



**Student and  
Family  
Handbook  
2025-2026**

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# **Welcome to Uncommon Schools!**

Uncommon Schools (or “Uncommon”) starts and operates outstanding urban public schools that close the opportunity gap and prepare students from low-income communities to graduate from college. Our goal is to lead the best and highest performing K-12 schools in the nation.

## **School Profile**

North Star Academy Charter Schools (“North Star Academy” or the “School” when referring to individual schools) is a not-for-profit network of free, public charter schools that serve over 6,700 K-12 students in Newark. Each school shares the same mission of preparing students to enter, succeed in, and graduate from college. Believing that every child has a right to high-quality education and that a bachelor’s degree should be within reach for every young person in the nation, North Star Academy builds uncommonly great schools that offer a rigorous college-preparatory curriculum that cultivates our students’ passions and interests and is infused with joy, love, and learning. Students are randomly selected by public lottery in grade K, and we maintain waiting lists through grade 12.

## **Educational Excellence**

Uncommon Schools believes our students’ potential is limitless and we are proud of all our alumni have accomplished and become. We support our students to meet high standards of academic achievement through culturally responsive practices that ensure a joyful and rigorous academic learning environment. We meet our students where they are at and help them develop intellectually and emotionally, and through their own hard work and dedication. Our college acceptance and graduation rates are among the top in the country.

## **Family Partnership**

Uncommon Schools is a community of students, families/guardians, teachers, staff, and school leaders. We believe in the importance of working together to make a positive impact on the academic and social-emotional growth of every child. Although the job of making decisions about school policy belongs to the Board of Trustees and the School Leader, family involvement is absolutely critical to the success of our students and the school. We appreciate our families’ active involvement in the education of their child.

Uncommon Schools families/guardians are asked to:

- Provide a quiet space for your child to study.
- Partner with your child's teacher in support of student growth, achievement, and character development.
- Support other Uncommon Schools families.

## **Welcoming, Safe, and Supportive Environment**

Uncommon Schools values and embraces its inclusive and diverse school communities and strives to provide a welcoming, safe, equitable, and supportive environment for all students and families regardless of their race, color, ethnicity, religion, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and gender identity. If a student or family would like to explore a particular accommodation based upon cultural or religious practices, or due to one's disability, sexual orientation, or gender identity, the student or the student's families or guardian should contact a School Leader to schedule a meeting to discuss a plan to address the student's particular circumstances and needs.

## **Core Values**

Uncommon Schools strives to build a culture where students thrive and develop into the best versions of themselves. This is a collective responsibility of all staff, in partnership with families. The ethos of our community is one of mutual care and respect. We believe engagement is fostered when students are seen, valued, and heard by all of the faculty and staff,

Core Values are at the heart of Uncommon's community and represent lifelong values necessary for students to be the changemakers of the future. These Core Values are embedded in all aspects of the school community and vary by grade span.

## **Academics & Learning**

Uncommon Schools is committed to nurturing the social-emotional growth and development of students while maintaining a rigorous and joyful academic program that prepares them to graduate from college. To achieve this goal, Uncommon Schools is committed to the following:

- **Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices:** Uncommon Schools believes in honoring the cultural backgrounds of each student. We do so by building trust and rapport with our students in a variety of ways that strengthen learning partnerships between students and staff. These partnerships are

essential to establishing joyful and rigorous learning environments where students can thrive and be the best versions of themselves.

- **Comprehensive, Rigorous Curriculum:** Uncommon Schools curricula are aligned to the New Jersey Student Learning Assessments and other standardized tests. We also know that learning doesn't end when the final bell rings: after hours, our students are debating on the national stage, contributing to literary journals, performing in musical theater, winning state athletic championships, and so much more. Through rigorous coursework and activities designed to help students find their passions both within and outside the classroom, Uncommon students graduate ready to thrive in college and beyond. In all of these ways, we are getting your child ready to succeed in a college-preparatory environment.
- **High Expectations:** We believe in our students' limitless potential. We believe the best way to help our students achieve that potential is through establishing clear and consistent high expectations for academics and engagement and supporting them to deliver on those expectations.
- **Grading:** Clear, fair, and rigorous grading standards help ensure that students are demonstrating the learning and progress needed to be successful on each step of the road to college. In Middle and High School, students are graded on a scale of 70-100. The minimum passing grade is a "C." In order for a student to pass a course, they must earn a cumulative average of at least 70 for the year.

## Report Cards

Report cards are distributed four times during the academic year, at the end of each academic quarter. Report cards are important opportunities for our students, families, and teachers to develop a shared understanding of the student's academic performance and progress.

- **Honor Roll:** In Middle School and High School, students may achieve Honor Roll status each quarter by earning at least all B's on their report cards or High Honors by getting straight A's. This distinction is also recorded on their permanent report card.

## Promotion and Retention Policies

Uncommon is committed to making sure that our students are prepared both socially and academically for success in the immediate future and beyond; therefore, Uncommon does not practice social promotion. Students who do not meet academic standards for their given grade will be retained. Students who exceed 18 days of absence from school, and considered chronically absent, may be retained.

Grade Level	Promotion and Retention Policies
Elementary School	<p><b>Elementary School Promotional Policy:</b> Promotion in the elementary grades is determined through a holistic evaluation of the student's academic and social readiness for the next grade level. Schools take into consideration the following criteria in determining whether a student would benefit from retention in the current grade level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● <b>Academic Assessments:</b> Performance on academic assessments (STEP and Interim Assessments) are used to determine the student's readiness for the next grade level's content.</li><li>● <b>Attendance &amp; Work Completion:</b> Attendance and work completion are taken into consideration and used with assessments to determine the student's readiness for the next grade level's content.</li><li>● <b>Overall Learning Profile:</b> In determining whether retention in the current grade level would support the student's long-term achievement, the student's holistic learning profile is taken into consideration (e.g., educational history, disability, special services, etc.).</li></ul>

