



## The Exploris School

### The Exploris School Board Regular Monthly Meeting

**Date and Time**

Thursday August 28, 2025 at 4:30 PM EDT

**Location**

The Exploris School: Elementary Campus  
17 S Swain St, Raleigh, NC 27601, USA  
5th Grade Classroom

**Agenda**

	Purpose	Presenter	Time
<b>I. Opening Items</b>			<b>4:30 PM</b>
<b>A.</b> Record Attendance		Edward Buchan	1 m
<b>B.</b> Call the Meeting to Order		Steven Darroch	1 m
<b>C.</b> Approve Minutes	Approve Minutes	Edward Buchan	2 m
Approve minutes for The Exploris School Board Regular Monthly Meeting on July 24, 2025			
<b>D.</b> Public Comment		Steven Darroch	15 m
PUBLIC COMMENT			

	Purpose	Presenter	Time
	<p>Fifteen minutes will be allocated on the agenda for public input at each meeting. Additional time may be added at the discretion of the Chair.</p> <p>Public comment may be oral, in person, or in written form to be read by the Chair. Public comment is limited to no more than 3 minutes per person. It is recommended that public comment be written out and provided to the board following the three minutes to ensure the entire message is heard by the board.</p> <p>Each speaker will clearly state their full name and county of residence.</p> <p>All public comment should be factual and should not include personally identifiable information of students or personnel in order to maintain confidentiality. Speakers should avoid using names of students or staff and maintain confidentiality and privacy standards.</p> <p>All public comments will be taken under advisement by the Board, but will not elicit an immediate written or spoken response. The names of persons providing public comment and a brief summary of topics or input will be included in the meeting minutes published.</p> <p>A response will be provided to the stakeholder within seven (7) days. Those providing public comment are asked to provide in writing (either in person or via email to board@exploris.org) their contact information including name, County of residence, and address (either email or postal, whichever is preferred).</p> <p>Specific issues about a particular student or teacher should be addressed to the elementary or middle school director, rather than the Board of Directors.</p>		

## II. Committee Reports

4:49 PM

- The Board oversees the membership and work of each Committee.
- Committees present their latest minutes and action items to the Board. The Board makes all official decisions regarding Committee recommendations.

<b>A. Finance</b>	FYI	Koren Morgan	10 m
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monthly Financial Reports</li> </ul>			

	Purpose	Presenter	Time
<b>B.</b> Educational Excellence	FYI	Eric Grunden	15 m
<b>C.</b> Governance	Vote	Deborah Brown	10 m

- Welcome Lauren Collins
- Thank you to outgoing members
- Vote: 2025-26 Handbook Revisions (Personnel and Student-Family Handbooks)

<b>D.</b> Community & Connections	FYI	Deborah Brown	5 m
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- Announcing the refocused mission of this work (see attached draft letter)
- Recruiting Board leadership for this committee

<b>E.</b> Director Evaluation & Support	Discuss	Steven Darroch	5 m
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<b>F.</b> Facilities	FYI	Josh Corbat	10 m
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- Updates on Facilities Project

<b>G.</b> Kaizen	FYI	Shawna Scipione	5 m
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- Kaizen leaders will give an update to the Board.

### **III. The Exploris Foundation 5:49 PM**

- The Exploris Foundation Board will give an update

<b>A.</b> Foundation Update	FYI	Susan Singer	5 m
<b>B.</b> Foundation Seats	Vote	Steven Darroch	10 m

- The Board will discuss and vote on additional Foundation seats the Board is required to fill.

### **IV. The Exploris Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) 6:04 PM**

The Exploris PTO leadership will give an update

	Purpose	Presenter	Time
<b>A.</b> PTO Update	FYI	Stacey Carothers	5 m
<b>V. Meeting Items</b>			<b>6:09 PM</b>
<b>A.</b> Directors Report	FYI	Deborah Brown	15 m
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monthly Report &amp; Updates (The Directors Report will not be made verbally during meetings. Please review the written report prior to the meeting. We will answer questions and provide critical updates and vote on any requested items.)</li> <li>• Discussion about items to include in the forthcoming Exploris Data Dashboard</li> <li>• Implementation of new Student Device Damage Protection Plan</li> </ul>			
<b>B.</b> Board Business	Vote	Steven Darroch	10 m
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adoption of <a href="#">A Framework for Community Engagement &amp; Accountability</a></li> <li>• May 19, 2025 <a href="#">Town Hall responses</a> have been shared with the community</li> <li>• Exploris Data Dashboard: What should we include in this new tool?</li> <li>• Updating photos/bios in your BoardOnTrack profile</li> <li>• Board Retreat on Sept. 6th: Please RSVP</li> <li>• General Discussions</li> </ul>			
<b>VI. Closed Session</b>			<b>6:34 PM</b>
<b>A.</b> Facilities & Legal Items	Discuss	Josh Corbat	5 m
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Updates on Facilities</li> <li>• Updates on Personnel</li> <li>• Updates on any Open Legal Items</li> </ul>			
<b>VII. Closing Items</b>			<b>6:39 PM</b>
<b>A.</b> Adjourn Meeting	Vote		



# Coversheet

## Approve Minutes

**Section:** I. Opening Items  
**Item:** C. Approve Minutes  
**Purpose:** Approve Minutes  
**Submitted by:**  
**Related Material:**  
Minutes for The Exploris School Board Regular Monthly Meeting on July 24, 2025

APPROVED



## The Exploris School

### Minutes

#### The Exploris School Board Regular Monthly Meeting

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##### **Date and Time**

Thursday July 24, 2025 at 4:30 PM

##### **Location**

The Exploris School: Elementary Campus  
17 S Swain St, Raleigh, NC 27601, USA  
5th Grade Classroom

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##### **Directors Present**

E. Grunden, G. Bayo (remote), M. Perry, P. President, R. Averitte, S. Darroch, S. Scipione, W. McLamb (remote)

##### **Directors Absent**

E. Buchan, M. Alexander, M. Nelson, S. Singer

##### **Ex Officio Members Present**

E. Burton, J. Corbat

##### **Non Voting Members Present**

E. Burton, J. Corbat

##### **Guests Present**

K. Morgan, Rachel Bugher (remote)

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##### **I. Opening Items**

**A. Record Attendance**

**B. Call the Meeting to Order**

S. Darroch called a meeting of the board of directors of The Exploris School to order on Thursday Jul 24, 2025 at 4:33 PM.

**C. Approve Minutes**

Sarah Goutcher not in attendance, also not yet a board member; EG will correct.

E. Grunden made a motion to approve the minutes from May 2025 The Exploris School Board Regular Monthly Meeting on 05-22-25.

W. McLamb seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

**D. Public Comment**

**E. Board Development**

**II. Committee Reports**

**A. Educational Excellence**

Annual summary of school goals and environment presented by EB.

**B. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

E. Grunden made a motion to Retitle DEI committee to Community and Connections.

P. President seconded the motion.

committee work is based on mission that was defined by the board in the past. This committee's work is to be incorporated into the work of all committees. City of Raleigh has done something similar. Committee would also engage in communication.

The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

**C. Governance**

R. Averitte made a motion to Approve Lauren Connor as a new board member.

E. Grunden seconded the motion.

She will be attached to the Governance Committee

The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

**D. Director Evaluation & Support**

**E. Facilities**

**F. Kaizen**

**G.**

## Finance

E. Grunden made a motion to Approve the proposed 2025-2026 budget.

S. Scipione seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

## III. Meeting Items

### A. Directors Report

P. President made a motion to approve the slate of new hires.

M. Perry seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

R. Averitte made a motion to approve a voluntary damage protection plan for school devices to be paid for by families, with final approval of the board via email.

E. Grunden seconded the motion.

The language of the submitted plan description is unclear - make the voluntary part clearer. How do we determine who is at fault for damage? We would seek very positive confirmation of who caused the damage. Admin will revise the description and review it.

The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

### B. Board Business

## IV. Closing Items

### A. Adjourn Meeting

There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 6:40 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,  
M. Perry

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## Documents used during the meeting

- 03. Board Report 2025.05 - Exploris.pdf
- 05. Income Statement 2025.05 - Exploris.pdf
- 06. Balance Sheet 2025.05 - Exploris.pdf
- Bank Account Balances 2025.05 - Exploris.pdf
- FY26 Budget for approval at 7\_24\_25 Board Meeting.pdf
- FY26 Budget for approval at 7\_24\_25 Board Meeting.xlsx
- Renewal Letter for Entering Cohort 2027.docx.pdf
- The Exploris School Intent to Renew Charter July 2025.pdf

- July 2025\_Exploris Facilities Update.pdf
- Exploris Student Device Damage Protection Plan.pdf
- July 2025 Exploris Leadership Team Board Report.pdf

# Coversheet

## Finance

<b>Section:</b>	II. Committee Reports
<b>Item:</b>	A. Finance
<b>Purpose:</b>	FYI
<b>Submitted by:</b>	
<b>Related Material:</b>	03. Board Report 2025.07 - Exploris.pdf 06. Balance Sheet 2025.07 - Exploris.pdf 05. Income Statement 2025.07 - Exploris.pdf Bank Account Balances 2025.07 - Exploris.pdf

THE EXPLORIS SCHOOL							
Budget Analysis Report (Unreconciled)							
Fiscal Year: 2026 - July							
							8.33% of the year
Account	Budget	Period Activity	YTD Activity	Remaining Budget	% Used	EOY Projection	Notes
<b>Revenues</b>							
▶ STATE REVENUE	3,462,839.00	269,302.20	269,302.20	3,193,537.00	7.78	3,462,839.00	
▶ LOCAL REVENUE	1,688,128.00	756.32	756.32	1,687,372.00	0.04	2,110,427.93	Budget correction needed
▶ FEDERAL REVENUE	144,909.00	0.00	0.00	144,909.00	0	144,909.00	
▶ FOUNDATION REVENUE	20,718.60	0.00	0.00	20,718.60	0	20,718.60	
▶ B&A CARE REVENUE	96,000.00	0.00	0.00	96,000.00	0	96,000.00	
<b>Revenues</b>	<b>5,412,595.00</b>	<b>270,058.50</b>	<b>270,058.50</b>	<b>5,142,536.00</b>	<b>4.99</b>	<b>5,834,894.53</b>	The EOY projection will be the total budgeted Revenue when the budget correction is complete.
Account	Budget	Period Activity	YTD Activity	Remaining Budget	% Used	Budget	Notes
<b>Expenses</b>							
▶ SALARIES AND BONUSES	3,188,317.00	239,067.00	239,067.00	2,949,250.00	7.5	3,188,317.00	
▶ BENEFITS	674,566.30	47,249.04	47,249.04	627,317.20	7	674,566.30	
▶ BOOKS AND SUPPLIES	52,872.78	2,259.41	2,259.41	50,613.37	4.27	52,872.78	
▶ TECHNOLOGY	109,770.00	5,242.77	5,242.77	104,527.20	4.78	109,770.00	
▶ NON-CAP EQUIPMENT & LEASES	17,000.00	1,448.90	1,448.90	15,551.10	8.52	17,000.00	
▶ CONTRACTED STUDENT SERVICES	261,075.00	2,500.00	2,500.00	258,575.00	0.96	261,075.00	
▶ FIELD TRIPS/ACTIVITIES	13,150.00	(20.60)	(20.60)	13,170.60	-0.16	13,150.00	
▶ ADMIN SERVICES	190,300.00	13,713.71	13,713.71	176,586.29	8.3	190,300.00	
▶ INSURANCES	46,342.00	35,246.00	35,246.00	11,096.00	76.06	46,342.00	
▶ FACILITIES	749,800.00	56,526.22	56,526.22	693,273.80	7.54	1,172,100.00	Budget correction needed
▶ B&A CARE	60,707.50	0.00	0.00	60,707.50	0	60,707.50	
▶ CLUBS	3,066.75	0.00	0.00	3,066.75	0	3,066.75	
<b>Expenses</b>	<b>5,366,968.00</b>	<b>403,232.40</b>	<b>403,232.40</b>	<b>4,963,735.00</b>	<b>7.51</b>	<b>5,789,267.33</b>	The EOY projection will be the total budgeted Expenses when the budget correction is complete.
<b>Surplus/(DEFICIT)</b>	<b>45,627.02</b>	<b>(133,174.00)</b>	<b>(133,174.00)</b>	<b>178,801.00</b>	<b>-2.52</b>	<b>45,627.20</b>	
	<b>0.84%</b>					<b>0.79%</b>	

THE EXPLORIS SCHOOL

Balance Sheet

Fiscal Year: 2026 | Fiscal Month: July  
Include Funds: All

<b>Assets</b>		
1X.10100.0000.00000.00000.000.0 0.000.00000	Cash OP FCIT 6528	(25,979.26)
2X.10100.0000.00000.00000.000.0 0.000.00000	Cash OP FCIT 6528	41,573.40
2X.10110.0000.00000.00000.000.0 0.000.00000	Cash - Reserve 3637	2,226,637.29
2X.16110.0000.00000.00000.000.0 0.000.00000	Security Deposit	15,658.00
36.10100.0000.00000.00000.000.00 .000.00000	Cash OP FCIT 6528	(17,867.66)
3X.10100.0000.00000.00000.000.0 0.000.00000	Cash OP FCIT 6528	8.97
5X.10100.0000.00000.00000.000.0 0.000.00000	Cash OP FCIT 6528	488,628.68
<b>TOTAL Assets:</b>		<b>2,728,659.42</b>
<b>Liabilities</b>		
2X.22820.0000.00000.00000.000.0 0.000.00000	EEs' Flex Spending Deductions	(8,280.46)
<b>TOTAL Liabilities:</b>		<b>(8,280.46)</b>
<b>Reserves and Equity</b>		
2X.29600.0000.00000.00000.000.0 0.000.00000	Fund Equity	2,382,464.41
5X.29600.0000.00000.00000.000.0 0.000.00000	Fund Equity	488,628.68
<b>TOTAL Reserves and Equity:</b>		<b>2,871,093.09</b>
<b>NET GAIN (LOSS):</b>		<b>(133,173.95)</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES / RESERVES / INCOME:</b>		<b>2,729,638.68</b>

Fund 1X - State Funds  
Fund 2X - Local Funds  
Fund 3X - Federal Funds  
Fund 5X - Multiple Enterprise Fund (Before & After School Program)



08/08/2025  
04:07 PM

Page 1 of 1

**THE EXPLORIS SCHOOL****Income Statement****Fiscal Year: 2026 Month: July****Include Fund(s): 1X, 2X, 36, 5X**

<b>Fund</b>	<b>Beg. Balance</b>	<b>MTD Actual</b>	<b>YTD Actual</b>
<b>Fund 1X</b>			
Revenue Total:	0.00	269,302.15	269,302.15
Expense Total:	0.00	294,302.15	294,302.15
Change in Fund 1X Balance:	0.00	(25,000.00)	(25,000.00)
<b>Fund 2X</b>			
Revenue Total:	0.00	756.32	756.32
Expense Total:	0.00	91,071.58	91,071.58
Change in Fund 2X Balance:	0.00	(90,315.26)	(90,315.26)
<b>Fund 36</b>			
Revenue Total:	0.00	0.00	0.00
Expense Total:	0.00	17,858.69	17,858.69
Change in Fund 36 Balance:	0.00	(17,858.69)	(17,858.69)
<b>Fund 5X</b>			
Revenue Total:	0.00	0.00	0.00
Expense Total:	0.00	0.00	0.00
Change in Fund 5X Balance:	0.00	0.00	0.00

Fund 1X - State Funds

Fund 2X - Local Funds

Fund 3X - Federal Funds

Fund 5X - Multiple Enterprise Fund (Before &amp; After School Program)

<b>7/31/2025 Account Balances</b>	
<b>Bank Account</b>	<b>Balance</b>
The Exploris School Checking	\$603,337.09
The Exploris School Reserves	\$2,226,637.29
The Exploris School Foundation-Annual Fund	\$114,558.95
The Exploris School Foundation-Capital Campaign	\$227,683.53

# Coversheet

## Educational Excellence

<b>Section:</b>	II. Committee Reports
<b>Item:</b>	B. Educational Excellence
<b>Purpose:</b>	FYI
<b>Submitted by:</b>	
<b>Related Material:</b>	Ed Ex Committee Standardized Testing Comparison.pdf

### Education Excellence Committee Standardized Testing Comparison

There is a perception that The Exploris School is increasing the use of standardized tests. In conversations with a few parents over the summer, it appears to be a result of 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade participating in NC Check-Ins as a pilot program last year.

Last year, as part of the pilot, these three grade levels participated in two additional standardized tests throughout the year. However, that was only to try the NC Check In platform before the whole school switched to a different assessment tool.

The pilot was successful. Teachers gained valuable student data to inform their instruction, and student proficiency on the End-of-Grade tests increased by over 10% in math and reading for 3rd, 4th, and 5th grades.

The NC Check-ins will now be used in grades 3 through 8 for math and reading. Fifth and eighth grades have the option to use these assessments for science, as these are the only two grades that participate in End-of-Grade Science tests.

By moving to the NC Check-Ins, we can consolidate standardized testing and will no longer use NWEA MAP as our assessment tool for Fall, Winter, and Spring Benchmark tests. NWEA MAP tests take up to three hours for students to complete.

By administering more frequent standardized assessments throughout the school year that are shorter in duration, we anticipate a decrease in the total time students spend taking tests. See the table below for a side-by-side comparison of time spent testing:

Schoolwide Standardized Test	Estimated Time Spent in the 2024-2025 School Year	Estimated Time Spent in the 2025-2026 School Year
NWEA MAP Benchmark Assessment (Grades 3-8)	2.5 hours per trimester for math 2.5 hours per trimester for reading <b>15 hours total</b>	0 hours per trimester
IXL Benchmark Assessment (Grades 3-8)	0 hours each trimester	30 minutes per trimester for math 30 minutes per trimester for reading <b>3 hours total</b>
NC Check-Ins (Grades 3-8)	Pilot	30 minutes, 3 times per year for math 30 minutes, 3 times per year for reading

		3 hours total
End-of-Grade/End-Of-Course Tests (Completed by all students in grades 3-8 throughout NC)*  *This does not include science tests in grades 5 & 8	2 hours per test (Reading and Math)  4 hours total	2 hours per test (Reading and Math)  4 hours total
Totals	19 hours of standardized assessment	10 hours of standardized assessment

The benefits of this consolidation include:

- Benchmark Testing: Previously completed on NEWA MAP three times per year (fall, winter, spring), now integrated into the IXL platform used by students throughout the school year for independent practice. (NWEA was an expensive assessment tool.)
- NC Check-Ins: These are short 20-40 minute assessments aligned to state teaching standards (NWEA MAP was not aligned to the state teaching standards). We are coaching teachers to use these instead of creating their own assessments. If we use the tool effectively, this is not additional testing. This is our school supporting teachers by providing NC standards-aligned assessments that are self-graded and taken by students on the same online platform used for EOGs. This is a free service provided by the Department of Public Instruction, which offers formatted student data that teachers can analyze as professional learning teams to support students' academic needs. By taking two NC Check Ins throughout the school year, the questions on the EOGs become [adaptive to fit the individual testing profile of each student](#).
- End-of-Grade tests: These are completed by every student in a traditional public school or charter school across the state.

These are the tests we administer, and we are seeing improved academic performance among our students. Part of this growth can be attributed to an increase in alignment with the teaching standards we are asking students to master. IXL, NC-Check Ins, and End-of-Grade tests align with the NC Standard Course of Study. This has not been the case with previous instruments, such as NWEA MAP. This testing plan should enable students to practice more on the same online platform used for End-of-Grade tests, without requiring additional time spent on tests.

# Coversheet

## Governance

**Section:** II. Committee Reports

**Item:** C. Governance

**Purpose:** Vote

**Submitted by:**

**Related Material:**

Report\_ 25-26 Updates for The Exploris School Family & Student Handbook.pdf

Report\_ 25-26 Updates for The Exploris School Staff & Personnel Handbook (1).pdf

PENDING 2025-26 Exploris Personnel Handbook (1).pdf

PENDING 2025-26 Exploris Family & Student Handbook.pdf



# Exploris School Family & Student Handbook

## Comparative Report: 2024-2025 vs 2025-2026 Draft

### 1. Introduction

This report presents a detailed comparison of the **2024-2025** Family & Student Handbook and the **2025-2026 Draft** from Exploris School. It highlights key changes and updates in policies, procedures, and school operations to assist families, staff, and administrators in understanding the evolving school environment.

### 2. Core Values and Community Engagement

Aspect	2024-2025 Handbook	2025-2026 Draft Highlights
<b>Core Values</b>	Innovation, Social Empowerment, Relationships, Reflection, Craftsmanship, Curiosity, Responsibility, Connections to Nature	Same core values with reinforced definitions
<b>Family Engagement (Time, Talent, Treasure)</b>	Families encouraged to contribute time, talents, and financial donations with a goal of \$250 Annual Fund per family	Stronger formalized expectations: 3 hours/month volunteer time; increased Annual Fund goal
<b>Community Service</b>	Service as part of the curriculum and community involvement	Continuation with refined guidelines and responsibilities

### 3. Educational Approach and Curriculum

Aspect	2024-2025 Handbook	2025-2026 Draft Highlights
<b>Project-Based Learning &amp; Expeditions</b>	Emphasizes integrated project learning across subjects	Added specificity on expeditions, real-world problems, and goal setting; frequent fieldwork and presentations
<b>Use of Primary Sources</b>	Encouraged to support inquiry	Explicit emphasis on primary sources and reducing textbook reliance
<b>Student Responsibility</b>	Students take ownership of work, and revision is expected	Expanded details on portfolios, drafts, and reflections; mandatory student-led parent conferences
<b>Field Experiences Attendance</b>	Attendance expected unless health/extraordinary reason	More explicit policy: attendance required; non-health absences considered unexcused; scholarship policies refined

### 4. Operations and Logistics

Aspect	2024-2025 Handbook	2025-2026 Draft Highlights
<b>School Hours &amp; Attendance</b>	Set drop-off/pickup times; tardy policies	Similar times with detailed late fees for aftercare
<b>Before and After Care</b>	Provided as a fee-based program	More structured billing (no prorating), late fees (\$5/min)
<b>Food Policies</b>	Nut-free campus; no junk food encouraged	Added prohibition of fast food deliveries; energy drinks & sodas, waste-free lunch program
<b>Transportation</b>	Families provide transport; no school buses	Detailed carpool safety protocols; strict drop-off/pickup plan approved by the city



## 5. Safety and Health Policies

Aspect	2024-2025 Handbook	2025-2026 Draft Highlights
<b>Security and Emergency Protocols</b>	Locked doors, sign-in required for visitors	Same with added details on the new video camera system and comprehensive emergency procedures
<b>Medical Policies</b>	Medication protocols; health forms required	Enhanced: concussion management, health plans for chronic conditions
<b>Environmental Policies</b>	Outdoor activity adjusted for weather	Added air quality alerts (code orange/red/purple) implementation and heat/cold advisories

## 6. Code of Conduct & Discipline

Aspect	2024-2025 Handbook	2025-2026 Draft Highlights
<b>Behavior Philosophy</b>	Responsive classroom and social-emotional framework	Expanded restorative justice approach with conflict resolution and community circles
<b>Disciplinary Levels</b>	Six levels of interventions and consequences are defined	Clarified categories and added examples; emphasizes equity and law compliance
<b>Bullying and Harassment</b>	Detailed policy and reporting protocols	Continuation with enhanced focus on threat assessment, cyberbullying, and incident response
<b>Technology Use and AI Policy</b>	Acceptable use policy including responsible AI use	Added AI usage guidelines with a 3-tier (red/yellow/green) rating system

## 7. Family and Legal Rights

Aspect	2024-2025 Handbook	2025-2026 Draft Highlights
<b>FERPA and Privacy</b>	Explained rights to access/edit education records	Similar with added clarity on confidentiality and sharing protocols
<b>Parent Rights (SB49)</b>	Detailed parent education and privacy rights	Reinforced with opt-out and consent policies, especially around technology and biometric data, more emphasis on how families can track student academic progress
<b>Special Education &amp; 504</b>	Policies on services, eligibility, and dispute resolution	Expanded protocols for service delivery and procedural safeguards
<b>Grievance Procedures</b>	Multi-level complaint process involving the Board	Enhanced formal structure with impartial oversight and confidential process

## 8. Appendices & Additional Policies

- **Detailed policy documents attached for:**
  - Grievance procedures
  - Acceptable Use of Technology and AI Usage
  - Transportation and field trip forms/process
  - Health and safety emergency protocols

## 9. Summary and Recommendations

- The 2025-2026 draft handbook builds upon the 2024-2025 policies with clearer guidance on family engagement, discipline, health, safety, and technology use.
- Notable expansions include the formalization of family service hours and giving expectations, threat assessment, concussion protocols, AI policy, detailed attendance and field trip requirements, and restorative justice emphasis.



**The Exploris™ School**  
Empowering Learners To Improve Our World

# Exploris School Staff Handbook

## Comparative Report: 2024-2025 vs 2025-2026 Draft

Below is a side-by-side comparison of the 2024-2025 Exploris Personnel Handbook and the draft 2025-2026 edition, highlighting notable changes, clarifications, and additions that staff should be aware of:

### Handbook Comparison: 2024-2025 vs. 2025-2026 (Draft)

Topic / Section	2024-2025 Handbook <sup>1</sup>	2025-2026 Handbook (DRAFT) <sup>2</sup>	Notable Changes or Updates
<b>Staff Hours (2.1)</b>	ES: 8:10-4:00  MS: 7:45-3:30.  Office/support: 8:00-4:00.	ES: 8:00-4:00  MS: 7:45-3:30.  Office/support: 8:00-4:00.	Elementary staff start time moved to 8:00 (was 8:10). Clarified extracurricular attendance expectations.
<b>Remote Learning (2.15)</b>	On remote days, staff provide instruction; students complete work.	Staff expected to keep regular hours, check/respond to email, provide instruction; students are assessed.	Greater specificity for staff/family expectations and assessment during remote learning.
<b>Assignment of Duties (2.16)</b>	Admin may reassign duties to cover supervision or absences.	Adds expectation that staff whose classes aren't meeting are expected to be present for a full day in-building.	Expectations for attendance/presence are clearer during events or student group absences.



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## Recording of Students (2.17)

recordings forbidden. Classroom recordings only as approved part of curriculum.

“Video and Audio Recordings,” with added “no secret recordings” of staff/community members; consistent privacy standards.

explicitly applies to all community members, not just students.

## Selection of Instructional Materials (2.18)

Notification to directors and families before using age-above-rated materials; parental opt-out required.

Notification to directors one week prior to guest speakers, before informing students/families.

Advanced notice for guest speakers is now specified (“at least one week prior”), procedure more detailed.

## Artificial Intelligence (2.19)

“EVERY” framework. Includes sample use-cases.

Adds: Do NOT input discipline/academic record data into AI. More explicit “Traffic Light” system (●, ●, ●).

Data privacy emphasized; more explicit actionable guidance for student/teacher use; traffic light icons.

## Staff Communication Norms (NEW 2.20)

Not present.

Introduces norms for staff-to-staff and staff-to-family communications: use official channels, timely responses, avoid “reply all,” safeguard confidentiality.

Entirely new section in draft version, based on co-created norms from staff



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## **Fundraising (NEW 2.21)**

Required before fundraising events or campaigns; coordinated plan to avoid donor fatigue/equitable planning.

New section in draft version.

## **Testing (NEW 2.22)**

Not present.

Ethical testing standards; specific requirements for students with IEP/504/ML; advance admin notice for accommodations.

Entirely new section in draft version.

## **Application of Exploris Educational Philosophy (NEW 2.23)**

Not present.

Staff expected to build skills/apply Exploris philosophies; provides plans/support for those struggling.

Entirely new section in draft version.

## **Leave: Blackout Times (5.2)**

“Blackout” times at start/end of school year for collaboration; two days in a row require Director approval.

Expands blackout periods: start/end of year, before/after breaks, PD days, and testing periods.

Broader definition of blackout periods; more detail and examples.

## **Staff Meeting Attendance (5.2e)**

All staff must attend; every three missed means .5 PTO day deducted.

Adds curriculum nights as mandatory; specifics on possible solutions for absences (remote meeting,

Clearer mandates for curriculum night/meet-the-teacher.



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possible  
PTO deduction).

## **Teacher Workdays & Professional Development (5.2f)**

Not itemized.

Five types of professional days explained with expectations for each.

Now detailed—clarifies on-campus/off-campus activity expectations.

## **Leave Without Pay (5.10)**

Considered case-by-case; must exhaust other leave first.

Adds: excessive absenteeism may trigger disciplinary action/termination.

Consequences for overuse made explicit.

## **Threats & Self-Harm Policy (Section 8)**

Immediate reporting to Director/counselor required; uses “Emergency Preparedness and Crisis Manual.”

Adds required use of Comprehensive School Threat Assessment Guidelines (CSTAG); formalizes threat assessment and clear staff roles.

More robust/explicit threat-assessment protocol.

## **Other Notable Minor Edits**

Occasional minor typographical errors; less specificity in some topics (e.g., professional dev. reimbursement, remote learning).

Many clarifications and slight wording updates throughout; e.g., updates on reimbursement expectations for PD, more explicit guidelines for new staff orientation.

Draft version is generally clearer, more actionable, and reflects recent best practices.



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## Key Takeaways

- **No major reversals or removal of benefits:** All benefits for staff remain, with some clarifications added in the draft version.
  - **Greater specificity:** The 2025-2026 draft clearly defines expectations, blackout periods, mandatory attendance, threat assessment steps, and sets new communication and data privacy norms.
  - **New Sections Added:** Communication norms, fundraising, academic testing, and explicit application of educational philosophy are newly introduced.
  - **Expanded Policy Detail:** Protocols for attendance (including for non-class times), notification requirements, and disciplinary consequences are more thoroughly documented.
  - **Updates for Modernization:** AI guidelines now stress data privacy, and digital communication protocols are adapted for current work environments.
-



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**2025-2026**

## **PERSONNEL HANDBOOK**

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## **Section 1: Introduction to The Exploris School**

### **Our History**

Exploris opened as one of the first charter schools in North Carolina in 1997. The school was attached to the Exploris Museum, an interactive museum with an international focus, and enrolled 53 sixth grade students from Wake and Johnston counties in its first year and grew to a sixth through eighth grade middle school. As a Global Education school, its early mission was to help people of all ages learn to respect their differences and appreciate their similarities. Exploris was heralded as an adolescent-centered, self-directed learning environment that engaged students actively, taking an integrated approach to learning using major themes and projects. From its inception, the school sought to provide a nurturing and respectful atmosphere with high expectations for all learners. Keeping Exploris's mission at the forefront, the school expanded to include elementary students in grades K - 5.

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

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

### **Our Mission**

The Exploris School is a diverse learning community that engages students in challenging, relevant, relationship-based education. Through experiential, project-based learning we empower students to foster a just and sustainable world.

### **Our Vision**

Empowering learners to improve our world.



## Core Values

Exploris has been serving students in the downtown Raleigh community for over 20 years and is committed to growing our school in size and diversity to expand support and opportunity for all students. Our educational program is built around 4 core pillars: Global Education, Project-Based Learning, Co-Teaching, and Responsive Classroom. The articulation of our core values ground the school in our educational approach and community partnerships.

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

**SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT** - Students learn best when they are exposed to meaningful, complex issues that are applicable to their own lives. Teachers engaged students in current, relevant issues by solving authentic problems that are being addressed beyond the four walls of the school building. Students realize that they have the power to change how their world works. They know how to navigate public systems, lobby public officials, and present their research and opinions as responsible citizens. Student work is tangibly connected not only to the local community but to other regions of the world and to past and future events.

**RELATIONSHIPS** - A nurturing school environment is one where students are encouraged to build and maintain positive relationships and collaborate with their teachers, parents, peers, and community. With a keen understanding of the unique development of the age group which they teach, teachers are intentional about the structures and relationship-building activities that they design. Positive relationships and collaboration result in a tapestry of learners who know they can depend on each other and work together in almost any situation. The end-product is deeper and Exploris students experience a collective sense of accomplishment and ownership.

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

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

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

**RESPONSIBILITY** - Students will take ownership of their learning and accountability for their actions and behavior. Students will recognize the importance of character, integrity, and honesty.



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

## **Commitment to Our Community**

At Exploris, we learn through our commitment to our core values. Each student and family is part of our school community, bringing unique strengths and ideas to our school. Our school is stronger when families take an active role in our school community. As the African proverb states, “It takes a village to raise a child,” and we believe it takes a community to help a school thrive. We encourage every family to share in this commitment to the school community through service.

Service to our school community looks different for each family. For some, a dedication to leading a neighborhood carpool enables other students safe and reliable transportation to and from school. For others, we welcome family members into our classrooms to lead Explorations. Service on our School Board, our Parent Teacher Organization, or the numerous working groups and committees is how some families choose to engage in strengthening our community. For those with schedules that are unpredictable, active engagement with Crew Teachers and offers of support when possible are much appreciated and integral to the successful education of our students. However you can commit to serving our school community, we welcome you. We ask that each family please aim to join us in whatever way they can for at least five hours each month. Together, our combined efforts will help us grow as a school community and continue to provide the exceptional education we believe every child deserves.



## Section 2: Basic Work Standards

### 2.1 Staff Hours

While Exploris is committed to providing a flexible work schedule that meets the requirements of the position and the employee, the mission of the school is founded upon the engagement of students. The school day for staff working at the Middle Campus begins at 7:45 a.m. and typically ends at 3:30 p.m., and for staff working at the Elementary Campus begins at 8:00 and ends at 4:00 p.m., although after school meetings and events, such as faculty meetings, IEP meetings, curriculum and showcase nights, school dances, etc., may necessitate a need to stay beyond the defined time or arrive before the defined time. Staff should plan to arrive at school in time to be prepared to receive students for the day and to avoid conflict with family carpool arrivals. Staff should plan to work when students are in session, and submit a leave request for time off to attend any off-campus appointments. Office and support staff hours at both campuses will be 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Staff members who are consistently late to work or consistently leave early without prior permission could be required to meet with their Campus Director, complete an action plan, or be required to take paid time off, depending on the situation and frequency of occurrence. Staff members who have specific situations that might require them to arrive late or leave early should consult with their campus director to work out a mutually agreeable plan. Staff members who occasionally need to arrive late or leave early, such as for a doctor's appointment, should secure the permission of their Campus Director and complete a leave request form if their arrival or departure will cause them to miss an hour or more of the school workday.

Staff members are expected to participate in chaperoning at least one extracurricular event per year, such as the Fall Festival or the Middle Grades Dance, and are encouraged to strengthen community ties through attendance at and contribution to other extracurricular clubs and activities, PTO-sponsored events, working groups, and committees.

### 2.2 Field Experiences

Staff members should follow the [Checklist for Planning and Conducting Field Experiences](#) prior to communicating the event to families or scholars and prior to securing any arrangements with community partners. Teachers/staff members should allow at least two weeks in advance when planning for a field experience. Field experiences that require travel outside the city limits of Raleigh should be discussed in advance and require the approval of the Campus Director so we can better support the experience and communicate with families.

Staff members who plan, organize, and accompany students for field experiences whether local, national, or international, should plan to stay with their students for the transportation to and from events and for the duration of all events. Any exceptions should be discussed with and



require the permission of your campus director. Staff members should not plan to have their own family and friends accompany them on field experiences without permission of the campus director unless those family members are also students or employees of The Exploris School.

The teacher/staff member in charge of an event or field experience is responsible for following all elements of the Field Experience Checklist, including:

- Ensuring that students are adequately supervised and safe.
- Bringing a school issued walkie-talkie, all emergency contact information, first aid kit, and any required student medication.
- Informing the front office prior to leaving school and providing an estimated time for return along with the roster of attendees and cell phone numbers where they can be reached. The teacher/staff member should inform the front office when they return to school.
- Working with the student support team to make sure that lunches that have been ordered can either be canceled or picked up and delivered to the field experience site. This includes determining if any students who receive free or reduced price lunches need food support for this event.
- Managing the budget, collection of funds, and ensuring the affordability of the field experience. If there is a cost to the field experience, staff members should anticipate scholarship needs ahead of time and consult with leadership to make sure we can support all students participating BEFORE communicating plans to families. All field experiences that have a cost associated with them must also have an approved budget that is shared with the Campus Director prior to finalizing plans and communicating about the trip to families. This is to make sure all costs are covered and can be supported for all students.
- Checking in with the EC and Student Support Teams to determine if any students with an IEP or 504 plan have specific needs that will require accommodations during the field experience and make those arrangements as needed. Recruiting adult chaperones to provide assistance.
- Communication with chaperones is very important and is the responsibility of the teacher/staff member in charge of the event or trip. Volunteers who will be alone with a single student who is not their own child (for example, while driving a car) must complete a background check before the field experience. All volunteer drivers must submit a copy of their driver's license and auto liability insurance prior to the beginning of the trip. The teacher/staff member must ensure that all chaperones are familiar with safety procedures in the event of an emergency.

EC Support and Behavior Concerns: Field experiences are a key part of our educational experience. Students who might be excluded from a field experience because of a disciplinary issue should be allowed administrative review before the final decision is made to deny that





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opportunity. If students with an IEP have specific accommodations listed that could apply during the field experiences, a plan for support or alternate educational opportunity must be developed for them.

Contracts of any kind over \$5,000 need Exploris School Board approval, so staff should notify the Directors when planning longer field experiences so we have time to bring them before the Board for approval prior to paying the invoices and communicating to students and families.

## 2.3 Use of Automobiles

When an employee uses their privately owned automobile for pre-approved Exploris business travel outside of Wake County and exceeding 20 miles round trip, they are eligible to be reimbursed at the annual federal mileage reimbursement rate. When using personal vehicles to drive to or from a field experience, funds for this reimbursement must be collected in the due course of planning the field experience, which is the responsibility of the team of the teacher/staff member requesting reimbursement. The employee is responsible for complying with motor vehicle laws and for obtaining adequate insurance coverage of their automobile.

If staff members will transport students in the staff member's personal vehicle, they should follow the "rule of three" and make sure they are never alone in a car with a child and that they are always with another adult or multiple children in the vehicle. Staff members who choose to use a personal vehicle for transporting students are responsible for making sure the vehicle complies with all North Carolina motor vehicle expectations for safety inspections, registration, and insurance, and employees must obey all traffic laws, including speed limits and seat belt or car seat requirements while transporting students.

Staff will not be required to use their personal vehicle for student transport.

