bullying, without specific names. The school will make the list available upon request and will provide the number of confirmed acts of cyber bullying as required to the State Department of Education.

**Investigation**

1. As with any situation involving a serious breach of school culture and the Code of Conduct, the dean of students will take action to investigate the report of bullying. As bullying is prohibited by the Code of Conduct, it is important to note that this applies to activity on school grounds, at a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function or program whether on or off school grounds, at a school bus stop, on a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased or used by the school, or through the use of an electronic device owned, leased or used by the school, or outside of the school setting if the bullying creates a hostile environment at school for the scholar against whom the bullying was directed, infringes on the rights of that scholar, or substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of the school.
2. The dean of students will investigate, in a timely fashion, parents’ reports and will review students reports, anonymous or otherwise, to determine the proper action.
3. The dean of students will question the reporting student or parent about specific details, which may include date of incident, time, location, and what was said or done to the student being bullied. If the reporter is anonymous, the dean of students will question those who are listed in the report. No disciplinary action will be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous report.
4. The dean of students will then meet with and question the student(s) accused of bullying, as well as the student(s) being bullied.
5. The dean of students or his/her designee will call the parents or guardians of the students involved in verified incidents of bullying and inform them of the incident(s), the school’s response, and any consequences that may result from further acts of bullying within 48 hours after the completion of the investigation. Parents or guardians of scholars against whom the bullying was directed will be invited to a meeting to discuss the measures being taken by the school to ensure the safety of their scholar and policies and procedures in place to prevent further acts of bullying. Parents or guardians of scholars who committed the bullying will be invited to a separate meeting to discuss specific interventions undertaken by the school to prevent further acts of bullying.
6. At the discretion of the dean of students or his/her designee, the parents of both parties may be requested to come in and meet with the dean of students and Social Worker for mediation.

**Intervention and Prevention**

**A. Intervention**

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

**B. Prevention**

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

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

## Appendix B: Disciplinary Procedures and Due Process Rights

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

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

**Classroom Removals**

* Although the goal is to keep scholars in the classroom learning as much as possible, a teacher, staff member, or school leader has the authority to remove a scholar from the classroom when the scholar’s behavior poses a continuing danger to scholars or staff or an ongoing threat of disruption to the academic process.
* When a scholar is removed, the teacher must notify the dean of students or the dean’s designee at once and send the scholar to a designated area.
* As soon as the child is able to have a calm conversation, the scholar will have the opportunity for an informal hearing with the dean or dean’s designee to hear the reasons for the removal and have an opportunity to informally present the scholar’s version of the relevant events before the staff member makes a decision whether to assign additional consequences. We think it is good practice to have an informal hearing, to the greatest extent possible, in connection with each removal.
* The overall goal is to get the scholar back on track and back in class as quickly as possible. In most cases, the scholar will be able to return to class in 20 to 60 minutes. In order to return to class, the scholar may have to complete a reflection form, not be disruptive in the removal area or other classrooms or offices, demonstrate that he/she is calm and ready to return to class, practice building skills in the areas in which he/she struggled to make appropriate choices, and have a satisfactory conversation with the dean or dean’s designee about the behavior and how the scholar is to behave the rest of the day and in the future. In addition, the scholar may be required to have a discussion with and apologize to the relevant teacher or staff member before re-entering the class.
* The dean, principal, or designee will record the amount of time lost from class.
* In cases of major or egregious behavior, the principal or dean may decide that the behavior warrants additional consequences that would keep the scholar from returning to class.

**In-School Suspensions**

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

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

Misbehavior during an in-school suspension may result in an out-of-school suspension or other consequence. Additionally, if a scholar has a history of not being able to successfully serve an in-school suspension, including by significantly disrupting the learning of others and/or repeatedly failing to cooperate with directions, the school may seek an out-of-school suspension consistent with the school’s disciplinary policies and procedures. As necessary and appropriate, the school may require that the in-school suspension be served at a different Achievement First school.

**Short-term Out-of-School Suspensions**

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

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

**Hearing Regarding Short-term Out-of-School Suspension Decisions**

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

**Work completion during suspension and documentation of suspensions**

Scholars are responsible for completing academic work missed during the suspension. The completed work will receive full credit if it is submitted by the deadlines in accordance with the school make-up policy. If a scholar does not complete this work, the scholar may face standard academic consequences (*e.g.*, Homework Extension or no academic credit).