<p><b>Middle School</b></p>	<p><b>Middle School Promotion:</b> Middle school students will be promoted based on their academic performance in core courses (English, Math, History, Science).</p> <p><b>Middle School Failure of a Course Policy:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> Grade:</b> Any student who fails two core courses (English, Math, History, Science) will be retained. Any student who fails one core course may be retained.</li> <li>• <b>7<sup>th</sup> Grade:</b> Any student who fails two or three core courses must attend and pass Summer School to earn promotion to the next grade. Any student who fails two or three core courses and does not attend or pass Summer School will be retained. Any student who fails four core courses will be retained.</li> <li>• <b>8<sup>th</sup> Grade:</b> Any student who fails one or two core courses must attend and pass Summer School to earn promotion to the next grade. Any student who fails a core course and does not attend or pass Summer School will be retained. Any student who fails three or more core courses will be retained.</li> <li>• In any grade, when a student is retained and repeats the grade, it is required that all courses, even those passed from the failed year, be retaken.</li> </ul> <p><b>Middle School Summer School:</b> Summer School is held for five weeks over the summer as an opportunity for students to master core content for the course they failed. Summer School grades will replace the original course grades on Report Cards. Summer School may begin as early as one week after the normal school year ends. To pass Summer School, students are required to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be present for at least 90% of all Summer School class time</li> <li>• Earn a grade of 70% or higher for the summer.</li> </ul> <p><b>Middle School Summer School Grade Recovery Scale:</b></p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 90-100% Summer Academy Grade (High Pass) = replacement grade on transcript of 75% or C</li> <li>● 70-89% Summer Academy Grade (Pass) = Replacement grade on transcript of 70 or C-</li> <li>● Below 70% (Fail) = No replacement grade, student must repeat the grade</li> </ul>
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## Homework

- **Why homework?** Homework is important because it teaches students to work independently, develop self-discipline, and learn time management skills. It is also an opportunity to reinforce important skills and content learned during the instructional day. It also encourages students to take initiative and responsibility for completing a task. Homework is also an effective way for families to have an active role in their child's education and helps them to evaluate their child's progress and curriculum over time.
- **Supporting Homework Success:** In order to support, families/guardians can:
  - Provide a time and quiet place for study.
  - Help the student develop responsibility for completing the assignments.
  - Talk to their child about what they learned at school and encourage their child to develop a positive attitude about learning.
  - In Elementary school, read to or with their child every night for at least 20 minutes
  - Check your younger child's assignment pad to make sure they did all of their assignments or discuss assignment completion with older students
  - Review assignments for neatness and accuracy
  - Contact your child's teacher if you feel that your child is having a homework problem
  - Help your child get started by asking questions:
    - Do you understand what you are supposed to do?
    - Do you need help in understanding how to do your work?
    - Have you done any problems like the ones you're supposed to do now?
    - Do you have everything you need to complete the assignment?
    - Do your answers make sense to you?

## Student Accommodation Policy

We know that we can best serve our students' educational success and socio-emotional well-being by providing them with in-person instruction. In rare circumstances, Students may apply for an accommodation for bedside. The only circumstances under which enrollment in remote learning will be granted are:

- If a student is deemed at increased risk of severe illness by a medical professional in accordance with state criteria and submits approved

documentation to the school detailing the risk.

- There is a state or local requirement that the student is allowed to participate in remote learning (for example, certain cities/states may require exceptions for temporarily displaced students).
- **Requesting Accommodation for Full Remote Instruction** If a student qualifies for an accommodation according to the policy above and the family would like to apply for full remote learning, they should contact their school leader to learn more about the process for applying.

## **Student Attendance & Tardiness Policy**

Students are required to be present at school on time and engaged in learning every day. However, we know that students may have to be absent due to illness. If a student is absent for the day, we ask that a family member/guardian contact their teacher or the school's operations team through the School's email to notify us of your child's absence. Families should provide a doctor's note or other documentation for absences whenever possible in order for the absence to be excused.

The School will track students' attendance and will follow up with families if students are repeatedly absent or tardy without notifying the School, in order to ensure students and families have the support they need for students to engage in and maximize student learning. Note that students who exceed 18 days of absence from school **will be considered chronically absent**. At Uncommon schools,, this is considered an **excessive level of absence** and **may jeopardize a student's promotion to the next grade level**. In addition, the school may also file a report with the Department of Children and Families as required by state/local laws.

## **Logistics, Facilities, & Schedule**

### **School-day Hours**

Due to building regulations, campus hours vary by school. Please confirm with your school's main office for more information.

### **Friday Dismissal**

On Fridays, students are dismissed at 12:30 (12:50 for High School) in order to make time for teacher professional development meetings. Please make sure to make transportation arrangements for your child on Fridays.

### **School Closings**

In the event of inclement weather such as heavy snow or other emergency

closures, North Star Academy Schools will send communication to all families updating them on any school closures.

### **Student Meals**

We believe student meals are an essential part of their ability to stay healthy and engaged in their learning and are pleased to offer that all Uncommon students have the option to eat a school breakfast and lunch. If a student does not like a particular meal, they may bring in their own.

### **Families/guardians are required to notify the school of any food allergies and provide documentation from a doctor for the student's health file.**

Families/guardians should also notify the school of any other food restrictions due to religion or custom.

Please note that Uncommon has a no-gum policy. Students are not permitted to bring in or chew gum at any time while they are on the premises.

**Arrival & Breakfast:** The purpose of morning procedures is to establish strong engagement and high student achievement at the onset of the day. It is also an opportunity to greet students with a smile and meal so they can maintain a positive mindset during the school day. Your student's school will share the exact arrival and breakfast schedule prior to the start of the school year.

**Lunch:** At Uncommon, lunch is served each academic day. Lunch is a moment where students are free to talk and interact with their peers but must remain seated and follow all other school protocols.

**Breakfast & Lunch Fees:** Uncommon Schools: North Star Academy child nutrition program requires that parents who do not qualify for Free or Reduced price meals contribute toward the cost of school meals eaten by their scholar(s). No fee is required for families that do qualify for Free or Reduced price meals. For families who do not qualify, each breakfast costs \$1.25 and each lunch costs \$2.25. Families may send lunch or breakfast from home for their scholar(s) to eat at no cost. Parents will be regularly invoiced by the school for monies owed for student meals. Parents are required to pay all balances by the due dates specified on invoices. Non-payment of monies owed may result in loss of privileges for the scholar. Parents with high balances will be required to meet with School Leaders to discuss payment plans.

**Dismissal:** The purpose of dismissal is to ensure the safety of our students as they go home for the day. Our goal is to ensure that students are supervised by staff so they can return home safely and urgently.

- Students are encouraged to stay after school if they are registered for and involved in a structured, supervised, and sanctioned school activity.
- Students who are not involved in a structured, supervised activity must leave the building at their dismissal time.
- If students are picked up from school, families (or their designees) are expected: to do so on a timely basis; to be very familiar with the days on which students have scheduled activities (or detentions) and to communicate in advance about transportation plans.
- Within 15 minutes of dismissal, all students who are not involved in a structured, supervised activity must be picked up.
- Students must be at least 10 years of age to walk home without an adult present; younger students may not.