## 2.4 Travel and Business Expenses

Reasonable expenses incurred by an employee while on business for Exploris, such as copying, transportation, parking, meals, and lodging, will be reimbursed in accordance with procedures and standards as set forth in The Exploris School's financial policies. All expenses must be pre-approved using the [Purchase Request Form](#) and the [Reimbursement Request Form](#). If a pre-approval is not completed, then the employee may not be reimbursed by the school for their travel and business expenses. In addition, all reimbursement requests must be accompanied by receipts. Travel within Wake County for an off-site professional activity will not be eligible for reimbursement.

## 2.5 Outside Employment and Creation of Original Materials

Employees shall accept no outside employment that presents a conflict of interest with responsibilities at Exploris. Educational materials created while teaching at Exploris will be used



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to support The Exploris School's mission and vision and will not be utilized for personal gain or sold commercially either during or after employment with The Exploris School. Following federal copyright rules, materials created for the classroom while a staff member is employed at Exploris shall have the copyright retained by The Exploris School. The Exploris School, in serving our mission to scale out best practices, does support requests to share resources under Creative Commons guidelines, provided that the designations of Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike and the Creative Commons license symbol are applied

as follows: CC BY-NC-SA



## 2.6 Gifts and Gratuities

Employees who are offered, receive, or anticipate that they may receive a gift of any value or favor in conjunction with their roles at the school shall immediately notify their Campus Director. This shall not apply to or restrict the acceptance of gifts or tokens of minimal value offered up to an estimated \$50 in value and accepted openly from students, parents, or other persons in recognition or appreciation of service. Group gifts from the PTO and other organizations that are given to the entire staff are exempt from this policy and do not need to be reported. Employees may not use their position at Exploris for personal gain or advantage. Employees shall accept no gift or gratuity that presents a conflict of interest with their responsibilities at The Exploris School.

## 2.7 Inclement Weather: Closures and Delays

The Exploris School will follow the Wake County Public School System for inclement weather closures and reserves the right to make an independent decision to close for weather-related issues if the safety of staff and students might be affected. If Wake County Public School System has extended closures due to road conditions (for example, waiting to clear secondary roads) Exploris may decide conditions are clear enough around our campus to warrant a return to learning on the Exploris campus. For any WCPSS delayed openings or school closures that arise out of situations not related to inclement weather, the Exploris School will operate independently. Employees should check their school email and phone messaging for updates. Notifications will also be posted on Exploris social media and through assorted news outlets. If conditions allow, the school may designate a remote learning day if physical campuses are closed. On remote learning days, staff is expected to be keeping school hours, checking and responding to email, and providing instruction, and students are completing work synchronously or asynchronously that will be assessed by teachers.



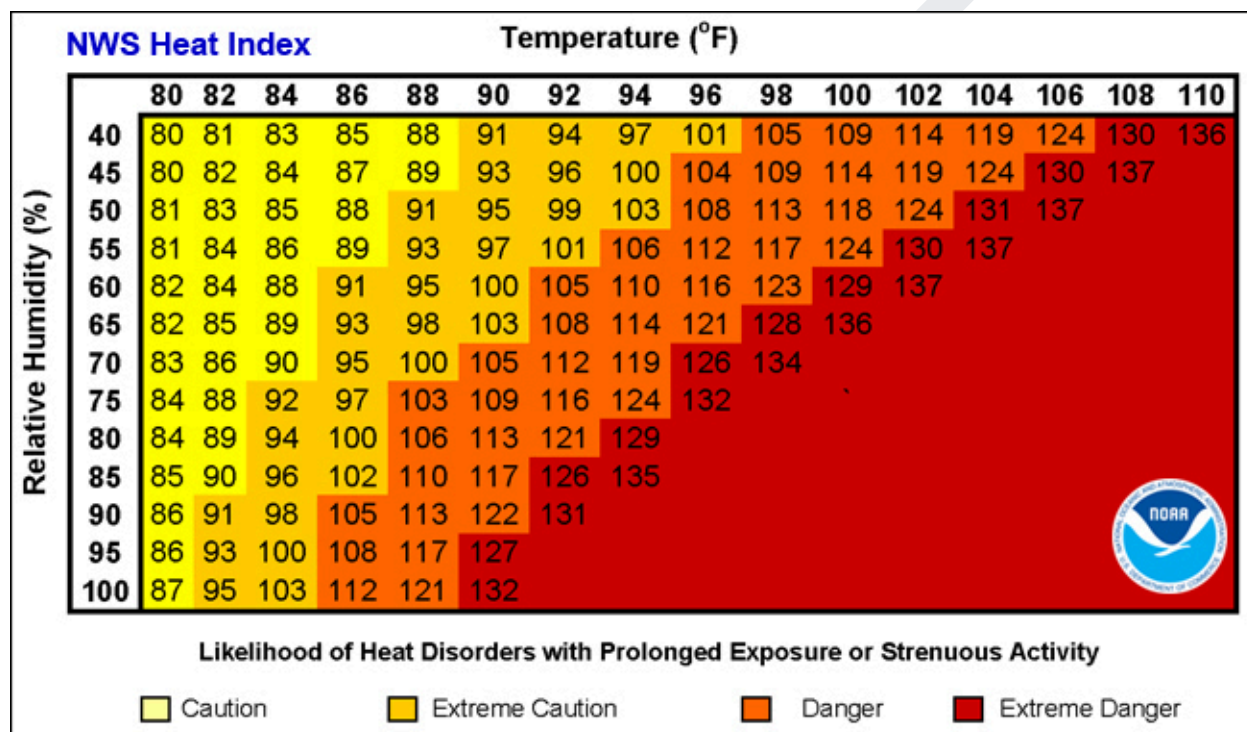
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## 2.8 Weather Conditions and Student Safety

### 2.8a: Warm Weather Conditions

When temperatures are predicted to be 95°F or higher, student activity outside after 1:00 p.m. should be avoided or limited to 15-20 minutes at a time. When a day is designated as a Code Orange day, student activity outside will be limited to 15 minutes for the entire day. When a day is designated as a Code Red day, student activities should take place indoors only.





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<b><u>PRECAUTION</u></b>	<b><u>PROCEDURE</u></b>	<b><u>PRECAUTION</u></b>	<b><u>PROCEDURE</u></b>
<b><u>LIGHT YELLOW</u></b> CAUTION	Observe students or staff members susceptible to heat illness (e.g., individuals who are obese or suffer from asthma, etc.). Water should be readily accessible to everyone.	<b><u>ORANGE</u></b> DANGER	All students and staff going outdoors should be under constant and careful supervision. Breaks from physical activity should be every 20-30 minutes with water readily accessible to everyone. Fluid replacement is vital!
<b><u>YELLOW</u></b> EXTREME CAUTION	Observe students or staff members susceptible to heat illness (e.g., individuals who are obese or suffer from asthma, etc.). Water should be readily accessible to everyone.	<b><u>RED</u></b> EXTREME DANGER	Postponing outdoor physical activities or moving physical activity to air-conditioned indoor settings is recommended for all students and staff. If outdoor activity is required, constant supervision is needed. Water must be readily available! Fluid replacement is vital!

References: State Climate Office of North Carolina [http://www.nc-climate.ncsu.edu/climate/heat\\_index\\_climatology.php](http://www.nc-climate.ncsu.edu/climate/heat_index_climatology.php)

### ***2.8b Cold Weather Conditions***

Increased caution is necessary when temperatures are below 32°F. Temperature plus wind velocity, or wind chill, is a prominent factor in determining cold weather safety. As the speed of the wind increases, it carries heat away from the body more quickly. Staff should limit student outdoor time to under 30 minutes if the temperature is near or below freezing.

### ***2.8c Severe Weather: Lightning***

In cases where thunderstorms are bringing lightning into the area, staff should follow the 30-30 rule, which means waiting 30 minutes after the last lightning flash is seen or the last roll of thunder is heard to resume outdoor activity. It may seem safe to return to activity after the storm has passed, but lightning can and does strike at least 10 miles away from the storm even after the clouds have moved on. This phenomenon is known as a “bolt out of the blue.” Every time lightning is seen or thunder is heard, the 30 minute clock should be reset.

### ***2.8d Air Quality Alert Days***

Due to ground-level ozone and particulate levels being higher than usual, the National Weather Service may declare a Code Orange, Code Red, or Code Purple for air quality that is separate from alerts for temperature. On days that are designated as Code Orange for air quality (but not for temperature) staff should limit student outside time to 15-20 minutes at a time and watch for students or colleagues who may be sensitive to air quality and exhibit signs such as fatigue, trouble breathing, increased heart rate, and other signs of stress. If noticed, staff and students



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affected should return indoors, drink water, and call for assistance from administration to determine next steps for care. Inside, classroom air purifiers should be turned on to high and ionizer settings, and windows should remain closed.

On days that are designated as Code Red for air quality (but not for temperature) staff should severely limit time outside to short periods of 5 minutes for things like travel between buildings, and then apply the above guidelines for Code Orange days.

On days designated as Code Purple, no outside activities should be conducted. Students arriving early to school should immediately be allowed inside, and carpool riders should wait inside for their ride to be called. Administration will consider whether or not to cancel in person learning and move to a remote learning day based on this severe level of weather conditions and will notify staff and family of any decisions.

### ***2.8e Dressed Appropriately for Weather***

Exploris staff should note if students are dressed appropriately for weather conditions. Exploris staff may limit a student's time outdoors if the student is not dressed appropriately for the weather, or may have the student complete an indoor activity instead. Families, administration, and counseling staff should be notified if staff members notice a student who is consistently not dressed appropriately for weather conditions.

## **2.9 Smoking and Tobacco Products**

Exploris is a smoke-free and tobacco-free environment. Smoking, use of electronic cigarettes, chewing tobacco, or vaping is prohibited.

## **2.10 Firearms & Weapons**

No firearms, weapons, or facsimiles of firearms or weapons of any type are allowed on The Exploris School property or at any Exploris School function.

## **2.11 Media**

All inquiries from the media shall be referred to the Director Team. Teachers should feel free to contact appropriate news outlets in order to promote school happenings; however, this should be done in coordination first with the Directors.

Staff should take care with personal social media and be aware that even with privacy settings, personal pictures and posts can often be discovered by colleagues, students, families, and the media. Staff members are representatives of the school and should avoid comments and postings that are negative about the school, colleagues, families, or students or that could create a disruption to the school environment. Staff should avoid posting pictures of, or comments about,





current Exploris students on staff members' private social accounts. Breaches of this policy that cause a disruption, conflict, or damage to the school could lead to disciplinary action for the employee.

## **2.12 Safety**

The Exploris School is committed to a safe work environment and to adherence to all federal and state safety regulations.

### ***2.12a Staff Members Injured at School***

Staff members injured at school should notify their direct supervisor as soon as possible.

### ***2.12b Students Injured at School***

Staff members should notify their direct supervisor as soon as possible following any injury of a student on campus or during a school-sponsored activity. Staff members will be responsible for completing all required forms and reports in a timely manner and staying abreast of policies such as concussion awareness. Injured students should remain under adult supervision and families should be notified of the injury as soon as it is reasonable and safe to do so.

### ***2.12c Student Medical Conditions and Medication***

Staff members are responsible for complying with all medical directives of students in their care and for the safe management and storage of student medications, inhalers, epi-pens, etc. Staff members must ensure that when leaving campus with students, all appropriate emergency medications are with them. Staff members should comply with the [Concussion Policy](#) both when suspecting a student injury might result in a concussion and when a student with a diagnosed concussion returns to school.

### ***2.12d Building Security and Student Supervision***

Staff members are responsible at all times for the safety and supervision of the students in their care. Basic responsibilities include:

- taking daily attendance
- Tracking student movement in and out of your classroom, such as requests for bathroom breaks or office visits
- keeping all exterior doors closed and locked
- closing and locking all windows before leaving the school for the day
- keeping your building access code secure and not sharing it with students
- practicing the three components of active supervision: Moving, Scanning, and Interacting with students.



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- Staff cell phone usage when responsible for student supervision during the day should be brief and limited to necessary school-related communications.

These expectations for student supervision apply both in the building, on all school grounds, and when supervising students at other locations such as during lunch, before or after school activities, or field experiences.

Staff members should follow all school expectations for teaching and enforcing the student code of conduct, including documenting student behaviors and staff actions taken in response.

Staff members who confiscate items from students are responsible for the safe and secure storage of those items until such time as they can be returned to the student or family or disposed of by an administrator.

## **2.12d Threats of Harm to Self or Others**

Refer to section 8.3 for details and response requirements

## **2.13 Political Campaigning**

While The Exploris School encourages all employees to be involved in the community, political campaigning by any employee on the school's time and using the school's resources is strictly prohibited in accordance with relevant federal, state, and local statutes. In addition, employees may not make statements purporting to represent the views of The Exploris School with regard to political campaigns. Violation of this policy could jeopardize The Exploris School's tax-exempt status, and staff members who do not comply with these policies could be subject to disciplinary action. In addition, staff members should strive to create and keep all classrooms as welcoming and inclusive spaces and should refrain from personal expressions of political causes that could cause a disruption to the school's educational environment, including items displayed in classrooms or worn on the employee's person.

## **2.14 Use of School Networks and Equipment**

Staff should be aware that activities that are conducted on school devices, over school networks, and/or during the school day should not detract from professional duties and are subject to the Freedom of Information Act. Use of personal equipment over personally funded networks should not interfere with the job duties of the employee during work hours.

Staff members should not use the school network or their school email to promote personal businesses or services. From time to time staff members may get a request from a family or from an individual or company to share information about a service such as a fundraiser, tutoring, summer programming, etc. While we are happy to provide resources to an individual inquiry, it is important that we do not share en masse through school email listservs because that could be



perceived as an endorsement of those services by the school or a solicitation of business which could endanger our non-profit status.

## **2.15 Remote Learning**

Should the school need to utilize a remote learning plan (for example, in the case of extended building closures for illness, construction, or weather), staff should follow the Digital Teaching & Learning guidelines set by the school for expectations for the teaching day and for providing remote instruction or services.

## **2.16 Assignment of Duties**

Exploris school administration reserves the right to reassign teaching duties temporarily in order to cover a student supervision need in case of staff absences, or in cases where a staff member is not accompanying a field experience and their regular classes would not be in session. The goal is to ensure safe student supervision, continuity of instruction, and equity in duties. Staff members whose regular classes are not meeting because of a field experience or other event should still plan on a full working day and be in attendance in person at their building.

## **2.17 Video and Audio Recordings**

Employees shall not make secret recordings, in any format, at school, on school system property, or at a school-related event or meeting. Camera phones and other recording devices shall not be used to take a photo or video of students, staff members, or a member of the educational community at school, on school system property, or at a school-related event or meeting from a vantage point that a reasonable person would view as an invasion of personal privacy.

Nothing in this section is intended to restrict the school system in the use of recording devices or other technology for conducting official business in investigations, surveillance, or archival purposes. Nothing in this section is intended to restrict employees from the appropriate use of recording devices or other technology as part of an approved curriculum, program, marketing, or course of study.

## **2.18 Selection of Instructional Materials and Approaches**

Employees should select instructional materials that align with state standards for their curriculum and align with the school's mission and values. Instructional materials must follow guidelines for compliance with all state laws, such as SB 49, the "Parents Bill of Rights."

Employees should follow school expectations for universal classroom practices, such as outlined the Responsive Classroom techniques or other methodologies endorsed by the school.





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Staff members should preview any instructional materials to ensure they are appropriate for the age and developmental levels of their students and meet the above requirements. This includes resources like technology, apps, videos, and films. Where a rating is given, teachers should select materials that have ratings that correspond with the age of their students. If a teacher would like to use a whole text/film or a portion of a text/film that is rated above the age level for their students, the following steps must be taken:

- Consultation and approval of the campus director
- Notification to families that this film will be used in class, a description of why the material was selected and why it meets the instructional goals, and an option for a parental opt-out and assignment of an alternate activity, resource, or text that could meet the instructional goals.

Staff members should vet any guest speakers or outside programs and curriculum to ensure that their content meets the guidelines above. Campus Directors should be informed of any guest speakers to the campus at least one week prior to their visit and before students and families are informed of the speaker. If a speaker's topic or a planned curriculum or program activity could potentially be misaligned with curriculum standards or school mission and values, the teacher should consult with and secure permission from the Campus Director, and notification should be given to families that this speaker or program will be presented to students, along with a description of why the speaker's content or the program meets the instructional goals, and an option for a parental opt-out and assignment of an alternate activity, resource, or text that could meet the instructional goals should be offered.

## 2.19 Artificial Intelligence: Usage and Curriculum

**Objective:** To responsibly integrate Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology into the educational environment of our K-8 public charter school, following the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) guidelines.

### Key Principles

1. **AI Literacy:** AI literacy should be infused into all grade levels and curriculum areas to prepare students for future technological advancements and job markets.
2. **Responsible Use:** AI should be used as a tool to aid in learning, not replace traditional teaching methods. It should enhance educational outcomes while promoting ethical use.

### Guidelines for Teachers

- Administrative Efficiency: Utilize AI to automate administrative tasks such as grading, attendance tracking, and data analysis to free up time for direct student interaction.
- Personalized Learning: Employ AI tools to analyze student performance data and suggest personalized teaching methods to cater to diverse learning styles.
- Ethical Implementation: Follow the "EVERY framework" for responsible AI use:



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- **EVALUATE** the AI output for relevance and accuracy.
- **VERIFY** facts and data using reliable sources.
- **EDIT** prompts and ask follow-up questions to refine AI output.
- **REVISE** the results to suit specific needs and maintain originality.
- **YOU** are responsible for the final content created with AI, ensuring transparency in its use[1].
- Protected Information: Staff members should NOT input information which could violate privacy policies, such as student discipline or academic records, into any AI prompts.

### Guidelines for Students

- Educational Tool: Teach students to use AI as a supplementary tool for learning, such as for research, language translation, and accessibility features like text-to-voice and voice-to-text for students with disabilities.
- Academic Integrity: teach students to understand the importance of academic honesty. AI should not be used to complete assignments dishonestly but to enhance understanding and learning.
- Use the “Red/Yellow/Green Light” system (described below)
- Data Privacy and Security: Staff should help ensure Data Protection, that student data used by AI tools is protected according to state and federal regulations. Regular audits should be conducted to maintain data privacy and security.

### Traffic Light System for AI Use

#### ● Red Light (Not Allowed)

- Using AI to complete assignments without teacher permission
- Submitting AI-generated work as your own without disclosure or citation
- Using AI to access inappropriate content or bypass school filters

#### ● Yellow Light (Use with Caution)

- Using AI tools for research, with proper citation of sources
- Utilizing AI for brainstorming ideas, with teacher approval
- Checking grammar and spelling with AI-powered tools

#### ● Green Light (Encouraged Use)

- Learning about AI technology and its applications
- Using teacher-approved AI tools for educational games and activities
- Collaborating with classmates on AI-related projects

### Training and Support

Professional Development: The school encourages ongoing training for teachers on the effective and ethical use of AI in the classroom. This includes understanding AI capabilities, limitations, and best practices.



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Staff are encouraged to incorporate AI literacy into the curriculum to help students understand AI technology, its applications, and ethical considerations.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

Continuous Improvement: The school will review and update AI usage policies based on feedback from educators, students, and advancements in AI technology and help ensure that the implementation aligns with educational goals and ethical standards.

By following these guidelines, Exploris aims to responsibly integrate AI technology, enhancing the educational experience while preparing students for future technological landscapes.

## **2.20 Staff Communication Norms**

### **2.20a Communications Between Staff Members:**

- Staff members should communicate professionally and using agreed upon channels and norms, using the agreements updated annually in the [Staff Communications Norms](#) document.
- In general, all school communication should happen on school channels such as email, Google chat, and school phones, and use of personal cell phones and texting should be avoided, in order to provide records of school related communications.
- Teams should discuss each year their comfort levels and set norms with personal communications outside of school hours and on private lines
- Staff should avoid using “Reply All” for most use cases in order to avoid distractions and to keep communications focused
- Staff should be mindful that chat features can be disruptive to the working environment and be judicious in their use

### **2.20b Communicating with Families & Community:**

- Emails or phone calls from families or community members should be acknowledged as soon as possible but no later than 24 hours, and should be responded to in full within 48 hours.
- Staff should be mindful that all school communications are considered public documents
- Staff should avoid representing their own opinions as those of the Exploris organization
- Staff should use care when using listservs that email addresses or other confidential information is not unwittingly shared

## **2.21 Fundraising**



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Staff members who wish to raise funds for school activities and classroom resources should meet with their Campus Director and get approval before beginning any requests for donations, planning fundraising events, or setting up sites like Donors Choose or GoFundMe. The Exploris organization wants to have a coordinated plan for raising money and to help avoid donor fatigue and make sure there is an equitable plan for how funds are raised or requested.

## 2.22 Testing

Exploris employees should follow ethical standards and all requirements in administering classroom, state, or national assessments, including following required modifications for students with an IEP, ML (formerly ELL), and/or 504 plan. At the beginning of the year, teams should create a testing plan for students who have specific accommodations and give administration at least 5 days notice to help solve any space or coverage issues to make sure all accommodations are met.

## 2.23 Application of Exploris Educational Philosophy

Staff members employed by The Exploris School are expected to make good faith efforts to build their professional skills and apply the educational approaches embraced by the school, such as co-teaching, use of Responsive Classroom techniques, a project-based and expeditionary approach to learning, and a restorative approach to student behavior and discipline. Staff members who struggle with these expectations will be offered additional professional development, instructional coaching, or even growth or action plans related to building the necessary skills.

# Section 3: Salary Plans

## 3.1 Salaries

Employee salaries will be determined at the time of employment and evaluated approximately annually thereafter. The initial salary will be stated in the Employment Offer Letter.

Teacher salaries are calculated using the State salary scale and adding an Exploris supplement based on years of service. The following chart outlines the Exploris teacher supplement rates.

<u>Years at Exploris</u>	<u>Supplement</u>
No License	10%
0-9 years	14%
10-17 years	16%
18-24 years	18%
25+ years	20%
* 5 Years may be transferred in.	

The Teaching Partner Salary Scale, based on years of experience at Exploris, is outlined below.

Years	Gross salary				
0	\$31,000.00	11	\$36,516.42	24	\$44,314.59
1	\$31,465.00	12	\$37,064.16	25	\$44,979.31
2	\$31,936.98	13	\$37,620.13	26	\$45,654.00
3	\$32,416.03	14	\$38,184.43	27	\$46,338.81
4	\$32,902.27	15	\$38,757.19	28	\$47,033.89
5	\$33,395.80	16	\$39,338.55	29	\$47,739.40
6	\$33,896.74	17	\$39,928.63	30	\$48,455.49
7	\$34,405.19	18	\$40,527.56	31	\$49,182.32
8	\$34,921.27	19	\$41,135.47	32+	\$49,920.05
9	\$35,445.09	20	\$41,752.51		
10	\$35,976.77	21	\$42,378.79		
		22	\$43,014.47		
		23	\$43,659.69		

NOTE: Up to 5 years of comparable K-12 classroom teaching experience can be transferred in.

### 3.2 Salary Review

Salary adjustments will be made as appropriate and may be based on one or more of the following criteria: Job performance, length of service, change in certification or degree status, and/or position reclassification.

### 3.3 Pay Schedule

Each employee will be paid on a monthly basis at the end of each month. Payroll dates will be published at the beginning of each school year. Employee salaries are paid over a 12 month period from July 1 - June 30. Returning 10-month employees are paid in advance of their contracted start date (August) for the new school year. Advance payments of salary are to be returned to Exploris if an employee fails to return at the start of the new school year or if an employee leaves employment before the total amount of prepayment is satisfied by the number of days employed in the school year. Employees starting in August during their first year will be paid over an 11-month pay schedule in year 1 of employment and over a 12-month pay schedule in subsequent years of employment, resulting in lower monthly payments in the second year of



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employment. Employees who leave their position midyear will have payment prorated based on the date of the termination of their employment. Since Exploris teachers are paid in advance, the employee who is terminating their position may need to return any advance payment of salary. Exploris will not grant any other form of advance payment to employees.

### **3.4 Direct Deposit**

All employees are required to use direct deposit for the depositing of their paychecks.

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## Section 4: Benefits

### 4.1 Eligibility

The Exploris School provides group medical, dental, and vision insurance to employees. All employees regularly scheduled to work 30 hours or more per week are eligible to enroll on the first day of employment with The Exploris School. The Exploris School contributes to the group medical and dental for all eligible employees.

Regular full-time employees who work a normal schedule of 30 hours per week or more are eligible for medical benefits. The Exploris School will pay 100% of the medical premium and 25% of the dental premium for the employee. The employee portion of the medical, dental, and vision monthly premium is handled through monthly payroll deductions. Employees will be provided with the medical, dental, and vision costs during Open Enrollment each year.

Employees who are eligible for benefits can also elect coverages for their dependents at additional costs, which are outlined each year in the employee insurance booklet, which can be obtained from the HR and Operations Manager and which contains a complete description of available benefits and assorted costs.

Employees who work less than 30 hours and temporary employees, such as substitute teachers, are not eligible for any benefits.

### 4.2 Insurance

#### 4.2a Health Insurance

Please refer to the employee insurance booklet, which can be obtained from the HR and Operations Manager, for a complete description of benefits.

- Exploris pays 100% of the premium for employee-only medical coverage for employees who work 30 or more hours per week (100% employed).
- Exploris does not offer medical coverage to an employee who works less than 30 hours a week (less than 75% employed).
- Exploris also offers a Health Savings Account if the employee is enrolled in the HSA-qualified health insurance plan. Exploris will contribute \$45 per month to the employee's HSA account. Employees may also contribute to their HSA account up to the contribution limit defined by law.

#### 4.2b Dental Insurance

Please refer to the employee insurance booklet, which can be obtained from the HR and Operations Manager, for a complete description of benefits.



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- Exploris pays 25% of the premium for employee-only dental coverage for employees who work 30 or more hours per week (75% or more employed).
- Exploris does not offer dental coverage to an employee who works less than 30 hours a week (less than 75% employed).

#### ***4.2c Vision Insurance***

Employees that work 30 hours or more a week (75% or more employed) are eligible for Vision insurance. Exploris does not contribute to the vision premium, thus the employee pays 100% of the premium.

#### ***4.2d Life Insurance***

Please refer to the employee benefits booklet for a complete description of benefits. The Exploris School offers Life Insurance coverage at no cost to employees who work 30 hours or more per week.

#### ***4.2e Short-term/Long-term Disability***

Please refer to the employee benefits booklet for a complete description of benefits. The Exploris School offers Short-term disability and Long-term disability coverage at no cost to employees who work 30 hours or more per week.

### **4.3 Retirement and Training**

#### ***4.3a 401(k) Retirement Plan***

Employees can contribute up to the United States Federal limits of pre-tax income from payroll deductions into a 401(k) retirement plan. Employees may enroll, decrease, increase, or discontinue their contributions on a quarterly basis. The Exploris School will match employee contributions, as organizational resources allow, at a rate determined annually by the Board of Directors. The maximum amount may increase annually. Please refer to The Exploris School's 401(k) provider for updated information and details on vesting of The Exploris School's contribution.

Exploris matches 50% of employee contributions up to 8%. Exploris matching contributions maximum is 4% of the salary for all employees if an employee makes contributions of 8%.

#### ***4.3b Career Development and Training Assistance***

As part of an employee's annual progress review, the employee and their Campus Director will review personal career development needs and the needs of the school. Employees may be eligible for reimbursement of workshop/conference registration, materials, or other incidental





fees up to a maximum amount that is budgeted for professional development. Areas of professional learning, training, study, or presentations must be related to an employee's work at The Exploris School as well as the continuous improvement needs of the school. All assistance and leave must be approved in advance by the Leadership Team by completing a Request for Professional Development form. Approval is contingent upon the availability of organizational resources and on the expected positive impact of the professional learning on the school program. Documentation of satisfactory completion must be received in order to be considered for reimbursement. Staff members who receive funding for professional development may be asked to share with colleagues informally or through planned presentations any knowledge, skills, and/or resources gained in the training. The staff member may be asked to reimburse the funding to the school if they do not attend the approved training in good faith (i.e., did not complete a training module, attend a webinar, or stay for the entire conference/training that was approved).

#### **4.4 Child Care**

When the Before and After Care program is in operation, child care is provided free of charge for children of employees who attend Exploris. This care is available while the employee is at school conducting school business. Registration is required. If the employee would like to utilize Before and After Care for periods of time beyond their job responsibilities, they are responsible for paying all required fees.

On days when they are not responsible for student supervision or family meetings, employees may bring their children to work with them, provided the presence of the children does not interfere with the completion of their professional duties or the completion of colleagues' professional duties. The employee shall assume all responsibility for the safe supervision of their children, and the school is not responsible for any injuries the children may incur while on our campus.

#### **4.5 Lottery Priority**

Staff members who are employed at least 80% at Exploris can receive priority admissions in our lottery under the lottery provision for children of eligible staff members. For Exploris employees, "children" is defined as biological children, foster children, stepchildren, children under the legal guardianship of the employee, or children domiciled with the employee.



## Section 5: Leave Benefits

All leave except leave for holidays scheduled for the whole school on the annual calendar is subject to prior written approval by the employee's Campus Director. The Leave Request must be completed through the ADP portal for any time that the employee is not fulfilling their primary job responsibilities.

### 5.1 Holidays and School Vacations

The Exploris School's holidays are listed on the official School Calendar, published each year on our website. School will be closed on all holidays and school vacations denoted on the annual school calendar.

### 5.2 Paid Time Off

Beginning July 1, 2015, full-time employees who work 40 hours a week will earn up to 1 paid time off day per month over a 10-month term to be utilized for sick days and personal business. Staff members who are 11-month employees will earn up to 11 days of paid time off, and staff members who are 12-month employees will earn up to 12 days of paid time off. Staff shall not request paid time off days the day before or after school vacations or during testing periods. Such requests will be considered only for extenuating circumstances. Staff members' primary responsibility while school is in session is fulfilling their contracted responsibilities to the school and to students; time off should not be requested in order to schedule personal vacations. Leave requests of more than two days in a row must be approved by the Campus Director and may require documentation.

There will be blackout times designated by the Leadership Team:

- At the beginning and end of the school year to allow for collaboration. This will ensure the successful planning, organization, and implementation of school procedures and policies are completed for the opening and closing of the school year.
- Days directly before and after school vacations such as fall break, winter break, or spring break.
- Specific professional development days where staff is receiving key training or working collaboratively.
- During testing periods where staff is needed for exam administration, proctoring, or student supervision.

#### *5.2a Service Leave or Floating Holiday*

Employees may take up to eight hours per year to volunteer in a school or a service organization of their choice or for religious or personal observances not already built into the school calendar



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and that would occur during school hours. The Campus Director must approve the leave request and be notified in writing at least one week in advance, and reserves the right to request documentation for religious activities. The employee must provide written documentation from the school or service organization if the employee chooses to use this leave day for service. This category of leave may not be carried over in full or in part as a paid time off balance into the next school year.

### ***5.2b Partial Days Leave***

Leave may be taken in half day or full day increments. Employees who expect to be away from their duties for more than one hour should request a half day of paid time off.

### ***5.2c Paid Time Off for Part Time Employees***

Employees who work fewer than 40 hours per week will earn leave in proportion to their percentage of employment, for example, .5 days of paid time off per month for 50% employment or .8 days per month for 80% employment.

### ***5.2d Leave Carryover***

For any full time Exploris employee returning for the following school year, up to 5 paid time off days will be carried over into the subsequent school year. Staff employed by the school at 80% of full time work will earn .8 Paid Time Off Days per month worked and four days may be carried over into the following school year. Staff employed at 50% of full time work will earn .5 Paid Time Off days per month and 3 days may be carried over into the following school year.

Exploris employees employed by the school prior to July 1, 2015 with accrued sick leave may roll over all sick leave days earned prior to July 1, 2015, and will continue to receive short-term and long-term disability. This leave will be referred to as “grandfathered sick leave.” Once an employee’s bank of accrued sick leave gets down to 15 grandfathered sick leave days, their days will be capped at a maximum of 15 paid time off days per year. The Leadership Team must approve any exceptions to this policy.

If an Exploris employee terminates employment before the end of the school year and was paid in advance of their accrual of paid time off days, the final paycheck will be adjusted to reflect paid time off days actually earned during their time of employment.

### ***5.2e Staff Meeting Attendance & Curriculum Nights***

All full time employees must attend all mandatory staff meetings unless otherwise approved by the Director Team. Failure to attend staff meetings for any reason will result in the deduction of Paid Time Off for the employee at the rate of every three staff meetings missed being deducted as a half day of PTO leave.



Staff members should not schedule other professional duties, such as club meetings, signing up to work aftercare if you're not part of the regular aftercare staff, or parent conferences, during previously scheduled staff meetings.

Attendance at the annual Meet-the-Teacher night and the Curriculum Night are also mandatory, as they are important touchstone events for our community and help to define our core value of Relationships. Staff members with a medical or personal reason to miss these two events should contact their campus director as soon as possible to work on a resolution of the issue, which may include the expectation of remote meetings or other communications with families, and possible half day of PTO leave.

### ***5.2f Teacher Workdays and Professional Development Days***

The Exploris School Calendar provides for 5 different kinds of professional work days where students are not in attendance.

1. **Pre-service and post-service days.** All staff should be in attendance and on site for these days of training, preparation, and activities.
2. **Post holiday workdays:** These days follow fall break, winter break, and spring break, and are designed for staff members to prepare classrooms and materials for the upcoming weeks. All team members should be in attendance on campus for at least two hours of each of these days working with their teams or as directed by administration; the remainder of the day can be used for on or off campus preparation activities as a team or individually.
3. **Achievement Report Writing:** These days are designed for staff to be able to complete narrative progress reports. While all staff members, even those not directly responsible for writing achievement reports, should be engaged in professional activities for these days, these activities may take place asynchronously and off campus.
4. **Portfolio Days:** All staff members should be supporting portfolio work.
5. **Professional Development Days:** Days for specific training, skill building, or collaboration.

### **5.3 Substitute Procedures**

Staff are responsible for notifying their Campus Director and team members as soon as an absence is anticipated. As much notice as possible is appreciated so that accommodations can be made. Administrators should be notified no later than 6:00 a.m. on the date of the absence.

Teachers are responsible for providing lesson plans and maintaining a folder of class lists, schedules, and back up lesson plans. Once a Campus Director has been notified of the absence, the Director or their designee will make every effort to secure a substitute teacher for the day.

Staff members may also make arrangements for a substitute to cover for them in their absence, and should notify the Director of the name of the substitute teacher who has agreed to provide



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coverage. If an external sub from the pre-approved substitute list is not able to be recruited, the teacher or Campus Director may make arrangements with an internal colleague and the Campus Director must be notified. Staff members are responsible for notifying their Director if illness or a personal issue will cause them to need to leave school before the school day has ended or will cause them to arrive late.

If the employee is teaching classes in a remote learning environment and will be absent, they shall notify their Director and team members as soon as possible and follow the procedures outlined in the Digital Teaching and Learning Guide.

## 5.4 Annual Leave and PTO Payout

Exploris employees do not accrue annual leave and are not paid for unused paid time off days if they leave Exploris.

## 5.5 Donated Paid Time Off Leave

At any time, employees may donate up to five paid time off days per year to a pool of shared paid time off. This “leave bank” can be accessed by Exploris employees through the policies described here. The donated Paid Time Off leave pool is funded through employee donations, therefore, there is no guarantee of hours that might be available. An employee may access the donated Paid Time Off leave pool in the event of an extraordinary personal event or medical situation that will require the employee to be out for an extended period of time to care for themselves or an immediate family member. Any employee who wishes to access the donated leave in the leave bank must first have exhausted their own available paid time off. The Donated Paid Time Off Leave bank can also be requested in extraordinary situations, if the employee’s Paid Time Off leave has been depleted. The requesting employee must submit a certification of illness or injury from the member’s or immediate family member’s health care provider. Unused days contributed to the pool would not carry over to the next school year. Any employee wishing to use this pool must have exhausted their paid time off and must apply to the Director Team for approval.

Employees receiving other payments such as worker’s compensation, short-term disability, long-term disability, or paid parental leave are not eligible to receive donations from the pool of donated time off or direct donation of paid time off from colleagues.

## 5.6 Family and Medical Leave (FMLA)

The Exploris School follows the federal guidelines for Family and Medical Leave. See Section 6.



## **5.7 Maternity and Paternity Leave**

Exploris Employees are eligible for paid parental leave for the qualifying event of becoming a parent by birth, adoption, foster care or other legal placement of a child. Eight (8) weeks (320 hours) of Paid Parental Leave are granted to employees who have given birth. Four (4) weeks (160 hours) of Paid Parental Leave are granted to employees to care for and bond with a newborn or recently adopted, foster, or otherwise legally placed child. This applies to all full-time employees and any part-time employees who have worked at The Exploris School for more than twelve months and work more than twenty hours a week.

## **5.8 Military Leave**

The Exploris School will provide military leave as required by law. All employees will be protected against loss of income as a result of participation in annual encampment or training duty in the United States Military Reserves or National Guard. In these circumstances, The Exploris School will pay the difference between what the employee earns from the government for military service and what the employee would have earned normally on the job at The Exploris School. This difference will be paid for up to two weeks per calendar year. The Employee must inform their Campus Director in writing as early as possible when requesting military leave.

## **5.9 Jury Duty**

Necessary time off without loss of pay shall be granted to employees called for jury duty. The employee may retain the fee earned from jury duty. The Employee must inform their Campus Director in writing as early as possible when assigned for jury duty.

## **5.10 Leave Without Pay**

The Exploris School's teachers are considered twelve-month employees for group insurance purposes but are paid for ten months of work over a twelve-month period. In addition, Exploris grants time off to all employees on the days and breaks designated by the academic calendar for the current school year. Leave without pay will be considered on a case-by-case basis for employees who have exhausted all other applicable forms of leave. The standard Leave Request process shall be followed to request leave without pay. Non-teaching positions must utilize any approved leave without pay in full-day increments only. While Exploris understands that significant events can impact any individual staff member, due to the nature of our work with children, consistent attendance is necessary for academic progress. Employees who use all their paid leave and request significant amounts of leave without pay can be subject to disciplinary action plans, including supportive conversations to brainstorm solutions and resources for high absenteeism and up to and including termination of contract or non-renewal.



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## **5.11 Advancement of Leave**

An advance on a future year's leave is not permitted.

## **5.12 Infectious Diseases**

In the case of local infectious disease outbreaks, employees shall follow the guidelines and recommendations set by the school and local authorities in regard to screening, cleaning, prevention, reporting, and quarantine protocols and may be eligible for additional leave as per state or federal legislation that is passed after the publication of this handbook.