**Re-entry from In-School Suspension or Short-term Out-of-School Suspension**

We ask all scholars who are suspended to take the following steps before they re-enter the school or classroom. We believe that the following practices are essential to set up the scholar for success. The length of a longer suspension may be reduced (at the discretion of the principal) if the following are satisfied:

* The scholar and parent meet with the principal, dean, or dean’s designee
* The scholar writes a letter of apology of acceptable quality (as deemed by the principal or dean) based on the child’s academic level.
* The scholar presents this letter to Achievement First staff and/or scholars.
* Scholars who are suspended two or more times may be asked to submit a reasonable and realistic, plan for improvement (based on a template / guidance given by the school). This plan must be of acceptable quality, as defined by the principal or dean.
* The scholar may be asked to meet additional conditions if school staff believes these conditions will improve the likelihood of the scholar returning to school successfully.

**Recommendation for Long-Term Out-of-School Suspension**

A long-term suspension may be recommended by the principal. It is an out-of-school suspension (10 or more days up to one school year) due to serious, major, or egregious infractions. Only the Board may impose a long-term Suspension. A scholar may appeal a long-term Suspension decision to the Commissioner of Education.

**Recommendation for Expulsion**

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

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

**Hearing Procedures**

Except in an emergency situation, prior to long-term discipline of a scholar, a hearing shall be conducted by the Presiding Officers (which in Rhode Island is the Board of Trustees). The hearing is governed by the procedures outlined below. Whenever an emergency exists, the hearing provided for above shall be held as soon as possible within the time limits set forth by law.

The school will provide written notice to the scholar himself/herself, or if a minor, to his/her parent/guardian or person legally responsible for the scholar. The written notice will be in the parent/guardian’s spoken language, unless it is clearly not feasible to do so. It will include: (a) a clear, written statement of the reason for the recommended long-term suspension; and (b) notice of the scholar’s rights to (i) a prompt public or private hearing, at the scholar’s election; and (c) representation by counsel at the hearing. Payment for this representation is the responsibility of the scholar and his/her parents/guardians, although afree or reduced legal services through various agencies may be available to those entitled. Parents and guardians should feel free to request information about such services from the principal or dean.

If a hearing is requested, the scholar or parent/guardian shall be given a prompt notice setting the time and place of such hearing. The school shall schedule that hearing so as to allow sufficient time for preparation, without undue delay.

A parent may request to postpone the hearing for a reasonable period time to allow the scholar and parent/guardian to prepare the case. In such instances, however, the scholar must remain out of school while awaiting the hearing, even if scholar is out of school for more than 10 days; the school will provide alternative instruction during this period.

The hearing is before at least a quorum of the Board. This means that at least a majority of the Board will be in attendance for the entirety of the hearing, including the process of rendering a decision. The hearing shall take place in public or private, at the scholar’s election. If in private, the Board shall follow the process for convening in closed session under the Rhode Island Open Meetings Act. A complete verbatim record of the hearing will be made either by a recording or by a stenographer.

A scholar is entitled to be represented by counsel throughout the hearing. He or she is entitled to cross-examine all witnesses presented by the administration, and to present witnesses and evidence on his/her behalf. If the scholar or his/her parents/guardians use a spoken language other than English, the School or Board may provide the services of a translator or interpreter, as practicable and available.

The Chair of the Board, or legal counsel if the Board elects to be assisted by counsel, shall conduct the hearing. The Chair or Counsel shall call the meeting to order, introduce the parties, Board members and counsel where applicable, and swear any witnesses as they are called by the administration or the scholar. It is also permissible for the stenographer to swear the witnesses prior to taking of testimony.

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

The hearing will not follow formal rules of evidence. The Board may accept hearsay and other evidence if it deems that evidence reliable, relevant and/or material to its determination.

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

After the administration has presented its case, the scholar will be asked if he/she has any witnesses or evidence to present. If so, the witnesses will be sworn, will testify, and will be subject to cross-examination by the administration or its legal counsel, and questioning by Board members. The scholar may also choose to make a statement at this time. If the scholar does so, he/she will be sworn and subject to cross-examination by the administration or its legal, and questioning by Board members. The parties may then make concluding statements, with the administration proceeding first, the scholar next, and the administration retaining the right to reply to the scholar’s concluding remarks if it chooses to do so. The parties may also submit written position statements within a reasonable time after the close of the hearing.