### **Student Belongings**

Students are not permitted to bring toys, electronics, or other personal items to school unless they are instructed to do so by their teacher, because they can be a distraction or can be easily lost. Uncommon Schools: North Star Academy is not responsible for lost or stolen items.

### **Enrichment Programs**

Uncommon Schools: North Star Academy conducts several after-school activities. Students are encouraged to participate in enrichment activities. Students may be removed from enrichment activities temporarily due to behavioral concerns or

academic performance. Students may be required to submit an up-to-date physical or other forms in order to participate in certain enrichment activities, including sports.

### **Events & Celebrations**

Birthday Celebrations are welcome and must be scheduled in advance with your child's teacher or Operations team.

### **Fire Alarm**

Any time the fire alarm goes off (including regularly scheduled fire drills), students must obey the following procedures, for their safety and the safety of others:

- Listen for the fire alarm.
- Line up immediately and be silent.
- Follow their teacher to the designated exit and line up outside.
- Once outside they must remain silent and listen to instruction from their teacher.

### **Toilet Training**

Students are expected to be toilet trained by the time they enroll in Kindergarten. Families should notify the school as soon as possible upon enrollment if their student is not currently toilet trained, so that they can work with the school to develop a plan to support the child using the toilet independently as soon as possible.

## **Health Policies**

The health and safety of our students and staff are a top priority of North Star Academy. Specific policies that apply to all North Star Academy students are captured below. These policies, like all other policies in this handbook, are subject to change. Your child's school will contact you in writing if any policies are added or changed.

### **Illness and Return Policy**

In general, students should not be sent to school if they are feeling too sick to participate in school. Students should stay home from school if they experience any of these symptoms:

- Fever of 100 degrees or higher
- Vomiting and/or Diarrhea

- Symptoms of communicable illness such as rash/sores, sore throat, COVID-19, conjunctivitis
- Any other symptoms or illnesses that prevent the student from participating in learning.

Students can return to school when they are fever free (without fever reducing medication), have not vomited for 24 hours, and when symptoms have resolved or become mild enough to enable the student to participate fully in the day's learning.

### **Administration of Care and Medication Policy**

North Star Academy is committed to caring for its students and provides the health services required by law.

- The school will contact family members/guardians or a designated relative or family friend if a student becomes ill or suffers an injury. If the School determines that a student is unable to take part in learning, the student's family member/guardian will be notified to pick up the student. Students with serious injuries are taken to the hospital for emergency medical care and the family member(s) or guardian(s) are notified immediately. **Be sure to list all emergency telephone numbers on your child's enrollment information.**
- If a student requires medication of any kind (including Tylenol, aspirin, and asthma inhalers), the student's family member/guardian must submit a Medication Administration Form and must give the medication in the original container to the nurse. A family member/guardian of any student who is required to carry an asthma inhaler on his/her person must provide a Medication Administration form specifying that the student needs to carry the inhaler with their and a second inhaler that is kept in the nurse's office.
- Please be advised: **Nurses are not allowed to give out any medication (prescription or over the counter) without a doctor's written order & pharmacy label.** This includes all medicines, including aspirin or Tylenol, given for any reason. This consent—which you will receive from your child's doctor—will state the name of the medication, dosage, and frequency of dosage.
- Students are not permitted to carry or self-administer over-the-counter OR prescription medication without family or guardian permission and doctor's written order.

### **Immunization Policy**

The school abides by all New Jersey State immunization requirements. Each new student must have a certificate of immunization at the time of registration or no later

than the first day of school. Family members/guardians must present documentation that their children have received all required doses of vaccines or are waiting to receive the subsequent doses at the appropriate time intervals. Family members/guardians seeking to waive the immunization requirement should submit their request to the school nurse. The nurse will review the request and will advise the DOO, who will make the final decision on whether to grant the waiver request.

## **Additional Policies**

### **Uniform**

At Uncommon, we believe uniforms help build community pride and support equity amongst all students. School uniforms must be worn at all times. Uniforms are:

- Uniform shirt from the designated school vendor. Shirts must be tucked in.
- Uniform pants, skirts, or jumpers (these may be purchased from any vendor but must match the school's uniform color)
- All-black sneakers or Black or Brown shoes
- Socks of any color
- Black or brown belts are required for students in middle and high school when wearing pants

### **Social Media**

Social Media is a powerful and effective tool for keeping people connected and the School respects the rights of families/guardians to engage in free and open communication of their personal information through personal online activities. When posting classroom photos, please be respectful of the fact that other families/guardians may not want their child's photograph posted to your Social Media site(s). Do not post photos of your child's classmates without their permission. Please note that school staff are not permitted to "friend" or "follow" students or request "friend" or "follow" requests from currently enrolled students on their personal social media accounts, with the exception of the professional networking site LinkedIn.

### **Tobacco and E-Cigarette Policy**

The school prohibits the use of any tobacco or cigarette products (including electronic cigarettes, vapes, electronic nicotine delivery systems, etc.) within the school buildings, the school facilities, on the school grounds, or on school buses by any individual, including school personnel.

## **Bus Behavior**

It should be clear to all students and their families that a public-school bus is a form of school-sponsored transportation. Therefore, appropriate behavior as laid out in the Code of Conduct is expected at all times on school buses and disciplinary consequences apply. No adult besides a school staff member may board the bus for any reason without the explicit permission of the bus driver. Violation of this policy may result in suspension from transportation and/or other consequences.

## **Visitors**

North Star welcomes family members and other community members to our schools. We encourage open lines of communication between the school and families, and these guidelines have been established to help ensure student safety and to minimize disruption of instruction during visits.

## **Parent/Guardian Visits**

Parents/guardians or members of the community who wish to visit the school are required to arrange each visit in advance (>24 hours).

- Meeting with a teacher: Meetings should be scheduled directly with the teacher. Teachers are expected not to take class time to discuss individual matters with visitors.
- Classroom visits (for birthdays, etc.): contact the teacher or school leader directly to schedule a time and date
- Meeting with the Principal: Meetings are able to be requested with the school principal and should be scheduled with a minimum of 24 hours notice. No visitors will be granted building access during arrival or dismissal times unless they have a scheduled appointment. Scheduling advanced visits to discuss important matters helps our staff make student safety their primary concern during arrival and dismissal.