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## Section 6: Family and Medical Leave Policy

### 6.1 Eligibility

The Exploris School (“the Employer”), in accordance with the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993, **permits eligible employees to take up to twelve weeks of unpaid leave in a twelve-month period** for the birth or placement of a child or a serious health condition. This policy sets forth employee eligibility and obligations associated with taking a qualifying FMLA leave.

Employees who have worked for the employer for at least twelve months and at least 1,250 hours during the twelve-month period immediately prior to the date the leave will commence may take up to twelve workweeks of unpaid leave during any twelve-month period.

An eligible employee may also take up to 26 workweeks of leave during a single 12-month period to care for a covered service member with a serious injury or illness when the employee is the spouse, son, daughter, parent, or next of kin of the service member. An eligible employee is limited to a combined total of 26 workweeks of leave for any FMLA-qualifying reasons during the single 12-month period.

Employees are entitled to take up to twelve weeks of unpaid FMLA leave in any twelve month period. For purposes of this policy, the twelve-month period on which eligibility for leave shall be based is a period measured backward from the date an employee last used FMLA leave. Therefore, if an employee takes four weeks of FMLA leave on February 1; four weeks of FMLA leave on April 1; and four weeks of FMLA leave on August 1, the employee will not be entitled to any additional FMLA leave until the following February 1. At that time, he or she will be entitled to four weeks of leave. On April 1 he or she will be entitled to another four weeks, and so forth.

Eligible spouses who work for Exploris are limited to a combined total of 12 workweeks of leave in a 12-month period to share for the following FMLA-qualifying reasons:

- The birth of a son or daughter and bonding with the newborn child,
- The placement of a son or daughter with the employee for adoption or foster care, and bonding with the newly-placed child, and
- The care of a parent or other legal dependent with a serious health condition.

Eligible spouses who work for the same employer are also limited to a combined total of 26 workweeks in a single 12-month period to care for a covered servicemember with a serious injury or illness if each spouse is a parent, spouse, son or daughter, or next of kin of the servicemember (commonly referred to as “military caregiver leave”). This limitation also applies





to a combination of military caregiver leave and leave for the other qualifying reasons listed above.

## 6.2 Reasons For Taking Leave

FMLA protected leave may be taken for any of the following occurrences:

- Birth and/or care of the employee's newborn child.
- Placement of a child for adoption or foster care.
- Care of the employee's spouse, child, other legal dependent or parent who has a serious health condition.
- A serious health condition that makes the employee unable to perform any one of the essential functions of their job or requires the employee to be absent from work to obtain medical treatment from a qualifying health care provider.

## 6.3 Advance Notice, Medical Certification, and Other Reports

The employee seeking FMLA leave must provide at least thirty days advance written notice when the need for leave is foreseeable. If an employee fails to provide thirty days notice, leave may be denied until thirty days after the date notice is given. If leave must begin in less than thirty days from the date notice is given, the employee must give as much notice as is practicable (one or two business days after learning of the necessity for leave). In cases where the need for leave is unforeseeable, employees must give as much notice as possible under the circumstances. Requests for leave should be submitted to the employee's supervisor.

Leave taken because of the birth of a child or to care for a newborn child or child placed in the employee's home by adoption or foster care must be taken within the twelve-month period immediately following the child's birth or placement.

Employees who have accrued paid leave time (sick, vacation, personal) are not required to substitute such accrued paid leave to cover any period of otherwise unpaid FMLA leave. If, however, an employee elects to do so, once an employee has exhausted their bank of accrued paid leave, the duration of the FMLA leave will be unpaid.

The employee must provide a medical certification form completed and signed by the employee's health care provider when the request for leave is due to the employee's own serious health condition or to care for a seriously ill spouse, child or parent. Failure to provide certification of a serious health condition within the appropriate time frame may result in leave being delayed or denied.

The employee must notify the employer every thirty days of their status and intent to return to work. Employees on leave longer than thirty days may be required to recertify their serious health condition or the serious health condition of a family member by submitting documentation



to verify health status. In such circumstances, failure to provide documentation within fifteen calendar days after each thirty day anniversary date will result in the leave losing its FMLA protection.

The employee must provide a medical certification (fitness for duty report from physician) to resume work before returning from leave due to the employee's own serious health condition. Otherwise, the employee may not be permitted to return to work until he or she submits the required certification. Failure to provide a fitness for duty report after the end of the FMLA leave may result in the employee being terminated from employment. The fitness for duty report must list any limitations upon the employee's ability to return to work, as well as the anticipated duration of such limitations.

## **6.4 Medical Insurance Coverage**

If the employee is covered under the employer's group health insurance plan during unpaid leave, the employer will continue to pay its portion of the health insurance premium, and the employee must continue to pay their share of the premium to the employer. Failure of the employee to pay their share of a premium will result in loss of coverage if the premium is more than thirty days late.

If the employee does not return to work after the expiration of the leave, the employee may be required to reimburse the employer for payment of health insurance premiums paid during the period of unpaid leave, unless the employee does not return to work due to:

- the continuation or onset of a serious health condition either affecting the employee or the employee's family member which would otherwise entitle the employee to leave under the FMLA.
- certain circumstances beyond the employee's control.

## **6.5 Reinstatement**

Upon return from FMLA leave, the employee will be reinstated to the same or equivalent job, with the same pay and benefits, unless the employee has received a written notice that special circumstances apply. The Exploris school reserves the right to reassign the employee to an equivalent role at a different grade level or subject area if needed.

## **6.6 Paid Time Off Benefits**

During unpaid leave, the employee will not accrue paid time off benefits and will not receive holiday pay.



## **6.7 Workers' Compensation and Disability Leave**

Any employee who takes FMLA leave for a condition which also qualifies for workers' compensation or disability leave will not be entitled to substitute accrued paid leave for the period covered by workers' compensation or disability benefits, but such time will be counted against the employee's twelve week FMLA entitlement. If an employee is certified to return to a light duty position, but chooses not to do so, and instead chooses to remain on FMLA leave, or if such employee's workers' compensation or disability benefits cease for any reason, such employee will then be required to substitute accrued paid leave for the duration of the FMLA leave. If the employee exhausts their accrued paid leave, the remainder of the leave will be unpaid.

## **6.8 Application for FMLA Leave**

Each employee seeking FMLA leave will be provided an application. Applications for leave must be submitted in writing to the Director Team. Applications must be submitted at least thirty days prior to the leave when the need for leave is foreseeable, or as soon as possible if thirty days' notice is not practicable under the circumstances.

## **6.9 Designating the Leave**

An employee will normally be advised whether their leave will be counted as FMLA within two business days after making a request for leave. If the employer does not designate the leave as FMLA leave and the employee wants the leave to be counted as FMLA leave because the leave was due to an FMLA-qualifying reason, the employee must, within two days after returning to work, notify the employer of his/her desire to have the leave counted as FMLA leave. Failure to notify the employer within two business days after returning to work that leave was taken for an FMLA-qualifying reason will result in such leave losing its FMLA protection. Any such request must be in writing, and submitted to the employee's direct supervisor.



## **Section 7: Employment Policies and Practices**

### **7.1 Equal Employment Opportunity**

Exploris is an equal opportunity employer and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, disability, or age. There will be no retaliation or reprisal against any employee for making such a report or for filing any discrimination charge with any federal or local agency.

### **7.2 Employee Classification**

- Regular Full-Time: 40 hours/week
- Regular Part-Time:
  - 30-39 hours/week
  - 20-29 hours/week
  - 1-19 hours/week
- Temporary: Will last no longer than six months. May be reviewed for possible extension.

Note: The Exploris School will determine employee work schedules. Employees shall be required to work as needed, including regular school schedules and other school events deemed necessary, such as attendance at faculty meetings, training, open houses, parent conferences, etc.

Each employee will also be classified as either “Non-Exempt” or “Exempt.” Classification will be noted in the employee’s job description.

**Non-Exempt:** An employee who is covered under the federal Fair Labor Standards Act must be paid in accordance with the minimum wage rate provisions of the law. Overtime or compensatory time will be paid to non-exempt staff for time worked in excess of 40 hours/week. On a daily basis, all non-exempt employees must document their hours worked in a manner required by The Exploris School.

**Exempt:** An employee exempt from the minimum wage and overtime provisions of the federal Fair Labor Standards Act.

### **7.3 Recruitment And Selection**

The Exploris School typically advertises positions in-house, on the school’s web site, and through ads in major publications, electronic job search services such as Indeed, and other electronic sources. An applicant must submit a formal cover letter and resume to be considered for any position. Any false or erroneous information intentionally reported to The Exploris School, regardless of when discovered, may be grounds for dismissal.



## **7.4 Orientation of New Employees**

Each new employee will meet with the administrative staff to review the requirements and responsibilities of the position. Each employee will receive an Employment Confirmation Letter within 30 days of their start date, which will include the start date, benefits and other pertinent information. Each employee will also receive a position profile, which will include general and specific expectations and responsibilities. Each employee shall fill out the necessary personnel paperwork prior to beginning employment with The Exploris School. Each new employee is required to attend the orientation for new staff at the beginning of the school year. Employees who join the school after the start of the school year will be invited to the new staff orientation program the following school year.

## **7.5 Personnel Records**

All personnel records are confidential and are kept by the Directors. Only the Directors, HR and Operations Manager, Members of the Exploris School Board, or the employee themselves may have access to that employee's personnel records. Personnel files contain records of performance reviews, promotions, disciplinary actions, leave records, grievances, and training offered or completed by the employee. Each employee may request a review of their personnel file at any time. All employee reviews of personnel files will take place in the office where the records are stored and under the supervision of an Exploris Director or HR and Operations Manager. Medical and dental records are kept separate from personnel records and are also confidential.

## **7.6 References And Employment Inquiries**

References may be given upon request from the employee or employee's prospective employer. Information will be limited to job specific information (dates of employment, job title, job performance, job responsibilities, and salary). No employee will be given a general letter of reference. All letters of reference must be addressed to a specific employer and a copy of that letter must be placed in the employee's personnel file. A period of four weeks notice is requested in the event an employee intends to terminate their employment with The Exploris School so the school can provide for continuity of instruction and safe supervision of students.

## **7.7 Disciplinary Action**

Grounds for disciplinary action for Exploris employees include but are not limited to the following: Violation of The Exploris School personnel policy, behavior disruptive to the school climate, culture, and environment, failure to complete assigned responsibilities on a consistent basis, insubordination, theft of monies, illegal acts committed during work time, acts which reflect adversely on The Exploris School's reputation in the community, and inappropriate behavior with staff, students, or visitors to The Exploris School.



The Director of Resources, Director of Elementary Grades, or Director of Middle Grades shall take actions regarding termination, suspension, demotion, or classification. If the Leadership Team believes there are grounds for disciplinary action, they may impose an immediate suspension with pay for an employee while an investigation is conducted.

If a staff member's professional work is not meeting expectations or an allegation occurs that is connected to the employee's professional work, some or all of the following may be part of a corrective process:

- Meetings or conferences with administration and/or affected families or students
- Documentation in the employee's file
- Administrative leave
- Additional expectations for assigned professional learning
- Employee action and growth plans
- Investigations and evidence gathering
- Legal action
- Non-renewal of employment contract
- Dismissal under at-will employment guidelines
- Dismissal for cause

## **7.8 Death In Service**

In the event of the death of a staff member, the salary earned as of the last day of work, and any other benefits to which the employee was entitled will be paid to the deceased employee's estate, spouse, or named beneficiary.

## **7.9 Background Check & Credentials Audit**

The Exploris School is dedicated to children and to the public interest. All Exploris employees are subject to a criminal background check and verification of education and professional credentials. Each prospective employee as part of the application process will provide The Exploris School with their addresses for the past 10 years. Any falsification of information for this check will result in disciplinary action, including possible termination.

## **7.10 Discrimination and Harassment Policy**

It is the policy of The Exploris School to maintain a safe and supportive school environment for all students and staff, free from harassment, intimidation, and/or bullying and free from discrimination due to actual or perceived race, color, creed, ethnicity, national origin, citizenship/immigration status, religion, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, disability, or weight.



Discrimination means any act or failure to act that unreasonably and unfavorably differentiates treatment of others based solely on their membership in a socially distinct group or category, such as race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or gender identity or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have one or more of these characteristics. Discrimination may be intentional or unintentional,

Harassment, including sexual or gender-based harassment, is not limited to specific situations or relationships. Types of unlawful harassment covered by this policy include harassment of an individual because of that person's sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, religion, color, national origin, age, disability, or any other classification protected by law. It may occur between fellow students or co-workers, between supervisors and subordinates, between employees and students, or between non-employees, including visitors and volunteers, and employees or students. Harassment may occur between members of different genders or the same gender. The Exploris School also strictly prohibits sexual harassment in any form. The definition of sexual harassment is as follows:

Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal, graphic, or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:

1. Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or a condition of an individual's employment;
2. Submission to or a rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as a basis for employment decisions affecting such individual; or
3. Such conduct has a purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment.

The Exploris School will not tolerate any unlawful harassment or discrimination of employees. Any employee who engages in any form of unlawful harassment will be disciplined. Discipline may include, but is not limited to transfer, demotion, suspension, or termination. The Exploris School also forbids retaliation of any type against an employee for reporting any type of unlawful harassment. Complaints alleging discrimination or harassment based on a person's biological or gender identity must be handled in accordance with procedures outlined in our harassment policy.

If an employee feels that he or she has been unlawfully harassed at work, or feels that a fellow employee is being unlawfully harassed, The Exploris School encourages the employee to immediately notify their Campus Director. If possible, such notice should be in writing (signed and dated), stating the date, place, time, nature of harassment, and the name(s) and position(s) of the offending party and any witnesses to the alleged harassment. If a Director is involved in harassment in any way, or for some other reason a Director cannot be approached, then The Chair of the Exploris School Board of Directors should be notified.





The Exploris School encourages reports of any such acts when they happen. All reports of unlawful harassment and/or discrimination will be investigated promptly. In all cases, the employee who reports unlawful harassment will be advised of the results of the investigation. To the greatest extent possible, The Exploris School will attempt to maintain the confidentiality of any harassment and/or discrimination investigation. The disclosure of any information relating to a charge of unlawful harassment and/or discrimination will be made only on a need-to-know basis.

## **7.11 Supporting Transgender or Transitioning Staff Members and Students**

It is the school's policy that transgender and transitioning employees are treated with dignity, respect, and sensitivity in the workplace.

In addition, Educators play an essential role in creating a supportive school culture and advocating for the well-being of all students. It is important for school staff, students and parents to be aware that transgender, non-binary, and gender non-conforming students may be at a higher risk for peer ostracism, victimization, and bullying because of bias and/or the possibility of misunderstanding and lack of knowledge about their lives. Employees must be proactive in creating a school culture that respects and values all students and fosters understanding of gender identity and expression within the school community and utilizes the guidelines and support provided.

Gender Support Guidelines are intended to help our school promote the educational and social integration of transgender, non-binary and gender non-conforming students and staff and ensure a safe learning and working environment free from discrimination and harassment. The Exploris School expects all employees to fully comply with this policy.

Information contained in personnel records about an employee's transgender status (such as the sex they were assigned at birth) is confidential and should not be disclosed except with the employee's consent or to supervisory or HR staff with a legitimate job-related reason to access such records.

Employees who intend to transition on the job should meet with their Campus Director and an HR representative to create a plan for their workplace transition. The employee is welcome to involve a chosen support person in any such meeting or discussion. Workplace transition planning should include topics such as the date the transition will formally occur at work; what updates will be made to workplace records and electronic accounts; how and when coworkers will be informed; and, if the employee works with students, what information will be shared with students and their families. It is ultimately the employee's decision when to formally transition at work and what information to disclose to coworkers prior to a formal transition.





### ***7.11a Staff Records***

Employees are entitled to have their preferred name appear on all unofficial records (for example: Staff ID, email address). Official records, such as payroll and benefits, may require documentation of a legal name and gender change. Staff requests should be submitted to the Director of Resources or their designee.

### **7.12 Communicating the End of Employment of an Employee**

In the event that the employment of an employee is terminated voluntarily or involuntarily, the Exploris Director Team will communicate the departure to the Exploris Community. This communication is to be sent out prior to any message from the employee. All messages to the Exploris Community pertaining to the severance of the staff member's employment must be approved by the Director Team before they are sent by the departing employee.

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

**Includes Grievance Procedure for Section 504 and Special Education (Individuals with Disability Education Act):**

#### ***Article I: Introduction and Values***

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

Those seeking to submit a formal grievance are required to first consult with the Family and Employee Liaison (see Article III, Section 2 of this policy). The Family and Employee Liaison's role is to impartially facilitate the grievance process set forth in Article II of this policy, as well as support the family member or employee in producing the required documents and adhering to required timelines.

**Definition of a Grievance:** A grievance is a formal complaint regarding specific decisions made by school personnel that alleges that such decisions have adversely affected the person making the complaint or the dependent of the person making the complaint. A grievance can be made when an employee, student, or parent believes that school and board policy or law has been misapplied, misinterpreted, or violated. The term "grievance" does not include any matter for which the method of review is prescribed by law, for which there is a more specific board policy



providing a process for addressing the concern, or upon which the board is without authority to act.

## ***Article II: Family Grievance Procedures***

1. **The Family & Student Grievance policy can be found in the [Family and Student Handbook](#).**

## ***Article III: Employee Grievance Procedures***

### **Section 1: Responsibility and Authority of the School Leadership Team**

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

### **Section 2. Informal Procedures:**

A faculty or staff member (the “employee”) should first attempt to resolve any concerns through discussion with their supervisor and/or other involved persons. If a concern cannot be resolved in such an informal manner, the employee may initiate a formal grievance procedure.

### **Section 3. Formal Grievance Procedure:**

In instances where informal means are ineffective or otherwise not feasible, the School offers these more formal grievance procedures. Grievance proceedings and information shall be kept confidential at all levels to the extent feasible and permitted by law. An employee grievance is a formal written claim by an employee or group of employees identifying the concern, identifying the individual or group’s resolution attempts, and identifying the law, policy, or practice that is implicated by the concern. No one shall retaliate against an employee who files a grievance under this policy in good faith.

*(A) Level One - Supervisory Request and Conference.* An employee may, by written request, seek a formal conference with their immediate supervisor to address an unresolved grievance. Emailed correspondence and previous informal conversations about the topics connected to the grievance shall not constitute fulfillment of this step.



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1. The request shall succinctly describe the specific grievance(s) and related details, and shall identify any specific policy, rule, regulation or law believed to have been violated, and shall provide other relevant information to help the supervisor adequately understand the nature of the grievance.
2. The grievance shall be filed within fifteen (15) business days of the incident(s) or the last informal attempt to resolve the grievance, provided that such attempt was made within ten (10) business days of the last incident.
3. Following receipt of the written request, the supervisor shall, if feasible, conduct a conference with the aggrieved employee within ten (10) business days of the written report. Within five (5) business days following the conference, the supervisor will state in writing their position on the grievance, and a copy will be given to the employee.

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

1. The appeal must be made within five (5) business days following receipt of the supervisor's written Level One response to the employee. The Director Team shall issue a written response to the employee and the Level One supervisor/staff within ten (10) business days following receipt of the written appeal.
2. Decisions of the Director Team are final and not subject to further appeal, except in the following instances:
  - a. Decisions involving an alleged violation of a contractual right;
  - b. Decisions involving an alleged violation by the School of state or federal law;
  - c. Decisions based on allegations of conduct by the Leadership Team in violation of law or school policy; or
  - d. Decisions involving suspension without pay or dismissal of the employee.
3. The Board retains discretion to determine whether an alleged violation involves a “final” or “appealable” decision by the Director Team. The Board may consider all available evidence in the record established at the time of the decision and any other evidence it deems necessary for consideration. In addition, the Grievance Committee has the authority to grant a discretionary appeal in exceptional circumstances.

*(C) Level Three - Appeal to the Board: Appeals of Right and Discretionary Appeals.* If an employee is not satisfied with the disposition of their grievance at Level Two or is subject to suspension without pay or dismissal by the Director Team, the employee may, within five (5) business days of receiving notice from the Director Team, submit a written request to the Grievance Committee Chairperson to appeal the Leadership Team’s decision and to request a formal hearing.



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1. Within five (5) business days of receiving the written request for appeal, the Grievance Committee Chairperson shall issue a written notice to the employee and the Director Team indicating whether the Director Team's determination is "final" in nature or whether the Board, in its discretion or by right of appeal, shall grant a hearing. The notice shall also specify, if a hearing is granted, the time it will occur and guidelines by which it will be conducted.
2. When a hearing is granted, a panel of the Grievance Committee consisting of at least three people shall hear the grievance within ten (10) business days of the date the Chairperson's notice is issued to the employee.
3. The Grievance Committee panel may affirm, reverse, or modify the decision of the Director Team or refer the grievance to the full School Board. The decision of the Grievance Committee or the full Board is final.

### ***Article IV: Grievance Committee Structure and Rules***

#### **Section 1. Composition of the Grievance Committee:**

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

#### **Section 2: Family and Employee Liaison**

Annually at a meeting of the Board, one member of the Board of Directors shall be appointed by the Chairperson of the Board of Directors and confirmed by a vote of the full Board to serve as Family and Employee Liaison. This individual shall not sit on the Grievance Committee. His or her primary role will be to help family members and employees understand the grievance procedures and to provide process guidance to aggrieved parties. Those who approach other members of the Board of Directors with grievances will be referred to the Family and Employee Liaison.

#### **Section 3. Training:**

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

#### **Section 4. Timelines:**

Failure of a family member or employee to comply with the procedural timelines listed in this policy may result in the denial of a grievance request. Extensions in timelines may be granted if the relevant decision-maker determines there is a reasonable need for such extension. Similarly,



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the timelines for actions to be taken by school personnel or Board members may be extended, with notice to the aggrieved party, when there is a reasonable need for extension or extension is in the best interest of an effective process.

#### Section 5. Forms:

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

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## Section 8: Policies On Child Abuse, Neglect, And Harm To Self And Others

### 8.1: Mandatory School Mental Health Training

Topics include: Youth mental health, suicide prevention, substance abuse, teenage dating violence, and in accordance with SL 2019-245, child sexual abuse prevention, and sex trafficking.

- All staff who work with students shall receive 2 hours of training in even-numbered years beginning in 2020 on the topic of child sexual abuse and sex trafficking.
- All staff who work with children must receive 6 initial hours of training regarding student mental health and learning and 2 hours subsequent annually.
- All staff must receive 2 hours of suicide prevention training annually.
- All new employees must be trained on both trainings named above for a total of 8 training hours.

### 8.2 Child Abuse and Neglect

In accordance with [North Carolina Statute 7B-301](#), the school's policy establishes guidelines for the prevention of child abuse/neglect and for responding to allegations of child abuse by an employee or volunteer of The Exploris School. The policy follows [state definitions for abuse and neglect and mandatory reporting laws](#). This policy is applicable to all paid and volunteer staff members of The Exploris School.

The Directors of The Exploris School are responsible for the enforcement of this policy, as well as for training and education of staff and volunteers in accordance with [North Carolina Statute 7B-301](#).

The following outline provides information on safeguards against abuse/neglect and the initial steps to respond to allegations of abuse/neglect:

- Safeguards Against Abuse: A Crisis Management Plan for the Prevention of Child Abuse has been incorporated into the policies of The Exploris School.
- Preventive Measures
  - All applicants for employment and volunteer positions will be required to report any prior accusations of or convictions for child abuse.
  - Criminal background checks will be conducted on all new employees and volunteers prior to their commencement of work.
  - Staff and volunteers will make sure that on a foreseeable basis, they are never alone with a child.



In the event of abuse or neglect, **all staff members have a duty to report the information**. If a staff member receives information deemed to be abuse or neglect, notify the Director on site and the counselor as soon as possible by phone, text, or in person. If the student contacts you after school hours or you are unable to get in touch with the Director on-site or counselor, you must report the incident to Child Protective Services as soon as possible. For more information regarding reporting laws, please visit [North Carolina Child Reporting Laws](#). In the event Child Protective Services cannot be reached local law enforcement should be contacted immediately. All mandatory reporters must complete the following form as documentation of the report: [CPS Reporting Form](#).

### ***8.2a Responding to the Alleged Victim***

An appropriate response toward the victim and the victim's family is a critical step in the healing process. Nothing should be done to blame the victim nor to minimize or deny the reported behavior. Every effort must be taken to assure that the victim and the victim's family understand that The Exploris School takes the allegations seriously. The care and safety of the victim is the first priority. Investigators must avoid taking an adversarial posture.

### ***8.2b Responding to the Alleged Perpetrator***

A single individual should not try to determine whether the accused is telling the truth. Rather, professional investigators will assist in the investigation and determination of the facts. Until the investigation has been completed, the alleged perpetrator will be removed from any position from which there could be a possibility of behavior similar to the alleged actions. The Exploris School will treat the alleged perpetrator with dignity. The Director Team of The Exploris School and the Board Chair will negotiate the future status of the employee or volunteer. A finding that child abuse has occurred will result in the immediate dismissal of the perpetrator.

## **8.3 Exploris Threat Assessment Protocol and Policy**

### ***8.3a Required Reporting to Campus Director and Counselor***

If a student threatens to harm themselves or another person, whether it be another student or staff member, it must be immediately reported to the Director on-site and the school counselor in person, by phone, or text. At that point complete the steps outlined within the [Emergency Preparedness and Crisis Manual, found on page 25](#). Staff should not attempt to contact the threatened student or their family members without contacting the campus director and school counselor first. If the staff member is concerned that harm is imminent they should call 911.

### ***8.3b Understanding and identifying threats***





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*The Exploris School has adopted the policies, practices, and guidelines as part of a research based training from the [Comprehensive School Threat Assessment Guidelines \(CSTAG\)](#), specifically from Dr. Dewey Cornell and the University of Virginia's research team*

A **threat** is a communicated intent to cause harm to someone. Threats can take various forms:

- **Spoken:** Direct verbal statements.
- **Written:** Notes, letters, or digital messages.
- **Social Media:** Posts or messages on any social platform.
- **Gestures or Behavior:** Non-verbal cues that convey an intent to harm.

Threats can also be categorized by their nature:

- **Direct:** Clear and unambiguous statements (e.g., "I am going to beat you up.").
- **Indirect:** Less specific but still concerning (e.g., "I am going to get him.").
- **Implied:** Suggested harm without explicit words (e.g., "You better watch out.").
- **Conditional:** Harm contingent on a specific action or event (e.g., "If I wanted to, I could blow this place up.").

If you are unsure whether someone's behavior constitutes a threat, it's crucial to notify the campus director and school counselor, who will then **conduct an assessment**. This assessment will help determine if a threat exists and, if so, whether the individual seriously intends and has the capability to carry it out.

### ***8.3c Threat of Self Harm & Suicide Ideations***

#### **Your Role as a "Trusted Adult"**

As a staff member, you are a crucial "Trusted Adult" for our students. Being aware of warning signs and report them to your campus director and the school counselor when they appear.

#### **Sign and Warning Signs to look for:**

- **Self-Harm:** Visible cuts, burns, or other injuries; or talking about or engaging in self-harming behaviors (e.g., cutting, burning, hitting oneself).
- **Expressions of Hopelessness:** Talking or writing about feeling hopeless, trapped, or a burden to others.
- **Making Plans:** Direct or indirect statements about suicide, death, or "not being around." This includes writing notes, drawing morbid pictures, or searching online for methods.

Important Reminders for Staff:





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- Your role is to recognize the signs and connect students with a school counselor/social worker and campus director.
- Do not promise confidentiality if a student discloses self-harm or suicidal ideation. Always explain that you may need to involve other adults to get the student the help they need.
- Avoid minimizing or dismissing a student's feelings or threats.
- Never leave a student alone or allow them to leave the building if you believe they are at immediate risk of harm.
- Participate in ongoing professional development related to mental health, suicide prevention

## **Section 9: Substance Abuse Policy**

### **9.1 Purpose**

The purposes of this Substance Abuse Policy (“Policy”) are as follows:

- To encourage employees with alcohol and drug problems to seek assistance in overcoming those problems;
- To provide assistance to employees with dependency problems;
- To reduce the risk of injury to person or property; and
- To reduce absenteeism, tardiness, and unacceptable job performance.

### **9.2 Prohibited Conduct**

The following conduct, as well as any other conduct that is at variance with the specific requirements of this policy, will result in immediate discipline up to and including termination:

- Employees shall not consume alcoholic beverages either on the premises of The Exploris School or in vehicles being used in service to The Exploris School.
- Employees shall not illegally use or possess prescription drugs not prescribed for them.
- Employees shall not refuse to submit to an alcohol or drug test when requested by their supervisor.
- Employees shall not alter or attempt to alter a sample submitted for testing under this policy, nor may employees submit a sample that is not the employee’s sample.
- Employees shall immediately notify their supervisor if they have been either arrested for, or convicted of, any drug or alcohol-related crime.



### 9.3 Testing Policy

**“Cause Testing.”** Each employee, regardless of their job duties, as a condition of continued employment, shall submit to a drug or alcohol test if there is cause to believe that the employee is engaging in prohibited conduct, as that term is defined in this Policy.

- *Definition of “Cause.”* “Cause” includes, but is not limited to, being involved in any occurrence which requires further investigation in The Exploris School’s discretion; involvement in an accident; engaging in conduct in violation of company policy; violence; conduct exhibiting less than total consciousness or self-control; difficulty in performing normal physical tasks; exhibiting the odor of alcohol or marijuana; or any unusual appearance or behavior.
- *Transportation for “Cause” testing.* When an employee is tested based on cause, The Exploris School will transport the employee to the site for the collection of a sample for testing purposes.

### 9.4 Confirmation Tests

As a part of this Policy, all positive test results will be confirmed by a second test on the same sample before any employment action is taken based on a test result. The following specific procedures apply to testing pursuant to this Policy:

- *Drug confirmation tests.* An initial drug test will be conducted on all samples. If the initial test is positive, the confirmation test will be conducted using a process called gas chromatography with mass spectrometry (“GC/MS”) or an equivalent scientifically accepted method. All such tests will be conducted by laboratories certified by the National Institute of Drug Abuse or “NIDA”.
- *Alcohol confirmation tests.* Initial tests will be conducted using a process that identifies the presence of alcohol in saliva. If this test is positive, and the employee appears capable of making a decision, then the employee will be given the option of submitting immediately to either a urine or a blood alcohol confirmation test. Testing a urine sample for alcohol is not as accurate as testing a blood sample; however, The Exploris School will not require employees to submit to the withdrawal of blood. Therefore, an employee who initially tests positive for alcohol will be given the option of submitting either to a blood or a urine confirmation test. The employee will be bound by the confirmation test procedure he or she selects.
- *Medical Review Officer.* The Exploris School’s insurance carrier will provide the services of a Medical Review Officer (“MRO”) to review all positive confirmation test results and explore with the employee the possibility of a false positive test result. Positive confirmation tests will not be reported to The Exploris School until the employee in question has been given the opportunity to consult with the MRO.



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- *Incapacitated employees.* If the employee does not appear to be capable of making an immediate decision concerning the option of submitting to either a urine or a blood alcohol confirmation test, the initial test result will be final and the employee will be suspended pending a determination of employment status.
- *Refusal to submit to a test.* Any employee who refuses to submit to an initial alcohol or drug test or who refuses to submit to a confirmation alcohol or drug test will be subject to immediate discipline, up to and including termination.

## 9.5 Confidentiality

The results of all drug and alcohol tests will be treated as confidential. Unless an employee gives their written consent, The Exploris School will not release the employee's drug or alcohol test records to a subsequent employer.

## 9.6 Rehabilitation

- *Self-identification.* The Exploris School encourages any employee who has a substance abuse problem to come forward and identify themselves as having a problem. Such an employee will not be immediately terminated but instead may be required to complete a 30-day unpaid rehabilitation leave of absence. An employee may use sick and vacation leave or short-term disability if available for these 30 days. However, an employee will not be eligible for a 30-day rehabilitation period if they request the opportunity for rehabilitation in response to being asked to submit to a substance abuse test, if the employee has tested positive under this Policy, or if the employee has otherwise violated this Policy.
- *Participation in treatment during rehabilitation.* During the rehabilitation period, the employee will be required to provide The Exploris School with proof of participation in treatment, which will include at least regular attendance by the employee at Narcotics Anonymous or Alcoholics Anonymous meetings.
- *Probation following rehabilitation.* If the employee successfully completes the rehabilitation period, he or she will be placed on probation for the balance of their employment. The terms of the probation will include submission by the employee to drug or alcohol testing at the request of The Exploris School. Employees who test positive for drugs or alcohol while on probation will be terminated immediately.



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## Section 10: No Contract

This policy does not constitute a contract for employment of a specific duration. All employees of The Exploris School are employed at will, and the employment relationship may be terminated by The Exploris School or by the employee at any time or for any reason. The Exploris School reserves the discretion to rescind or modify this policy, in whole or in part, with or without notice. Other employment policies and procedures remain applicable to employees to the extent that these policies and procedures do not conflict with the substance abuse policy.

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- Revised August 12, 2015
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- Revised July 28, 2020
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- Revised July 26, 2024
- Revised July 24, 2025



**The Exploris™ School**

*Empowering Learners to Improve Our World*

**2025-2026**

## **FAMILY & STUDENT HANDBOOK**

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## Section 1: Introduction to The Exploris School

### Our History

Welcome to The Exploris School. This section offers an overview of our school's history, mission, vision, and core values. We are a diverse learning community centered on challenging, real-world, project-based education. By getting involved as families—whether through volunteering, sharing your skills, or supporting fundraisers—you help all children succeed.

Exploris opened as one of the first public charter schools in North Carolina in 1997. The school was attached to the Exploris Museum, an interactive museum with an international focus, and enrolled 53 sixth-grade students from Wake and Johnston counties in its first year and subsequently grew to a sixth through eighth grade middle school. As a Global Education school, its early mission was to help people of all ages learn to respect their differences and appreciate their similarities. Exploris was heralded as an adolescent-centered, self-directed learning environment that engaged students actively, taking an integrated approach to learning using major themes and projects. From its inception, the school sought to provide a nurturing and respectful atmosphere with high expectations for all learners. Keeping Exploris's mission at the forefront, the school expanded in 2014 to include elementary students in grades K - 5.

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

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

### Our Mission

The Exploris School is a diverse learning community that engages students in challenging, relevant, relationship-based education. Through experiential, project-based learning we empower students to foster a just and sustainable world.



## Our Vision

Empowering learners to improve our world.

## Core Values

Exploris has been serving students in the downtown Raleigh community for over 20 years and is committed to growing our school in size and diversity to expand support and opportunity for all students. Our educational program is built around 4 core pillars: Global Education, Project-Based Learning, Co-Teaching, and Responsive Classroom. The articulation of our core values ground the school in our educational approach and community partnerships.



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

**SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT** - Students learn best when they are exposed to meaningful, complex issues that are applicable to their own lives. Teachers engage students in current, relevant issues by solving authentic problems that are being addressed beyond the four walls of the school building. Students realize that they have the power to change how their world works. They know how to navigate public systems, lobby public officials, and present their research and opinions as responsible citizens. Student work is tangibly connected not only to the local community but to other regions of the world and to past and future events.

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



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which they teach, teachers are intentional about the structures and relationship-building activities that they design. Positive relationships and collaboration result in a tapestry of learners who know they can depend on each other and work together in almost any situation. The end-product is deeper and Exploris students experience a collective sense of accomplishment and ownership.

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

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

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

**RESPONSIBILITY** - Students will take ownership of their learning and accountability for their actions and behavior. Students will recognize the importance of character, integrity, and honesty.

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

## **Commitment to Our Community Policies**

At Exploris, we learn through our commitment to our core values. Each student and family is part of our school community, bringing unique strengths and ideas to our school. Our school is stronger when families take an active role in our school community. As the African proverb states, "It takes a village to raise a child," and we believe it takes a community to help a school thrive. We encourage every family to share in this commitment to the school community through service.

Service to our school community looks different for each family. For some, a dedication to leading a neighborhood carpool enables other students to have safe and reliable transportation to and from school. For others, we welcome family members into our classrooms to support teachers and lead Explorations. Some families choose to engage in strengthening our community through service on our School Board, our Parent Teacher Organization, or the numerous working groups and committees that carry out the business of the school. For those with schedules that are unpredictable, active engagement with Crew Teachers and offers of support when possible are much appreciated and integral to the successful education of our students. However families can commit to serving our school community, we welcome you. We ask that each family please aim to join us in whatever way they can to share their time, treasure, and talent.. Together, our



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combined efforts will help us grow as a school community and continue to provide the exceptional education we believe every child deserves.

## Exploris Hallmarks

- Deep learning of state and national standards through the context of current, complex issues or community needs.
- Integrated use of computers and other technology to develop research and critical thinking skills.
- Field Experiences allowing students to learn about and provide service to their community.
- Adventure and environmental education to challenge students, foster teamwork, and nurture students' understanding of nature; including a culminating Outward Bound experience in the 8th Grade Year.
- Global Arts (including Art, Connected World, Health & Wellness/Movement, Seminar, and Music (ES only) to further develop critical thinking, global awareness, empathy, and craftsmanship.
- Self-reflection through goal setting, student self-assessment, and student-led portfolio conferences.
- International exchanges of middle school students and staff with students in Hiroshima, Japan and Gefrees, Germany.
- Dedication to the environment by limiting the amount of student waste and energy produced.
- Our teachers and staff members go by their first names. This is part of our culture, which fosters respect within relationships and not necessarily by titles. Some of our students prefer to put Ms. or Mr. in front of our first names. A few staff members request more traditional use of their last names. We respect their desire to do so.
- Students and Teachers Often Dress Casually. Because we are a hands-on school, teachers and students need to dress appropriately for whatever activities are called for on a given day. We are often up to our elbows in goopy materials and the natural world. Appropriate dress for a visit to a museum, for science experiments and messy art projects, and for venturing to the river will vary. Families are asked to be knowledgeable about activities on a given day by reading the weekly grade-level letters to assure that their students are dressed appropriately for the weather and activities of the day.

## Time, Talent, and Treasure Policy

At Exploris, we learn through our commitment to our core values. Each student and family is part of our school community, bringing unique strengths and ideas to our school. Our school is stronger when families take an active role in our community.. We encourage every family to



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share in this commitment to the school community through generously sharing their Time, Talent, and Treasure.