The Board may convene to deliberate outside of the presence of both parties, in conformity with the Rhode Island Open Meetings Act. If the Board elects to deliberate outside of the presence of the parties, neither the administration nor the scholar, nor their representatives, shall be present for or participate in such deliberations. Legal counsel to the Board may assist the Board during deliberations but only to provide counsel regarding procedural and related questions, such as the weight to be afforded the evidence, the standard and burden of proof, and the appellate process.

In cases in which the scholar has denied the allegation(s), the Board will first determine whether the administration has proven, by a preponderance of the evidence, that the scholar committed the offense(s) as charged by the principal/designee.

If it finds that the administration has carried this burden, and that the charges are proven, then the Board next will determine the appropriate discipline to be imposed. It need not be bound by the principal’s recommendation, but may give it strong consideration. In addition, the Board may review the scholar’s attendance and/or academic records.

The Board may only consider evidence of past disciplinary problems that have led to removal from the classroom or a suspension for the purpose of determining the length of suspension, and the nature of the alternative educational opportunity to be offered. **Note**: Past disciplinary incidents may not be considered if they were determined in a Manifestation Determination Review to have occurred as a result of a scholar’s documented disability.

In those cases in which administrators presented the case in support of the charges against the scholar, those administrators will not be present during the deliberations of the Board either on questions of evidence or on the final discipline to be imposed. The superintendent/designee may, after reviewing the incident with administrators, and reviewing the scholar’s records, make a recommendation to the Presiding Officers as to the appropriate discipline to be applied.

R.I. Gen. Laws § 16-21-18 requires the Board to suspend a scholar for one year if he or she brings or possesses a weapon, as defined under 18 U.S.C. § 921(a), within school premises, premises being used for school purposes or activities, into a vehicle used for school transportation, or onto a roadway or path along which school children or teachers are walking to school. The one-year penalty also applies when the scholar aims a firearm or realistic replica of a firearm at school premises, school vehicles, or students, staff, or visitors attending school or in transit to or from school. The law permits the Board to short this term of suspension, however, on a case-by-case basis, on the recommendation of the regional superintendent, under guidelines to be developed by the Board.

The Board will issue a written decision, within a reasonable time after the hearing, based exclusively on the record, detailing the reasons and factual bases for its decision. It will provide the scholar with: (a) a copy of the decision; and (b) a copy of the stenographic or electronic record, including exhibits (at no cost). The scholar is entitled to appeal an adverse decision of the Board to the Commissioner of the Rhode Island Department of Elementary & Secondary Education by filing an appeal. If he or she files such an appeal, the Board shall transmit the record to the Commissioner, with a copy of the Board decision.

Notice of long-term suspension, and the conduct for which the scholar was suspended, shall be included on the scholar’s cumulative educational record. Such notice, except for notice of a long-term suspension based upon the possession of a firearm or deadly weapon, shall be expunged from the cumulative educational record if the scholar graduates from high school.

When a scholar withdraws from school after having been notified that a hearing on a long-term suspension is pending, the hearing will be canceled.

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

The Scholar/Parent may submit any complaint regarding this process to the Rhode Island Department of Education’s Charter School Office.

**Alternative Instruction**

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

## Appendix C: Discipline of Scholars with Special Needs

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

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

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

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

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

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

Under the IDEA, a change of placement occurs if:

1. The **removal** is for more than 10 consecutive school days; **or**,

2. Short-term removals make up a pattern because:

1. The current removal when added to a series of previous short-term removals totals more than 10 schools days in a school year;
2. The child’s behavior is similar to his/her behavior that resulted in previous removal(s); and of other factors (*e.g.*, length of each removal; proximity of removals to one another). \*

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

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

* The scholar is not segregated from his/her general education peers
* The scholar has continued access to the general curriculum
* The scholar continues to receive all services mandated in his/her IEP, 504 plan or Behavior Intervention Plan.

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

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

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

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

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

**Additionally, each subsequent removal after the initial MDR requires a new MDR to be conducted.** Prior to a change of placement, scholars may receive disciplinary actions in accordance with the Achievement First discipline policy.