## **Family Communication**

Our families are partners with Uncommon Schools staff in creating a warm and respectful environment for everyone in our team and family. We work hard to ensure that the School's values permeate all interactions with families and students whether communication occurs in person, in writing, by telephone, or by text message. By virtue of being a parent/guardian, you are opting into receiving communication from platforms (such as ParentSquare, School Messenger, etc.). School staff and families are both responsible for ensuring that all communication is positive and mutually respectful. To that end, this policy prohibits disruptive, volatile, hostile, violent, or threatening



communication and/or actions by Uncommon staff, students, families, visitors, or other members of the public. The policy further requires that Uncommon staff treat students, families, and other members of the public with civility, courtesy and respect, and that scholars, families and other members of the public members in turn treat Uncommon staff and each other with civility, courtesy and respect.

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

Our priority is to maintain a safe and respectful environment for students and adults alike via a calm, productive, positive learning environment. In the event that there is a violation of these communication expectations, the school may issue consequences such as issuing a written warning, requiring written requests prior to scheduling subsequent meetings, or barring an individual from the school site.

### **Student Records**

The school administration is in charge of student records. They will discuss, explain, and/or make available to the student or their families/guardians any records on file. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) affords families/guardians and students over 18 years of age ("eligible students") certain rights with respect to the student's education records.

These rights are:

- The right to inspect and review the student's education records within 45 days of the day the School receives a request for access. Family members/guardians or eligible students should submit to the School Principal or appropriate school official a written request that identifies the record(s) they wish to inspect. The School official will make arrangements for access and notify the family/guardian or eligible student of the time and place where the records may be inspected. Copies of records will be made available if requested by a family member or guardian.
- The right to request the amendment of the student's education records that the family/guardian or eligible student believes are inaccurate or misleading. Family

members/guardians or eligible students may ask the School to amend a record that they believe is inaccurate or misleading. They should write to the School Leader or appropriate official; clearly identify the part of the record they want to be changed and specify why it is inaccurate or misleading. If the School decides not to amend the record as requested by the family/guardian or eligible student, the School will notify the family/guardian or eligible student of the decision and advise them of their right to a hearing regarding the request for amendment. Additional information regarding the hearing procedures will be provided to the family/guardian or eligible student when notified of the right to a hearing. After the hearing, if the school still decides not to amend the record, the family/guardian or eligible student has the right to place a statement with the record commenting on the contested information in the record.

- The right to consent to disclosures of personally identifiable information contained in the student's education records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent. One exception, which permits disclosure without consent, is disclosure to school officials with legitimate educational interests. A school official is a person employed by the School as an administrator, supervisor, instructor, or support staff member (including health or medical staff and law enforcement unit personnel); a person serving on the School Board; a person or company with whom the School has contracted to perform a special task (such as an attorney, auditor, medical consultant, or therapist); or a family member/guardian or student serving on an official committee, such as a disciplinary or grievance committee, or assisting another school official in performing his or her tasks. A school official has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record in order to fulfill his or her professional responsibility. Upon request, the School discloses education records without consent to officials of another school in which a student seeks or intends to enroll.
- The right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by the 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 20202-8520
- The right to opt out of the School's policy to, without prior authorization by family members/guardians or eligible students, release basic student "directory information," which includes the student's name, address, telephone listing, date and place of birth, participation in officially recognized activities and sports, weight and height of members of athletic teams, dates of degrees and

awards received, and the most recent educational agency or institution attended by the student, applies equally to military recruiters, the media, colleges and universities, and prospective employers. The School shall arrange to provide translations of this notice to non-English speaking family members or guardians in their dominant language.

### **High School Enrollment**

Students who are promoted from 8<sup>th</sup> grade at a North Star Academy middle school will be offered a 9<sup>th</sup> grade seat at one, designated North Star Academy high school (their middle school's "Assigned High School"). The Assigned High School is the school where they and all the graduating 8<sup>th</sup> graders from their middle school who choose to attend a North Star Academy high school will be offered a seat.

Due to capacity constraints in our high schools, North Star Academy is not able to offer students a choice of enrolling at a high school other than their Assigned High School at this time, absent exigent circumstances. Every North Star Academy high school offers i) rigorous college preparatory curriculum, ii) opportunities for students to explore passions and interests, iii) individual support and planning on students' paths to college, iv) alumni support, and v) commitment to meeting student needs.

Family Members/guardians and students should contact the Director of Operations at their school with additional questions about high school enrollment.

### **Public Display of Affection**

North Star Academy is a professional environment and as such all students must conduct themselves appropriately. Therefore, students must show respect for themselves and others by restraining from inappropriate public displays of affection. These actions include, but are not limited to kissing, hand holding, extended hugging, and sitting on another student's lap.

# **Code of Conduct**

## **Introduction**

At North Star Academy, our goal is to provide a safe, rigorous, joyful, and culturally responsive learning environment where all students can thrive. Our student discipline policy is restorative, providing opportunities for students to pause and reflect, recognize the impact their behaviors have on the community, and commit to repairing any harm through positive future actions. Student disruptions may lead to disciplinary action, such as in-school and out-of-school suspensions. These decisions are made with the utmost consideration for the social and emotional wellbeing of all students. This is the basis of our student Code of Conduct.

The Code of Conduct will be equitably applied without regard to race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, or a mental, physical, or sensory disability or by any other legally protected

distinguishing characteristics. The School reserves the right to amend, supplement, or rescind provisions of this Code of Conduct at any time as it deems appropriate, in its sole and absolute discretion, consistent with applicable law and regulations.

## **Disciplinary Procedures**

The School believes in the importance of setting forth clear behavioral expectations to ensure a safe, equitable, respectful, and supportive environment for every student. These expectations are outlined in the Code of Conduct, and it is the collective responsibility of students, staff, and families to uphold these expectations. The School has put in place systems to reinforce positive behavior and academic success. When student behaviors negatively impact the school environment, behavior interventions and supports will be used to remediate problem behaviors, enabling students to learn from their mistakes and be accountable for their misconduct.

The following disciplinary procedures apply to behaviors that occur on school grounds, at school-sponsored events, or traveling to or from school, including on school buses. Additionally, students may be disciplined for behavior that occurs off of school grounds, such as on social media, if it jeopardizes the safety or well-being of other students, teachers or school property or when such behavior can reasonably be expected to impact the educational process and/or create a risk of substantial disruption within the School environment.

## **Consequences**

There are a series of consequences that the School uses to ensure that the School environment is safe, equitable, respectful, and supportive. In administering consequences, School personnel will take into account such factors as (i) the type and severity of the conduct; (ii) the harm or potential harm of the conduct (including the disruption of educational processes, physical harm or emotional harm to others, damage to property, etc.); (iii) the student's prior disciplinary and academic record; (iv) the student's age; (v) deterrence; (vi) the student's honesty and cooperation when confronted with the violation; and (vii) the future protection of persons and property.