**Time**

Time is understandably our most valuable resource. It's limited and once it's gone, it's gone! Giving generously of your time shows a strong commitment to education as a whole, and the Exploris community directly. Families share their time with Exploris through volunteerism such as Leading an Exploration, coordinating or driving a neighborhood carpool that enables other students to have safe and reliable transportation to and from school, or joining other family members in helping keep our campuses safe and clean during our campus cleanup events. We are committed to keeping you in the loop about opportunities to share your time with us, and we hope you will find fulfillment and joy by joining us!

**Talent**

We all have unique skills that can contribute exponentially to the Exploris community! As an independent public school, the talents our families share with us continuously improve our ability to educate our students in ways we often cannot fully predict. Whether it's strengthening our community through Service on our School Board, our Parent Teacher Organization, or the numerous working groups and committees that carry out the business of the school, the talents our families share with us enable our incredible teachers and staff members to enact the profoundly impactful ideas and goals they have for each student. Those with strong communication and organization skills can choose to share their talents through active engagement with Crew Teachers and other offers of support. We encourage you to reach out to our team and let us know your special skills and how you would like to impact our community.

**Treasure**

Being an independent public school gives us the freedom to craft an educational program that honors our core values and our incredible community. Being in Downtown Raleigh is one of our greatest assets, but brings with it high costs and the need to remain agile in the fast-paced culture of a vibrant community. When our families share their treasure through their support of the Exploris Foundation Annual Fund, grade-level field experiences, and other financial initiatives, it allows us to think bigger and do better for our students so they can improve our world. We have committed ourselves to being as transparent as possible about how your money is spent; 100% of the donations you make to our school are kept here, enhancing our educational and social programs.

As is often the case, we encourage you to stay engaged with our school and to give generously in multiple ways throughout the year. Together, our combined efforts will help us grow as a school community and continue to provide the exceptional education we believe every child deserves.



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In the spirit of being helpful and transparent about our needs, we offer the following guidelines for each type of generosity:

*Time:* We encourage families to share 3 hours each month with our school. This can be through operating a carpool for other families, answering the call to volunteer throughout the year, or joining your Crew Teacher to help out around the classroom. There are so many ways to be engaged at Exploris!

*Talent:* Please join the PTO Slack account (details will be shared directly with families each school year) and attend at least two Exploris School Board meetings each year (details can be found on The Exploris School Calendar and website). These channels of communication will allow you to consider if you would like to share your talent with our school through numerous opportunities that are advertised throughout the year.

*Treasure:* If every family gave \$375 to our Annual Fund each year, we would hit our fundraising goal of \$100,000. Please consider giving this amount or more, depending on your ability. We also encourage our families to share the joys and successes of Exploris with their networks (family, friends, colleagues, etc.) and encourage them to support our mission of empowering students to foster a just and sustainable world by giving to our Annual Fund.

## Section 2: Educational & Curriculum Policies

Exploris uses an integrated “Expeditions” approach, focusing on hands-on projects that tie together science, language, and social studies with relevance to world events and issues. Teachers build curriculum around state standards, emphasizing collaboration, responsibility, and rigorous academic growth. Families can review curriculum at community events and are strongly encouraged to attend student-led conferences to keep track of progress.

A great deal of thought, research, and practice has gone into designing our school's structure. We haven't always made the same decisions that were made by the schools in our childhoods. Some of what you see at Exploris may look unfamiliar. You may be surprised that certain school pieces are missing. You may notice some unexpected new things. This section should explain some of these surprises.

### Curriculum Design and Resource Selection

Our staff create curriculum based on the state standards for each grade level and incorporating the principles listed below for project-based and expeditionary learning. Textbooks and classroom resources are selected to supplement the core curriculum and provide appropriate support for differentiation for students performing at grade, below grade level, or above grade level.

Parents and Guardians have the opportunity to learn about the course of study and any planned supplementary texts through several channels. First, the school conducts two community events annually where parents are invited to the school to meet staff, visit the classrooms, and receive key information about the curriculum. The first is the meet-the-teacher night held the Monday afternoon and evening before the first day of school, and the second is the Curriculum Night program held on or about the second week of September. Teachers will share details and curriculum snapshots of their subjects, Expeditions, and planned field experiences as they are available on those evenings. Second, each grade level writes a weekly blog that will contain timely updates about the planned course of study, and families are encouraged to read and subscribe. Parents may inspect and review all textbooks and supplementary instructional materials that will be used in their child's classroom at Open House, Back to School Night, and by making an appointment with their child's teacher to be held between the hours 7:30 am and 4:00 pm at a mutually agreed up time and date.

### *Project-Based Learning*

The Exploris curriculum is integrated around projects including the formal units we call Expeditions. The world is not compartmentalized into neat little boxes, but instead intertwines various content matter and skills. Science, language and communication, math, and social studies work together to paint a fuller picture of our world and are thus embedded in grade-level





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standards, community outreach and involvement, extensive collaboration, and a public culminating activity.

### ***Our Classroom Space Is Used Flexibly***

In an Exploris classroom, work areas are arranged to help students collaborate in both small and large groups. This requires group tables, breakout spaces, and workstations as opposed to rows of individual desks. Students may also use hallways and other spaces outside the classroom for learning.

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

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

### ***We Use Primary Sources as Much as Possible***

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

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

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

### ***Revising Work Is a Habit Here***

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



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

### ***Learning is Public and Collaborative***

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

### ***Service and Social-Emotional Learning Are Part of Our Curriculum***

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

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

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

Exploris does not provide lockers for student belongings. While our incidents of theft are low, Students should not bring large sums of cash or valuable items to school with them. If such items are needed for an activity that day, they can be given to an adult on campus to be secured until the end of the school day. We offer lost and found areas on each campus and encourage students and families to check these frequently for missing coats, water bottles, and other assorted items that are often left behind. Items not claimed by students after a reasonable period will be donated.

## **Field Experiences and Service Learning Policies**

### ***Field Experiences Are Central to Our Curriculum***

Learning extends beyond Exploris's walls; it connects to the world. Students work in the "field" sometimes once or twice a week. The field may be a wetland, a museum, a community garden, a science lab, a courtroom, a national forest, etc. Field experiences are deeply woven into each





teacher's curriculum. On days when learning is taking place outside the classroom on a field experience, students are expected to be in attendance. Reasonable modifications can be made to accommodate physical or learning disabilities, which may include an alternate activity offered at school or an excused absence from a field experience. Unless a modification is required for a disability, attendance is required on all field experiences just as it is in the classroom, and absences for any reasons other than those recognized by the state, such as illness, will be considered unexcused and no alternate program will be provided.

We ask that families sign one blanket field trip form (and Medical Release Form) that covers permissions for all trips within the Triangle area. Walking field experiences are part of our routine learning environment. Students are expected to walk with their classmates and teachers unless they have a specific health plan that requires transportation. Families will be notified through their class newsletter or website whenever field experiences that require transportation are planned. Your student must have this form on file to attend. Please return this form and any medication forms by the first day of school. Students arriving late (after class has left campus) or without a Medical Release Form will be placed in the care of another adult (either in another classroom or in the Director's or Counselor's office). Some field experiences will be free and some will have small or even larger fees attached. In the case of a fee-based field experience, teachers will communicate the costs and expected payments and options for support for families for whom the fee may be a financial hardship, which may include fundraising, a small blanket fee attached to the whole group, or scholarships.

### ***Field Experiences and Student Behavior or Disciplinary Issues***

Students with behavioral needs or disciplinary issues that could put themselves or others at risk during a field experience may be offered a different educational experience from the planned field experience, subject to administrative review.

Families who opt out of a field experience for anything other than a medical reason should plan to keep their student home. The absence will be coded as an unexcused absence and no alternate curriculum will be provided.

Students who have a medical reason to miss a field experience will be offered an alternate assignment but should stay home that day, or the school will have a provision for onsite supervision if the trip is less than a half day in length. Directors reserve the right to consider the pattern of student behaviors or any recent major disciplinary issues as a reason to withhold a field experience. Families will be notified within a reasonable time frame, unless the disciplinary concerns are severe and emerge close to the time of the trip. In those cases, the absence will be considered an in-school or out of school suspension, and alternate work will be provided accordingly. Refunds will not be offered for any advance payment if a student is pulled from a field experience for disciplinary reasons.



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## ***Overnight Field Experiences***

Each year, many grades will take an overnight trip. It will last 1-5 days, depending on the grade level. These field experiences are a big part of who we are as a school. They allow our crews to develop positive cultures, stretch students beyond their comfort level, and create opportunities for leadership and adventure. Students who are comfortable taking risks out of the classroom often gain the confidence to take bigger risks in the classroom, building confidence as leaders and collaborators. Other than the reasons listed above, such as medical disability, academic disability, disciplinary actions, or state-recognized reasons for excused absences, **Student attendance is NOT optional because the field experiences are part of our education curriculum.** Therefore, you must be willing to let your child participate in these overnight educational experiences. Overnight and field experiences outside of the Triangle area will require a separate permission slip.

Costs of field experiences will be communicated to families as early as possible in the planning process. Scholarships may be available for students who apply and demonstrate a financial need. Exploris provides a universal financial support application which is sent to qualified families with their enrollment application. Should your family financial circumstances change during the school year and you would like to request financial support, please contact our student support team at [Counselor@Exploris.org](mailto:Counselor@Exploris.org).

## **Guidelines and Policies for Academic Achievement**

Exploris fosters academic rigor to prepare students for high school and beyond. Since we primarily use standards-based and portfolio assessments, timely completion of all coursework is crucial for students to demonstrate their academic ability through a comprehensive body of work. The following policies in this section include grading, achievement, and student retention and promotion.

## ***Portfolio Assessment and Student-Led Conferences Policies***

At Exploris, student portfolios are the place where students house evidence of intellectual achievement, academic growth, and responsibility for learning. Students use these portfolios to present their learning at student-led conferences throughout the year. These conferences not only tell you how your student is doing in school, but they help your student take responsibility for their own learning. Conferences provide an occasion for students to reflect on their progress, set goals for future work, and make a public presentation to the most important people in their lives. Students prepare for these conferences by choosing their best work, revising work, writing reflections on their learning, and practicing presentation skills. We expect families to come with their students for every teacher/family/student conference in the school year. Teachers analyze

the portfolios and other classroom assessments to determine progress toward academic targets which they share in Achievement Reports. Portfolios and student-led conferences are crucial tools for revealing student growth. They help teachers and students notice missing links in a child's learning and acknowledge and celebrate a child's accomplishments. In the 8th grade students present a cumulative passage portfolio to school staff, family, and community members. This culminating event helps determine a student's readiness for high school. Specific dates for student led portfolio conferences and for 8th grade Passage Portfolios are listed on the school calendar. **Families should plan to attend these conferences on the assigned dates and are discouraged from asking for a different date or time or treating these days as additional family vacation days.** Requests for a change in date for a portfolio conference will be honored if possible; families are asked to recognize that requests to meet outside of these prearranged times can strain our staff and their availability may be limited.

### ***Achievement Reports and Grading Policies***

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

### ***Standardized Testing***

As a public school, Exploris is required to administer all standardized tests mandated by the NC Department of Public Instruction including EOG's for grades 3-8 and the EOC for Math I. Exploris considers data gleaned from these tests as one barometer of student learning but does not consider the results of this testing as the primary factor in assessing student growth or achievement. In an effort for students to do their "personal best" on these tests, there will be some specific test review, with an emphasis on activities meant to relieve student test anxiety. There will not be a great emphasis placed on "teaching to the test" prior to administration. In addition to state assessments, Exploris may utilize assessment instruments such as mClass, NC Check-Ins, and summative and formative assessments. Some assessments are computerized adaptive tests which help teachers, parents/guardians, and administrators improve learning for all students and make informed decisions to promote a child's academic success. The mClass test is administered to assess the development of reading skills in early grades. Other school-based testing may be administered to contribute to the data-driven effort of educating your student. Families can refer to the Parent Guide to Student Achievement found on our school website for



more information about how student progress is monitored and how families can help support their student's educational success.

## Section 3: School Logistics Operations Policies

### School and Family Communication Policies

This section explains daily logistics: school hours, before/aftercare, snacks, and transportation. Safety and effective operations for a learning environment are our priorities.

Families are integral partners and should feel comfortable contacting teachers with questions or concerns about their student's learning. Exploris teachers are with students for most of the day and planning instruction for the rest, therefore please allow 48 hours for staff to reply to emails or phone calls. Where possible, please email within business hours or use the 'scheduled send' feature when sending an after-hours communication.

Some staff members may be comfortable with using their own phones or a business number for calls and texting. Please respect staff guidelines and preferences when phoning or texting to a personal number, and please communicate with your student's teachers your own comfort levels in receiving text messages about school issues.

Please schedule an appointment in advance to meet with a teacher or administrator to ensure that they are available to discuss your questions or concerns and give you their undivided attention. Adults who arrive at school without a prior appointment to meet with a teacher, counselor, or administrator will likely not be able to be accommodated.

Your crew teacher will be your central point of contact for any school concern or question. Please reach out to them directly, and they can direct your concern to the best person on staff to provide a response.

### School Hours

#### *Elementary 8:30-3:15*

**Students can be dropped off beginning at 8:10 AM.** For students needing supervision prior to that window, a Before School Care Program is available. More information and a fee schedule can be found on the school's website. **Students who enter the carpool line after 8:25 will be marked tardy and must report to the office to sign in and be accompanied by an adult.** **Students who are tardy are subject to consequences as outlined within the Code of Student Conduct.**



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***Middle 8:15-3:15***

**Students can be dropped off beginning at 7:55.** For students needing supervision prior to that window, a Before School Care Program is available. More information and a fee schedule can be found on the school's website. **Classroom instruction will begin promptly at 8:15, so all scholars should arrive in time to organize their materials and be ready to learn at that time. Students who arrive after 8:10 will be marked tardy and must report to the front office to sign in and are subject to consequences as outlined within the Code of Student Conduct.**

**Before and After School Care Policies**

Supervision outside of official school hours is exclusively provided through our fee-based Before and After School Care Program. Students must be registered in order to attend the Before & After School Care Program. To register, [PLEASE CLICK HERE](#) For assistance with before and aftercare please refer to the Universal Application for Financial Assistance. Reach out to [counselor@exploris.org](mailto:counselor@exploris.org) for more information.

Elementary Before Care: 7:15-8:10 a.m.; Elementary After Care: 3:40-6:00 p.m.

Middle Before Care: 7:00-7:55 a.m.; Middle After Care: 3:15-6:00 p.m.

- Morning Drop-off: Students arriving more than 20 minutes before school starts will be escorted to Before School Care, and families will be billed (see our website for details).
- Afternoon Pick-up: Students remaining after dismissal ends will be sent to After School Care, and families will be billed accordingly. Please notify the office as soon as possible if you anticipate a late pick-up.
- Limit on enrollment: Based on the number of staff available for the program, enrollment may need to be limited. If this occurs, we will create a waitlist based on the date/time of registration.
- The Student Code of Conduct applies to both programs. Students with repeated disciplinary issues may lose access to before or after school care.
  - Students who are enrolled in before/aftercare who leave the space or go out of the building will be considered truant, face disciplinary action, including removal from the before/aftercare program.
- Students who attend before or aftercare **MUST REPORT DIRECTLY** to the before and aftercare location.
- There will be no After School program on early dismissal days.
- Please pick up your student promptly. If a student remains past **6:00 PM**, staff will first attempt to contact parents/guardians, then other authorized contacts.



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- **A late fee of \$5.00 per minute** will be charged for students remaining after 6:00 PM. All students and family members must exit the building by 6:00 PM.
- **Excessive late pickups may result in termination from the program.**
- **Inclement Weather:** If there is a delay in school starting, then Before School Care is canceled. If we have an early dismissal, then After School Care is canceled. PLEASE make sure you have arrangements for your student to be picked up on these early dismissal days. We will not have before and after school care if/when Saturdays are used for make-up days.
- **No Refunds:** We will not give refunds if your student is absent or if the school schedule has been affected by inclement weather. Fees are monthly and rates are not prorated. Fees will not be adjusted for reduced hours, absences, inclement weather, etc.

See the school website for additional details and further information on the policies and procedures.

## Food and Snacks Policies

Exploris strives to promote a dining experience that includes an aesthetic conducive to enjoying both one's food and the company of others. Because Exploris has no formal lunch program, families must provide lunch for their students on a daily basis. The school coordinates with a third-party lunch vendor to provide families with a nutritious, well-balanced option if they desire to order lunch for their student. The school will work with families to provide lunch for those students who qualify for the Free and Reduced Lunch Program and have met the requirements on the Economically Disadvantaged Student Form.

Exploris emphasizes the use of fruits, vegetables, or whole grains as the primary snack and water as the primary beverage. Refrigerators and microwaves are not available for student lunches. Please be sure to send a reusable water bottle with your student each day. Nutritious foods fuel your student's work and play; however, sweets do not, and often create a distraction in the learning environment. Please limit the amount of sweets that you send to the school. Soft drinks, gum, and candy are not to be brought on the school's campuses. Additionally, we ask families not to bring in or send cupcakes, donuts, or other such treats for student birthdays. This is especially important for the safety of students with food allergies.

We cannot accept fast food lunch deliveries during the school day from parents, family members, friends, or professional companies such as Grubhub, Uber Eats, or others. It creates a safety hazard to have other adults and cars not vetted by the school on our campus during the school day and creates a strain on our staff to have to manage these deliveries. If your student has forgotten a lunch or snack, we keep a kid-friendly food pantry and will make sure they receive a lunch or snack for that day.





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The following items are not to be brought to school or consumed on school grounds:

- Gum
- Beverages other than water, including energy drinks, coffee, and sodas
- Items with peanuts or tree nuts

### ***Food Allergies - We are a nut-free school***

In order to protect students or staff who have a life-threatening allergy we may have to ask the school community to refrain from bringing certain items on campus. Families should communicate with the school in a timely manner about any student allergies. School Leadership will communicate to all families any grade-level specific or campus-wide food restrictions that must be considered by the Exploris community. Families and students are expected to follow all guidance from School Leadership regarding food allergies.

### ***Waste-Free Lunch***

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

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

When you pack your student’s lunch and snack, please also pack any reusable utensils that they will need to enjoy the food items, like spoons and forks. The school does not keep a supply of plastic silverware, and we discourage single-use plastics. Help your student learn to plan and bring home forks and spoons for washing and reuse.

A Waste-Free lunch not only helps to reduce waste at the school, it helps families to be aware of their child’s eating habits while at school. Please make sure to check your student’s lunch box each day and talk with your student about their food choices, and reach out to our counseling team if you begin to see any concerns.

### **Transportation**

At Exploris, we have chosen to focus our resources on teacher quality and a safe facility, rather than providing transportation for students on school buses. All families who can provide transportation to and from school are asked to do so.



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Due to the school's limited parking and queuing lanes, public transportation and carpooling are strongly encouraged. Exploris staff and the PTO will gladly help families form carpool groups. Watch for emails and communication on the PTO Blog beginning the week before school starts.

Our carpool patterns and parking rules are designed by the City of Raleigh in line with traffic and safety expectations for our locations and all Exploris families are expected to adhere to these rules.

Students are also welcome to walk or bike to school. A bike rack provided by the City of Raleigh is located outside the middle grades campus. The Exploris School is not liable for theft or damage to bikes parked on these racks. We regret that we cannot provide indoor storage for bicycles or scooters on a daily basis.

## ***Parking***

### Elementary Campus:

It is important that families keep in mind that the elementary campus is temporarily located in a residential area that was not intended for heavy traffic. Please be respectful of our neighbors and help us to remain a welcome addition to the neighborhood.

Please DO NOT block driveways, park facing the wrong direction, park in our neighbor's spaces or at the Wake County Young Men's Leadership Academy lots, or park in a way that prevents the smooth flow of traffic. Please park in the following areas:

- Marked parking spaces in the elementary school's parking lot. Do not park along the queuing or driving lanes.
- ONLY along the Northbound traveling (or eastern side facing New Bern Ave.) on S. Swain Street.

### Middle School Campus:

We regret that there is NO on-site parking available for families. Exploris Middle Grades Campus's parking lots are reserved for staff parking ONLY. This includes those picking up for After School Care. Please be mindful that faculty and staff and employees of neighboring businesses must be able to enter and leave the parking lots whenever necessary. Families must park in the appropriately labeled spaces on the street or in public parking lots. Cars parked on the Exploris Middle campus are subject to towing by our neighboring businesses and landlords.





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## ***Drop Off and Pick Up Safety Policies for both Elementary and Middle School Campus***

Exploris is an urban school with limited parking, and we need your help to ensure student safety, timely class starts, and smooth traffic flow. We understand that time can be tight, but these rules, developed with the City of Raleigh, are designed to keep everyone safe and traffic moving efficiently. Please follow them diligently, even when you're in a hurry.

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

- DO NOT USE CELL PHONES at any time in the pick-up or drop-off lines. Cell phones distract drivers and lead to accidents. In the interest of safety, please refrain from using your phone.
- DO NOT GET OUT OF YOUR CAR: drivers/passengers may not get out of your car if you are in the queuing lanes.
- DO NOT PULL OVER on the side of the street to pick up or drop off your child on the sidewalk or corner.
- DRIVE SLOWLY: Watch for students walking and biking. Be extra careful anywhere near the school.
- DESIGNATED PARKING AND CARLINE: Students should only exit and enter cars once the car has entered the designated parking lot/area and come to a complete stop.
- BUCKLE UP: Before pulling away, make sure your students are either safely on the sidewalk or buckled in their seat.
- **NO EARLY DISMISSAL after 2:45 p.m. After 2:45**, your child will not be dismissed until the published dismissal times. During that time, all students should be dismissed via the walk-up or carpool lines. Please keep this guideline in mind when scheduling things like doctor and dentist appointments.
- APPROVED PICK UP LIST: We can only release students to the people who have been designated from your enrollment paperwork. If there is an occasion where someone not listed needs to pick up your child, the parent must contact the school directly.
- SAFETY REGARDING LATE PICK UP:
  - All Elementary campus students not picked up by 3:40 p.m. will be taken to After Care and a fee will apply.
  - All Middle campus students not picked up by 3:30 p.m. will be taken to After Care and a fee will apply.

**MORGAN STREET FOOD HALL AND OTHER COMMUNITY PARTNERS:** The only supervised before and after care program is the one run by and on location at Exploris. If families choose to allow their minor children to go to other locations and businesses, such as the library or Morgan Street Food Hall, before or after school, they do so at their own risk. The school does not provide staffing or supervision at these locations. Families who allow their minor children to visit these locations without an adult should review with their children the behavior expectations



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for these public places of business and safety guidelines for being alone in the city. Exploris strives to stay in good relationships with our community partners and expects our students to model our core values and behaviors when interacting with our community partners and their places of business. Students whose behavior damages our relationships with our community partners could be subject to disciplinary actions from those businesses as well as from our student code of conduct.

***Elementary Campus Drop-Off and Pick-Up*** Please make sure that all drivers who will be dropping off/picking up your child are aware of these requirements:

Drop off Elementary Campus:

- The Elementary School driveway is one-way. Please follow the signs indicating where to enter and exit the lot.
- To ensure a smooth traffic flow, **never turn left when entering or leaving the school.**
- **For morning drop-off, approach the school from Hargett Street, turn right onto S. Swain Street, then right into the school driveway. Drive around to the administrative building entrance where staff will greet students.**
- **Students in the back seat should exit on the driver's side whenever possible.** If using the passenger side, always have students walk *in front* of your vehicle.
- **Keep backpacks and belongings inside the car**, not in the trunk. Students should never walk behind vehicles to retrieve items, as other cars will be pulling in behind you.
- After drop-off or pick-up, **exit the school's driveway by turning right onto S. Swain Street, then right onto New Bern Avenue.**

Pick up and Dismissal at the Elementary Campus:

- Dismissal has two locations, carpool line pick up and walk up on the side of the K-2 building
- It would be helpful to display a paper with the names of the students you are picking up (first and last) typed in a font size that allows the text to take up most of the paper.
- For carpool and walk up, a staff member will be standing in the designated area with a walkie-talkie and will call your child's name to ensure your child is ready for loading.



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

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

This is the approved traffic pattern for arrival to the middle school campus. All families are expected to follow this pattern.

- **If you're coming from the East:** Take **Peace Street** to **N. West**, then turn onto **N. Harrington**.
- **If you're coming from the North, South, or West:** Travel to **W. Edenton** and make a left onto **N. Harrington Street**.
- Once you're on N. Harrington, approach the school by turning **right onto Harrington**, then **right into the Ugly Monkey Parking Lot**. When exiting, turn **right onto Morgan Street**.
- **Only turn right into and out of school lots:** This is a city requirement! As part of the school's approved transportation plan, the city required that only right-handed turns be allowed into and out of the parking lots during peak hours. No left turns allowed!

#### Drop off Middle School Campus:

- All vehicles dropping students off in the morning should turn south onto Harrington St. from Hillsborough St., turn right into the rear parking lot of the school (next to Ugly Monkey) and pull in as far as possible before letting students out.
- Students cannot exit their cars off along Hillsborough St. or in the lot by the main entrance.
- All students should wait until their car is fully pulled into the parking lot behind the school before exiting the vehicle.
- All students should wait until their car is fully pulled into the parking lot behind the school before exiting the vehicle.
- All cars **MUST** exit the back of the parking lot by turning right **ONLY** onto W. Morgan St.
- Students should be prepared to exit vehicles quickly with their belongings. For safety, do not allow students to access the trunk once parked due to active traffic. Unattended vehicles are prohibited.



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### Pick up and Dismissal at the Middle School Campus:

- Vehicle pick up for students is between 3:15 and 3:30 p.m. in the Harrington Street (Ugly Monkey) lot.
- Vehicles should turn south onto Harrington Street and turn right into the Harrington lot. Because of the amount of traffic on Hillsborough Street, please DO NOT approach from Hillsborough traveling east.
- When leaving the school, after turning right onto Morgan St. please avoid turning right again onto West St. because you will run into cars who are arriving and will create a circle of traffic where no one can move forward. Instead, please travel at least one other block or two before continuing on your route.
- Pull into the lot as far as possible in order to get between 3 and 4 cars into the lot at one time. All vehicles exiting the Harrington lot should **turn right** onto W. Morgan Street. NO LEFT TURNS.

When leaving the school, after turning right onto Morgan St. please avoid turning right again onto West St. because you will run into cars who are arriving and will create a circle of traffic where no one can move forward. Instead, please travel at least one other block or two before continuing on your route.

Pull into the lot as far as possible in order to get between 3 and 4 cars into the lot at one time. All vehicles exiting the Harrington lot should turn right onto W. Morgan Street. All middle grades students not picked up by 3:30 will be taken to after-school care and a fee will apply.

### ***Field Experience/Field Trip Transportation Policies***

We need families' help both in transporting students on field trips and in chaperoning trips, but student safety has to remain our primary concern. Parents/guardians who agree to drive on field experiences are required to complete the **Vehicle Insurance Declaration** and the **Volunteer Transportation Assurance** form, which will be shared with families directly. Submit these forms annually to the front office along with a copy of your valid N.C. driver's license and insurance card. We ask that parents'/guardians' cars are in good repair, with a current state inspection, and that parents/guardians have a cell phone to communicate with the school in the event of an emergency. You are encouraged to contact your insurance agent and inquire about obtaining additional coverage for transporting students other than your own.

No volunteer should be alone with a child who is not under their own guardianship unless they have completed a full background check. At all times, volunteers should have at least two children with them and/or another adult.

All students must be properly restrained in cars. North Carolina law states that a properly used car seat or booster seat is required for students less than age 8 and less than 80 lbs.



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The law does not specify which type of car seat can be used at any age or weight, only that the seat is used properly in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and meets all federal safety standards in place when the seat was manufactured.

When a child reaches age 8 (regardless of weight) or 80 pounds (regardless of age), a properly fitted seat belt can be used in place of a car seat or booster seat.

Booster seats can only be used with lap and shoulder seat belts. They can NEVER be used with a lap belt only. A child who weighs at least 40 pounds can legally be restrained using only a properly fitted lap belt if there is no lap and shoulder belt available for use with a booster seat, however this is not considered to be the safest option.

The recommendation according to NC law is that all students less than 12 -13 years of age should sit in the back of the vehicle.

Drivers are expected to know and follow the laws and recommendations for proper restraint of students, follow all traffic laws including speed limits, use all cautionary measures when driving students to and from field experiences, and refrain from using a cell phone or engaging in other distracting actions while driving.

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

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

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

## Enrollment/Lottery Policy

All students entering Kindergarten-8th grade and who are residents of North Carolina are invited to apply for enrollment. Kindergarten students must have reached the age of 5 on or before August 31 of the year of enrollment. It is important to keep in mind that all students who are not currently enrolled must apply for admission, including siblings of currently enrolled students. Students are admitted through the lottery and offered a seat in a specific grade. If, after acceptance, a family wishes to request that the student be placed in a different grade based on their academic progress, that student would be placed on the waitlist for that newly requested grade.



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If you misrepresent your student's legal grade or age, your lottery application will be canceled. If we find when confirming documentation of your student's age and grade placement that they do not qualify for the grade level for which you applied, we may refuse placement. You must accept the seat at the grade level for which you applied. Families who wish their student to be accelerated by a grade level or be retained by a grade level must have first applied for that grade level seat and then supply documentation from a recognized school program that the student's needs would be best served at that grade level; Exploris will not make a placement decision independent of the decision made by the sending school. For families wishing to apply for kindergarten ahead of the age cutoff, the [Wake County School District policies for early admission](#) will apply. If you discover after application that your student was not promoted at the end of the previous school year, Exploris will place your student as a grade level repeat if a seat is available; if no seats are available at that grade level, your student will be added to the waitlist for that grade.

More information on the school's lottery policy, procedures, and preference status can be found on our website on the Admissions page.

## Class Request Policy

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

Requesting a classroom has several other consequences as well, including that when one family's request is honored, it affects other families at that grade level. To accommodate one request, many students may have to be moved. This is unfair to parents/guardians who do not make requests. Though class requests are confidential, inevitably teachers may learn of them, which can contribute to poor morale.

Often a group of parents/guardians request one classroom due to student friendships. These requests are not practical to accommodate and may lead to negative feelings among families and toward office staff who develop the class lists. Exploris is fortunate to have incredibly talented and qualified teachers. While one teacher or classroom may seem to better "fit" a student, all of our teachers are fully capable of working with all students. Every year, classroom environments will change. One year a crew may seem ideal; and the next it may not. We all need to work together to encourage and support strong classrooms.

Personnel assigned for school duties such as particular curriculum areas, Exceptional Children case managers, or counseling, for example, are chosen by the school according to state and



federal policy. Parents cannot dictate which teachers are assigned for which duties with their children. As a small school, there is often only one staff member assigned for particular roles.

For the reasons given above, we strongly discourage classroom requests. Most requests will not be granted. If you feel strongly about requesting a classroom, you must submit a letter in the spring before the end of the school year. Please be sure to include your reasoning. You may be placed in the class of your choice for reasons not related to your request.

### **School Initiated Changes in Classroom or Personnel Policies**

Occasionally, a circumstance may make it necessary or desirable to change a student's placement in a particular crew or with a particular teacher. These circumstances might include a change in personnel, student conflicts, or scheduling needs. One place this is likely to happen is with Kindergarten and 6th grade, where students new to Exploris are placed randomly at first but once we learn more about the children's personality and needs a different placement may prove advantageous or may help balance a classroom. Such changes will be communicated with families.

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

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

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

After 10 school days there will be a follow-up conversation between the parent/guardian and crew teacher to check in on progress. At that time there will be a decision to continue with the interventions, modify the interventions, or begin a more formal process of requesting a change of crew. If a change of crew is still being requested, the parent, crew teacher, and Campus Director will discuss issues and develop a further plan of action to resolve the situation within the current crew assignment. The new plan of action will be closely monitored for an additional ten school days. If the situation is resolved, no further action will be taken. If the family is still interested in a change of crew, there will be a meeting with the family, crew teacher, the prospective crew teacher, and the Campus Director. This meeting would be to discuss the pros and cons of such a move. If this group decides that there are enough compelling reasons to move the student, a change of placement will occur. Campus directors reserve the right to modify this timeline depending on individual circumstances.

## **Section 4: Student Health and Safety Policies**

### **We Are Strict About Safety**

Your student's safety is our top priority. Exploris follows safety measures conscientiously and always errs on the cautious side. Every precaution is taken to ensure your student's safety at all times. All of our teachers and staff are experienced and vigilant about high safety standards. Exploris has routine emergency drills and has established an Emergency Procedures Manual and Crisis Intervention Team so that we can effectively address any crisis that may arise.

We ask that families support our efforts to establish and implement safety guidelines. Please report all unsafe conditions immediately to your child's crew teacher or to a Director.

### **Building security**

In conjunction with safety goals, Exploris will enforce our security measures during the school day. All exterior doors will be locked and remain so throughout the day. Exterior doors should never be propped open during the school day.

- Parents, guardians, and visitors must enter the building and sign in at the main front office.
  - All visitors must ring the bell and enter through the main office.
  - Visitors who arrive at other school entrances will be asked to come to the main front office for admission.
- Students are not allowed to use staff codes to enter the building. Students who are found to be in possession of a staff code can be subject to disciplinary consequences.
- Students are not allowed to open the doors for parents/guardians and visitors as this is a safety concern. Only adult school employees should open exterior doors.
- Exploris uses limited video surveillance on both campuses as a security measure. Footage from the video surveillance system is subject to FERPA regulations on a case by case basis.

### **Emergency Contacts and Notification**

During the course of normal activities for school, emergencies or accidents may occur. In the event of an accident or emergency, the school will contact you and/or your emergency contacts directly or through our electronic alert system via phone call, text, and/or email.

Families should assist the school and help ensure each child's safety and wellbeing by making sure that the office has your current contact information as well as additional emergency contacts.





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Please make sure to let your contacts know that you have done this, because it is imperative that we are able to reach a responsible adult at all times when a student is involved in school activities.

Please notify your student's teachers and the office if any contact numbers change throughout the year. If you are requesting a change to the directory for which family members can be listed as primary contacts, **we may ask for proof of custody** to ensure that any changes in student contact information and family/guardian notification complies with legal custody and guardianship.

## Inclement Weather / School Closings

The Exploris School will follow the Wake County Public School System for inclement weather closures and reserves the right to make an independent decision to close for weather related issues if the safety of staff and students might be affected. If Wake County Public School System has extended closures due to road conditions (for example, waiting to clear secondary roads) Exploris may decide conditions are clear enough around our campus to warrant a return to learning on the Exploris campus. For any WCPSS delayed openings or school closures that arise out of situations not related to inclement weather, the Exploris School will operate independently. Notifications will also be posted on Exploris social media and through assorted news outlets. If conditions allow, the school may designate a remote learning day if physical campuses are closed. On remote learning days, staff is providing instruction and students are completing work.

## Remote Learning Days

Infrequently, Exploris may use a Remote Learning Day to help preserve continuity of instruction. Each year, Exploris creates and files a Remote Learning Plan with the state that can be used in the case of prolonged closures for weather, facility, or other related issues. Teachers will issue directions for expected assignment and task completion, which may include asynchronous work like readings or choice boards, asynchronous class communications through emails or discussion boards, synchronous online meetings, or a combination. On remote learning days, students are counted as in attendance when they either attend an on-line class session, communicate with their teachers about the tasks, and/or submit completed work. Students who fail to show any “proof of life” during remote weather days by one or more of the above actions will be counted as absent. Students who are sick or medically unable to complete work on remote learning days should submit a written excuse to their crew teacher, following our absence policies for regular days when school is in session.



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## Weather Conditions & Outdoor Activities

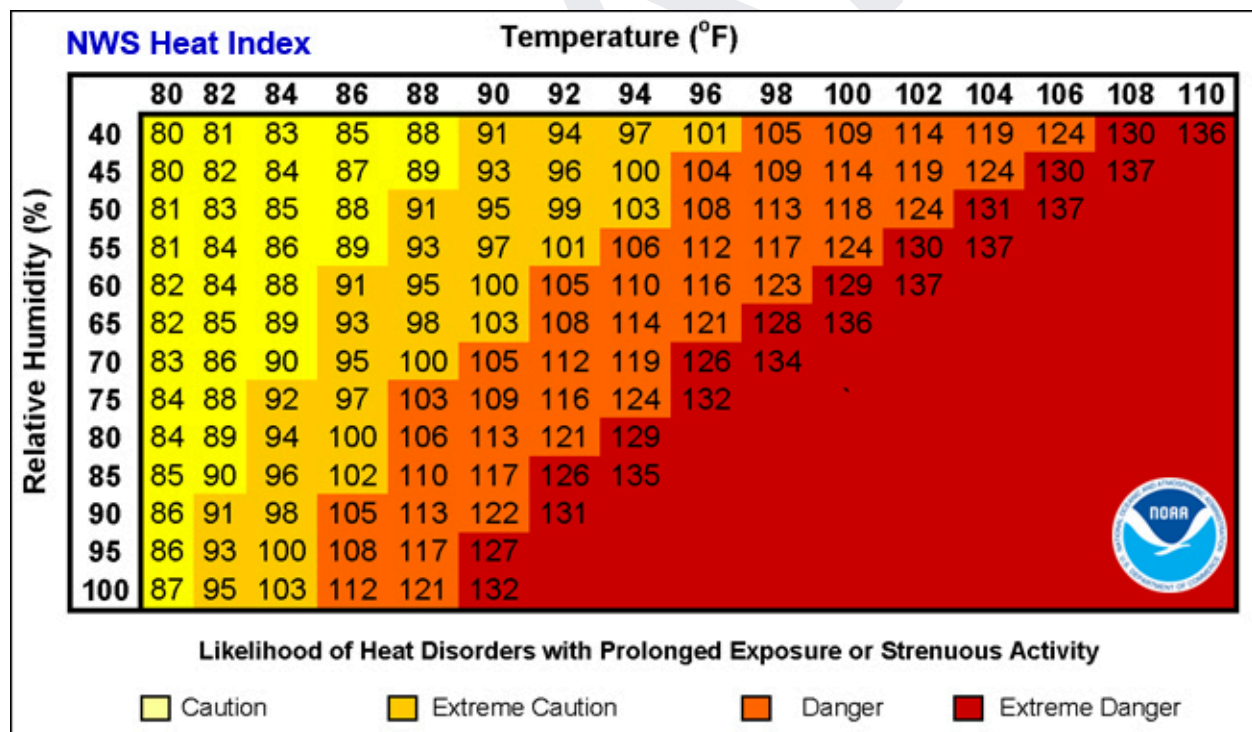
Families should be aware that Exploris students are often outside in all different weather conditions and should provide clothing that is appropriate for changing conditions, footwear that is appropriate for walking outside, rain gear as needed, and sunscreen as desired.