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

**Weapons, Drugs and Serious Injury**

If a child with a disability or suspected disability either:

1. Carries or possesses a weapon at school, on school premises or at a school function;
2. Knowingly possesses or uses illegal drugs, or sells or solicits the sale of a controlled substance at school, on school premises or at a school function; or,
3. Inflicts serious bodily harm at school, on school premises or at a school function[[1]](#footnote-1);

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

**If you have questions about the disciplinary guidelines for students with disabilities, please contact XXXXXX at XXX-XXX-XXXX.**

**Expulsions and Manifestation Determination Reviews**

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

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

**Provisions of Services during Removal**

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

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

## Appendix D: How to File a Grievance about Discrimination

**Non-Discrimination**

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

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

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

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

**Internal Resolution Process:**

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

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

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

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

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

**Formal Procedure:**

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Anti-Retaliation**

The anti-discrimination laws protect complainants from retaliation for reporting allegations of discrimination and participating in an investigation. The administration will take steps to prevent retaliation and take strong responsive action should retaliation occur.

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

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

**Additional Procedures for Claims Alleging Harassment or Hostile Educational Environment**

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

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

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

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

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

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

Complaints may be filed at <https://wdcrobcolp01.ed.gov/CFAPPS/OCR/contactus.cfm> or by contacting the Office for Civil Rights at the address/telephone number below:

Office for Civil Rights

Boston Office

U.S. Department of Education

8th Floor

5 Post Office Square

Boston, MA 02109-3921

Telephone: 617.289.0111

Fax: 617.289.0150

Email: OCR.Boston@ed.gov

The Special Services Coordinator, [INSERT NAME] is the Title VII, Title IX and Section 504 Coordinator and may be contacted at [INSERT NUMBER AND EMAIL].

## Appendix E: Bullying, Sexual Harassment, or Dating Violence

**Bullying**

In accordance with the Rhode Island Safe School Act (RI Gen. Law §16‐21‐34), Achievement First prohibits bullying, cyber bullying, and retaliation against any person who reports bullying.

Bullying is the use by one or more students of a written, verbal or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture directed at a student that:

* Causes physical or emotional harm to the student or damage to the student’s property;
* Places the student in reasonable fear of harm to himself/herself or of damage to his/her property;
* Creates an intimidating, threatening, hostile, or abusive educational environment for the student;
* Infringes on the rights of the student to participate in school activities; or
* Materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

Cyber bullying is bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication. It includes:

* The creation of a web page or blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person;
* The knowing impersonation of another person as the author of posted content or messages; or
* The communication or posting of materials online that meets the definition of bullying above.

Bullying motivated by characteristics such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression or mental, physical, or sensory disability, intellectual ability or by any other distinguishing characteristic will not be tolerated.

**Sexual Harassment and Dating Violence**

Sexual harassment, sexual intimidation, and teen dating violence are prohibited in the public schools of Rhode Island. In accordance with the Lindsay Ann Burke Act (R.I. Gen. Laws §§ 16-85-1, 16-85-2, 16-21-30 and 16-22-24), Achievement First prohibits and will not tolerate sexual harassment, sexual intimidation or teen dating violence at school.

Sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination. Sexual harassment includes degrading remarks, gestures, and jokes, notes, graffiti, and spreading rumors. It can also include indecent exposure, inappropriate touching, grabbing, pinching, or brushing against another in a sexual way.

Dating violence is a pattern of behavior where one person uses threats of, or actually uses, physical, sexual, verbal or emotional abuse to control his/her dating partner.

Sexual violence is an extreme form of sexual harassment. Teen dating violence can be a form of sexual harassment when it involves unwelcome touching, sexual demands, verbal abuse, and physical coercion of a sexual nature.

**Internal Resolution Process**

A victim of bullying or teen dating violence, or anyone who witnesses of knows of an incidence of bullying or teen dating violence, may file a report. Any student or staff member who believes he or she is being bullied or the subject of sexual intimidation or sexual violence should immediately report such circumstances to an appropriate staff member, teacher, or administrator.

**General Provisions**

RI Gen. Law §16‐21‐34 and Title IX protect complainants from retaliation for reporting allegations of bullying and sexual harassment and participating in an investigation. The administration will take steps to prevent retaliation and take strong responsive action should retaliation occur.

In the event that there is a finding of bullying or sexual harassment, the administration will take steps that are reasonably calculated to end such behavior; to prevent recurrence; and to correct bullying or sexual harassment effects on the complainant and others, if appropriate.

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

## Appendix F: Parent Concern Form

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

Today’s Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Scholar’s Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  Grade: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to Scholar: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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

If yes, who were you in touch with?:

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

What was the result?