The School reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to amend or discontinue any of the policies, procedures, practices or general descriptions set forth in this policy, including to take immediate action when required, and to create alternatives to disciplinary protocols when in the best interests of our students, staff members and/or the School.

The following is a non-exhaustive list of possible consequences that may be issued to a student who is determined to have broken the School's Code of Conduct:

1. Oral or non-verbal warning
2. Written warning
3. Loss of school privileges
4. Written notification to family/guardian
5. Conference with families/guardian(s)
6. Confiscation of property
7. After-school detention
8. Suspension, exclusion and/or removal from a particular class or School Function
9. Suspension or revocation of School privileges related to the violation (e.g., revocation of computer uses privileges);
10. Suspension from transportation
11. Suspension from social, athletic, after-school, field trip, extracurricular, or other School Functions
12. In-school suspension
13. Short-term suspension (ten days or less) from school
14. Long-term suspension (more than ten days) from school\*
15. Expulsion from school\*

\* Certain violations, such as bringing a firearm to School, may legally require suspension for a certain time and require reporting to law enforcement agencies.

Students may be subject to disciplinary actions, up to and including suspension and/or expulsion from school, for:

- Open defiance of the Code of Conduct that threatens safety
- Skipping class or truancy
- Skipping detention or tutorial
- Excessive disrespect of staff, teachers, peers, or other adults that significantly disrupt the classroom or school community
- Attempted or actual theft, loss, or destruction of personal or School property
- Mistreatment or Inappropriate Use of Technology
- Inappropriately using a cell phone in school
- Presence on school property or at a school function without permission of a staff member.
- Blocking Access to any Part of the School Building.
- Trespassing.
- Possession of Inappropriate or Prohibited Property/Material.
- Academic integrity violations
- Profane Language or Gestures.
- Physical contact, fighting or physical assault of another student
- Physical harm or assault of a teacher, staff member, or other adult at school
- Harassment or violent threats, including cyber bullying of any kind and/or
  - creating images or videos of another student in a manner intended to harass or exacerbate an incident of harassment
- Gang recruitment and/or expression of gang membership through symbols, jewelry, insignia, etc.
- Possession of a weapon
- Arrest for criminal activity
- Possessing, using, or dispensing controlled dangerous substances without legal authority, alcohol, tobacco or nicotine products, or illegal substances (Any illegal substances will also be reported to the police, as required by law)
- Engaging in sexual activity or inappropriate touching
- Harassment, Discrimination, Bullying, and Hazing.
- Gambling
- Open Flame/Arson
- Setting Off a False Alarm or Making a Threat
- Other actions deemed suspendable offenses by a School Leader

### **Long-Term Suspensions and Expulsions For Serious Offenses**

In order to maintain a safe learning environment, there will be zero tolerance for weapons at the School. Students who violate this Code of Conduct shall be immediately removed from school and disciplined as appropriate. This includes but is not limited to any of the following offenses:

- Conviction or adjudication of delinquency for possession of a deadly weapon, or for committing a crime while in possession of a deadly weapon, on any school grounds, on traveling to or from school, including on a school bus, or at a school-sponsored function.
- Possession of a firearm on any school grounds, on a school bus or at any school-sponsored function
- Assault with (or without) a weapon upon a student, teacher, administrator, other employee, or board member on any school grounds, traveling to or from school, including on a school bus, or at any school-sponsored function.

This policy will be interpreted as broadly as necessary to ensure a safe environment for our students and staff.

### **Seclusion and Restraint**

As part of our emergency procedures, physical restraint is permitted in limited circumstances where a student is in imminent risk of injury to themselves or others and the student is not responsive to less intensive behavioral interventions, including verbal directives or other de-escalation techniques. No student will be placed in seclusion and/or restrained by school staff as a form of discipline or punishment. As soon as possible, during or after any such use of restraint and/or seclusion, family member(s) or guardian(s) will be informed when any of these actions have occurred and will be provided with an account of the incident, including the circumstances that led to the use of seclusion and/or restraint. Additionally, situations where there is the potential for significant harm may be reported to crisis services for additional support. The School is committed to following the evolving rules and requirements relating to the use of any force in schools and will ensure that its practices align with all current relevant law.

### **Procedures For Certain Types of Discipline**

#### **Short Term In-School Suspension or Short-Term Suspension from School (ten days or less)**

When the Principal and/or Director of Operations or their designee (referred to as the “Suspending Authority”), such as a Dean of Students, determines that a student’s misbehavior calls for a removal from class and should be assigned in-school suspension or should be suspended on a short-term basis for ten days or

less, the Suspending Authority will provide notice (by telephone or in writing) of such suspension decision. Such notice will be provide to, in the first instance, the student; the student will be informed of his or her infraction(s) and allow the student an opportunity to give the student's side of the story, and then to the student's family or guardian, and afford the family or guardian an opportunity for an informal conference.

The student also may be removed from class and/or School immediately if, in the sole discretion of the Suspending Authority, it is determined that the student's

presence in class or the School poses a continuing danger to persons or property or risks disruption of the academic process. Proper authorities will be notified if students who are suspended out of School return to school during a period of suspension.

The purpose of the informal conference, if the family or guardian chooses one, is to discuss with the family or guardian the circumstances that led to the suspension decision and to explore proactive steps to ensure the student's misconduct that led to the suspension does not reoccur. The informal conference may be held in person or by telephone. Any written notice and informal conference shall be in the dominant language or mode of communication used by the family or guardian(s). The opportunity for an informal conference shall take place as soon as possible after the suspension as is reasonably practicable. If family member(s)/guardian(s) choose to contest the suspension decision, they may file a written appeal of not more than three pages to the Board of Trustees via the Principal and/or Director of Operations within five business days of the date of the Suspending Authority's decision, or if an informal conference has been held, within five days of such informal conference. The suspension will take place while such a challenge is made. The appeal to the Board will be handled by the Board's designee, currently the School's Regional Senior Director from Uncommon Schools. If the Board's designee upholds the challenge to the suspension, any portion of the suspension already served will be expunged from the student's records and any portion of the suspension not yet served will be nullified and cancelled. The Board's designee will promptly communicate his or her decision in writing to the family member(s)/guardian(s).