Time spent outdoors is an integral part of the school day. Properly clothed, school-aged students can participate in safe, vigorous play in an outdoor environment in most weather conditions. Exploris staff may limit a student's time outdoors if the student is not dressed appropriately for the weather, or may have the student complete an indoor activity instead.

Increased caution is necessary during extremes in heat and cold.

### *Warm Weather Conditions*

When temperatures are predicted to be 95°F or higher, student activity outside after 1:00 p.m. will be avoided or limited to 15-20 minutes at a time. When a day is designated as a Code Orange day, student activity outside will be limited to 15 minutes for the entire day. When a day is designated as a Code Red day, student activities will take place indoors only.





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<b><u>PRECAUTION</u></b>	<b><u>PROCEDURE</u></b>	<b><u>PRECAUTION</u></b>	<b><u>PROCEDURE</u></b>
<b><u>LIGHT YELLOW</u></b> CAUTION	Observe students or staff members susceptible to heat illness (e.g., individuals who are obese or suffer from asthma, etc.). Water should be readily accessible to everyone.	<b><u>ORANGE</u></b> DANGER	All students and staff going outdoors should be under constant and careful supervision. Breaks from physical activity should be every 20-30 minutes with water readily accessible to everyone. Fluid replacement is vital!
<b><u>YELLOW</u></b> EXTREME CAUTION	Observe students or staff members susceptible to heat illness (e.g., individuals who are obese or suffer from asthma, etc.). Water should be readily accessible to everyone.	<b><u>RED</u></b> EXTREME DANGER	Postponing outdoor physical activities or moving physical activity to air-conditioned indoor settings is recommended for all students and staff. If outdoor activity is required, constant supervision is needed. Water must be readily available! Fluid replacement is vital!

References: State Climate Office of North Carolina [http://www.nc-climate.ncsu.edu/climate/heat\\_index\\_climatology.php](http://www.nc-climate.ncsu.edu/climate/heat_index_climatology.php)

### ***Cold Weather Conditions***

Increased caution is necessary when temperatures are below 32°F. Temperature plus wind velocity, or wind chill, is a prominent factor in determining cold weather safety. As the speed of the wind increases, it carries heat away from the body more quickly. Staff will limit student outdoor time to under 30 minutes if the temperature is near or below freezing.

### ***Severe Weather: Lightning***

In cases where thunderstorms are bringing lightning into the area, staff will follow the 30-30 rule, which means waiting 30 minutes after the last lightning flash is seen or the last roll of thunder is heard to resume outdoor activity. It may seem safe to return to activity after the storm has passed, but lightning can and does strike at least 10 miles away from the storm even after the clouds have moved on. This phenomenon is known as a “bolt out of the blue.” Every time lightning is seen or thunder is heard, the 30 minute clock should be reset.

### ***Air Quality Alert Days***

Due to ground-level ozone and particulate levels being higher than usual, the National Weather Service may declare a Code Orange, Code Red, or Code Purple for air quality that is separate from alerts for temperature. On days that are designated as Code Orange for air quality (but not for temperature) staff should limit student outside time to 15-20 minutes at a time and watch for students or colleagues who may be sensitive to air quality and exhibit signs such as fatigue, trouble breathing, increased heart rate, and other signs of stress. If noticed, staff and students



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affected should return indoors, drink water, and call for assistance from administration to determine next steps for care. Inside, classroom air purifiers should be turned on to high and ionizer settings, and windows should remain closed.

On days that are designated as Code Red for air quality (but not for temperature) staff should severely limit time outside to short periods of 5 minutes for things like travel between buildings, and then apply the above guidelines for Code Orange days.

On days designated as Code Purple, no outside activities should be conducted. Students arriving early to school should immediately be allowed inside, and carpool riders should wait inside for their ride to be called. Administration will consider whether or not to cancel in person learning and move to a remote learning day based on this severe level of weather conditions and will notify staff and family of any decisions.

### ***Dressing for Cold & Wet Weather***

When colder temperatures and rain approach, please be reminded that it is very important for students to come to school every day with the appropriate winter clothing for outside activities. If you have a child in need of winter clothing or rain gear please let the school know so that they may help you find appropriate clothing for your student.

Exploris activities take place rain or shine, so being prepared with a sturdy rain poncho and shoes that are appropriate for the weather is important to consider each day.

Below please find guidelines to assist you in sending your child to school outfitted for outside activities in cold weather.

#### **Weather Conditions and Clothing Recommendations**

- Mild (45-55 degrees): Lightweight Coat & Hat
- Moderate (35-44 degrees): Heavy Coat, Hat, Gloves or Mittens, Closed Toe Shoes, and Scarf
- Cold (34 degrees or below): Heavy Coat, Hat, Gloves or Mittens, Closed Toe Shoes, and Scarf
- Snow: Heavy Coat, Hat, Gloves or Mittens, Closed Toe Shoes or boots, and Scarf
- Soggy, Wet Conditions: Coat, Hat, Closed Toe Shoes or rain boots, waterproof poncho



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## Health and Medical

### *Medications*

- Students requiring **medication** (prescription or over-the-counter) during school or field experiences must have a current **medical release form** on file. This form is part of the annual Enrollment Forms.
- If a student begins a new medication or discontinues a medication, contact the front office staff to update or complete a medical release form.
- No student should carry medication of any kind, prescription or over the counter, with them during the school day. Any medication you wish to have available to your child, including Tylenol or cough drops, should follow the procedures below. It can be a danger to your student and to others to have these substances not under adult control during the school day or on any school activity.

In order for The Exploris School to administer medication to your child during the school day, the following conditions must be met:

1. Medication (both prescription and over-the-counter) must be in the ORIGINAL packaging with administration directions clearly viewed on the packaging. If a prescription, the prescription date on the packaging must be within date (not expired) and include clear directions for administration from the prescribing doctor. Please send enough medication for the number of days needed.
2. Medication must be given to school personnel. Students ARE NOT allowed to carry medicine with them, not even a cough drop. The only exceptions are for students needing to carry a prescribed asthma inhaler or epipen.

### *Health Forms*

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





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## ***Health Plans***

Consistent with the State Board of Education policy GCS-G-006, school personnel shall be made aware of the existence of health problems including asthma, diabetes, seizure disorder, and life-threatening allergies (anaphylactic reaction) for the purpose of emergency care as well as daily programming. **In these cases a student health plan is required.** This plan is created in conjunction with the family and their designated healthcare provider and the school.

- Health Plans MUST be created or updated each year for both new and returning students PRIOR to the start of the school year.
- Requirement for Health Plans: **Parent/Guardians must reach out as soon as possible to the front office and student services** at the beginning of the year or upon the official diagnosis if it is a new medical issue

## ***Illness***

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

If your child has a fever of 100.4 or higher, vomiting, diarrhea or other adverse symptoms, please keep your child at home to recover for at least 24 hours. We require that they be free of such symptoms without the aid of medication or fever reducer before they return to school. If such symptoms develop at school, you will be asked to pick up your child. Before sending your child to school, be sure they feel well enough to have a positive, productive day in a manner considerate of the health of others.

## ***COVID-related Illness***

Students who present with any of the common symptoms of COVID-19 or any other respiratory illness, including runny or stuffy/congested nose, coughing, upset stomach, and/or fever, are encouraged to wear a medical face mask to prevent the spread of illness at school.. If a student tests positive for COVID-19 or any other respiratory illness, they will be required to wear a face mask that covers their mouth and nose for 5 calendar days at all times while participating in indoor school activities.

## ***Concussion***

The Exploris School utilizes a multidisciplinary team approach to support students suffering with concussion issues. The team at the school level includes appropriate Exploris staff, parents/guardians, students, and healthcare providers, all focusing on student wellbeing during



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and after the injury. The school complies with the state required concussion plan and policy, for more details see NCDPI [return-to-learn](#) after concussion requirements

- Exploris recommends that any injury to the head be referred to and evaluated by the student's chosen doctor or medical professional for assessment for a possible concussion
- If your student is under a physician's care for a diagnosed concussion, the school must be informed and the student cannot return to school until a health plan has been created stating the appropriate and required accommodations that may be needed.

### ***Lice, Scabies, Ringworm, and Other Conditions Transmitted through Physical Contact***

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

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

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

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

Students who present with skin conditions may have their parents or designated adults contacted for immediate pick up and will need to be seen by a medical professional. In the case of physical conditions like scabies or ringworm or other conditions that are transmitted by physical contact, the student must have confirmation of the condition by a medical professional and remain out of school for at least 24 hours after treatment has started. After that period, they may return to school and should cover the affected area with clothing such as long sleeves or appropriate bandages to reduce possibility of transmission.



## **Student Safety, Emotional Health, and Wellbeing**

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

### **Student Supervision**

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

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

- Calling 911 if indicated
- Preventing further harm to the student or other students which may include moving the student.
- Providing comfort care and urgent care in situations involving breathing or bleeding.
- Referring immediately to medical professionals as indicated
- Contacting families as soon as possible

When an accident happens at school that results in serious injury, the school staff will use information from the Medical Release Form to contact parents/guardians or the person(s) they have designated. If needed, we will call 911 while we are still trying to reach a parent. We will make every attempt to call families as soon as possible to involve them in the decision-making process, unless time and urgency are issues. If the injury is minor, the classroom teacher will exercise their judgment in making a decision to call the family. In most cases, families will be alerted so they will have the option of viewing the injury themselves.

### **Search of Student's Person or Belongings**

In any case where there is reasonable suspicion a student may be intending harm to self or others, the student's person and belongings may be searched. Reasonable suspicion is satisfied when two conditions exist: (1) The search is justified at its inception, meaning that there are reasonable grounds for suspecting that the search will reveal evidence that the student has violated or is





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violating the law or school rules or that the student may have the means and intent to do harm to self or others, and (2) The search is reasonably related in scope to the circumstances that justified the search, meaning that the measures used to conduct the search are reasonably related to the objectives of the search and that the search is not excessively intrusive in light of the student's age and sex and the nature of the offense. School officials and sworn law enforcement officers may conduct a search without reasonable suspicion or probable cause if the student voluntarily consents to the search. Voluntariness is determined on the basis of the circumstances—including the student's age, education level, and mental capacity—and the context of the search. School officials may conduct random or blanket searches not because of individualized suspicion, but as a preventive measure. This type of search will not be utilized by school officials if any type of suspicion is present.

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

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

## Background Checks for Employees

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

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

## Volunteer Expectations and Confidentiality

Exploris is a cooperative enterprise: Our families, teachers, Board, and administrative staff share the responsibilities and rewards of operating our school. Our families experience firsthand the school environment, become advocates for their students, and enrich the school community with their ideas, interests, talents, and resources. There are significant opportunities for involvement: Volunteering in our K-8 Explorations classes, helping with off-site fieldwork trips, serving on



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our PTO board, supporting the office, chaperoning overnight trips, etc. Parents/Guardians are always welcome to visit the school and join their child's class, but we ask you to plan your visit with your child's teacher. Planned, organized visits support instruction and help ensure the safety of all students and staff. Please keep in mind that visitors can sometimes distract students and inadvertently disrupt the learning environment. It is difficult for teachers to stop and instruct/prepare for volunteers while they are teaching, and advance notification is required to make the most of your contribution. All parents/guardians and volunteers should sign in at the front office before proceeding to the classroom.

The Directors may place limits on the frequency or conditions of school visits or communication by parents/guardians or other visitors to avoid disruption and to ensure that a positive, safe, and constructive educational environment is maintained for all.

Remember that the teacher's first responsibility during class hours is to teach students. Therefore, we ask that you refrain from engaging in conversation about your child's progress when assisting in the classroom or during field experiences. If you would like to discuss your child's individual progress, teachers are happy to set up an appointment to meet with you outside of the normal school day. When you volunteer in school-related events, you may be exposed to sensitive issues involving students and families other than your own, including academic and social/disciplinary challenges. Just as you would like for adults who interact with your child to be sensitive to issues of confidentiality, we ask that you treat information about all students with care.

If you have particular concerns about students that stem from your observations during school activities, please consult that student's classroom teacher. Always refrain from inappropriate interactions with students and other parents/guardians that breach these confidentiality guidelines. While as parents you are always welcome to take photos for your own remembrance, we ask that our volunteers refrain from posting information about other students or photos taken during the school day on internet and social media sites unless express written permission has been granted. We have several students each year whose families do not consent to the media release of images or information about their student, often for safety or custody issues.

As family volunteers, we ask that you respect the direction and/or guidelines established by the sponsoring teacher in a given activity or the school's Directors. Although employees are open to the ideas and feedback of parents/guardians who are involved in an activity or outing, it is the school employee who must make a final decision in the event of an emergency or difficult situation. Please note that we are a drug, alcohol, and tobacco-free campus. This policy applies to staff and parents/guardians volunteering, transporting students (including their own student) or attending any school sponsored event or trip in which students are present and is essential to our continued participation in federal grant programs.

## **Background Checks for Volunteers**

Exploris supports and encourages volunteers in our schools. Volunteers work in cooperation with the school to help in meeting the needs of students and the school staff. The school's Directors hold the sole responsibility for the recruitment, monitoring, and/or dismissal of community and parent volunteers.

Any family member or volunteer who participates in school-related activities and may have an opportunity to be alone with a student as part of that activity will be asked to complete a Federal and State background check. If two or more non-related adults work together with students, or if Exploris staff continually and directly supervises the volunteer, the Directors may determine a background check unnecessary.

## **Field Experience Chaperones**

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

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

## **Student Sleeping Accommodations for Overnights**

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



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

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



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## Section 5: The Code of Student Conduct

### Our Exploris Philosophy

We use a responsive classroom approach that focuses on the strong relationship between academic success and social emotional learning. To be successful in and out of school, students need to learn a set of social and emotional competencies such as relationships, collaboration, responsibility, empathy, and reflection. They also need to learn a set of academic competencies such as academic mindset, perseverance, learning strategies, and academic behaviors.

***The purpose of the code of student conduct is four-fold:***

1. To illustrate expected student behaviors
2. To describe violations of the Student Code of Conduct and associated interventions and consequences that may be enforced
3. To outline student rights, privileges, and responsibilities
4. To provide information about how to get help from school personnel

Equally important to sharing what is expected of students is that Exploris policies and practices support social emotional learning and positive behavior choices. Developing positive and effective student behaviors requires collaborative efforts from school, home, and community organizations and agencies.

**Families should note that enrolling at The Exploris School means acceptance of school policies and the student code of conduct. Families are responsible for reading the Family and Student Handbook and being aware of expectations and policies for student conduct.**

## Exploris's Restorative Justice Approach to Student Relationships, Conduct & Discipline

### Introduction

The Exploris School Code of Conduct is designed to ensure a safe, supportive, and inclusive learning environment for all students, staff, and families. It aligns with North Carolina legal requirements, follows applicable federal guidelines, and is grounded in restorative justice principles, focusing on repairing harm, building community, and supporting student growth rather than relying on punitive measures

### Core Principles



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- **Respect and Dignity:** Every member of the school community is treated with respect and dignity at all times.
- **Restorative Responses:** When harm occurs, the focus is on understanding, accountability, and repairing relationships.
- **Equity and Inclusion:** All policies and practices are applied fairly and equitably, with attention to eliminating disparities.
- **Community Engagement:** Students, staff, and families are partners in upholding and improving the school climate

## Restorative Practices in Action

### Proactive Community Building

- **Classroom Circles:** Regular check-ins to build relationships, set norms, and discuss challenges.
- **Collaborative Agreements:** Students and staff co-create classroom expectations.
- **Social-Emotional Learning:** Integrated into daily instruction to foster self-awareness, empathy, and responsible decision-making

### Responding to Harm

- **Restorative Chats:** One-on-one conversations to address minor misbehavior and reflect on impact.  
**Restorative Circles:** Group discussions involving those affected by harm to share perspectives and develop agreements for repair.
- **Mediation:** Facilitated sessions to resolve conflicts between students or between students and staff.
- **Reintegration Meetings:** Supportive re-entry for students returning from suspension or extended absence, focusing on accountability and community support

### Levels of Response to Misconduct

Level	Example Behaviors	Restorative/Disciplinary Responses
1	Minor disruptions, off-task behavior, tardiness	Restorative chat, reflection activity, classroom circle, parent contact



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2	Repeated minor behaviors, disrespect, and minor property damage	Restorative circle, mediation, behavior contract, family conference
3	Bullying, fighting, theft, and significant disruption	Restorative conference, community service, learning pathway, temporary removal from class through informal time out or more formal in school or out of school suspension, re-entry circle
4	Serious harm, threats, possession of prohibited items	Restorative process (if appropriate), suspension (as last resort), law enforcement notification if required by law, reintegration meeting upon return

**Note:** Exclusionary discipline (suspension/expulsion) is reserved for the most serious incidents and only when necessary to ensure safety or as required by law. All other interventions prioritize keeping students engaged in learning and repairing harm

## Legal Compliance

- **Due Process:** All students are entitled to fair and consistent application of rules, with opportunities to be heard.
- **Reporting Requirements:** Incidents involving assault, weapons, drugs, or serious threats or harassment are reported to law enforcement as required by North Carolina law.
- **Non-Discrimination:** Discipline is administered without regard to race, gender, disability, or other protected status.
- **Special Education:** Students with IEPs/504 Plans receive accommodations and support as required by federal and state law. Students with disabilities are still expected to adhere to the school's code of conduct and policies. However, there are important legal protections and procedures in place, outlined by laws like the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, to ensure fair and non-discriminatory disciplinary practices for these students.

## Family and Community Involvement

- **Communication:** Families are informed of expectations, major incidents or repeated minor instances, and school responses.
- **Participation:** Families and students are invited to participate in restorative processes.
- **Training:** Staff, students, and families receive communications and training in restorative practices and conflict resolution.





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## Continuous Improvement

- **Data Review:** School climate and discipline data are regularly reviewed to identify and address disparities.
- **Feedback:** The Code of Conduct is reviewed annually with input from students, staff, and families to ensure it remains effective and equitable

## Sample Restorative Questions

When student behavior does not meet expectation, the reflection process may include questions like:

- What happened, and what were you thinking at the time?
- Who has been affected by what happened? In what ways?
- What needs to be done to make things right?
- How can we prevent this from happening again?
- What will you commit to doing?

## Expected Student Behavior

*We believe everyone deserves a safe, supportive, and orderly learning environment. We encourage appropriate behaviors by teaching, guiding, directing, and providing opportunities for new learning to occur. We create opportunities for students to practice and succeed in making responsible and effective choices in order to reach their social, emotional, and academic potential and contribute to the school community. Our mission is to empower learners to improve our world.*

**The Code of Student Conduct shall apply to all students engaged in or traveling to or from school or school-sponsored activities at all times on all school grounds, public spaces, spaces owned or operated by community partners, vehicles, field experiences, and school events, including cases where student behavior off campus or outside of school hours violates this code of conduct and has a negative impact on the school's reputation, community partnerships, or learning environment, as per state policy and Title 9 regulations**

***I will maintain a positive relationship with myself by:***

- Attending school regularly and being on time.
- Following rules and directions of adults.
- Doing my schoolwork and homework with craftsmanship.





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- Practicing positive behavior choices.
- Remaining within my designated school area/classroom unless I have permission to leave my assigned area.
- Learning from the consequences of my behavior.
- Choosing not to bring tobacco, alcohol, other drugs or weapons to school.
- Dressing in a way that is appropriate for the learning environment and planned activities.

### ***I will maintain a positive relationship with others by:***

- Being understanding of others feelings.
- Using positive words with others (no put downs).
- Treating others like I want to be treated.
- Being an upstander for others and not bullying or threatening.
- Being honest by telling the truth and taking responsibility.
- Working with others in a positive and inclusive way.
- Keeping my hands and body to myself.
- Using appropriate language at school.
- Working with others to manage negative behaviors and emotions.
- Using respectful, positive, and considerate tone of voice and body language when I am speaking to others.
- Listening when others are speaking.

### ***I will maintain a positive relationship with my school environment by:***

- Taking care of things in my school and on school grounds.
- Not bringing dangerous or distracting things, such as matches, lighters, toys, fireworks, alcohol/tobacco/other drugs, medicine not prescribed for me, etc.
- Using school materials or classmate's materials for their intended purpose.
- Using computers as directed by adults (see Acceptable Use Policy).
- Conducting myself in a safe and considerate way that reflects a positive image.
- Leaving spaces as they were or better. I will clean up and participate positively in cleaning tasks. I will not engage in defacing, removing, digging, destroying, or disturbing the features of private and public spaces.

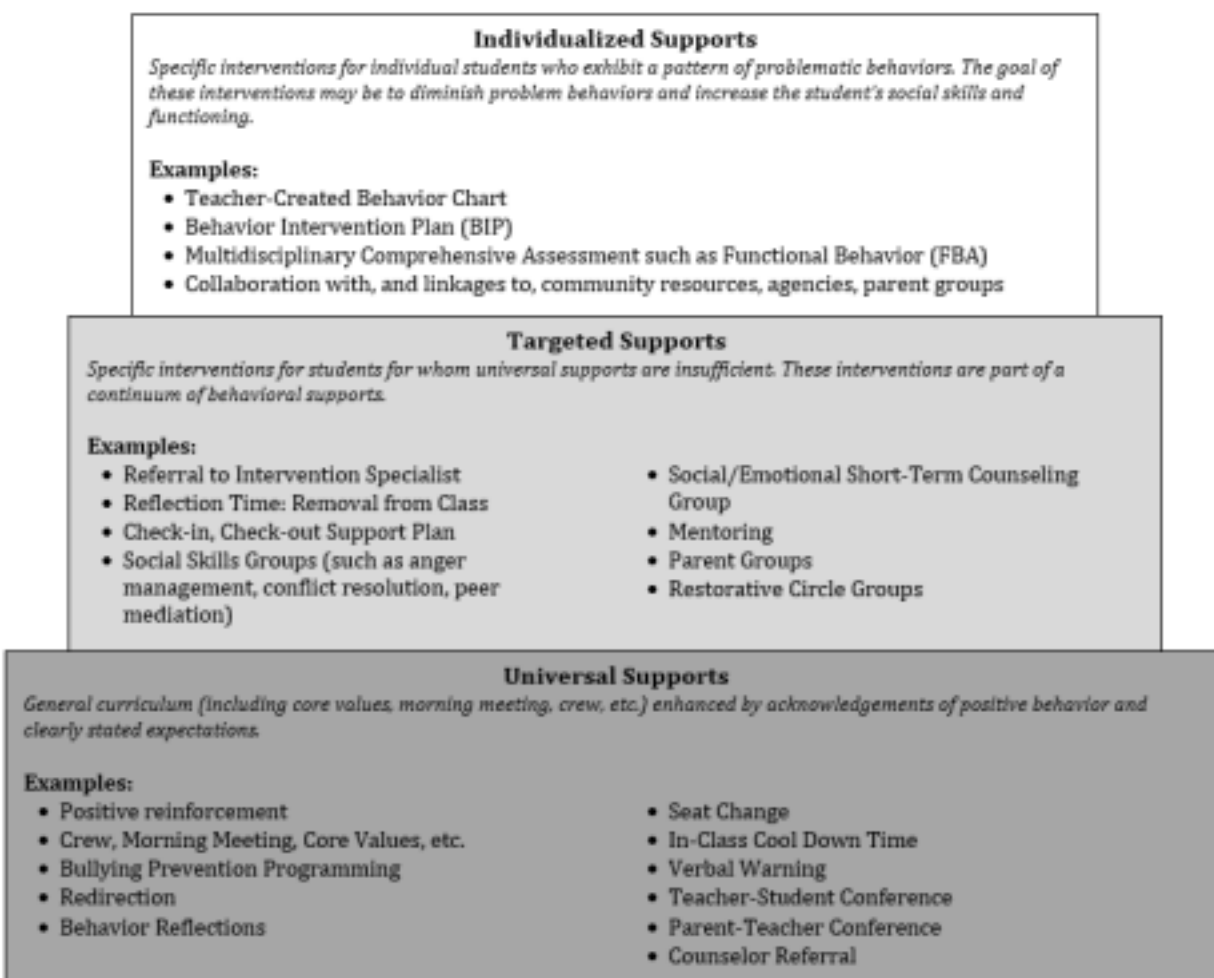
## **The Three Levels of Supports**

Supports may include (but are not limited to) the examples below:



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## Levels of Interventions and Consequences for Violations of the Code of Student Conduct

As with any incident of student behavior, school administrators must exercise informed judgment as to whether a student's actions constitute a violation of the school policies and/or the Code of Student Conduct. The levels, shown on the following page, guide administrators to use progressive interventions to impact student behaviors. The administrator will use their discretion and apply interventions and consequences appropriate to the situation. Restitution for loss or damage could be required in addition to any other prescribed consequences.

The following chart is intended as a guide to determine appropriate consequences. **Repeated chronic or cumulative offenses may require higher levels of intervention/consequences.** For serious violations, interventions/consequences may begin at a higher level and/or be reported to local law enforcement agencies. Incidents involving suspected harm of a child may be reported to Child Protective Services.

## Levels of Consequences

Level	Disciplinary Options
<b>1- Teacher managed</b>	Warning Letter of apology Loss of privileges Use of Student reflection/problem-solving worksheet Seat change Teacher conference with student behaviors Mentoring In-class time-out (take a break) Time out in another classroom setting Reinforcement of appropriate behaviors Student email to parent Confiscation of item by teacher Redirection and reteaching expected behaviors
<b>2- Teacher Managed</b>	<b>Parent/guardian involvement required</b> Confiscation of item (pick up in office) Supervised time-out outside of classroom Conference with parent/guardian Behavior Contract Teacher and/or administrator conference with student and/or parent Monitored/Limited transitions Parent contract Parent or guardian accompany student to school, classes or on field experience Conflict resolution Peer mediation Working Lunch/Lunch Detention Required help hall (before or after school) Community service assignment, as a form or restitution
<b>3- Administrator Managed (considered an office referral)</b>	<b>Parent/guardian notification required</b> Suspension (1-5 days) Reteaching expected behaviors Alternative school-based program Parent contract Parent or guardian accompany student to school, classes or on field experience Conflict resolution Peer mediation



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	<p>Restricted Activity or Use of Technology</p> <p>Working Lunch/Lunch Detention</p> <p>Detention (before/after school or lunch)</p> <p>Required help hall (before or after school)</p> <p>Community service assignment, as a form or restitution</p>
<b>4- Administrator Managed (office referral)</b>	<p><b>Parent/guardian notification required</b></p> <p>Restricted activity</p> <p>Modified school day</p> <p>Suspension (5-10 days)</p> <p>Restricted use of technology</p>
<b>5-Administrator Managed (office referral)</b>	<p><b>Parent/guardian notification required</b></p> <p>Extended Suspension (10+ days)</p>
<b>6- Administrator Managed (office referral)</b>	<p>Expulsion (to be considered only in the most extreme cases, which could be a single incident or multiple repeated violations of school policy and behavior codes.). More serious offenses may result in recommendation for expulsion following due-process procedures. Please note that under charter school law, other North Carolina public schools, including Wake County Public Schools, will not accept students suspended or expelled from The Exploris School for the duration of their suspension or expulsion.</p>

## Definitions for Problem Behavior and Consequences for Students

NOTE: These designations and codes are subject to review and update as state policies or legislation may change.

### Offense/Violation

**Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drugs (including unauthorized prescription drugs),**

**drug paraphernalia Level: 3, 4, 5, 6**

***Definition***

*Alcoholic substances, tobacco, inhalants or other intoxicants, vaping pens and paraphernalia, and controlled dangerous substances, including prescription drugs, over the counter medications, look-alikes, and substances represented as controlled substances, and drug paraphernalia.*

***Possession***

*The student has on his/her person, or within the student's personal property, or has under the student's actual or constructive control, any of the substances listed in this offense.*

***Consumption/Use***

*The student has consumed, ingested, assimilated, inhaled, or injected any of the substances listed in this offense.*

***Distribution/Sale***

*A student has disseminated or transferred any of the substances listed in this offense with or without compensation.*

***Possession with Intent to Distribute***

*The student has in his/her possession, as previously defined, any of the substances listed in this offense in a quantity or packaging to indicate intent to distribute or transfer to another person/people with or without compensation.*

**Arson/Fire**

**Level: 3, 4, 5, 6**

***Definition:***

*Attempting to, aiding in, or setting any fire on school property. This includes unauthorized possession of a flammable liquid or materials with the intent to set fire*

**Assault on a Student**

**Level: 3, 4, 5, 6**

***Definition:***

*Causing or attempting to cause physical injury to another student. For the purposes of this policy serious physical injury shall refer to any significant or aggravated bodily injury, including but not limited to broken bone(s), loss or chipping of teeth, loss or impairment of vision, loss of consciousness, internal injuries, scarring or other disfigurement, significant bleeding, lacerations resulting in sutures, significant bruising, severe or prolonged pain, any injury requiring hospitalization for any period of time, and/or any injury resulting in medical treatment beyond simple first aid procedures.*

**Assault on School Personnel or Other Adult**

**Level: 3, 4, 5**

***Definition:***

*Causing or attempting to cause physical injury to any school employee or other adult.*

**Assault involving weapon/dangerous instrument/substance**

**Level: 3, 4, 5, 6**

*Causing or attempting to cause serious physical injury to another student, school personnel or other adult by using a weapon, dangerous instrument, or dangerous substance.*



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### **Filming an Assault or Inappropriate Act**

**Level: 3, 4, 5, 6**

*Students who record video of any physical altercations or other inappropriate acts at school or at school events will have their phones confiscated and could face disciplinary consequences including suspension. Any student who refuses to disperse while witnessing an incident is subject to suspension.*

### **Bomb Threat**

**Level: 3, 4, 5, 6**

**Definition:**

*The making of threats or providing false information concerning the presence of explosive material or devices on school property without cause in writing, in person, or by phone*

### **Bullying/Harassment**

**Level: 3, 4, 5**

**Definition:**

*Any repeated, systematic pattern of gestures or written, electronic, or verbal communications, or any physical act or any threatening communication on school property; at any school sponsored function that places a student or school employee in actual and reasonable fear of harm to his or her person or damage to his or her property; or creates or is certain to create a hostile environment by substantially interfering with or impairing a student's educational performance, opportunities, or benefits. A hostile environment means that the victim subjectively views the conduct as bullying or harassing behavior and the conduct is objectively severe or pervasive enough that a reasonable person would agree that it is bullying or harassing behavior.*

*Harassing or bullying behavior includes, but is not limited to, acts reasonably perceived as being motivated by any actual or perceived differentiating characteristic, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, socioeconomic status, academic status, gender identity, physical appearance, sexual orientation, or mental, physical, developmental, or sensory disability, or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have one or more of these characteristics (additional information regarding this policy can be found in the Student Code of Conduct).*

### **Contamination**

**Level: 3, 4, 5, 6**

**Definition:**

*Putting any substances in another person's food or drink or on their body, which poisons or contaminates that food, drink, or person's body.*

### **Destruction of Property/ Vandalism**

**Level: 1, 2, 3, 4**

**Definition:**

*Damage, destruction, or defacement of property belonging to the school or others. The level of the offense may depend on whether the property is damaged by the student's action/s that was*

- *Completely accidental*
- *Unintentional but impactful (roughhousing, "playing")*
- *Negligent (threw something intending for the trashcan but hit and broke a laptop, for example)*
- *Intentional with purpose to cause harm or damage*



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*Students should not be in possession of spray paint while on school property unless they have permission of a staff member for a specific school project.*

### **Disrespect**

**Level: 1, 2, 3, 4**

**Definition:**

*Inappropriate comments or physical gestures to others.*

### **Disruption to Classroom/School**

**Level: 1, 2, 3, 4**

**Definition:**

*Behavior (including possession of toys) that interferes with instruction, learning, and a safe and orderly environment, which includes, but is not limited to: chronic talking, throwing objects, horseplay, teasing, refusal to remain in seat, selling items without permission, rude noises, etc.*

### **Dress Code Violation**

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

**Definition:**

*Clothing should cover the torso, midriff, and backside.. Clothing, imagery, and accessories that display or promote negative messages or that disrupt the school's educational environment are not permitted. These could include drugs, weapons, alcohol, or tobacco-related information, obscenities, put-downs, innuendo, polarizing political messages, or offensive graphics/words. If a teacher questions the appropriateness of a student's dress, the student will be referred to an administrator. If the administrator determines that the student is inappropriately dressed, the student will be given the opportunity to call home and have other clothing delivered (additional information regarding this policy can be found in the Student Code of Conduct).*

### **Electronic Devices:**

**Level: 1, 2, 3, 4**

Personal technology devices (including but not limited to smart phones, smart watches, tablets, laptops, etc.) may be used by students for instructional purposes with the permission and under the supervision of the teachers and in compliance with the Acceptable Use Policy as outlined in the Student Code of Conduct. Possessing or using devices outside of this guidance can be subject to disciplinary consequences. Students using school issued devices are not to attempt to disable or go around installed safety and monitoring programs and applications. Students should use only their school-issued email and school wifi network while on campus or on a school-related activity.

### **Failure to Report a Firearm or other weapon**

**Level: 3, 4, 5**

*Any student who has knowledge that another student possesses or intends to bring a firearm or other weapon on any school campus or to any school activity shall report this information to school or law enforcement authorities immediately*





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*Exploris believes that gangs and gang-related activities pose a serious safety threat to students and staff members and can significantly disrupt the educational environment.*

*No student shall participate in any gang-related activities. For purposes of this policy:*

- i. A gang is any ongoing organization, association, or group of three or more persons, whether formal or informal, having as one of its primary activities the commission of criminal acts, and having a common name or common identifying sign, colors or symbols.*
- ii. Gang-related activities are any activities engaged in by a student on behalf of an identified gang; to perpetuate the existence of an identified gang; to effect the common purpose and design of an identified gang; or to represent gang affiliation, loyalty, or solidarity.*

*Conduct prohibited by this policy includes:*

- i. Wearing, possessing, using, distributing, displaying, or selling any clothing, jewelry, emblems, badges, symbols, signs, visible tattoos and body markings, or other items, with the intent to convey or promote membership or affiliation in any gang;*
- ii. Communicating either verbally or non-verbally (gestures, handshakes, slogans, drawings, etc.), with the intent to convey or promote membership or affiliation in any gang;*
- iii. Tagging, or otherwise defacing school or personal property with symbols or slogans intended to convey or promote membership or affiliation in any gang;*
- iv. Requiring payment of protection, money or insurance, or otherwise intimidating or threatening any person in connection with gang-related activity;*
- v. Inciting other students to intimidate or to act with physical violence upon any other person in connection with gang-related activity;*
- vi. Soliciting others for gang membership;*
- vii. Committing or conspiring to commit illegal acts in connection with gang-related activity.*

### **Hazing**

**Level: 3, 4, 5**

#### **Definition:**

*An act that subjects a student to potential harm and is affiliated with initiation into a student organization or team. Hazing may involve an act committed against a student or a situation in which a student is coerced into committing an act.*

### **Inappropriate Language**

**Level: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5**

#### **Definition:**

*Using vulgar, abusive, or threatening spoken or written language or gestures, such as use of profanity, making "finger guns," and sexual innuendo. Hate speech, defined as derogatory language directed at another person verbally or in writing and based on race, religion, sexuality, ability, country of origin or appearance will automatically trigger a level 3 consequence or above.*

### **Inciting or Participating in a School Disturbance**

**Level: 3, 4, 5**

#### **Definition:**

*Intentionally participating in or recruiting others to cause a disruption to the school atmosphere*

### **Indecent Exposure/Sexual Behavior**

**Level: 3, 4, 5, 6**

*Engaging in behavior which is indecent, consensual, overly affectionate, or of a sexual nature, including*





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*possessing or transmitting sexually explicit images*

### **Insubordination (Uncooperative Behavior)**

**Level: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5**

**Definition:** *Refusing to follow a reasonable request to a specific direction/instruction of an adult through disobedience, defiance, unruliness, or noncompliance which includes, but is not limited to, walking away when an adult is talking to you, talking back to an adult, refusal to work in class, refusal to turn off or put away an electronic device, or refusal to report to the office*

### **Integrity**

**Level: 1, 2, 3, 4**

*Engaging in or attempting to engage in cheating, plagiarism, counterfeiting, falsification, violation of software copyright laws, or violation of computer access shall be subject to disciplinary action. The following actions are specifically prohibited:*

- *Cheating- giving or receiving of any unauthorized assistance on academic work*
- *Plagiarism- copying the language, structure, or idea of another and representing it as one's own work.*
- *Falsification- verbal or written statement of any untruth.*
- *Violation of software copyright laws- unauthorized duplication of computer software (computer piracy), printed material related to computer software, and/or the use of pirated computer software.*
- *Violation of school Acceptable use Policies for electronic devices and communications*

### **Leaving an Area and/or Leaving Class**

**Level: 1, 2, 3, 4**

**Definition:**

*Leaving the classroom or other assigned area on or off campus without permission from the adult in charge.*

### **Matches/Lighter(s)**

**Level: 2, 3**

**Definition**

*Possession of matches or lighter(s) without attempting to use them. Using them falls under fire/arson.*

### **Non-Compliance**

**Level: 1, 2, 3**

**Definition:**

*Student engages in a low or high intensity of failure to comply with adult requests. Individualized consequences may be stated in a behavior contract.*

### **Physical Aggression/ Fighting**

**Level: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5**

*Physical Aggression: Taking any action or making comments or written messages that might reasonably be expected to result in a fight or physical altercation. Fighting (physical altercation). Fighting and physical altercation will automatically be moved to a level 3 or more.*

### **School/Class Attendance**

**Level: 1, 2, 3**

*Being tardy to class, skipping class/school, leaving campus without permission, or being in an unauthorized area is prohibited. Out of school suspension should be used as a last resort as a consequence for violation of this rule*

### **Sexual Assault**

**Level: 4, 5, 6**

*Definition: Physical sexual attack on school system staff, or another student*

### **Sexual Harassment**

**Level: 3, 4, 5, 6**

**Definition:**

*Unwelcome sexual advances, sexual comments on physical appearance, unwanted touching, requests for sexual favors, and/or other inappropriate verbal, written, or physical conduct of a sexual nature, directed toward others. Includes "sexting" and sharing or asking for sexually explicit images. "Pantsing," "bra snaps," and other attempts to remove another person's clothing constitutes sexual harassment.*

### **Stealing/Theft**

**Level: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5**

**Definition:**

*Taking, obtaining, or attempting to take property of another person or institution without permission or knowledge of the owner.*

### **Trespassing**

**Level 3, 4, 5**

**Definition:**

*Being on school property without permission, including while suspended or expelled; includes breaking and entering.*

### **Unsafe Actions**

**Level: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6**

**Definition:**

*Any action that has the potential to cause danger or physical harm to self or others; including but not limited to reckless behavior in a vehicle or on a field experience, with or without intent to harm.*



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**Weapons** (including look-a-like and toy items)**Level: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6*****Definition:****A weapon is, by way of illustration and without limitation, one of the following:**Possession and/or use of:****Firearms****A firearm as defined in 18 U.S.C. 921 of the federal code. Examples include handguns, rifles, shotguns, and bombs. Refer to the federal code for the complete definition.****Knife****This shall include, but is not limited to, switchblade knife, hunting knife, star knives, razors (including straight or retractable razor) **Gun** (including look-a-like gun)**Any gun of any kind, loaded or unloaded, operable or inoperable, including any object other than a firearm which is a look-a-like of a gun. This shall include, but is not limited to, pellet guns, paintball guns, stun guns, tasers, BB guns, flare guns, nail guns, and airsoft guns.****Other Weapons****Any implement which could cause, or is intended to cause bodily harm, other than a firearm, gun or knife. Including but not limited to explosives, laser pointers, brass knuckles, box cutters, nunchaku, spiked gloves, spiked wristbands, any mace derivative, tear gas device, or pepper spray product.***Acceptable Use of School Technology**

Students will have the opportunity to use The Exploris School's computer resources, which includes access to the Internet. Student use of technology develops skills in defining, accessing, managing, integrating, evaluating, creating, and communicating information. For computers that are accessed by minors, and in accordance with the student's Internet Protection Act (federal law enacted December 2000), The Exploris School implemented technology protection measures to block or filter Internet access to pictures and sites that: (a) are obscene, (b) are child pornography, or (c) are harmful to minors. We are committed to providing safe and quality instructional opportunities for all students. The student is responsible for appropriate behavior while using computer resources, including the internet. Teachers monitor student activities while online for appropriateness and instructional relevance.