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

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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## Appendix G: Additional Information

**Title I**

The Federal *No Child Left Behind* Act of 2001 requires school districts that receive federal Title I funding to notify parents of their right to know the professional qualifications of the classroom teachers who instruct their child. **SCHOOL NAME** is a Title I school.

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

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

SCHOOL NAME is committed to providing quality instruction for all students and does so by employing the most qualified individuals to teach and support each student in the classroom. Please feel free to contact the school if you wish to receive this information or if you have any questions.

**Public Documents / The Access to Public Records Act**

The school fully complies with Rhode Island’s Access to Public Records Act, which guarantees access to public records of government bodies. Any requests for school records or information from the school must be in writing and submitted to the principal or to his/her designee(s). Within ten business days of receipt of a written request, the school, depending on the requested information, will respond by:

* Making the information available at the school itself during normal business hours to the person requesting it;
* Denying the request in writing; or
* Providing a written acknowledgment of receipt of the request that supplies an approximate date for when the request will be granted or denied.
* If the person requesting information is denied access to a record, he/she may appeal such denial to the principal. Upon timely receipt of such an appeal, the school, within 10 business days of the receipt of the appeal, make a final determination whether or not to allow public inspection. If the principal determines that the record is not subject to public inspection, the person or entity seeking disclosure may file a complaint with the Rhode Island Attorney General.
* The school may deny access to requested records the requested record falls within one of the 23 categories that are exempt from public disclosure. Even then, if not exempt, the school may nonetheless deny access if on balance, the privacy interest of the affected individual outweighs the public interest in disclosure. Listed below are the more typical records that are not subject to disclosure under state law::
	+ Records, reports, opinions, information, and statements required to be kept confidential by federal law or regulation or state law, or rule of court;
	+ Personnel and other personal individually-identifiable records otherwise deemed confidential by federal or state law or regulation, or the disclosure of which would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy;
	+ Child custody and adoption records, records of illegitimate births, and records of juvenile proceedings before the family court;
	+ Reports and statements of strategy or negotiation involving labor negotiations or collective bargaining;
	+ Any individually identifiable evaluations of public school teachers made pursuant to state or federal law or regulation;
	+ All documents prepared by school districts intended to be used by school districts in protecting the safety of their students from potential and actual threats.

The school may charge a copying fee of up to fifteen cents ($.15) for each page requested to be copied. The school may also charge fifteen dollars ($15.00) per hour, after the first hour, for search and retrieval of the requested documents.

**The Open Meetings Law**

1. All meetings of the Board of Trustees and all committees of the Board (“Board meetings”) will be open to the general public pursuant to the Rhode Island Open Meetings Act (R.I. Gen. Laws §§ 42-46-1 et seq.
2. The school will provide written notice of regularly scheduled Board meetings at the beginning of each calendar year, including dates, times, and locations of all meetings. Notice will also be provided to the public upon request. A calendar of all scheduled Board meetings will be posted at the school.
3. In addition to annual notice, the school will give supplemental written public notice of any Board meeting within a minimum of forty-eight (48) hours before the date. This notice will include the date the notice was posted, the date, time and place of the meeting, and a statement specifying the nature of the business to be discussed. Public notices will be placed on the bulletin board in the reception area. Public notices will reflect the location of Board meetings or any location changes.
4. To the extent possible, the school will publicly post notices of Board meetings immediately after each meeting date is determined.
5. For the purposes of determining a quorum, Trustees must be present at the meeting as defined in the bylaws.
6. Written minutes will be recorded of all Board meetings. To the extent required by law, minutes will include:
	1. The date and time and place of the meeting
	2. The members of the public body recorded as either present or absent
	3. A summary of all motions, proposals, resolutions, and other matters formally voted upon
	4. A record of how each Trustee voted on each matter
	5. In the case of an executive session, the minutes will include a record of the final determination of any action that was taken.
7. A record of all votes taken at all meetings of public bodies, listing how each member voted on each issue, shall be a public record and shall be available, to the public at the office of the public body, within two (2) weeks of the date of the vote. The minutes shall be public records and unofficial minutes shall be available, to the public at the office of the public body, within thirty-five (35) days of the meeting or at the next regularly scheduled meeting, whichever is earlier. All executive sessions shall be conducted as part of an open meeting; they are not considered separate meetings per se. An executive session may be called via motion and majority vote by the Board; the motion must specifically identify the topics to be considered.
8. All Board members may participate in the executive session, and the Board may invite others to be present as well.