### **Long Term In-School Suspension, Long Term Suspension from School (more than ten days) and Expulsion**

When the Instructional Leader and/or Operations Leader or their designee determines that a suspension for more than ten days or expulsion may be



warranted, the student may be removed from class and/or school immediately if the student's presence in school poses a continuing danger to persons or property or is an ongoing threat of disruption to the academic process. The Instructional Leader and/or Operations Leader or their designee shall give reasonable written notice to the student and the student's family member(s)/guardian(s) of the charges against the student, the proposed penalty and the right to due process and a fair hearing within ten days unless the family member(s) or guardian(s) consent to an adjournment. Every effort will be made to ensure that the hearing is held as soon as practicable in order to limit the amount of time the student spends outside the

classroom, but not so soon as to prevent the family/guardian from seeking counsel and making arrangements to attend the hearing. Where possible, notification also shall be provided by telephone if the school has been provided with a contact telephone number for a family member(s) or guardian(s). The notification provided shall be in the dominant language used by a family member(s) or guardian(s). A short-term suspension will be imposed until the hearing on the long-term suspension or expulsion.

At the hearing, the student shall have the right to be represented by counsel or advocate (at the student's/family's expense), the right to question witnesses against them, confront evidence against them and the right to present evidence and witnesses on their own behalf. If the witness is a minor, the School must have written permission allowing the student to serve as a witness from the student's parents prior to the Hearing. The Board's designee, currently the School's Regional Superintendent of Operations from Uncommon Schools, shall personally serve as hearing officer or may, in his/her discretion, designate a hearing officer to conduct the hearing. The hearing officer shall be authorized to administer oaths and make determinations on evidentiary issues. A record of the hearing shall be maintained, but no stenographic transcript shall be required. An audio recording shall be deemed a satisfactory record. The hearing officer shall make written findings of fact and recommendations as to the appropriate ruling. The report of the hearing officer will be final. The written ruling will be provided to the student and family member(s) and guardian(s). This ruling will also be placed in the student's permanent record.

If a family member(s)/guardian(s) fail to attend the hearing and fail to notify a school official of the need to reschedule the hearing prior to its start, or if the student withdraws from the School prior to occurrence of the hearing, the School may conduct the hearing in a family member(s)/guardian(s)' absence. In such an event, the School shall notify a family member(s) /guardian(s) in writing of the

School's determination, the student's placement (if applicable) and their appeal rights.

In the event a student is expelled from the School, they are not eligible to transfer to or enroll in any other charter school operated by the School's education corporation, North Star Academy Charter Schools.

### **Alternative Instruction**

For any suspension (in-school or out of school) of one day or more, or any suspension of less than one day when the student has not yet received 60 minutes of instruction in grades K-6 or 120 minutes of instruction in grades 7-12, student has a right to live alternative instruction by qualified staff of at least 60 minutes (grades K-6) or 120 minutes (grades 7-12). The character of the instruction shall be such that the student receives all homework, takes all tests and quizzes and is able to keep pace with the student's class toward promotion in grade or graduation. The instruction shall be provided as soon as feasible after the suspension. The School may provide alternative instruction in-school or out-of-school at the School's discretion. If the student does not attend alternative instruction, the student shall be marked absent. If the School does not offer alternative instruction the student may not be recorded as absent.

In the case of an expulsion, alternative instruction will be provided for a reasonable period of time or until the student is enrolled at another accredited school, or otherwise participating in an accredited program to the extent the provision of such services is required by law. If the expulsion is in close proximity with the end of the school year, then the School will provide alternative instruction until the end of the school year.

### **On-Site Learning Program**

Students placed in On site learning by the Instructional Leader and/or Operations Leader or their designee may be required to report to an On-Site Learning Program (OSL) located outside the School to serve the suspension and receive alternate instruction. In such cases, the Instructional Leader and/or Operations Leader or their designee shall give reasonable notice to the student and the student's families(s)/guardian(s).

Students who have lost the privilege of being in class with their peers may be required to report to the OSL to serve their consequence. Failure to report to the

designated location in a timely manner will result in an absence, and students will need to report to the OSL for an additional day to make-up the absence. Students placed on OSL will not be allowed to return to their primary high school until they have fully met the requirements of their OSL.

### **Gun Free Schools Act**

Federal law (20 USC §7961) requires suspension from school for a period of not less than one year for a student who the School determines to have brought a firearm to school, or to have possessed a firearm at school, except that the School's Chief Operating Officer from Uncommon Schools may modify in writing such suspension requirement for a student on a case-by-case basis with the consent of the Board of Trustees. "Firearm" as used in this law means a "firearm," or "destructive device" as defined by 18 USC § 921(a), and includes firearms and explosives.

The School may also permanently expel a student for bringing a firearm to school.

It is the policy of the School that in the event a student brings a firearm to school or possesses one at school, the Regional Superintendent of Operations will refer the student to local law enforcement or other presentment agency as a juvenile delinquent.

The provisions of the Gun Free Schools Act shall be construed in a manner consistent with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Therefore, the CST will be consulted, even after a manifestation determination that the student's behavior was not a manifestation of the student's disability, regarding placement and services for such student.

### **Bullying**

Bullying is strictly prohibited on school property and at any school function, as well as any other place or time when the effects of such conduct would reasonably be expected to impact the educational process or create a risk disruption within the School environment.

"Bullying" for the purpose of this policy is defined as harassment, aggressive behavior or other intentional action, whether verbal or physical, which is intended, or could reasonably be expected, to cause Emotional Harm, distress, fear, ridicule, humiliation and/or intimidation. Bullying can be face-to-face, or carried out by phone, over the internet and other ways directed at another person through the "posting" of sensitive and/or private information, including Cyberbullying: "Cyberbullying" means

Bullying through any form of electronic communication, such as email, text, and social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, and Instagram). Bullying can take many forms, such as slurs, jokes, innuendos, demeaning comments, cartoons, pranks, gestures, and physical attacks. ("Intentional action" refers to the individual's choice to engage in the act rather than the ultimate impact of the action(s).)

This policy includes Bullying of students (by other students, employees, volunteers and visitors) and by students (of employees, volunteers and visitors).

Bullying by students will result in discipline, up to and including expulsion. Bullying by employees will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

### **Harassment and Discrimination**

All students are entitled to a learning environment free from harassment and Discrimination. No student or employee shall be subjected to discrimination or harassment by other students, Employees or visitors on the basis of physical, cultural or even social differences, including, without limitation based on his or her actual or perceived race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, sex, gender identity, or gender. "Harassment" includes any action (verbal or physical) which tends to create a hostile environment (including Bullying and Cyberbullying) and has substantially interfered with a student's educational opportunities or benefits or the terms and conditions of an employee's employment, reasonably causes a student or employee to fear for his or her physical safety, or reasonably poses a risk to a student's or employee's physical or emotional well-being. Just like Bullying, Harassment that occurs off School Property is prohibited when the effects of such conduct would reasonably be expected to impact the educational process or create risk of disruption within the School environment.