***Students shall:***

- Use the provided school network account in an ethical, responsible, and legal manner for school-related tasks only.
- Communicate with others using appropriate language in a courteous and respectful manner.
- Maintain the privacy of their personal information, such as name, address, phone number, account passwords, social security numbers, and respect the privacy of others.
- Use only user accounts and passwords provided by the school.
- Comply with copyright laws and intellectual property rights of others.
- Keep their screen easily visible to adults at all times.



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### ***Students shall not:***

- Seek to override or bypass computer or network security provisions, including but not limited to turning off Hapara, Gaggle, or other school approved monitoring programs during school hours and on school devices.
- Use any network account for non-school related activities or to create accounts for personal use on websites.
- Access or attempt to access networks other than those approved
- Conduct unauthorized copying of licensed software; download or copy files without permission; or install personal software on computers.
- Plagiarize online content.
- Create fake accounts or attempt to impersonate others online
- Read, send, or forward personal email, chat messages, or instant messages.
- Use or import offensive, obscene, libelous, disruptive, or inflammatory language, pictures, or other material on any school computer or network.
- Remove or damage computer components.
- Knowingly access unauthorized computer workstations or software to tamper with or destroy data.
- Use electronic resources for commercial, personal purchasing, or illegal purposes.
- Use electronic resources for personal social media including blogging, social network sites, gaming, or to conduct cyber bullying.
- Share user account information or passwords with others.

### ***Directed Internet use***

- Requires appropriate adult supervision (i.e., staff members or their adult designees are present to the extent that active monitoring of student access to the Internet occurs).
- Internet use is permitted at all levels and in compliance with above stated conditions.
- Internet searches will be conducted using The Exploris School approved search engines and sites.

### ***Artificial Intelligence Technology Use Policy for Students***

At Exploris, we recognize the importance of preparing our students for a future where artificial intelligence (AI) plays a significant role. This policy aims to guide the responsible use of AI in our classrooms, following North Carolina guidelines for public schools.

#### **General Guidelines**

1. Always ask your teacher before using AI tools for assignments.
2. Be honest about your use of AI in your work.
3. Use AI as a tool to enhance your learning, not replace it.



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4. Report any concerns about AI use to your teacher or school administrator.

### Traffic Light System for AI Use

#### Red Light (Not Allowed)

- Using AI to complete assignments without teacher permission
- Submitting AI-generated work as your own without disclosure or citation
- Using AI to access inappropriate content or bypass school filters

#### Yellow Light (Use with Caution)

- Using AI tools for research, with proper citation of sources
- Utilizing AI for brainstorming ideas, with teacher approval
- Checking grammar and spelling with AI-powered tools

#### Green Light (Encouraged Use)

- Learning about AI technology and its applications
- Using teacher-approved AI tools for educational games and activities
- Collaborating with classmates on AI-related projects

By following these guidelines, we aim to create a safe and enriching learning environment that prepares students for the future while maintaining academic integrity.

### ***Penalties for Misuse of Technology***

Consequences for violations of the Acceptable Use Policy for School Technology are addressed in the Code of Student Conduct (Computer Misuse).

### ***Attendance & Tardies/Early Dismissal Importance of Attendance at The Exploris School***

- **Attendance is crucial for student success:** Regular attendance directly impacts a student's ability to learn and grow academically.
- **Attendance is essential for school funding:** Each absence during the first 20 days of school reduces the amount of funding Exploris receives from the state. Each absence after the first 20 days of school reduces the amount of funding we receive from the student's home county.
- **Attendance is vital for project-based learning:** The collaborative nature of the school's curriculum makes regular attendance particularly important.
- **Frequent absences hinder learning:** Students who miss school often struggle to keep up with coursework and miss out on valuable learning experiences.

#### **In essence:**

- Attendance is not just a requirement, but a cornerstone of a student's educational and social-emotional success at Exploris.



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- Regular attendance benefits both the student and the school community.

### ***School Attendance Policy***

**Notify the school:** Parents/guardians must inform the school in advance of their student's absence, tardiness, or early dismissal.

- **Communication methods:** Use the online [\*Exploris Attendance Notification Form\*](#) or contact the school office directly if you do not have online access.
- **Provide details:** Include student's name, reason for absence, and expected return date.
- **Verify absences:** Absences are unexcused until verified utilizing the online submission form within five days.
- Absences may be considered excused for only the following reasons, in accordance with Exploris School Board policy and state law:
  - Illness or Injury
  - Quarantine
  - Death in the Immediate Family
  - Religious Observances
  - Medical or Dental Appointments (with a note from the doctor)
- School Visits (3 per year)
- **Medical documentation required:**
  - Parent/Guardian communication may excuse up to three consecutive days of absence. After three consecutive days, a doctor's note is required.
  - Reaching 10 cumulative absences (excused or unexcused) requires medical documentation for future excused absences.
- **Attendance consequences:** In accordance with North Carolina's compulsory attendance law, G.S. 115C-378 parents/guardians will be notified in writing after 3, 6, and 10 unexcused absences.
- An Attendance Support Meeting is required after 10 cumulative excused and unexcused absences. The meeting will identify necessary interventions and implement strategies to improve the student's attendance. The plan will be regularly progress monitored and will be modified as needed.
- If it is deemed that an intervention plan is no longer serving the student, school personnel may refer to Child Protective Service, law enforcement and/or Juvenile Truancy Court in accordance with Compulsory Attendance Law. Additionally, the student may be withdrawn from school in accordance with the State Board of Education's 10-Day Rule.



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## ***Tardies and Early Dismissals***

- Tardies and early dismissals disrupt the learning process, for both the tardy student and their classmates. Please plan to have your student arrive at school on time and be in attendance for the entire instructional day.
- If and when possible, please schedule appointments, family trips, etc. after school hours or during school breaks.
- Students arriving after the start of school and/or leaving early **MUST** sign in/out using the SchoolPass system located in the front office of the building.
- A student must be present at least one-half of the school's instructional day in order to be recorded present for that day.
- **There will be NO EARLY DISMISSAL after 2:45 p.m.** After 2:45, your student will not be dismissed until the published dismissal times. Please arrange any appointments or pick ups to work within this timeframe. This policy helps make sure students being picked up early are not involved in carpool traffic.
- Excessive tardiness and/or early dismissals Additional Tips and Sample Communication can be found [here](#).

### **Emergency Situations:**

- If a parent/guardian needs to pick up a child in an emergency, they must inform the student's crew teacher, especially if an off-campus trip is scheduled.

### **Non-Parent/Guardian Pick-Up:**

- If someone other than the parent/guardian is picking up the student, the parent/guardian must provide written notice to the school that includes details on the person, time, and reason for the pick-up.

### **Message Policy:**

- Except in emergencies, the office will not deliver messages to students about pick-up arrangements.
- Students are not allowed to have cell phones on during the school day, so arrangements must be made in advance.

## ***Appeals***

- Parents/guardians may appeal attendance decisions to the school's Board of Directors.

This attendance policy aims to promote regular school attendance while complying with North Carolina state regulations. The school administration reserves the right to modify this policy as necessary to ensure compliance with state law and to meet the needs of our students and families.





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## Bullying Policy & Procedure

### State Law regarding bullying

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

It is important to make a distinction between bullying and conflict. Although any negative interactions between students are worth concern and attention, not all will rise to the level of bullying.

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

- An Imbalance of Power: Kids who bully use their power—such as physical strength, access to embarrassing information, popularity or social or financial status—to control or harm others. Power imbalances can change over time and in different situations, even if they involve the same people.
- Repetition: Bullying behaviors happen more than once and create a pattern of behaviors. Some specific examples of behavior that could be considered bullying include, but are not limited to; teasing, slurs, innuendo, derogatory remarks, name calling, spreading rumors, and circulating written materials or pictures that are either derogatory or insulting to an individual or group.

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

1. Any student who believes that he or she has been harassed or bullied in violation of this policy should report such behavior immediately to a teacher, counselor, or administrator.
2. A school employee who has witnessed or has reliable information that a student has been subject to any act of harassing or bullying behavior shall report the incident asap to the director on site
3. Any person may report an act of harassment or bullying anonymously using the [“Say Something” state-wide anonymous reporting system](#) or [“Anonymous Bullying Report Form.”](#) which is a direct link from the menu on The Exploris School website. However, disciplinary action may not be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

### ***Investigation of Bullying***

Reports of bullying activity will be investigated by the Director on site and staff.

Parents/guardians of the participants and victims will be notified. If warranted, formal disciplinary action will be taken by the Director on site as outlined in the level of consequences.

## ***Cyberbullying***

Instances of reported cyberbullying during the school day, on school grounds and over school devices will be handled in the manner described above. If the school is informed of inappropriate online comments/postings by students that happen outside of the school day, outside of the school network, or off the school campus, the following guidelines will apply:

- It is beyond our scope to police all online content.
- We will offer support to the student/family who reports, which may include consultations with our counseling staff, recommendations on tools to block and limit access to specific sites or tools, and recommendations on how to contact the hosting platform to report comments and activities.
- We will notify all parties as a courtesy, with the understanding that we do not evaluate, investigate, authenticate, follow up, or discipline such reports.
- We will be observant to see if the behaviors are carrying into the school environment.
- We will help students clarify the difference between bullying, which is behavior that is sustained, organized, creates a hostile environment, and random instances of unpleasant social media comments or conflicting political or social opinions.

## **Intervention and Support to Prevent School Violence: Exploris School Threat Assessment Protocols and Policies**

The Exploris School has adopted the policies, practices, and guidelines as part of a research based training from the [Comprehensive School Threat Assessment Guidelines \(CSTAG\)](#), specifically from Dr. Dewey Cornell and the University of Virginia's research team. Those policies are described below as best practices.

### ***Understanding and identifying threats***

A **threat** is a communicated intent to cause harm to someone. Threats can take various forms:

- **Spoken:** Direct verbal statements.
- **Written:** Notes, letters, or digital messages.
- **Social Media:** Posts or messages on any social platform.
- **Gestures or Behavior:** Non-verbal cues that convey an intent to harm.

Threats can also be categorized by their nature:

- **Direct:** Clear and unambiguous statements (e.g., "I am going to beat you up.").
- **Indirect:** Less specific but still concerning (e.g., "I am going to get him.").
- **Implied:** Suggested harm without explicit words (e.g., "You better watch out.").
- **Conditional:** Harm contingent on a specific action or event (e.g., "If I wanted to, I could blow this place up.").



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If staff is unsure whether someone's behavior constitutes a threat, they will **conduct an assessment**. This assessment helps determine if a threat exists and, if so, whether the individual seriously intends and has the capability to carry it out.

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### ***What is a Threat Assessment***

**Threat assessment** is a proactive, problem-solving method designed to prevent violence. It involves two key components:

- **Assessment:** Carefully evaluating individuals who have expressed threats or engaged in threatening behaviors.
- **Intervention:** Taking steps to address the underlying issues driving these threats.

We treat threatening statements and actions as signs that an individual is struggling with a difficult personal problem. The goal of threat assessment and intervention is to prevent violence by helping the individual resolve their issues, thereby removing their motivation for violence. As part of this process, **safety precautions and legal actions** are implemented when necessary to prevent immediate acts of violence.

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### ***Threat Assessment Team***

**The** team is a multidisciplinary group of The Exploris Staff. Their primary purpose is to **proactively identify, assess, and manage potential threats of violence or harm** within the school community, with the ultimate goal of preventing targeted violence.

- Members: Administration, Operations, Counseling, and Instructional Staff
- Training: Certification in CSTAT level 1 and 2 threat assessment training
- Responsible for the school risk management plan, safety drills, and adhering to the policies set forth by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, as well as state and federal legislation.
- Works collaboratively with the school community and outside agencies to ensure a safe school environment.

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## ***FIVE STEPS IN THE COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL THREAT ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES***

A threat assessment is conducted when there is a report that a student has threatened to harm someone.

**Step 1: Evaluate the threat.**

**Step 2: Attempt to resolve the threat as transient.**

**Step 3: Respond to a substantive threat.**

**Step 4: Conduct a safety evaluation for a very serious substantive threat.**

**Step 5: Implement and monitor the safety plan.**



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## ***Discipline and Transient Threats: What You Need to Know***

**Threat assessment** and **school discipline** are distinct but linked processes. While threat assessment aims to determine if there's actual danger, discipline addresses rule-breaking. Findings from a threat assessment should always inform disciplinary decisions.

### **Disciplinary Consequences for Transient Threats**

Not all threats are created equal when it comes to discipline:

- **Minor Consequences:** Many **transient threats**—those made without serious intent to harm—might only require a warning or counseling. For example, if a student uses a figure of speech that's misunderstood as a threat, they might just need guidance on using clearer language. If a student makes a transient threat simply for attention, they could be disciplined for disruptive behavior or using inappropriate language.
- **Serious Consequences:** Some transient threats, even without actual intent to harm, are so disruptive, disrespectful, or distressing that they warrant more serious discipline.
  - **The False Bomb Threat Example:** A student making a false bomb threat intends it as a joke or to cause disruption, not to blow up the school. From a threat assessment perspective, if there's no bomb, the threat isn't "serious" in terms of immediate danger.
  - **However, false bomb threats are serious legal violations.** The student could face arrest, criminal charges, and severe school disciplinary action, despite lacking true intent to harm.

### **Seriousness of Threat vs. Seriousness of Violation**

It's vital to differentiate between how "serious" a threat is (meaning, is there a real risk of harm?) and how "serious" the disciplinary violation is:

- A student might threaten a teacher in anger, then retract it and apologize. Even if the **threat is found to be transient** (no real intent to harm), **threatening a teacher is a serious disciplinary violation** that requires consequences.
  - Schools must be careful not to classify a threat as "substantive" (meaning there's a true intent to harm) just because the student's behavior itself is a serious rule infraction. The two concepts are separate.
  - Sometimes, a threat might happen at the same time as another, more serious disciplinary issue, like a fight. The student would face consequences for the fight, and a separate threat assessment would evaluate any risk of future violence.
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***Transient Threats*****Step 1: Evaluate the threat.**

Obtain a detailed account of the threat, usually by interviewing the person who made the threat, the intended victim, and other witnesses. Write the exact content of the threat and key observations by each party. Consider the circumstances in which the threat was made and the student's intentions. Is there communication of intent to harm someone or behavior suggesting intent to harm?

**Step 2: Attempt to resolve the threat as transient.**

Is the threat an expression of humor, rhetoric, anger, or frustration that can be easily resolved so that there is no intent to harm? Does the person retract the threat or offer an explanation and/or apology that indicates no future intent to harm anyone?

***Substantive Threats*****Step 3: Respond to the substantive threat**

For all substantive threats:

- a. Take precautions to protect potential victims.
- b. Warn the intended victim and parents.
- c. Look for ways to resolve conflict.
- d. Discipline the student when appropriate.

*Serious means a threat to hit, fight, or beat up, whereas very serious means a threat to kill, rape, or cause very serious injury with a weapon.*

**Step 4: Conduct a safety evaluation for a very serious substantive threat.**

In addition to a-d above, the student may be briefly placed elsewhere or suspended pending completion of the following:

- e. Screen the student for mental health services and counseling; refer as needed.
- f. Law enforcement investigation for evidence of planning and preparation, criminal activity.
- g. Development of a safety plan that reduces risk and addresses student needs. The plan should include a review of the Individual Educational Plan if the individual is already receiving special education services, and further assessment if a possible disability is identified.

**Step 5: Implement and monitor the safety plan**

Document the plan.  
Maintain contact with the student.  
Monitor whether the plan is working and revise as needed.

**Will parents be contacted if their child is threatened?**

**Yes.** Even for a transient threat, Exploris staff will do their best to inform the parents of the student who was targeted when we learn of a threat. While there's no "duty to warn" for protective reasons with transient threats, Exploris considers parents partners in their student's school experience and we want to keep clear communications about their student's experiences.



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*Guidance from CSTAG Manual and Training*

- **FERPA Concerns:**
    - In general information and disciplinary consequences for other students cannot be shared outside of the student's legal guardians.
    - In some cases where a student's safety is at stake, parents may be informed of the name of the student who has made the threat in order to help with any protective actions that may be deemed necessary. School staff can generally inform parents about what they personally observed, including student names, without violating FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act). Personal observations aren't part of a student's educational record.
  - **School Communication:** When contacting parents, staff members will share what the observed threat was, how the threat was investigated, what was determined, how it was resolved, and what steps are being taken to address any underlying problems. In some cases, parents of the student who made the threat might even allow sharing specific information to help ease the concerns of the targeted student's parents.
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## Corporal Punishment / Physical Restraint

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

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

## Dress Code Policy and Procedures

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

Learning at Exploris often happens off campus and may involve long walks or experiences in natural environments, in workplace settings, or even on religious sites. As such, shoes and clothing should be chosen carefully so that students are prepared to engage in these experiences and follow the requests and guidelines from any host site. The appropriateness and safety of footwear and clothing for a particular activity will be determined by the child's supervising teacher. If it is determined that a student is not appropriately dressed for the activity, the parent will be contacted for a change of clothing/shoes. If alternate clothing/shoes are not available, the student may miss out on the activity.

Clothing should cover the torso and backside. Clothing, imagery, and accessories that display or promote negative messages are not permitted. These could include drug, weapon, alcohol, or





tobacco-related information, obscenities, put-downs, innuendo, political messages, or offensive graphics/words. If a teacher questions the appropriateness of a student's dress, the student will be referred to an administrator. If the administrator determines that the student is inappropriately dressed, the student will be given the opportunity to call a parent and have other clothing delivered. If the parent/guardian cannot be reached the school will provide clothing for the student when possible. Habitual violations will be considered willful disrespect and non-compliance on the part of the student and formal disciplinary action will be taken:

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

## **Colognes, Perfumes, Body Lotions, and Sprays**

Students should not bring cologne, perfume, scented lotions, and spray deodorant products to school. These items and their aerosol propellants can trigger asthma and other allergic reactions in sensitive individuals. If they are found at school, they may be confiscated under the guidelines above.

If colognes, perfumes, scented body lotions or scented sprays are applied at home before arriving at school, they should be applied sparingly with a reminder that our classrooms and hallways are crowded and students often work in close quarters with one another. Sunscreen, solid, and roll-on deodorant are exceptions.

## **Peanut and Tree-Nut Free Campus**

In order to protect all our students, especially those already identified with a life-threatening allergy, no products containing peanuts or tree nuts (such as almond, cashew, macadamia, and Brazil nuts, for example, should be brought onto or consumed on school grounds, classrooms, or field experiences. Please reach out to your campus director or school counselor for suggestions on lunch and snack items that would meet these requirements.

## **Drugs and Alcohol**

The possession and use of illicit substances is illegal and harmful. The Exploris School and Board of Directors prohibits the unlawful possession, use, or distribution of illicit substances on school premises or as part of any school activities. Compliance with drug and alcohol laws is mandatory for all parents/guardians, students, and staff. Information on drug and alcohol counseling is available to all students upon request from the school counselor. Students who are caught with drugs, alcohol, and vapors are subject to drug testing to ensure the safety of the student. The Exploris School will provide the cost, location and procedures necessary to the parent/guardian for the student to return to school and ensure safety of the student.



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## Extended Suspension for Students with Disabilities

When the school system seeks to suspend students with disabilities for more than ten days, the Individual Education Program (IEP)/504 team must meet within ten days of the student's removal from school. The purpose of this meeting is to determine whether or not the behavior was a manifestation of the student's disability.

*If the IEP/504 team determines that the behavior is related to the student's disability, the student is returned to school immediately and the IEP team should discuss whether a change in placement or services is warranted.*

### ***For students with IEPs:***

- Regardless of whether the conduct is related to the disability, if the incident for which the student is being disciplined involves a dangerous weapon, a controlled dangerous substance, or serious bodily injury, the school system can unilaterally place a special education student in an alternative education setting for up to 45 days.
- If the IEP team determines that the conduct is not related to the disability, the student is subject to the regular discipline procedures explained herein.

## Student Conflict/Peer Mediation

In keeping with our restorative approach to conflict resolution and discipline, students are encouraged to work with one another, teachers, the counselor, and administrators to resolve conflicts and prevent hostility. Peer mediation is a student-based, voluntary process for resolving conflict among students, grade kindergarten through 8th grade. The school counselor or Directors can assist with this process. Peer mediation supports safe teaching and learning environments by increasing student responsibility for behavior and decreasing time spent on discipline. In some cases, students may be given the option to meet with mediators or other outside consultants who are trained and meet with individuals or groups of students in pairs. The goal is to repair relationships and reduce negative peer interactions that interfere with the learning environment.

## Items from Home

Students should only bring appropriate academic-related items to school. Unrelated magazines, toys, trading cards, etc. should remain at home. Any items (**including cell phones**) that disrupt the learning environment in any way or present a safety hazard will be confiscated according to the following guidelines:

- **1st offense:** Teacher will collect and return to the student at the end of the school day on the first occasion (Warning)



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- **2nd offense:** Items will be held in the office until a parent/guardian can pick them up on the second occasion and their after. (Family Involvement)
- **3rd offense:** Item will be held in the office. The director meets with the student and parent to discuss the behavior. (Office Referral)
- **Additional offenses:** Items will be held in the office and additional consequences will be applied as outlined in the code of student conduct.

**Cell phones and smart watches must be turned off when school is in session and during before/aftercare.** Cell phones are not to be used during the school day except when requested by their teacher for educational purposes. Teachers may require students to place cell phones in grade level designated areas.

House Bill 959, signed into law by Governor Josh Stein, prohibits students from using or having cell phones or any two-way personal communication devices such as smart watches or pagers turned on during instructional time.

In-ear earbuds should not be brought to school. They are expensive, easily lost, and easily concealed from teachers and as such constitute a disruption to the learning environment. Over-the-head headphones and wired earbuds are acceptable for use at approved times.

As of the 2024-2025 school year, Exploris will supply a school Chromebook for student use during classroom activities. Students should not bring personal laptops or tablets to school.

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

All personal property, including personal computers, brought to school is brought at the owner's risk. The Exploris School cannot assume responsibility for any property belonging to students. Distracting or inappropriate objects will be taken from a student and returned at the end of the day. Repeated violations will require a parent conference. Students should not bring large sums of money to school. If it is necessary to bring a large sum of money, that money should be taken to the office. Please note that in recent years the rise in popularity of AirPods and other in-ear Bluetooth devices has also corresponded with a rise in loss and theft of these small and hard-to-distinguish items. Students are encouraged to leave these items at home or secured in their bookbags during the day. It is also best practice to label all personal items in a permanent manner so as to distinguish them from other similar items if the need arises.

### **School visits and Classroom Observations:**

Federal Law under IDEA and ESSA mandate that parents/guardians have the right to schedule an observation as part of their meaningful participation in determining their child's educational placement. These observations can help parents/guardians gather key information about their child's behavior, classroom dynamics, and the appropriateness of a placement.



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Observations may not interfere with the delivery of instruction or disrupt the learning environment. Any Exit conferences with the teacher or campus director/designee must occur at a prescribed time away from students and after instructional time.

Visitors may not take photos, take video, or audio recordings while in the classroom observing. Any notes taken during the visit are the presumed opinion of the observer and are not considered an accurate written record of the classroom environment or events.

Upon arrival, visitors must follow established procedures for entering the main building including but not limited to: Signing in, presenting a photo ID, and wearing a visitors' badge. The visitor badge must be worn at all times and placed in a visible location. Visitors are to be escorted to the classroom by a staff member prior to the start of class. At the conclusion of the observation a staff member should be called to escort the parent/guardian back to the office.

Parents/guardians may not have access to student performance or behavioral records outside of their own child's. In addition, the campus director and/or their designee should discuss with the parent/guardian the importance of maintaining confidentiality regarding observations of other students within the classroom

## School Counselor

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

### ***Confidentiality in Counseling:***

When a student indicates that he or she is thinking about hurting himself or herself or other students, school personnel are required to take action to ensure the safety of the student or other students. This action may include sharing of information with the school principal, parents/guardians, and other outside agencies. No statement, oral or written, made by a student seeking counseling for any form of drug abuse may be used as admissible evidence against him/her in any proceedings.



## Section 6: School, Parent, and Student Rights and Responsibilities

### Parent Rights

Under State law SB 49, commonly referred to as the Parents' Bill of Rights, (S.L. 2023-106), parents are allowed to exercise the following rights with regards to their child's education:

- (1) To direct the education and care of their child.
- (2) To direct the child's upbringing and moral or religious training.
- (3) To enroll their child in a public or nonpublic school and in any school choice options available to the parent for which the child is otherwise eligible by law to comply with compulsory attendance laws, as provided in Part 1 of Article 26 of Chapter 115C of the General Statutes.
- (4) To access and review all education records, as authorized by the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1232g, relating to their child.
- (5) To make health care decisions for their child, unless otherwise provided by law, including Article 1A of Chapter 90 of the General Statutes
- (6) To access and review all medical records of their child, as authorized by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA), P.L. 104-191, as amended, except as follows:
  - a. If an authorized investigator requests that information not be released to a parent because the parent is the subject of an investigation of either of the following: A crime committed against the child under Chapter 14 of the General Statutes. An abuse and neglect complaint under Chapter 7B of the General Statutes.
  - b. When otherwise prohibited by law.
- (7) To prohibit the creation, sharing, or storage of a biometric scan of their child without the parent's prior written consent, except as authorized pursuant to a court order or otherwise required by law, including G.S. 7B-2102 and G.S. 7B-2201.
- (8) To prohibit the creation, sharing, or storage of their child's blood or deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) without the parent's prior written consent, except as authorized pursuant to a court order or otherwise required by law, including G.S. 7B-2201
- (9) To prohibit the creation by the State of a video or voice recording of their child without the parent's prior written consent, except a recording made in the following circumstances:
  - a. During or as part of a court proceeding.
  - b. As part of an investigation under Chapter 7B or Chapter 14 of the General Statutes.
  - c. When the recording will be used solely for any of the following purposes: A safety demonstration, including one related to security and discipline on educational property. An academic or extracurricular activity. Classroom instruction. Photo identification cards. Security or surveillance of buildings, grounds, or school transportation.



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(10) To be promptly notified if an employee of the State suspects that a criminal offense has been committed against their child, unless the incident has first been reported to law enforcement or the county child welfare agency, and notification of the parent would impede the investigation.

More details can be found on the school's website under "SB 49 Policies."

## **McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act and Policy**

The [McKinney-Vento Act \(42 U.S.C. § 11431 et seq.\)](#) is a federal law that addresses the needs of students and youth experiencing homelessness. The law defines homeless to include the following temporary living situations due to hardship:

- Living with a friend, relative, or other person
- Hotel or motel
- Shelter or transitional housing
- Car, park, or other public place
- Campground or inadequate home
- Youth living on their own, runaway youth, or youth kicked out of the home

The McKinney-Vento Act addresses educational challenges created by homelessness and guarantees students the right to enroll, attend, and succeed in school. The law places the responsibility for guaranteeing the rights of students experiencing homelessness in states and school districts (NCHE, 2014).

As a requirement of the federal law, all public school districts in the United States must appoint a liaison that will ensure compliance with the federal law. For more information, contact Exploris's McKinney-Vento Coordinator at [counselor@exploris.org](mailto:counselor@exploris.org) and click on the links below to learn more about parent rights, student rights, and the dispute resolution process.

- [Parent Rights, Student Rights, Dispute Resolution Policy](#)
- [Dispute Resolution Form](#)

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

It is the policy of The Exploris School to maintain a safe and supportive school environment for all students and staff, free from harassment, intimidation, and/or bullying and free from discrimination due to actual or perceived race, color, creed, ethnicity, national origin, citizenship/immigration status, religion, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, disability, or weight. The school also extends all programs and activity possibilities to students based upon their individual interests and potential without discrimination according to handicapping conditions.



Discrimination means any act or failure to act that unreasonably and unfavorably differentiates treatment of others based solely on their membership in a socially distinct group or category, such as race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or gender identity or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have one or more of these characteristics. Discrimination may be intentional or unintentional.

Harassment, including sexual or gender-based harassment, is not limited to specific situations or relationships. It may occur between fellow students or co-workers, between supervisors and subordinates, between employees and students, or between non-employees, including visitors and volunteers, and employees or students. Harassment may occur between members of different genders or the same gender. Complaints alleging discrimination or harassment based on a person's biological or gender identity must be handled in accordance with procedures outlined in our bullying and harassment policy.

## **Right to Confidentiality of Access to Student Records**

The *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)* guarantees to parents/guardians of students under 18 and the eligible student (18 and older) the right to:

- Inspect and review the educational records of the student within 45 days after the day The Exploris School receives a request for access.
- Request the school to disclose information in the educational records to persons/agencies outside the school.
- Request the amendment of the educational records to ensure that the records are not inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the privacy or other rights of the student.
- File with the US Department of Education a complaint concerning alleged failures by the school to comply with the requirements of FERPA.

Parents/Guardians or eligible students who wish to inspect educational records should submit a written request to the Director Team that identifies the records they wish to inspect. One of the directors will make arrangements for access and notify the parent/guardian or eligible student of the time and place where the records may be inspected.

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





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

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

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

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

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

## **Rights under the No Child Left Behind Act**

Parents and Students have the right to the professional qualifications of the school's classroom teachers. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 governs elementary and secondary education, allows for parents/guardians to ask for certain information about their child's classroom teachers, and requires the school to give this information to parents/guardians in a timely manner if they ask for it. [Specifics regarding Parents Rights to Know.](#)

## **Section 504**

As a parent/guardian, if you believe there might be a disability, please reach out to your child's crew teacher or our 504 coordinator (Exploris School Counselor) by contacting the school.



Many students have conditions or disorders that are not readily apparent to others. They may include conditions such as specific learning disabilities, diabetes, epilepsy and allergies. Hidden disabilities such as low vision, poor hearing, heart disease or chronic illness may not be obvious, but if the disabilities are not properly diagnosed and they substantially limit that child's ability to receive an appropriate education as defined by Section 504, they may be considered to have an "impairment" under Section 504 standards. As a result, these students, regardless of their intelligence, will be unable to fully demonstrate their ability or attain educational benefits equal to that of non-disabled students (The Civil Rights of Students with Hidden Disabilities under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973). For more information about protecting students with disabilities please visit [US Dept of Education- Office of Civil Rights](#).

*Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973* is a national law that protects qualified individuals from discrimination based on their disability. The nondiscrimination requirements of the law apply to employers and organizations that receive financial assistance from any Federal department or agency. It is a civil rights legislation for persons with disabilities, designed to prevent any form of discrimination based on disabilities, who are otherwise qualified or protected. For more information [click here](#). If a student qualifies, then a 504 plan is created.

A Section 504 Plan is a legal document falling under the provisions of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. It is designed to plan individualized services to assist students with disabilities who are in a regular education setting. A 504 Plan is not an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) as is required for exceptional students. However, if the student no longer needs special instruction and is moving to a regular education placement s/he could be placed under a 504 Plan.

### ***How Does an Individual Qualify as Disabled Under Section 504?***

There is no specific mention of learning disabilities in Section 504, however the law defines a person as disabled if he or she:

- has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities,
- has a record of such an impairment, or
- is regarded as having such an impairment. 28 CFR Sec. 36.104.

Learning, speaking, seeing, walking, and hearing among others listed in The Americans With Disabilities Amendments Act are all considered major life activities. As a general rule, if a child is [eligible for services under IDEA](#) (Individuals With Disabilities Education Act) he or she qualifies for protection under Section 504. However, not all students covered by Section 504 are eligible for IDEA-related services. Section 504 has a broader definition of "disability" as compared to the disabilities covered under IDEA and so it pertains to many more people.



Section 504 requires that school districts provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to qualified students in their jurisdictions who have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, regardless of the nature or severity of the disability. Under Section 504, FAPE means providing regular or special education and related aids and services designed to meet the student's individual educational needs as adequately as the needs of nondisabled students are met.

### ***Resources and Dispute Procedures for Section 504:***

- [National Center for Learning Disabilities- 504](#)
- [Parent and Educator Resource Guide for Section 504](#)
- [Section 504 Overview](#)
- [Section 504 Parent and Student Rights](#)
- [Non-Discrimination/Non-Harrasment of students and staff](#)
- [Procedural Safeguards](#)
- [Formal Grievance Procedure](#)

### **Special Education: Child Find for Students with Disabilities**

The Exploris School is required to locate and identify young people with physical, emotional or intellectual disabilities who may be in need of special education and related services.

Parents/guardians of students aged two years old or younger who may be in need of such services should contact the Exceptional Students Coordinator or School Counselor so that we may assist you in contacting Head Start.

The *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004* ensures that all eligible students with a disability who are in need of special education receive a free appropriate public education. IDEA mandates that eligible students receive individualized instruction specially designed to meet the unique needs of the learner.

To the maximum extent appropriate, students with disabilities, including students in public or other educational facilities, are to be educated with students who are not disabled. In addition, to the maximum extent appropriate, students with disabilities are to participate with non-disabled peers in both non-academic and extracurricular activities. Unless the individualized education program for the child with disabilities requires some other arrangement, the child is to be educated in the school that they would attend if they were not disabled. Special classes, separate schools or removal of students requiring special education from the regular educational environment shall occur only when the needs of a child are such that education in the regular classes cannot be accomplished satisfactorily.



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***What do I do if I think my child might need specially designed instruction?***

At Exploris, we provide special education and related services according to the federal mandates of the [Individual with Disabilities Education Act \(IDEA\)](#) and the regulations of the North Carolina Public School Law, Article 9.

If you would like to request that your child be evaluated for special education services or if you have questions regarding your child's IEP and services please contact your child's teacher of record or our Exceptional Students Coordinator.

***Resources and Dispute procedures for IDEA***

- [Parent Rights and Responsibilities](#)
- [Garantias de Procedimiento Manual de Derechos de los Padres](#)
- [North Carolina Dept. Public Instruction Dispute Resolution](#)
- [Formal Grievance Procedures](#): See The Exploris School Grievance Procedure

**Student Rights & Supports*****School Problems***

If a student has a problem related to discipline, security, personal safety or welfare, or vandalism, the student should:

1. Tell the nearest teacher, adult, or staff member.
2. Talk with the director on site or counselor right away.
3. Express feelings. It is natural to feel worried and upset. Talk to someone who will listen and understand perhaps your crew teacher and/or counselor. It is important to talk with a trusted adult.
4. Ask to talk with the school counselor, who can help students learn ways to deal with problems so that they may feel safer and more comfortable when faced with a similar problem in the future.
5. In addition to alerting school personnel, a student should tell their parent/guardian about the problem.

***Personal Problems***

For help with personal problems which may affect a student's school life or activities:

1. If possible, discuss the problem with parents/guardians.
2. If a student and their parents/guardians cannot solve the problem. The student may speak with a teacher with whom they feel comfortable.



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## Family &amp; Student Handbook

3. The school counselor is trained to offer help with personal problems. The counselor can also lead students/families to other resources that they may not be aware of.
4. The Campus Director will also be able to discuss the problem with the student and attempt to work on a solution. If they are unable to do so, they will seek additional assistance.

[Gender Support Guidelines](#): These guidelines are intended to help our school promote the educational and social integration of transgender, non-binary and gender non-conforming students and ensure a safe learning environment free from discrimination and harassment. While inadvertent slips and honest mistakes may occur from time-to-time, the intentional and persistent refusal to respect a student's gender identity or chosen name and pronoun is prohibited and may constitute discrimination, harassment, or bullying.

## Title I and Federal Programs

***What is Title I, Part A?** Title I, Part A (Title I) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) provides financial assistance to local educational agencies (LEAs) and schools with high numbers or high percentages of students from low-income families to help ensure that all students meet challenging state academic standards. Federal funds are currently allocated through four statutory formulas that are based primarily on census poverty estimates and the cost of education in each state.*

In support of strengthening student academic achievement, The Exploris School receives Title I, Part A funds and therefore must jointly develop with, agree on with, and distribute to parents/guardians and family members of participating students a written parent and family engagement policy, agreed on by such parents/guardians, that shall describe the means of carrying out the requirements of The Every Students Succeeds Act (ESSA) Section 1116.

Please click on this link to access the policy: [Parent Family Engagement Policy](#) | [Parent Family Engagement Policy \(Español\)](#)

## Family-School Compact and Parents Right to Know

In order to fulfill the requirements of the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA) of the Elementary and Secondary Act (ESEA), The Exploris School agrees to implement the formation of a partnership between the home, school, and community; recognizes that the family is the child's first and most important teacher; and provide students with the skills to meet the challenging academic standards required by the North Carolina State Department of Public Instruction.

- Each year, The Exploris School will ensure the School-Parent Compact is updated in collaboration with stakeholders and provided to all parents/guardians to review and sign.



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- As a parent you have the right to request information regarding student participation in state-required assessments [in accordance with ESSA's Parents Right to Know](#).
- Each year, The Exploris School shall provide notice to parents/guardians of the school's written parent and family engagement policy and parents'/guardians' right to know.