The Board may hold a meeting closed to the public pursuant to R.I. Gen. Law § 42-46-4 for one or more of the following purposes:

* Any discussions of the job performance, character, or physical or mental health of a person or persons (provided that such person or persons affected shall have been notified in advance in writing and advised that they may require that the discussion be held at an open meeting)
* Sessions pertaining to collective bargaining or litigation, or work sessions pertaining to collective bargaining or litigation.
* Discussion regarding the matter of security including, but not limited to, the deployment of security personnel or devices.
* Any investigative proceedings regarding allegations of misconduct, either civil or criminal.
* Any discussions or considerations related to the acquisition or lease of real property for public purposes, or of the disposition of publicly held property wherein advanced public information would be detrimental to the interest of the public.
* Any executive sessions of a local school committee exclusively for the purposes: (i) of conducting student disciplinary hearings; or (ii) of reviewing other matters which relate to the privacy of students and their records, including all hearings of the various juvenile hearing boards of any municipality; provided, however, that any affected student shall have been notified in advance in writing and advised that he or she may require that the discussion be held in an open meeting
* Any hearings on, or discussions of, a grievance filed pursuant to a collective bargaining agreement.
* Any discussion of the personal finances of a prospective donor to a library.

Subject to reasonable restrictions, Board meetings may be electronically recorded by the public. Reasonable restrictions include those designed to preserve orderly conduct of a meeting, to safeguard public facilities against damage caused by certain recording equipment or to require fair payment for the cost of electricity.

 **Use of Pictures & Videos of Scholars**

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

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

**Scholar Records**

The school administration is responsible for all scholar records. These will discuss, explain, and/or make available to an eligible scholar (18 years old or greater) or parents/guardians any records on file.

Scholar records are protected under both state and federal law. The Rhode Island law, R.I. Gen. Laws § 16-71-3, is in most respects the same as the federal law. The federal law is the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99). It applies to all schools that receive funding under an applicable program of the U.S. Department of Education. FERPA gives parents certain rights with respect to their children’s education records. These rights transfer to the scholar when he or she reaches the age of 18 or attends a school beyond the high school level. Scholars to whom the rights have transferred are “eligible scholars.”.

In accordance with FERPA law:

* Parents or scholars over 18 years of age have the right to inspect and review the scholar’s education records maintained by the school.
* Parents or scholars over 18 years of age have the right to request that the school correct records which they believe to be inaccurate or misleading. If the school decides not to amend the record, the parent or eligible scholar then has the right to a formal hearing. The issue will first be heard by the superintendent of Achievement First or the superintendent’s designee. If the parent or eligible scholar is still not satisfied with the decision of the superintendent or the superintendent’s designee, a hearing with the Board or a designated subcommittee of the Board may be requested. The decision of the Board or its designated subcommittee is final.
* The school may disclose, without consent, “directory” information including a scholar’s name, address, telephone number, date and place of birth, honors and awards, and dates of attendance. The school gives parents notice of the categories of information which it designates as directory information. Parents have a reasonable period of time to inform the school that any or all of their particular child’s information designated as “directory” should not be released without the parent's prior consent. Parents should submit such a request in writing to the director of school operations as soon as possible.
* Generally, the school must have written permission from the parent or eligible scholar in order to release any information from a scholar’s education record. However, the school may disclose those records, without consent, to the following parties or under the following conditions (34 CFR § 99.31):
	+ School officials with legitimate educational interest;
	+ Other schools to which a scholar is transferring;
	+ Specified officials for audit or evaluation purposes;
	+ Appropriate parties in connection with financial aid to a scholar;
	+ Organizations conducting certain studies for or on behalf of the school;
	+ Accrediting organizations;
	+ To comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena;
	+ Appropriate officials in cases of health and safety emergencies; and State and local authorities, within a juvenile justice system, pursuant to specific State law.

 If a parent would like to examine a child’s record, the parent should submit a request in writing to the director of school operations. Within 10 days, the eligible scholar or parent will be allowed to inspect the file and may request a copy of some or all of the information contained in the record. This listing in the parent handbook serves as the school’s annual notification of parents and eligible scholars of their rights under FERPA.

1. IDEA defines serious bodily injury as injury which involves a substantial risk of death, extreme physical pain, protracted and obvious disfigurement, or protracted loss or impairment of the function of a bodily member, organ or mental facility. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)