Harassment by students will result in discipline, up to and including expulsion. Harassment by employees will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

Uncommon values and embraces its inclusive and diverse school communities and strives to provide a welcoming, safe and supportive environment for all students and families regardless of their race, color, ethnicity, religion, gender, disability, sexual orientation and gender identity. If a student or his or her family would like to explore a particular accommodation based upon cultural or religious practices, or due to

one's disability, sexual orientation, or gender identity, the student or the student's families or guardian should contact a School Leader or adult the student feels comfortable with to schedule a meeting to discuss a plan to address the student's particular circumstances and needs.

### **Reporting and Investigation of Complaints**

Any staff member who witnesses, receives an oral or written account of, or otherwise reasonably suspects the occurrence of, any act constituting Harassment, Discrimination or Bullying *must* promptly notify the School Leader or superintendent of such occurrence as soon as reasonably practicable, but no later than one school day of witnessing or receiving a report of Harassment, Discrimination or Bullying. Such staff members are required to file a written report with the School Leader or superintendent no later than two school days after such oral report or notification.

All students, families/guardians, visitors and others are *strongly encouraged* to report any such conduct. Retaliation or reprisal by any staff member, student or family/guardian against any individual who, in good faith, reports or assists in the investigation of Harassment, Discrimination or Bullying is strictly prohibited (and, for students and staff members, will result in severe discipline). All complaints will be treated in a confidential manner. Please note that anonymous reports may limit the School's ability to effectively and efficiently respond to the complaint.

The Principal, Regional Superintendent of Instruction, or Regional Superintendent of Operations will lead or supervise the prompt and thorough investigation of all such reports. If such investigation results in a finding of a violation of the School's anti-Harassment/Discrimination/Bullying policies, the School will take prompt action, reasonably calculated to end the Harassment/Discrimination or Bullying, eliminate any hostile environment, prevent recurrence of the behavior, and ensure the safety and educational opportunities of the student(s) or staff member(s) against whom such behavior was directed.

The School reserves the right to notify an appropriate law enforcement agency when it is believed that any Harassment/Discrimination/Bullying constitutes criminal conduct.

Material incidents of discrimination and harassment will be reported to the State Education Department as required by law.

**Substance Abuse Policy**

Any student who is suspected to be under the influence without legal authority of a controlled dangerous substance will be required to have an immediate (within 24 hours) physical examination and drug test by a physician. Any examination or test completed by a physician of the parent or guardian's choice will be at the parent/guardian's expense, per N.J.A.C. 6.25-6.3a. If a student's parent/guardian cannot arrange an immediate examination then the school will take the student to the school's physician at the school's expense. The student will also be subject to suspension for up to 24 hours while the school determines the results of these tests. If the test results are positive then the student will have to have an evaluation and assessment done by a drug and alcohol counselor to determine the nature and severity of the problem. The student must then follow the given recommendations and treatment in order to continue at North Star. Repeated violations may result in escalation up to and including expulsion. Possession of, selling or use of controlled dangerous substances on school property, without legal authority, may also result in expulsion. Additionally, students may be sanctioned for being intoxicated, inebriated or otherwise under the influence while on school grounds. Such sanctions may include, but are not limited to, suspension and will be consistent with N.J.A.C. 6A:16-4.4 and 7.

**Discipline of Students with Special Needs**

In addition to the discipline procedures applicable to all students, the following procedures are applicable to students with disabilities. If a student is not specifically identified as having a disability but the School, prior to the behavior which is the subject of the disciplinary action, has a basis of knowledge—in accordance with 34 CFR 300.534—that a disability exists, the student may request to be disciplined in accordance with these provisions. The School shall comply with sections 300.530-300.536 of the Code of Federal Regulations and the following procedures, except that in the event that the following procedures are inconsistent with federal law and regulations, such federal law and regulations shall govern.

The School shall maintain written records of all suspensions and expulsions of students with a disability including the name of the student, a description of the behavior engaged in, the disciplinary action taken, and a record of the number of days a student has been suspended or removed for disciplinary reasons.

If a student identified as having a disability is suspended during the course of the school year for a total of eight (8) days, such student will immediately be referred to

the CST of the student's district of residence for reconsideration of the student's educational placement. Such a student shall not be suspended for a total of more than ten (10) days during the school year without the specific involvement of the CST of the student's district of residence prior to the eleventh day of suspension, because such suspensions may be considered to be a change in placement. In considering the placement of students referred because of disciplinary problems, the CST of the student's district of residence is expected to follow its ordinary policies with respect to family notification and involvement.

### **Due Process**

If discipline which would constitute a change in placement is contemplated for any student with an IEP, the following steps shall be taken: (1) not later than the date on which the decision to take such action is made, the family member(s) or guardian(s) of the student with a disability shall be notified by the school of that decision and provided the procedural safeguards notice described in 34 CFR §300.504; and (2) the CST of the student's district of residence and other qualified personnel shall meet and review the relationship between the child's disability and the behavior subject to the disciplinary action (subject to CST's availability).

If, upon CST review, it is determined that the child's behavior was not a manifestation of his or her disability, then the child may be disciplined in the same manner as a child without a disability, except as provided in 34 CFR §300.530(d), which relates to the provision of services to students with disabilities during periods of removal.

Family member(s) or guardian(s) may request a hearing to challenge the manifestation determination. Except as provided below, the child will remain in his or her current educational placement pending the determination of the hearing.

If a family or guardian requests a hearing or an appeal to challenge the interim alternative educational setting or the manifestation determination resulting from a disciplinary action relating to weapons or drugs, the child shall remain in the interim alternative educational setting pending the decision of the hearing officer or until the expiration of the time period provided for in the disciplinary action, whichever occurs first, unless a family member or guardian and School agree otherwise.

### **Provision of Services During Removal**

Those students with special needs removed for a period of fewer than ten days will receive all classroom assignments and a schedule to complete such assignments

during the time of their suspension. Provisions will be made to permit a suspended student to make up assignments or tests missed as a result of such suspension. The school also shall provide additional alternative instruction within the ten (10) days and by appropriate means to assist the student, so that the student is given full opportunity to complete assignments and master curriculum, including additional instructions, phone assistance, computer instruction and/or home visits and one-on-one tutoring.