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## Appendix I: The Exploris School Grievance Policy

**Includes Grievance Procedure for Section 504 and Special Education (*Individuals with Disability Education Act*):**

### Article I: Introduction and Values

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

This policy utilizes the term “family member” to denote a parent or guardian with direct custodial responsibilities for a student, and is meant to include adult family members with formal or informal guardianship responsibilities of the student.

Those seeking to submit a formal grievance are required to first consult with the Family and Employee Liaison (see Article III, Section 2 of this policy). The Family and Employee Liaison’s role is to impartially facilitate the grievance process set forth in Article II of this policy, as well as support the family member or employee in producing the required documents and adhering to required timelines.

**Definition of a Grievance:** A grievance is a formal complaint regarding specific decisions made in violation of school policy by school personnel that alleges that such decisions have adversely affected the person making the complaint or the dependent of the person making the complaint. A grievance can be made when a student or parent believes that school and board policy or law has been misapplied, misinterpreted, or violated. The term “grievance” does not include any matter for which the method of review is prescribed by law, for which there is a more specific board policy providing a process for addressing the concern, or upon which the board is without authority to act.

### Article II: Parent Grievance Procedures

#### *Section 1: Responsibility and Authority of the School Leadership Team*

The Board recognizes that effective school governance requires that the primary responsibility for issues involving student discipline, curriculum, assessment and promotion, and other day-to-day decisions regarding school management lies with the faculty, staff, and Leadership Team of the School and these individuals are best suited to resolve conflicts that arise with respect to these issues. The Board has the authority to appoint, employ, and remove the Director





Team, but primary responsibility and authority over faculty, staff, and volunteer organizations of the School are vested in the Director Team. The Board, therefore, will exercise any authority in this policy conservatively and narrowly so as not to usurp the authority granted to the Director Team.

## ***Section 2: Informal Procedures***

A family member should first attempt to resolve any grievance through discussion with the relevant teacher(s) or other involved persons. If the family member's concern is not adequately addressed through an informal discussion with the teacher and/or staff involved, the family member should next attempt to resolve the grievance with the appropriate Director, if applicable. Email conversations and previous in-person discussions of the topic do not satisfy the need for this step. A synchronous meeting is required, preferably in person, to discuss the grievance issue and the specific policy that may have been violated. If a grievance cannot be resolved in an informal manner, the family member may initiate a formal grievance procedure as outlined below.

## ***Section 3: Formal Procedures***

In instances where informal means are ineffective or otherwise not feasible, the School offers these more formal grievance procedures. Grievance proceedings and information shall be kept confidential at all levels to the extent possible and permitted by law. A family member grievance is a formal written claim by a family member with custodial responsibility for a student enrolled at Exploris or group of family members (including from multiple families) identifying the concern, identifying the individual or group's resolution attempts, and identifying any law, policy, or practice that is implicated by the concern. No one shall retaliate against a family member who files a grievance under this policy (or against a student whose family member files a grievance) in good faith.

**Level One – Supervisor Request and Conference.** A family member may, by written request, seek a formal conference with the relevant supervisor to address an unresolved grievance. The request shall succinctly describe the specific grievance(s) and related details, and shall identify any specific policy, rule, regulation or law believed to have been violated, and shall provide other relevant information to help the supervisor adequately understand the nature of the grievance.

1. The request shall be filed within fifteen (15) business days of the most recent incident(s) or last informal attempt to resolve the grievance, provided that such attempt was made within ten (10) business days of the last incident.
2. Following receipt of the written request, the supervisor shall, whenever possible, conduct a conference with the aggrieved family member(s) within ten (10) business days of receipt of the written request. Within five (5) business days following the conference, the



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supervisor will state in writing his or her decision with regard to the grievance and a copy will be given to the family member.

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

1. The appeal must be made within five (5) business days following receipt of the supervisor's written Level One response to the grievant. The Director Team will review the grievance and conduct an informal investigation as necessary.
2. The Director Team shall issue a written response to the family member and the Level One supervisor/staff within ten (10) business days following receipt of the written appeal.
3. Decisions of the Director Team are final and not subject to further appeal, except in the following instances:
  - a. Decisions involving an alleged violation of a contractual right;
  - b. Decisions involving an alleged violation by the School of state or federal law including Section 504, special education, or IDEA;
  - c. Decisions based on allegations of conduct by the Director Team in violation of law or school policy.
4. The Board of Directors, through its Grievance Committee, retains discretion to determine whether an alleged violation involves a "final" or "appealable" decision by the Director Team. The Grievance Committee may consider all the available evidence in the record established at the time of the decision and any other evidence it deems necessary for consideration. In addition, the Grievance Committee has the authority to grant a discretionary appeal in exceptional circumstances.

**Level Three - Appeal to the Board Grievance Committee (Third Party Representation):**

*Appeal of Rights and Discretionary Appeals.* If a family member is not satisfied with the disposition of the grievance at Level Two, they may, within five (5) business days of receiving notice of the decision of the Director Team submit a written request to the Grievance Committee Chairperson to appeal the Director Team decision and to request a formal hearing.

1. Within five (5) business days of receiving the written request for appeal, the Grievance Committee Chairperson shall issue a written notice to the parent and the Director Team indicating whether the Director Team determination is "final" in nature or whether the Board, in its discretion or by right of appeal, shall grant a hearing. The notice shall also specify, if a hearing is granted, the time it will occur and guidelines by which it will be conducted.
2. When a hearing is granted, a panel of the Grievance Committee consisting of at least three people shall hear the grievance within ten (10) business days of the date the Chairperson's notice is issued to the family member.



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3. The Grievance Committee panel may affirm, reverse, or modify the decision of the Director Team or refer the grievance to the full School Board. The decision of the Grievance Committee or the full Board is final.
4. Following the hearing, the family member and the Director Team shall be informed in writing of the panel's decision within five (5) business days after the hearing, whenever feasible.

## **Article III: Grievance Committee Structure and Rules**

### ***Section 1: Composition of the Grievance Committee***

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

### ***Section 2: Family and Employee Liaison***

Annually at a meeting of the Board, one member of the Board of Directors shall be appointed by the Chairperson of the Board of Directors and confirmed by a vote of the full Board to serve as Family and Employee Liaison. This individual shall not sit on the Grievance Committee. His or her primary role will be to help family members and employees understand the grievance procedures and to provide process guidance to aggrieved parties. Those who approach other members of the Board of Directors with grievances will be referred to the Family and Employee Liaison.

### ***Section 3: Training***

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

### ***Section 4: Timelines***

Failure of a family member or employee to comply with the procedural timelines listed in this policy may result in denial of a grievance request. Extensions in timelines may be granted if the relevant decision-maker determines there is a reasonable need for such extension. Similarly, the timelines for actions to be taken by school personnel or Board members may be extended, with notice to the aggrieved party, when there is a reasonable need for extension or extension is in the best interest of an effective process.



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### ***Section 5: Forms***

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

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## **Appendix II: Acceptable Use Policy for School Technology**

Students will be provided with a school issued device for educational use for classroom and school activities. We expect students to use all electronic resources, laptops, and other handheld devices for educational purposes only as approved by the teachers while on the school's campus. Students should not bring personal devices like a laptop or tablet to school. If a student has a health plan, IEP, 504 plan, or other individual situation where a personal device is required, they may be required to install school approved monitoring software, programs, browsers, or extensions for school use. Access to education technology and school internet is a privilege, not a right. As a technology user, students are expected to act in a considerate and responsible manner. Misuse of the network resources or internet will result in consequences for the inappropriate behavior, and access may be restricted.

Students should read the following rules of network etiquette. Family members should read this section aloud to students who are unable to read it to themselves.

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

- I will communicate politely. I will treat others with respect. I will not harass or attack others, or use expressions of bigotry, racism, sexism, or other types of hurtful language, pictures, or expressions. I will not send, display, or use profanity, obscenity, sexually explicit, or offensive material.
- I will use my school email account for schoolwork and educational purposes only. I will not use that email address to set up other accounts unless given explicit direction from a teacher to do so.
- I will protect privacy and safety by not disclosing private or personal information about myself and or others on the Internet. I will never falsify my identity.
- I will keep my password private and will not attempt to collect, reveal, share, or use another person's password.
- I will use the network/Internet and other school-given electronic resources for school-related, educational activities as assigned by my teachers. This also means that I will not attempt to use the computer to buy or sell any products, for illegal activity, or for political purposes.
- I will not tamper with or change a computer file that isn't mine, copy or download files or programs, or modify the computer's settings without permission from my teachers.
- I will recognize and respect the intellectual property of others by not plagiarizing or using copyrighted materials from the Internet without permission of the author. I will cite the source when appropriate.
- I will respect the integrity of the Exploris network system. I will enter authorized systems only. I will never try to circumvent security measures on either Exploris's Network or



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computers at any remote site. I will not tamper with or alter the system in such a way that would disrupt the network.

- I will use equipment responsibly. I will not attempt to damage or vandalize the computer hardware, electronic systems, software, or networks.
- I will not make, or attempt to make, any malicious attempt to harm or destroy data of another user, including the uploading, downloading, or creation of computer viruses.
- I will not turn off or circumvent any school monitoring programs such as Go Guardian or Gaggle.
- I will follow classroom guidance for integrity in the use of any AI tools and follow the school policy

### **Consequences for Unacceptable Use of the School Technology**

If I violate any part of this policy, the school administrator will evaluate the severity and level of the violation and determine the appropriate level of consequence warranted. Consequences will be assigned in accordance with our school Code of Conduct outlined in the Family and Student Handbook.

# Coversheet

## Community & Connections

<b>Section:</b>	II. Committee Reports
<b>Item:</b>	D. Community & Connections
<b>Purpose:</b>	FYI
<b>Submitted by:</b>	
<b>Related Material:</b>	Invitation to Community Connections Committee.pdf



## Invitation to Community Connections Committee

### **Subject: Join the Exploris Community Connections Committee – Your Voice Matters!**

Dear Exploris Community,

We are excited to share an opportunity for you to help shape the future of our school and strengthen the ties that connect us all. As part of our continued commitment to academic excellence, innovation, diversity, equity, inclusion, and deep community engagement, Exploris is launching our newly focused **Community Connections Committee**.

#### **Our Purpose:**

The mission of this committee is simple and powerful—ensure every member of the Exploris community has a meaningful channel for communication, idea-sharing, and joint problem solving. Together, we will actively seek out and include multiple voices and perspectives so that every decision made at and for our school is collaborative and reflective of our collective values.

#### **Why Join Us?**

The Exploris School Strategic Vision sets our course as a nationally recognized leader in education, where academic excellence and community connection empower lifelong learners and engaged citizens. Our School Improvement Plan calls for increased stakeholder satisfaction with communication and engagement—and that begins with inviting YOU to join in this work.

As a member of the Community Connections Committee, you will:

- Help design and facilitate activities such as monthly "Coffee Chats" with school leaders, book study groups, and community events
  - Be a part of ongoing dialogue to strengthen family, staff, board, and partner relationships
  - Support outreach and ensure all voices in our community are heard and valued
- Collaborate on strategies and solutions to enrich Exploris's learning environment for students and families

#### **Who Should Join?**

We welcome teachers, staff, parents, board members, and community partners—anyone who cares deeply about making Exploris stronger and more inclusive!

#### **Ready to Take Part?**

Please reply to this message if you are interested, or reach out to the school office with questions. We will share more details about our first meeting soon.

Exploris's legacy of excellence is rooted in our ability to innovate, include, and connect. With your participation, the Community Connections Committee will help us fulfill our strategic goals and mission:

*"Empowering students to thrive as lifelong learners and engaged citizens who make a difference both around the corner and around the world."*

Thank you for considering this important service. Together, we can ensure Exploris remains a beacon of 21st-century education and a true community of learners.

# Coversheet

## Director Evaluation & Support

<b>Section:</b>	II. Committee Reports
<b>Item:</b>	E. Director Evaluation & Support
<b>Purpose:</b>	Discuss
<b>Submitted by:</b>	
<b>Related Material:</b>	_Overview Exploris Director Feedback and Evaluation Process.pdf



## Overview of Exploris Director Feedback and Evaluation Process

*This process has been designed to support the continuous improvement of Exploris Directors through our Core Values of relationships and reflection. The intent is to provide structures that enable an ongoing conversation, feedback, and collaboration between School Board Members and the Directors NOT a rigid process that requires an undue amount of time for Board Members or Directors.*

<i>Prior to 1st Day of School</i> <b>Reflection &amp; Self-Assessment</b>	Director engages in self-assessment and reflection, selects focus areas from the <a href="#">NC Standards for School Administrators</a> , writes draft goals and identifies competencies that are most likely to support goal attainment.
<i>August/September:</i> <b>Initial Meeting with Board Champions*</b>	Director meets with their designated Board Champions* to discuss reflection and draft goals. The team works together to finalize goals and agree on the data, evidence, and artifacts that will be used to show progress on identified goals. Finalized goals are shared with the full board.
<i>Ongoing</i> <b>Data Collection</b>	Director works on their goals and collects the agreed upon data, evidence, and artifacts. A member from the Board Champion Team reaches out to see what support is needed a minimum of once per month. At least one member from the Board Champion Team does an informal on-site visit prior to the Mid-Year Review.
<i>January/February</i> <b>Mid-Year Review with Board Champions</b>	Director meets with their designated Board Champions to discuss progress on goals, review available data, and adjust plans as necessary. If there are any significant performance concerns that may lead to non-renewal of employment contract, a formal support plan with specific, measurable improvement expectations should be put in place at this time. The plan should have the support of the full board.
<i>January-June</i> <b>Portfolio Preparation &amp; Presentation</b>	Data collection and reflection continue. The Board Champion Team does an informal on-site visit. They meet with the Director to hear about accomplishments and see artifacts that show evidence of growth
<i>May/June</i> <b>Year-End Review with Board Champions</b>	Prior to the review, <i>Board Champions</i> meet with each other to complete a summary evaluation, gather any additional data needed, determine recommended salary adjustments based on ratings, and agree to continued employment. <i>Director</i> revisits their beginning of the year self-assessment, rates their current performance, and reflects on growth. The Director and Board Champions meet to review these items and check for agreement. The team also works together to identify potential focus goals and competencies for the next cycle. The final recommendations are taken to the full board for support.

\*Board Champions may include Board Chair and/or Vice Chair (same for all 3 directors), 1 Board Member that has educational background, and 1 Board Member without educational background (these two members could be different for each Director).

**Updated March 2022**

## Guiding Principles Used for the Creation of Exploris Director Feedback and Evaluation Process



KEY POINTS FROM RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS  
FOR MORE EFFECTIVE PRINCIPAL EVALUATIONS LITERATURE  
(from p. 37 [\*The Policies and Practices of Principal Evaluation\*](#)  
by WestEd)

1. Evaluation should stimulate and guide a principal's professional development.
2. Evaluation protocols should be aligned with important school and student outcomes (e.g., student achievement and effective instruction).
3. Evaluators should acquire appropriate feedback from multiple stakeholders.
4. Evaluations are enriched and strengthened when evidence is collected through multiple methods (e.g., portfolios, self-assessments, 360-degree feedback, outcome-based assessments).
5. Evaluation systems should be flexible enough to account for variations in school contexts and environments.
6. Principals should be engaged partners in the process of establishing evaluation goals and objectives and assessing their own performance.
7. Evaluation procedures and tools should be reliable and valid.
8. Evaluation systems should be based on established standards of administrative practice and on objective and measurable performance objectives.
9. Evaluation systems should be based upon a conceptual framework that includes research about effective leadership, effective organizations, and effective personnel evaluation.
10. Principal evaluations may be most effective when focused on a few high-impact criteria and behaviors.
11. Evaluation systems should consider incorporating performance-based rewards and consequences.
12. School district leaders should regularly assess the alignment between the district's principal evaluation system and the critical goals and needs of principals, the schools, and the district.

# Coversheet

## Facilities

<b>Section:</b>	II. Committee Reports
<b>Item:</b>	F. Facilities
<b>Purpose:</b>	FYI
<b>Submitted by:</b>	
<b>Related Material:</b>	September 2025_Exploris Facilities Update.pdf



# Exploris Facilities Update

August 26, 2025 | Board Update



# Outline

- Monthly Updates
- Looking Ahead
  - Planned work on the Unified Campus Project





# Monthly Updates

# Monthly Updates

- Work has already begun on the following:
  - Revising timelines and budgets to reflect the next phases of work.
  - Coordination for upcoming Administrative Site Review (ASR) and Site Plan Review (SPR), key design and site plan review stages required to obtain a building permit.
- The Facilities Committee, in direct collaboration with Board and School Leadership, has selected both the Architectural and General Contracting Firms for Board approval.
- Rosewood is exploring creative ways to get more City support for our project.
  - Mirroring work they do in D.C.



# Monthly Updates (continued)

- Architectural & GC Firm Selection Process
  - All Architectural (4) and General Contracting (3) Firms have been interviewed by the Board and Leadership team. Scores and notes were captured during and after the interviews, and a debriefing sessions were held with Rosewood.
  - Follow-up questions were sent.
  - The top Architectural and GC firms will be discussed by the Board for approval.






# Looking Ahead

# Keeping up with Requests

Shared Facilities Tracker

- Work is ongoing for this system.
- Using a Google Sheet to track requests and completed work.
- Shared amongst volunteers and staff members who can attend to specific tasks.

# Example Tracker

Table2 										
1	Timestamp	Name or Email	Brief description of repair or improvement needed:	Campus:	Location:	Detailed description (optional):	Priority	Picture or other file:	Approx. Cost	Responsibility
2		Josh	Replace carpeting throughout both buildings	Middle Campus	Throughout		High			
3		Josh	Full Mold Testing	Middle Campus	Whole building	Professional mold testing needs to be done over the summer.	High			
4		Josh	Roof leak repairs	Middle Campus	Roof	We still have leaks nearly every time it rains. These need to be repaired.	High			York
5		Josh	Duct cleaning	Middle Campus	HVAC	York has told us that ductwork is cleaned regularly. We're going to verify this definitively OR get them cleaned.	High			
6		Josh	Bathroom repairs and beautification	Middle Campus	Bathrooms	Our bathrooms need some major attention.	High			Exploris
7		Josh	Water bottle filler on 1st floor	Middle Campus	1st floor		High		\$3,000.00	Exploris
8		Alexandra	White board for 8S	Middle Campus	8S	*one of the giant whiteboards in the back of 8S was removed. We would really appreciate it if the other one could be removed. These boards do not work--the markers do not erase. We need a real white board in the back of the 8S classroom. 2.5 yards wide by as large as possible height would be awesome.*				Exploris



# Planned work on the Unified Campus Project

Site Review and Value Engineering

- Rosewood is coordinating with a local engineering firm to supply us with pro bono and reduced-cost work to begin the Administrative Site Review (ASR) and Site Plan Review (SPR) processes.
- Next steps:
  - Engaging an architect (Ready for approval!)
  - Engaging a GC (Ready for approval!)
  - Revising the project budget (including value engineering)
  - Developing a financing strategy



# Current Leases

Staying put for the duration of our development project

- Our Elementary landlord has indicated that they are enthusiastic about us staying put until we can move into our new building.
  - I have reached out to secure a 3-year lease renewal, if the landlord is amenable to that.
- Our Middle landlord is increasing our rents considerably for the next 3 years. We were able to negotiate the lowest possible rent for the next 3 and have executed the lease renewal.

# Additional Information



# The Work of the Committee

# What does the Facilities Committee do?

More than just find our new home!

- Maintain and improve our current facilities
  - Coordination work
  - On-the-ground improvement tasks
  - Fundraising efforts
- Shepherding our Unified Campus Project
  - Dreaming big, staying grounded
  - LOTS of moving parts, so staying engaged with communication (i.e., emails and possibly chats) is imperative



# Rosewood's Role in our Unified Campus Project

# Recognizing the Need & Finding the Right Partner

Closing the Skills Gap

- **Facing Project Complexity:** Initial efforts revealed the challenges of large-scale development in Raleigh's market.
- **Acknowledging a Skills Gap:** Real estate development requires specialized expertise beyond our internal capacity.
- **Securing Essential Expertise:** Rosewood provides the experienced representation needed to navigate this complex project effectively (since March 2023).
  - They work with urban non-profits, a niche market in the Development space.
- **Sharpening Our Focus:** This partnership allows school leadership to focus more of their attention on education, while Rosewood expertly manages the campus project.

# Rosewood in Action

Driving Tangible Progress

- **Driving Kindley Street Due Diligence:** Rosewood managed complex site evaluations, traffic studies (TIA/TDM), and City coordination.
- **Strategic Site Selection:** Assessed 27 sites, recommending Kindley Street as the optimal location for our goals.
- **Proactive Coordination & Negotiation:** Coordinated with adjacent developer (CCUD) to improve our site position (height, shared plans, shared use potential).
- **Initiating Key Financial Benefits (NMTC):** Started the complex New Markets Tax Credit process to significantly reduce the project's long-term cost to the school.

# Securing Our Future Campus

Rosewood's Planned Leadership

- **Comprehensive Financial Management:** Overseeing all project financing: underwriting, funding acquisition, budgeting, and updates.
  - **Expert NMTC Leadership:** Leading the full NMTC process to secure tax credits and maximize financial benefits for Exploris.
  - **Detailed Schedule & Project Oversight:** Developing and managing project schedules for due diligence and closing to keep us on track.
  - **Optional Construction Phase Leadership:** Offers continued expert support through construction for seamless project completion, if needed.
  - **Focused on Our Goal:** All efforts are dedicated to successfully delivering our Unified Campus.
-



# Typical Costs of Development Representation

Development Firm	Monthly Cost	Cost Structure
Rosewood	\$12,000	Fixed rate, not tied to overall project budget.
Rosewood (without Exploris discount)	\$18,000	Fixed rate, not tied to overall project budget.
Previous Firm engaged by Exploris	~\$37,000	Fee tied to overall project budget. Higher rate; not charged up front.  Some upfront costs would be absorbed by the firm and charged on the backend.





# The use of the Capital Fund for Pre-development Work

# Our Strategic Foundation

The 2017 Capital Fund

- **Building Our Foundation (2017):** A successful Capital Campaign, boosted by school contributions, created a dedicated fund of approximately \$590k.
  - **A Dedicated Resource:** These funds were restricted, meaning they could only be used for costs tied directly to our Unified Campus Project.
  - **Planning for Our Future Home:** This foresight provided essential capital specifically intended for finding and preparing our future school site.
-

# Putting Funds to Work for Kindley Street

Prudent Stewardship of Funds

- **Targeted Pre-Development Spending:** Funds were carefully spent only on allowable expenses crucial for searching for and evaluating potential campus sites near Downtown.
- **Essential Groundwork:** Key investments included:
  - Development Support (site identification/assessment, NMTC start-up, sourcing expert help)
  - Traffic Site Analysis & Approval
  - Property Taxes
  - Legal Fees & Feasibility Study
- **Focusing on Our Chosen Site:** These necessary expenditures allowed us to perform vital due diligence and prepare the Kindley Street property.

# Paving the Way Forward

The Impact of Our Investment

- **Critical Funding for Progress:** This Capital Account was absolutely essential, enabling us to secure, assess, and move forward with the Kindley Street lot.
- **Protecting School Resources:** Using these dedicated funds strategically meant we avoided draining daily operating budgets or taking on early project debt.
- **Strengthening Our Financial Position:** This approach preserved operational funds and put us in a stronger position for the upcoming major Bond Financing phase.
- **A Clear Path to Our Goal:** The prudent use of these 2017 funds successfully laid the necessary groundwork, creating the path forward to our unified "forever home."

# Capital Fund Expenditures

- **Legal:** \$3,681.50 (the School paid all of the legal costs of the litigation and settlement for Kindley Street)
- **Traffic Site Analysis and Approval:** \$66,869.60
- **Development Support:** \$397,534.05. This includes:
  - Site identification and assessment
  - New Markets Tax Credit initiation and startup
  - Sourcing pro bono and reduced-cost pre-development engineering support (e.g., test fits and site plans)
  - Rosewood's portion over two years: \$297,200.00
- **Property Taxes:** \$74,713.21
- **Capital Campaign Feasibility Study:** \$28,000



# Coversheet

## Directors Report

<b>Section:</b>	V. Meeting Items
<b>Item:</b>	A. Directors Report
<b>Purpose:</b>	FYI
<b>Submitted by:</b>	
<b>Related Material:</b>	August 2025 Exploris Leadership Team Board Report - Google Docs.pdf Why teach with us (3).pdf Staff Exploris Microbadge Program (2).pdf New Staff Orientation & Onboarding 2025-2026.pdf 2025-2026 Staff Work Week Schedule.pdf 2025 Planning for 6th Grade Summer Readiness Orientation Camp.pdf



# The Exploris School

## Directors Report

**To:** Board Members

**From:** Ethan, Josh, & Deb

**Re:** Monthly Board Report

**Date:** August 28, 2025

The following information is provided to the Board of Directors:

### Enrollment

Grade Level	Number for Full Enrollment	Target Crew Sizes	Current Enrollment	2025-2026 Applications	2024-2025 Applications as of 8/22/24
Kindergarten	34	17	30	175	160
1 <sup>st</sup> Grade	36	18	32	75	64
2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade	38	19	32	50	57
3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade	38	19	34	61	84
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade	38	19	38	56	65
5 <sup>th</sup> Grade	38	19	34	63	67
6 <sup>th</sup> Grade	76	19	62	151	144
7 <sup>th</sup> Grade	76	19	74	52	53
8 <sup>th</sup> Grade	76	19	75	40	41
<b>Total</b>	<b>450</b>		<b>411</b>	<b>723</b>	<b>735</b>

Note: Although we are currently underenrolled, we will continue to market and offer seats through the first trimester. Historically, we see some movement in our numbers in the first few weeks of school.

### Student Support Team Report

Month	In School Suspension # students / # days	Out of School Suspension # students / # days	Major referrals that did not result in suspension # students / # referrals	Minor Behavior Referrals # students / # referrals
August	ES: 0/0 MS: 0/0	ES: 0/0 MS: 0/0	ES: 4/10 MS: 1/1	ES: 5/8 MS: 7/7
September				
October				
November				
December				
January				
February				
March				
April				



May				
June				
TOTALS				

## Campus Updates

- We completed our onboarding of new staff members on Mon & Tues. Aug. 4th & 5th. The two day intensive training includes welcomes, gifts, breakfast and lunch hospitality and time to get to know one another, plus deep dives into our core values, competence based grading methods, project based learning, and responsive classroom techniques, with also time for logistics and administrivia, so our newest team members have the resources they need for being impactful with their teams from the very beginning. We also introduced our new one-pager of the non-salary benefits of teaching at Exploris and will use this in future recruiting as well. ***(Attached in the packet.)***
- Our full staff pre-service work week was held on Aug. 6th-12th. Highlights included
  - Welcome and connection time, with a special opening breakfast catered by Crepe Time and provided by our PTO
  - New year celebrations and inspirations, with time to explore new AI tools to create a team logo and elevator pitch
  - Responsive Classroom review and overview of the non-negotiable aspects, with team self-reflections and goal setting
  - Campus-specific meetings
  - Time in classrooms and with teams to plan and prepare
  - Sessions on effective co-teaching and co-planning
  - Introduction to our new Micro Credentialing and Badge program as a way to recognize and reward staff accomplishments in key areas (description is attached in packet)
  - Overview of iXL for benchmarking and new assessment tools, overview of the MTSS framework and expectations for interventions
  - Presentations from our Kaizen leaders
  - Workshop & training on Infinite Campus
  - Time for beginning teachers and their mentors to meet and review the BT support program
  - Expedition Design: training and planning
  - Training from the iXL staff on new features
  - Review of IEPs and 504 plans with crew, GA, EC, and counseling, so each student's needs could be met from day one
- Opening day and the following first week on both campuses were smooth, with many excited students and a relatively pain-free start to carpool.
- Teams have kicked off opening Expeditions and crew activities and are already hosting guest speakers and planning offsite events
  - Omer Abdulrahmen from Sudan visited 8th grade to talk about his experiences escaping the drought & violence there as the team kicks off their Hydrosphere unit
  - 6th grade practiced adding and subtracting with decimals by visiting Weaver St. Market and planning sample purchases
  - 7th grade took a "long tour" walking afternoon of all the parks and locations their team uses for the year
  - 8th grade's annual canoe trip to Falls Lake was held on Friday, Aug. 21st

## Community Events

- Fifty six rising 6th graders attended our orientation program at the end of July. Our "campers" got to meet their teachers and each other, tour the building, learn the "walking the city" routines and

take a walking tour of the city locations most frequently used in 6th grade, complete a mini-expedition project and presentation, and work on a sample humanities lesson. Parents were also invited to stay for a special Q&A with Deb at each session while their students were in camp.

- For three weeks in July, Mrs. Rachel, Mrs. Vikki, and Mrs. Jill led our annual Reading Camp. Students participated in small-group phonics lessons, focusing on decoding each morning. The highlight of the camp was that each Friday, students presented their Reader's Theater to parents and adult caregivers. Tickets were handed out, popcorn was popped, and students used the props and sets prepared during the Expedition project-based learning time in the afternoons. A majority of the students showed growth in their mClass literacy assessment at the end of the three weeks and had a blast along the way!
- On July 29th, the kindergarten team held a half-day Readiness Camp for our littlest learners. The camp is geared towards students with minimal pre-school experience and open to all students. Twelve students participated in the Readiness Camp and we also held a Popsicles on the Playground event in coordination with the Exploris PTO for kindergarten families to get to know each other.
- We held our annual "Meet the Teacher Night" on both campuses on Monday, Aug. 11th. Families could drop by any time to find out their crew placement, drop off school supplies, get to see their classrooms and teachers, and collect information about upcoming events and other items. Our PTO was also on hand to greet families, hand out popsicles, and sell some new spirit wear.
- Ethan and Deb held the first of ongoing drop-in listening sessions for families, designed to be at least monthly chances for just informal Q&A with your campus director. These will be alternating between in person and remote options at different times of day and days of the week to allow for different family schedules. Ethan shared information about [Exploration Fridays](#) and the new [Butterfly Highway Pit Stop](#) at Exploris Elementary..
- Our annual exchange with Shinonome Middle School began on Aug. 20th with the arrival of four teachers, eight students, and one translator/travel agent to visit with us at Exploris for a week. Students and teachers are hosted in Exploris homes and travel with their Exploris host through a typical school day, and also teach special lessons in assorted aspects of Japanese culture, both modern and traditional, to all GA classes while they are here, so all Exploris students have a chance to experience this cultural exchange. Each night a different teaching or administrative team hosts the teachers for dinners and provides lunch for the school day. There are many special events planned throughout their visit, including trips with host families, a cookout, visits to area attractions, and a Durham Bulls game. In early March, a delegation from Exploris will visit Hiroshima to complete the exchange. Also, in early September, Dr. Taketo Matsuura from Hiroshima University will visit Exploris with several graduate students who are in their teacher training program from Hiroshima University, and they will also teach lessons on Japanese history and culture during their time with us.

## Human Resources Update

### Staff Departures

Name	Position	Notes
Cole Travis	6th Grade	Never reported to work; no response to attempts to contact, after 5 days we formally rescinded the offer

### New Hires for Approval

Name	Position	Notes
Thomas Bowling	6th Grade	30 days long term sub

### Internal Position Changes

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<b>Current &amp; Anticipated Vacancies for 25-26 School Year</b>

### Important Dates (Board Attendance Requested)

- Board Retreat Sat. Sept. 6th 9:00-1:00 Strategic Vision planning, Board Handbook, Committee Planning documents, and more!
- Curriculum Night: Teams will present an overview of their teaching plans, Expeditions, field experiences and more for the 25-26 school year, and all Board members are cordially invited to attend
  - Middle on Sept. 4th 6:00pm-7:00pm
  - Elementary on Sept. 11th 6:00pm-7:00pm
- Join us for any of the [Shinomone activities](#)

# THE EXPLORIS SCHOOL

A DOWNTOWN RALEIGH  
PARTNER SINCE 1997



## WHY TEACH WITH US?



### Professional Autonomy & Creativity

- **Design Your Own Curriculum:** Enjoy true creative freedom and professional trust to shape your lessons and classroom structure, based on state standards and mastery-style grading
- **Innovate & Inspire:** Lead short elective courses every six-8 weeks on topics you're passionate about. Develop clubs and activities centered around your interests
- **Classrooms Without Walls Approach** lean into our "expedition" model and design frequent field experiences and involve guest speakers far more often and more easily than traditional schools

### Collaboration & Teacher Voice

- **Co-Teaching & Cross-Curricular Approach:** Work alongside colleagues in a supportive, team-based environment.
- **Teacher Leadership:** Be part of a leadership structure that values your voice; teacher leaders are integral to our administrative team and decision-making.
- **Access to Administration:** biweekly stand-up meetings with your campus director and your team
- **Authentic Assessment:** Guide student-led portfolio conferences for insightful feedback and reflection on student progress far beyond traditional numeric grades
- **International Collaboration:** Work with our two sister schools in Japan and Germany for teacher and student exchanges and travel

### Work-Life Balance & Professional Growth

- **Paid Time Off:** No separate "sick" or "personal" days—just flexible, paid time off with no need to cover your own substitute.
- **Protected Planning Time:** 100 minutes daily, reserved & respected; seldom called to cover other classes.
- **Communications Norms** to protect your time away from school
- **High-Quality Professional Development:** Access ongoing training on topics like Responsive Classrooms and Crucial Conversations. Support for conference and workshop attendance

### Prime Downtown Location; Student, Family, & Community Connections

- **In the Heart of the City:** Steps away from parks, museums, libraries, and vibrant community partnerships; daily chances to get outside with students & get in your steps!
- **Daily "Crew" Time:** Build relationships with a small group advisory—daily dedicated time for team building, social-emotional learning, and meaningful discussions.
- **Strong Family Partnerships:** Collaborate closely with families as true partners in student success and a proactive PTO
- **Restorative & Inclusive Practices:** Be a part of the Peaceful Schools Network: Join a community committed to restorative disciplinary practices and social-emotional growth for all





## Exploris Microbadges/Micro-credentialing Program

Exploris wants to recognize and encourage excellence in our staff, particularly in our core values. Microbadges are targeted, meaningful recognition of specific competencies, skills, or accomplishments. They are designed to be earned through demonstrated mastery of a skill, not just participation in activities, and to align with our school's mission, strategic vision, or individual professional goals. Below are some ideas for microbadges, along with examples of credentials or evidence teachers might need to provide to earn each badge. At the start of the 25-26 school year we will be gathering input and feedback to develop a rubric and process for microcredentialing. Microbadges will also come with an award of CEUs and the rights to display the badge and title on your emails and communications. Please reach out to Deb if you are interested in being a part of that process!

### Microbadges and Example Credentials

Microbadge Name	Description & Focus	Example Credentials Required to Earn Badge	Rubric
<b>Exploris Innovator</b>	Integration of new teaching technology, Expedition Plans, Explorations, new instructional methods or programming ideas	Lesson plans, Expedition snapshots, video of classroom implementation, descriptions of new technology applications, reflection on outcomes	Any combination of 5 NEW Expeditions, Explorations, field experiences, guest speakers, or innovative classroom activities, plus a reflection on the implementation and outcome
<b>Exploris Relationship Builder</b>	Excellence in social-emotional learning (SEL), colleague and family communications	Evidence of SEL activities, student feedback, reflection, or assessment data, crew time and morning meeting planning, colleague recommendations, parent feedback	10 pieces of data on SEL activities, crew activities, communication logs, event planning artifacts, team building activities, colleague, student, and/or parent testimonials, plus a reflection on the strategies and impact

<b>Exploris Nature Connector</b>	Excellence in building an appreciation of nature and cultivating care of our resources in students	Planning or participating in outdoor field experiences, planning and leading initiatives or Expeditions that help students better use resources, class activities that focus on appreciation of nature, green initiatives, conservation efforts, etc	Any combination of 2-3 major activities (planning a new Expedition or Exploration focused on nature/conservation themes, planning and participating in a full-day outdoor focused field experience) or 5-10 minor activities like ongoing class routines, single-day lessons, guest speakers, etc that help students build Connections to Nature, plus a reflection on the implementation and outcome
<b>Teacher Leader</b>	Effective collaboration with colleagues and leadership inside and outside of the classroom	Documentation of collaborative projects, peer feedback, meeting notes, time served on Kaizen, on Board Committees, being a mentor, etc.	Any combination of 2-3 leadership roles served over a minimum of 2 years, plus a reflection on the implementation and outcome
<b>IDEAS TO DEVELOP LATER</b>			
<b>Exploris Culturally Responsive Educator</b>	Demonstrates culturally relevant pedagogy	Lesson artifacts, student work samples, self-reflection, peer or admin observation, field experiences, guest speakers, school events	10 pieces of data on work to build a culturally responsive classroom, plus a reflection on the strategies and impact.

<b>Exploris Assessment Architect</b>	Mastery of formative/summative assessment strategies	Samples of assessments created, student data analysis, reflection on impact, leading PD and team development on standards based grading	To be developed
<b>Family Engagement Specialist</b>	Strong partnerships with families	Communication logs, event planning artifacts, parent testimonials	To be developed
<b>Equity Advocate</b>	Promotes equity and inclusion in the classroom	Evidence of differentiated instruction, equity-focused lesson plans, student outcomes	To be developed
<b>Digital Learning Expert</b>	Proficient in online/hybrid teaching tools	Completion of micro-courses, video demonstrations, student engagement data	To be developed
<b>Data-Driven Instructor</b>	Uses data to inform and adapt instruction	Data analysis reports, examples of instructional adjustments, student growth metrics	To be developed



## How Teachers Prove Their Credentials

Each badge will have **clear criteria and a scoring rubric**, and submissions will be reviewed by an appointed team of administrators and peers to ensure rigor and consistency.

To earn a microbadge, teachers will complete a checklist and prepare a small portfolio to submit **evidence of competency** such as:

- Videos of classroom instruction or implementation of a strategy
- Student work samples or assessment data showing impact
- Written reflections on their practice and outcomes
- Artifacts like lesson plans, communication logs, or event materials
- Peer, coach, or administrator feedback or observation notes
- Completion of relevant micro-courses or professional development modules

### Sample Badges:







**The Exploris<sup>™</sup> School**  
Empowering Learners to Improve Our World

## Welcome New Staff!!

Bobbi Brown, ES Global Arts Connected World	Cole Travis, 6th Math	Thomson Jaffe, 6th ELA	Lauren Yuscian, 7th ELA	Nikki Parker, K Teaching Partner
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### Day 1 August 4th @ Elementary Campus- 17 S. Swain St.

Time	Topic	Who
8:00-9:00	Welcome/Greeting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Light breakfast provided</li> <li>• Review the schedule and goals for the day</li> <li>• Morning Meeting (<a href="#">4 Component Responsive Classroom Resource</a>)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Greeting</li> <li>◦ Share</li> <li>◦ Group Activity</li> <li>◦ Morning Message</li> <li>◦ <a href="#">Morning Meeting Lesson Plan Example</a></li> </ul> </li> </ul> Today's slides	Deb, Josh, & Ethan
9-10:15	Exploris Core Values: Who We Are <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AI Exploration</li> <li>• Goose Chase Scavenger Hunt for Core Values</li> <li>• Rolling break, take a few minutes as needed.</li> </ul>	
10:15-10:30	What It Means to Be a Charter School and a Charter School Teacher	Deb
10:30-11:00	Project-Based Learning Overview	Deb
11:00-11:30	Field Experience Info: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What Is a Field Experience?</li> <li>• Checklist</li> <li>• School Safety Protocols</li> <li>• <a href="#">Emergency Bags</a> - and what goes in them</li> <li>• Protocols: Headcount for your group, notify the school of your location and return time, bring your bags!</li> </ul>	Josh & Ethan
11:30-12:30	Lunch Provided by Exploris! <i>Get your Temporary Photo Taken for Website (Josh)</i>	
12:30-3:00	<a href="#">Expedition and Standards-Based Grading- What is this anyway?</a>	Leah
3:00-3:30	Closing Reflection and Questions for tomorrow	Ethan

**Day 2 Tuesday August 5th @ Middle Campus 401 Hillsborough St**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Who</b>
8:00	Meet and Greet: Morning Meeting at ES  Carpool to MS and an informal walkthrough of the MS building  Administrivia and Front Desk Google Classroom Student Services Team Overview	Deb, Ethan, & Josh
9:15-9:30	Break	
9:30-10:30	<a href="#">Co-Teaching Foundations</a> @ Middle School	Leah
10:30-12:00	Carpool back to ES.  Go out for lunch with others or enjoy a packed lunch.	
12-2:00	<a href="#">Responsive Classroom Practices</a> @ Middle School	Shawna & Leah
2-2:15	Break	
2:15-2:45	Meet your Teacher Reps and get Insights from returning teachers!	Shawna & Mariah
2:45-4:00	Resolve any outstanding Paperwork/Salary/HR Issues BTs check in with Leah on Mentor/BT Program details Asynchronous Tasks	Lenny Mary Margaret Leah
<b>Use the rest of the day to work on your own/complete asynchronous tasks.</b> <b>Have lunch with each other, your team, or maybe you need some alone time after all our togetherness ;)</b>		



## Information & Resources!

*(Please note we are still updating some of these items and links!)*

### Important Contact Information

<p><b>Exploris Elementary Campus</b>  17 S. Swain Street  Raleigh, NC 27601  Phone: 919-715-0333  Fax: 919-715-0916</p> <p><b>Elementary Grades Director:</b> Ethan Burton  Ethan's Cell- 919-539-3528  <b>ES Teacher Leader:</b> Shawna Scipione  <b>Office Contact:</b> Lisa Averitte</p>	<p><b>Exploris Middle Campus</b>  401 Hillsborough Street  Raleigh, NC 27603  Phone: 919-715-3690  Fax: 919-715-2042</p> <p><b>Middle Grades Director:</b> Deborah Brown  Deb's Cell 919-465-4401  <b>MS Teacher Leader:</b> Mariah Perry  <b>Office Contact:</b> Mary Margaret Moffitt</p>
<p><b>Josh Corbat</b>, Director of Resources   Work cell: (919) 412-2341   Personal cell: (567) 482-0582  <b>Leah Ruto</b>, Instructional Coach (919) 757-1384  <b>Michelle Parkerson</b>, School Improvement Coach (919) 696-2703  <b>Michelle Duncan</b>, Student Services Coordinator (317) 508-0791</p>	

### Asynchronous Work/Important Links

- ☐ Get school-issued devices from Lenny or Josh
- ☐ Set up your school email and Google chat (Check with your campus director to ensure you've been added to the correct Google Chat Groups)
- ☐ Get the door code from Mary Margaret
- ☐ Work with Josh to obtain your Infinite Campus login and NCEdCloud Login (ECATS, SchoolNet, etc.).
- ☐ Get to know your colleagues
  - ☐ Staff Directory ([staff contact information](#) and listed by position)
  - ☐ [Myers-Briggs Personality Profiles](#)- take the [quiz](#) and email [mparkerson@exploris.org](mailto:mparkerson@exploris.org) the results so your profile can be added!
- ☐ Get to know your standards--We use the following to anchor and guide our work
  - ☐ [NC Standard Course of Study](#)
  - ☐ [ISTE Standards](#) (Technology)
  - ☐ [North Carolina SEL Standards Mapping Document](#)
  - ☐ [CORE SEL Practices](#)
  - ☐ [Literacy Instruction Standards](#) (LIS - for educators)
- ☐ Parking
  - ☐ No assigned Parking at ES Campus (any open spot is fine)
  - ☐ MS Campus- See the [Parking Map](#). Mary Margaret will help with questions
- ☐ Duty Schedule
  - ☐ [MS Duty Schedule](#)

- ☐ [ES Duty Schedule](#)
- ☐ Benefits/HR- Continue to work with Mary Margaret to complete all required paperwork and/or get your questions answered.
  - ☐ [Benefits Booklet](#), Contact Cristina Piascik [cp@inspeople.com](mailto:cp@inspeople.com), or Josh with questions
  - ☐ [Enroll in 401 K](#), Contact Andrew Rose [arose@capfs.com](mailto:arose@capfs.com)
  - ☐ Review the list of [payroll dates](#)
  - ☐ Contact Business Manager Koren [kmorgan@exploris.org](mailto:kmorgan@exploris.org) if you have salary questions
- ☐ Newsletters/Communication
  - ☐ Sign up for Front Office Google Classroom - Join Code x2kc3bc
  - ☐ Sign up for the PTO newsletter at [www.explorispto.org](http://www.explorispto.org)
  - ☐ Subscribe to [NCDPI Email Updates](#) in areas of interest
  - ☐ Download Google Chat and check to make sure notifications are on
  - ☐ Add campus and administrator contacts info from above to your phone--emergencies happen!!
- ☐ Licensure
  - ☐ If licensed, share a copy of your license with Mary Margaret and Leah Ruto
  - ☐ If you hold a NC Teaching License, log into the [NCDPI Online System](#). (Use the links to help with forgotten username or password)
  - ☐ Look under "Additional Activities" and select "Share license details with a School System of RALC" select "Add" and follow the steps to associate with Exploris. Email Leah Ruto when this is complete.
- ☐ Review Items from Folder & Other Administrivia
  - ☐ [New Staff Onboarding Slide Show](#)-for your reference
  - ☐ [Exploris School Organizational Chart](#)
  - ☐ [Mission, Vision, Values](#)
  - ☐ [Exploris Glossary](#)
  - ☐ [Personnel Handbook](#)
  - ☐ [Family & Student Handbook](#)
  - ☐ [2025-2026 Instructional Calendar](#)
  - ☐ [2025-26 Staff and Community Events Calendar](#) (DRAFT)
  - ☐ Review Leave Procedures and [How to Request Leave/How to Get a Sub](#)
  - ☐ [Teacher Growth Process](#) and [Teacher Evaluation Tool](#), [Beginning Teacher Evaluation Tool](#)
- ☐ Required Training/Policy Assurances (Mary Margaret and/or Josh can help with login)
- ☐ [Vector Solutions Login](#)
  - ☐ [Policy Assurances Form](#) (required of all staff)
  - ☐ [Emergency Preparedness and Crisis Manual](#) (pay attention to P.25 and Link #4)
  - ☐ [Emergency Contact List](#)
  - ☐ [Section 504 Compliance Training](#)
  - ☐ [Counseling Services Document](#)
  - ☐ [Accident Report](#)
  - ☐ [Exploris Mental Health Training](#) (required for ALL New Staff)
- ☐ Need supplies? Submit a [Purchase Request](#).
- ☐ Miscellaneous Resources/Information
  - ☐ [Crew Lists](#) (DRAFT)

❑ Communication & Meetings-What you can expect

- ❑ **Morning Message from the Directors in the ALL Exploris Google Chat (most mornings)** This message sets the tone for the day and typically includes staff absences/subs, campus events/meetings, and other important daily reminders
- ❑ **Staff Weekly Slides (by midday Friday)** Sent by Leadership Team in place of administrative faculty meetings so be sure to review closely
- ❑ **Grade-Level/Team Standups (Every other week during planning)** Scheduled and led by campus directors. Serve as team building/quick check ins to clarify any administritivia from the slides, get input, and allow time for staff to ask questions/share concerns with their campus director and/or Kaizen Lead. Student Support team check-ins are typically scheduled opposite weeks from standups
- ❑ **Wednesdays-** PD and other staff development activities occur on Wednesdays between dismissal and 5:00pm. Agendas and pre-work are typically sent 24-48 hours ahead. Schedule coming soon!
- ❑ **Grade-level Family Newsletters (Varies, but typically weekly between Thurs and Sun)** Each team has their own style, but anyone on staff can ask to have things included as needed
- ❑ **One Call (as needed)** Phone call message sent by directors that gives updates to families. Also used to push out important and/or timely messages quickly
- ❑ **Daily emails and Google Chats** These are the main form of ad-hoc communication we use every day, multiple times per day. Standard response time rule of thumb is 24-48 hours for email



# Exploris Staff Work Week Schedule

August 6-12, 2025



## Goals for the Week:

- Staff will be excited and fresh to begin the year.
- Staff will begin with a sense of shared purpose and connections.
- Staff will be equipped for meeting students on Day 1.
- Staff will have a shared foundation for curriculum and classroom relationships.

**Driving Question:** *How will we build a strong foundation for supporting students and one another for a successful school year?*

<u>Date and Time</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Title/Description</u>	<u>Who Attends</u>
<b>Wednesday, August 6th 2025</b>			
8:00-8:30 am	Elementary Campus Multi-Purpose Room	<b>Breakfast is provided, and Staff Mingle</b>	All Staff
8:30-10:00 am	4th Grade Classroom	<b>Welcome and Introductions of New Staff</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New year inspirations &amp; celebrations</li> <li>• Team “Elevator Pitch”</li> <li>• Key governance updates (handbooks, cell phones, AI policies)</li> <li>• Japan Exchange Overview (Jill &amp; Alexandra)</li> </ul>	All Staff
10:00-10:15 am		<b>BREAK</b>	
10:15-12 pm	4th Grade Classroom	<b>RC Overview, non-negotiables, Team Self-Reflection, Goal setting, share</b>	All Staff
12:00-1:30 pm	Elementary 4th Grade Classroom	<b>Campus Specific Lunch and Meeting w/Deb or Ethan</b> Bring your lunch. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schoolwide Schedule</li> </ul>	All Staff at their respective campus



## Exploris Staff Work Week Schedule

August 6-12, 2025

	Middle School 8 North	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Duty Schedule</li> <li>• Exploration Schedule &amp; Rotation</li> <li>• Intervention Times</li> <li>• Recess &amp; Lunch (outdoor space @ ES/Off campus plans @ MS)</li> <li>• Key Dates</li> </ul>	
1:30-4:00 pm		<b>Teams planning &amp; preparation work in classrooms</b>	All Staff
<b>Thursday, August 7, 2024</b>			
8:30-10:30		<u><b>Co-Teaching &amp; Co-Planning: Let's Plan to Plan!</b></u>	All Staff
10:30-10:45		<b>Break</b>	
10:45-11:20pm 11:20-12:00pm	3rd & 4th Grade Classroom	<u><b>Assessment Tools and Instructional Support</b></u> <b>(Leah/Tasha/Michele B/Hillary)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IXL Benchmark &amp; Diagnostic</li> <li>• NC Check-ins <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Training</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Dates/Windows</li> </ul> <b>MTSS (Leadership)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interventions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ IC expectations</li> <li>○ IXL is now the benchmarking tool, in addition to progress monitoring. We will use IXL to identify students with intervention needs. It is replacing MAP.</li> <li>○ Tier 1 (Core instruction) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ If 80% of grade is not on grade-level, core needs to be adjusted to meet the needs of the whole group.</li> <li>■ Example: spiral review for 6 weeks focuses on the content</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>	All Staff



## Exploris Staff Work Week Schedule

August 6-12, 2025

		<p>needed to reteach.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Tier 2 supports - class teacher <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Every grade level should have a intervention time built into their schedule that is every day for 30 min</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ Tier 3 - Interventionist/Intensive done by intervention team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Referral?</li> <li>■ EC</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
12:00-1:00		<b>Lunch</b>	All Staff
1:00-2:00		<b>Kaizen &amp; Teacher Leadership Opportunities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Shawna &amp; Mariah w/Kaizen vision &amp; goals</li> <li>● Governance Organization Chart/Explanation</li> <li>● Kaizen and Board committees carousel</li> </ul>	
2:00-4:00		<b>Teams planning &amp; preparation work in classrooms</b>	
<b>Friday, August 8, 2024</b>			
8:30-9:00	4th	<b>Introduction to Exploris Online Tools (Josh)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Bring your charged device</i></li> <li>● Be prepared to work in Gmail and Google Calendar</li> <li>● Double-check that you can login to ADP</li> <li>● Double-check that you can access Infinite Campus through NCEdCloud</li> </ul>	All staff
9:00-11:00	4th	<b>Infinite Campus Training Live from IC Staff</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Attendance</li> <li>● Behavior</li> <li>● Grading</li> </ul>	IC Guest
11-11:45am	4th	<b>Testing Training: The How, When, and Where!</b>	All Staff





## Exploris Staff Work Week Schedule

August 6-12, 2025

12-1pm	Multi-purpose Room	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Beginning Teacher and Mentor Training and program overview</b></li> <li>• <b>Lunch provided for BTs &amp; Mentors</b></li> <li>• <b>If you are NOT a BT or a mentor, you do not need to attend this session.</b></li> </ul>	BTs: Carolyn Floyd, Mariah Perry, Taison Farrington, Karen Mollins, Melissa Conway, Bobbi Brown, Charlotte Taylor  Mentors: Dan Hencher, Kelly Gay, Emily Felker, Jen Christian, Jessie Francese, Rachel Hearn, Adrian Findlay
1:00-4:00 pm	Classrooms / Workspaces	<b>Teams planning &amp; preparation work in classrooms</b>	All Staff
<b>Monday, August 11, 2024</b>			
8:30-12:00 pm	3rd/4th Grade Classroom	<b>Expedition Design &amp; Planning</b> Staff will review and reflect on Expeditions at Exploris. Teams will then use this time on their Expedition plans using tools and resources. We will end with an Expedition plan share.  Expedition Design Template in a shared folder  Facilitated by Leah Ruto	All Staff
12:30-4pm	Classrooms/ Workspaces	<b>Teams planning &amp; preparation work in classrooms: Meet the Teacher Prep</b>	All Staff
4:00-6:00 pm	Classrooms	<b>Meet the Teacher Open House</b> Informal student and parents drop-in format	All Staff
<b>Tuesday, August 12, 2024</b>			
8:00-10:00 am	Classrooms/ Workspaces	<b>Flexible Arrival and Planning Time</b>	All Staff



## Exploris Staff Work Week Schedule

August 6-12, 2025

Ongoing throughout the school day	Classrooms/ Workspaces	<b>EC, 504 Round-up Conversations</b> Set a time today to meet with your grade level EC teacher and review IEPs, and schedule with the counseling team a time for them to visit and review your grade level 504 and health plans. These plans must be reviewed before the students arrive in your classroom!	All Staff
10:00-1 pm	Classrooms/ Workspaces	<b>Teams planning &amp; preparation work in classrooms</b>	All Staff
1-2:30 pm	Virtual: Location of your Choice	<b>IXL Training</b> - login link will be shared <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>First session is for all staff, training is mandatory.</li> <li>Second session will cover Benchmark and Diagnostic Training - all welcome, but only mandatory for those listed.</li> </ul>	1-2 pm All Staff (virtual)  2-2:30: Jill, Leah, Michele B & Leadership
2:00-4:00 pm	Classrooms/ Workspaces	<b>Teams planning &amp; preparation work in classrooms</b>	All Staff

## 2025 6th Grade Summer Readiness Camp 8:15-12:30

### General notes:

- **Dates:** Thursday July 24th, Monday July 28th
- Camp drop-off begins at 8:15 each day.
- Program times are from 8:30 to 12:15
- Camp teachers should arrive no later than 8:00 am and have 2-3 people outside to help with carpool in the am
- Camp teachers are free to leave at 12:30 after most of the students have been picked up
- [Slideshow to project](#) each morning - links to activities/instructions to present
- The activities can be flexed depending on group sizes.

Date	Staff & Admin
Thurs. July 24th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Michelle Duncan</li> <li>• Kristen Laster</li> <li>• Thomson Jaffe</li> <li>• Maury Smith</li> <li>• Emily Felker</li> <li>• SJ Casar</li> <li>• Deb Brown</li> </ul>
Monday, July 28th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Matt Moreland (possible; Kristen will lead the SEL piece if not)</li> <li>• Kristen Laster</li> <li>• Thomson Jaffe</li> <li>• Maury Smith</li> <li>• SJ Casar</li> <li>• Deb Brown</li> </ul>

Time	Activity	Leaders	Notes/Resources Needed
8:15-8:30	Carpool/Arrival	Emily, Maury, and Michelle D in parking lot and sidewalk to help guide, Kristen, Casar, and Thomson in room to help supervise and get the activity started	
8:15-8:30 arrival	Make a name tag	Kristen	Check with kids - did they bring a snack/lunch? Do

			they have water?
8:30-9:00	Sample Crew	Maury & Casar	Icebreakers, name games, circles. <a href="#">Follow RC model</a> and include greeting, sharing, group activity, and morning message. (Morning message can be the daily slides, for example)
9:00-9:20	Building Tours (with rising 7th?)	Ambassadors & all staff <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Divide into smaller groups</li> <li>• Each group starts in a different direction</li> </ul>	Informal walk around: identify bathrooms, water fountains, hooks, and different classrooms and workspaces
9:20-9:50	1st Rotation	SEL: Michelle/Matt plan & lead, all staff support	See station descriptions below
9:50-10:00	break & snack	all	In back parking lot
10:00- 10:45	2nd Rotation	Academic: Kristen & Thomson lead, all staff support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Following Directions</li> <li>• Building Your Daily Agenda</li> <li>• Sample Academic Activity: reading <i>On the Bridge</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Read the story</li> <li>◦ Writing sample</li> <li>◦ Discussion questions</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<a href="#">Following Directions Activity</a>  <a href="#">On the Bridge story and discussion questions</a>
10:45-11:30	3rd Rotation	Maury & Emily Lead, all staff support Mystery Bones activity Followed by: discussion protocols, team collaboration protocols and debrief	
11:30-12:15	Lunch & “Walking the City” Routine	all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Walk to lunch at train station</li> <li>• Describe &amp; practice what we mean by “pack in/pack out” and an environmentally friendly, no-waste lunch</li> <li>• Describe and practice “Walking the City” routines</li> </ul>
12:15 Dismissal		All Staff outside to help with carpool	

### Three Stations:

- **Counseling Staff: Michelle and Matt (Kristen supports, all float to help) Social/Emotional Station: Core Values Relationships, Social Empowerment:** Building community– Making friends in middle school: connections, inclusivity, being an upstander, avoiding drama, use of social media, etc
- **Thomson & Kristen, Casar supports, all float to help) Academic Station: Core Values: Craftsmanship, Responsibility:** following directions activity, keeping an agenda, *On the Bridge* short story activity
- **Maury & EMILY (Thomson and Casar supports, all float to help) Collaboration/Group Work Station: Core Values: Curiosity, Reflection:** 6th grade expectations: rules of the road
  - Discussion protocols
  - Taking turns
  - Partner talk, group talk
  - Team collaboration protocol
  - Group work skills, micro project that requires collaboration - [Mystery Bones Group Activity](#)

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# Coversheet

## Board Business

**Section:** V. Meeting Items  
**Item:** B. Board Business  
**Purpose:** Vote

**Submitted by:**

**Related Material:**

Framework for Community Engagement & Accountability\_Exploris\_2025-26.pdf  
Exploris Town Hall Responses\_May 19, 2025.pdf



# The Exploris School: A Framework for Community Engagement & Accountability

**Date:** August 19, 2025

## Participating Groups:

- The Exploris School Directors
- The Exploris School Board of Directors
- The Exploris Foundation Board
- The Exploris Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) Leadership

## 1. Our Path Forward

Since its founding, The Exploris School has been a leader in innovative, inclusive education in Downtown Raleigh. As the educational landscape in North Carolina evolves, so must we. To meet the opportunities of a dynamic city and the needs of our highly engaged families, we are evolving our systems for communication and accountability.

This document outlines our proactive framework for strengthening community partnership. It is designed to ensure Exploris continues to thrive by making our governance, financial stewardship, and strategic planning clear and accessible to the community we serve. All of this work supports our ultimate goal: nurturing the growth of every student in a joyful, supportive school.

## 2. Our Guiding Principles

- **Student-Centered:** We prioritize the social-emotional and academic growth of our students in every decision.
- **Clear & Proactive Communication:** We share clear, timely, and relevant information.
- **Shared Accountability:** We build trust by creating systems that are transparent and hold our leadership accountable.
- **Sustainable Systems:** We build manageable, enduring processes that make engagement a natural part of our school's culture.
- **Respect for Privacy:** We protect the confidential information of all students, families, and staff. We will not share sensitive personnel, student, or legal matters.



### 3. Actionable Commitments

#### A. Governance & Decision-Making

*Goal: To clarify how our leadership bodies function and how key decisions are made.*

- **Define Roles:** Publish a one-page document outlining the distinct roles and responsibilities of the Directors, School Board, Foundation Board, and Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO).
- **Centralize Meeting Information:** Use **BoardOnTrack** as the standard platform for all Board agendas and minutes.
- **Share Our Process:** Create a simple framework illustrating how major school decisions are made.

#### B. Financial Stewardship

*Goal: To provide a clear and accessible view of the school's financial health, funding, and expenditures.*

- **Launch Financial Dashboard:** Provide understandable visualizations of revenue and expenses on the proposed Exploris Data Dashboard (see below for more information).
- **Report on Major Projects:** For initiatives like the Unified Campus Project, provide specific reports on funds raised and their allocation.
- **Clarify Fundraising:** The Foundation will provide clear goals, progress updates, and summary reports for all major campaigns.

#### C. Leadership Accountability

*Goal: To maintain a robust process for evaluating school leadership and demonstrating our commitment to continuous improvement.*

- **Gather Stakeholder Feedback:** Implement a formal system to gather feedback on Director performance from staff, families, and Board members.
- **Share Evaluation Summaries:** Following the annual evaluation, the School Board will share a public summary of identified strengths and growth areas for the leadership team.





## 4. Platforms for Engagement

- **The Exploris Data Dashboard:** A centralized dashboard for data on financials, strategic goals, and other key metrics.
- **Town Halls and other Feedback Opportunities:** Open forums focused on specific topics to facilitate direct dialogue with the community and provide consistent avenues and access for sharing ideas, concerns, and joint problem-solving.
- **Community Feedback System:** A dedicated tool for submitting questions and ideas in a structured manner.

## 5. Commitment to Review

This is a living document. We will review it at least annually to assess our progress and adapt our commitments to meet the evolving needs of our school and community.





## The Exploris School *Town Hall Responses | May 19, 2025*

This document summarizes the questions and topics of interest raised by the community during the recent Town Hall. Each question or topic is listed as submitted. To provide clear and comprehensive answers, related submissions on the same topic have been grouped together, followed by the Board's response.

### **Facilities, New and Existing**

Submissions related to this topic:

- Facilities outlook and budget. How long will we have the current facilities for and what happens next?
- The elementary school has been in trailers designed to be used for 3 years. At a minimum please replace carpet, paint walls, put shelves in bathrooms, make our 'non-permanent' home feel like a sanctuary for our students who come every day. Has a board member recently used the adult restroom in the 3-5 building??? Currently they are dingy, dirty, broken in areas, and otherwise do not elicit feelings of value and self-worth.
- Facilities: safety and reliability of equipment and building (leaking roof)
- What are potential timelines for the new building? How far along / likely are plans for Kindley street in particular? What improvements have been discussed for the current building/spaces to get the most out of them in the mean time?
- Roof leak and roaches in third grade classroom
- What specific improvements will be made to both campus facilities to maintain them for the next 2-3 yrs while waiting for re-location?
- With reports of financial struggles (teachers asked to spend less, fewer field trips, etc) how does the Board justify the 12k spent monthly on a consulting firm when a Facility Director was hired for the purpose of finding a new school (and all legalities that go along with it)?

### **Board Response:**

When Exploris started the project of securing our forever home, those who spearheaded the effort understandably took the route we know best: They built the project from the ground up in a grassroots manner. This has worked for the school in so many ways in the past. With a multimillion-dollar real estate project in one of the hottest and fastest-growing markets in the country, we've learned that we need to bring in experts to move the project along to completion. We're further now than we've ever been! Our site on Kindley Street is well underway toward full approval from all of the regulatory agencies. The current timeline analysis indicates that we will start the 2027-28 school year in our new facility; however, several factors may impact this target date. Our current, most urgent item is the launch of our

Capital Campaign, which the Foundation will lead. This work is underway. Activity with regard to Kindley street is progressing, and reports will be made regularly in [board meeting minutes](#), which are publicly posted after each meeting.

The search for a new site is a collection of duties that far exceed the scope of what school staff are expected to perform. It would be irresponsible of the Board and the school's directors to attempt to take on these efforts. It is quite common for organizations to have external agencies to manage site selection, screening architects and contractors, shepherding issues and plans through the city and county, and coordinating work done by other outside contractors the school must hire to deal with specific issues beyond the school's capabilities, such as traffic engineering, and researching and securing grants to reduce the overall cost of the school to our donors. Assuming \$12,000 per month, this would be \$75 per hour for one full time consultant. To be able to leverage an entire firm with specialized staff and years of experience, even a high end estimate of \$300 per hour, that would still represent an entire 40-hour week of work, done by an entire devoted to just our school. Moreover, the firm has given us a 33% discount on their standard rate. We feel this is money well spent and will result in a faster and more effective program for developing our forever home.

Regarding our existing facilities, School leadership has spent a lot of time with the landlords for the trailers and are addressing several issues, including repairs of the floors. Floors have been cleaned and polished and new paint has been applied in some of the elementary spaces. A new cleaning crew has been hired to better tend to the building.

## School Leadership

Submissions related to this topic:

- "In July 2018, The Exploris School changed its lottery system to incorporate economically disadvantaged students. This began a process that has fundamentally changed our student population over time to a more diverse population that better represents our local community. This is a positive. However, the shift in our student population is significant and must be analyzed and unpacked in order to meet student needs at school and at home. The first time this lottery adjustment was implemented was in Spring 2019.

A year later, we were all sent home during the pandemic. During that year, 2020-2021, our school's leadership adopted and began to implement an entirely different leadership model. We no longer had a Head of School; rather, we had a three-person administrative team comprised of a director of elementary, middle, and human resources. We also had two teacher leaders who comprised a five-person leadership team.

Returning to school physically in 2021 was a brand-new, foreign landscape. We returned to a rapidly changing student population due to the weighted lottery and the pandemic, which caused many students to be a year or more behind academically and socially. Our leadership team also returned to in-person for the first time under the new leadership model. Teachers were struggling, students were struggling, and it took a couple of years for us, educators, to feel like we could understand and work within our new reality following the pandemic.

During all of these changes, the Board ceased all forms of evaluation of our Leadership team and surveys to our stakeholders (parents and staff). The Board needs to desperately rise to the work they are responsible for, which includes evaluations of our leaders. Leaders who work tirelessly to serve teachers, students, and families. However, no one, no matter how well-intentioned, how talented, and how pure in motive, can make improvements and continue to grow without feedback and data to evaluate and analyze.

I am calling on our Board of Directors to act swiftly, to provide our Leadership Team with evaluative data so that they can continue to serve, grow, and develop as leaders and in guiding Exploris. It doesn't have to be perfect, it just needs to begin and then continue annually with systematic intent towards growth."

- How is our leadership evaluated and is it still the best mechanism? Also, is the structure of leadership still appropriate(three people who are equal in position?) Does the board ever go into closed session without leadership?
- The current leadership structure needs to be explained and addressed. It has become clear over the past two years that the current leadership structure is not working. Whether that is due to the 3-person structure that makes it difficult to hold leadership accountable or even for parents to get clear responses/answers, or if the current personnel in some or all of these positions are not an appropriate fit. The role of the board is to oversee and hold the leadership accountable for the appropriate management of the school. This town hall finally acknowledges parental concerns that have been raised the past two years. These concerns all begin with the lack of response from leadership and the board. Several parents spoke at the last board meeting about these concerns; their statements came from a place of true concern for and commitment to Exploris. I hope the board will listen to these concerns and act before it is too late to save our school.
- How has Leadership been evaluated by the Board and staff in the last 3 years and why hasn't that information been shared?
- With high teacher turnover, what information has been collected by those leaving and what improvements have been made to retain teachers?
- Success criteria: How does the board and the leadership team measure success for the school? And, how is the board evaluating the performance of the school leaders, both individually and collectively?

## Board Response:

The board has evaluated the leadership team each year since 2022; a committee of board members and other stakeholders designed the evaluation process and it was carried out by the committee (I, Eric Grunden, have been on this committee since I joined the board in 2022 and have taken part each year). The results of these evaluations are not public, which is often disappointing to other stakeholders. This evaluation scheme does meet the intent of the person who asked the question, eg. to "begin and then continue annually with systematic intent towards growth." Part of the evaluation is a set of goals provided by the leadership team members; progress toward those goals is evaluated by the committee based on data and personal interviews with the leader. We are always looking to improve this process and the town hall discussion highlighted a number of areas that we will be adding to the system.

When leaders or their behavior or issues about which there might be a conflict of interest arise, leaders are excused from meetings. If the board goes into closed session, leaders can be included if they have relevant information to be shared. They must be invited by the board to remain; they are not included by default. Not every reason for entering closed session is appropriate for school leaders or other attendees who are not official board members. As far as whether or not it is the best mechanism, this system has only been in place a few years, and during that time the board composition changed as well. Today there is consistent evaluation and data is collected in the biannual Teacher Working Conditions survey; those data are used to identify issues specific to the leadership team members and their official capacities. If there are problems identified, the board develops a process for improving those conditions. If those conditions do not improve, that could result in action being taken against a member of the team, or if extreme enough, reconsideration of the system itself. To date, there have been no issues that have significantly compromised safety, school operations, or the learning climate such that the model needs to be reconsidered.

The process for evaluating the school's leaders is described above. As far as the school in general, we look at several factors, including the complete annual audit, evaluations by state regulators for Exceptional Children, the Performance Framework by which all charter schools in NC are evaluated, the School Performance Grade that comes from our state-mandated End of Course and End of Grade exams, independent assessments of student progress like the MAP exams students take three times each year, the results of the Teacher Working Conditions survey, and our own observations and conversations with teachers, students, and parents. Evaluating school performance is a complex process and many measures of success can be obscured by a few.

## Financial Stewardship

Submissions related to this topic:

- I am very concerned about how money is being handled for field trips. First off, we collect money, but the payment is not made. One grade level was actually turned away on the trip due to non payment. When we ask for updates about invoices, we get no responses. In addition, I would love to have some transparency about where the fun run money goes. We raised almost 25, 000 but each crew only gets 100.00 for field trips, despite the fact that it has been publicized that this money goes to field experiences. Communication with billing goes unanswered.
- Budget, facilities; Question/concern - Why can't the school purchase a school bus for the grades to share for field trips? Parents are having to choose between working and the safety of their child in someone else's vehicle. This is a Title I school, too many parents cannot afford to take off work to drive their child to a field trip and have to trust another parent, who they oftentimes don't even know, with their child. This is not okay. Exploris needs to transport ALL students on a bus for field trips that are not in walking distance and have the same trusted adult drive each time. This will at least give me some peace of mind. I don't let my daughter ride with just anyone outside of school, why should it be the same while she's at school, too?

### Board Response:

The topic of financial stewardship was discussed at a recent board meeting. There has not been any instance of payments having failed to have been made. There is certainly room for improvement with respect to transparency, and we are making changes to support this. We discovered that reports were not being posted publicly due to a technical problem (we were posting but the system was not releasing them) and have corrected this. All budgets for at least the past year have been released. We are also working on a method of releasing all budgets to the public in a so that they are easy to compare and understand.

Exploris has a detailed process for the collection of funds and payment of expenses for field experiences. Invoices or payment requests are submitted using a purchase request form. If payment by credit card is an option without incurring additional fees, we often use this option as it is the quicker method. However, payment by check is often required although it takes more time to have a check processed and to reach the destination by mail. A similar concern was brought to our attention earlier in the spring with 11 specific bills/invoices inquired about. We conducted a detailed review and found no Exploris bills that have gone unpaid. Each was paid between 1 day and 33 days of the invoice being submitted. We are continuously working to improve our processes and communication. A specific area of focus at this time is to improve communication regarding the status of open requests.

The Fun Run is conducted by the Foundation and money raised goes to the Annual Fund. The

Foundation creates a budget each year to plan for the use of the funds raised for the Annual Fund during the prior year. The Foundation's Annual Fund budget for the 2025-2026 year will show how they have budgeted to use the funds raised for the 2024-2025 Annual Fund.

*Regarding the purchase of a school bus:* The cost of purchasing and maintaining a school bus is well into the hundreds of thousands of dollars initially, with ongoing annual costs in the tens of thousands. Additionally, we would likely need to hire a driver, or our teachers and staff would need to pull double duty to drive. Storage is also a primary concern, as we currently do not have space or permission to store vehicles on either of our campuses. Owning and operating a school bus has been discussed multiple times, including by the current leadership team. It has not been found feasible at this time. When it comes down to it, Exploris is unique for many reasons, and our approach to field experiences is certainly one of those reasons. We understand some discomfort is reasonable and expected, which is why we require each driver to submit their insurance information, show proof of a valid driver's license, and agree to a strict code of conduct while driving students.

## **Academics and Curriculum**

Submission related to this topic:

- Academic Performance and curriculum

### **Board Response:**

The Academic Excellence committee has been presenting school performance data to the board several times each year. This information is public. In addition, a summary of that data is made available to the school population in the summer after the school year is complete. Furthermore, the NC School Report card data is also available publicly (though the information provided is of limited scope and utility). In short, data show that the school has been increasing math and reading performance on both NC state exams and on nationally normed exams like NWEA MAP. Significant steps have been taken to evaluate student performance individually and provide appropriate interventions, which have resulted in further growth in scores. 2024 was a low point for student test scores, but internal data suggest improvements for 2025. In addition, Exploris has been revising its Exceptional Children's program and data showing that can be seen here: <https://tinyurl.com/5adf2ua8>



## School Culture, Discipline, and Related Policies

Submissions related to this topic:

- Diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives, School culture and discipline data
  - Why do students get 5 absences if they do not attend outward bound?
  - Black students not treated exactly
  - School culture and discipline data
  - Prioritizing relocation of students out of their deteriorating temporary buildings.
- Curriculum improvement: both social studies and particularly science education is negligible. Expanding explorations. It's literally the school's founding philosophy. Immediate board/admin transparency: every public board meeting should be recorded and available to all parents. Restructuring the board and its membership opportunities. Simplifying the many committees. Heed to your teachers! They are the school's pillars and the reason parents stay. If teachers don't like admin, teachers will leave. If the best teachers leave, families leave, and the community disintegrates.

### Board Response:

With respect to discipline, an informal review of suspension data show that white students are substantially more likely to be suspended, either in school or out of school, than any other demographic. The directors will be making a more in-depth review of this data to break it down by other factors so that we can more equitably serve all students. With respect to instruction, all students receive the same instruction from their teachers, and all students are supported by review of the curriculum so that we can be sure that each classroom is presenting content in a way that is accessible to all students. When a student has difficulty with that, we recommend the student for intervention. Data show that our intervention program is quite successful and continues to improve. We want all students and families to feel that they are being properly served by the school. If there is something we have missed in this question, please contact any of the directors and we will answer the question more completely. Mr. Burton has added more detailed data [on this document](#). Some data can be publicly shared; that data can be reviewed publicly on the [School Report Card](#).

*Regarding absences for missed days during programs like Outward Bound:* Exploris is an expeditionary style school, and as explained in our handbook, our classrooms and learning spaces are often off campus. Outward Bound is the capstone project for our whole program and is advertised and discussed throughout a student's time at Exploris. During that OB week, it's where school is happening-- all 8th grade staff and programming are at Outward Bound! If a student has a medical, religious, or other documented reason they cannot participate (something that meets the state criteria for approved absences) then those absences are approved as an "excused" absence. If they are an EC student and their documented disability is the reason they cannot attend, then we offer an option of an alternative program back at school. We provide full scholarships, equipment, whatever a student needs to be able to



participate. However if a student or their family just doesn't want to participate-- maybe they don't like camping, or something like that, and they choose not to attend, then it's the same as if they decided they don't like math and don't want to go to class on a certain day, or don't like museums so they're not going with the class on a day when the curriculum has activities taking place at the museum. If they miss Outward Bound for preferential reasons, it's an unexcused absence. OTOH at middle school there's no penalty for an unexcused absence-- there's no grade hit, there's no worry about exam exemptions or sports qualifications, for example.

*Regarding the final question listed above:* Several issues were raised in this question; other answers have addressed some of them. With regard to board committees and membership, the board and school leadership will make a greater effort to make the board structure more clear and easy to join. All board meetings are public and advertised in advance; the school is evaluated annually on board transparency by the Office of Charter schools. That said, we recently discovered that documents we had been publicly releasing had not been published. We have remedied this and all documents presented at board meetings over the past year have been released and each monthly meeting going forward will also be publicly posted. We are looking at improving technical solutions to public access; the technical problems at the Town Hall meeting were regrettable and cannot be allowed to happen again. Recording meetings is certainly a possible solution to increasing public access. Finally, we all agree that teachers are the most important factor in our ability to teach; it is also important to note that our HR contractors perform exit interviews with each departing staff member to understand what their reason for leaving is, and we know that one of the smallest reasons for leaving is dissatisfaction with the school's leadership. Most teachers leave for other opportunities, family changes, or other non-structural reasons. Working to keep our great teachers is a priority.