During any subsequent removal that, combined with previous removals equals ten (10) or more school days during the School year, but does not constitute a change in placement, services must be provided to the extent determined necessary to enable the child to appropriately progress in the general curriculum and in achieving the goals of his or her IEP. In these cases, school personnel, in consultation with the child's special education teacher, shall make the service determination.

During any removal to an interim alternative educational setting not to exceed 45 days for weapon, drug or infliction of serious bodily injury-related offenses pursuant to 34 CFR §300.530(g) services will be provided to the extent necessary to enable the child to appropriately progress in the general curriculum and in achieving the goals of his or her IEP. These service determinations will be made by the CST of the student's district of residence. The School will, in consultation with the CST, place students in interim alternative educational settings as appropriate per 34 CFR §300.520(g). The student should receive, as appropriate, a functional behavioral assessment, and behavioral intervention services and modifications that are designed to address the behavior violation so that it does not recur.

During any subsequent removal that does constitute a change in placement, but where the behavior is not a manifestation of the disability, the services must be provided to the extent necessary to enable the student to appropriately progress in the general curriculum and in achieving the goals of his or her IEP. The CST of the student's district of residence will make the service determination. The student should receive, as appropriate, a functional behavioral assessment, and behavioral intervention services and modifications that are designed to address the behavior violation so that it does not recur.

### **Compliance with the Child Find Requirements of IDEA**

The School will comply with the federal Child Find requirements (34 CFR §300.111), which require schools to have in place a process for identifying, locating and evaluating students with disabilities. Students enrolling for the first time in a New



Jersey public school will be screened by a team of teachers (including both regular and special education teachers) to identify any possible indication that the child may need a specialized or Individualized Education Program, or referral to the CST of the

student's district of residence. Other students will be brought to the attention of the team if they are demonstrating any problems within the regular classroom environment. Strategies will then be implemented to address any identified special needs of the student. Should the problems persist, and a disability is suspected, the student will be referred to the CST of the student's district of residence for an evaluation.

### **Students with a 504 Plan and “Deemed to Know” Students**

With regard to disciplinary actions, including suspension or expulsion, the Section 504 rights of charter school students with disabilities are the same as other students with disabilities.

When addressing discipline for students with disabilities, including students with 504 plans or those who are “presumed to have a disability,” The School will comply with applicable legal requirements governing the discipline of a student for misconduct.

### **Student Interviews and Searches**

#### **Student Interviews**

School staff may question or interview students and/or take statements from students regarding violations or potential violations of the Code of Conduct without the consent or presence of families or legal guardians unless otherwise required by law.

#### **Searches of Property**

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

#### **Searches of the Person**

The School authorizes the Instructional Leader and/or Operations Leader or their designee to conduct searches of students and their belongings if the authorized school official has reasonable suspicion to believe that the search will result in evidence that the student violated the law or the School's Code of Conduct or otherwise constituted a threat to the health, safety, welfare, or morals of the School,

other students, school personnel, or any other person lawfully on school property or attending a School Function. For example, an authorized School official, with minimal suspicion, may also conduct a search of a student's belongings that is minimally intrusive, such as touching the outside of a book bag for a security check so long as the school official has a legitimate reason for the very limited search, including investigative purposes.

An authorized School official may search a student or the student's belongings based upon information received from an informant who is deemed reliable, in the official's sole discretion. In instances where there are strong indications that a more intensive search would turn up evidence of a serious threat, such as drugs or a weapon, authorized School officials may conduct a more intrusive search of a student's belongings and/or person.

Before searching a student or the student's belongings, the authorized School official should seek an admission from the student that they possess physical evidence that they violated the law or the school code or request the student to voluntarily consent to the search. Searches will be limited in scope to that which is necessary to locate the evidence sought.

Whenever practicable, searches will be conducted in the privacy of administrative offices with more than one witness present, and students will be present when their possessions are being searched.

## **Student Use of Technology Policies**

### **Use of Technology, Electronic Devices and Phones at School**

We understand that many of our students have phones or other electronic devices, and we have created the following policies for the sake of ensuring that students and families clearly understand school expectations. These policies have been created with the goals of minimizing distraction to our students or risk of loss or theft.

- Students who use cell phones at unauthorized times will have the devices confiscated until the school leader returns the cell phone or determines a family member/guardian needs to pick it up. Egregious or repeated violations of the cell phone policy may result in additional consequences, including suspension.
- North Star Academy does not accept financial responsibility for cell phones reported missing during school hours. Students who bring cell phones or other electronic devices to school do so at their own discretion, and the school will not reimburse for phones or other electronic equipment reported

as misgivings while on school grounds.

<b>Grade Level</b>	<b>Technology Policies</b>
<b>Elementary School</b>	Students are not permitted to bring cell phones, smart watches, smart glasses, or other electronics to school.
<b>Middle School</b>	<p>All internet-connected devices such as Cell Phones and Smart Watches: In the interest of student safety during commuting, students are permitted to bring internet-connected devices to school. However, the following conditions apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cell phones must be labeled with student name and homeroom and stowed away according to school procedures.</li><li>• Except as noted below, internet-connected devices including cell phones and smart watches must be completely turned off during the school day from the start of instruction until dismissal.</li><li>• With a teacher's permission, at the end of the day, students are permitted to make phone calls after school or receive text messages from their families/guardians to coordinate their ride home. Students are not permitted to use cell phones for any other purpose during the school day.</li></ul>
<b>High School</b>	<p>High school students may use recreational electronic devices at teacher discretion and in specific ways during breakfast, lunch, and afterschool. Students abusing this policy will have this privilege revoked. In addition, students are responsible for their own electronic devices. While Uncommon Schools obviously strives to prevent theft of any item, the school is not responsible for broken or missing phones and will not track down electronic devices that have been reported missing. The following conditions apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Except as noted below, cell phones and smart watches must be completely turned off during the school day from the start of instruction until dismissal.</li><li>• Students may use electronic listening devices in common areas during breakfast and lunch but may not actually engage in cell phone calls or any loud music, gaming,</li></ul>

	<p>shows, etc. without the use of headphones.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students are encouraged to be courteous and discreet in their use of cell phones during times and places when they are permitted. Adult visitors to the high school will be given this same instruction.</li> <li>• Students who use or show cell phones or smart watches at unauthorized times will have the devices confiscated. Please see the Code of Conduct for specifications on consequences that may be assigned for unauthorized use of cell phones and smart watches.</li> </ul>
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### **Student Technology Acceptable Use Policy**

Uncommon Schools is committed to providing a learning environment designed to meet the needs of students and building a culture of openness, trust and integrity. Students and staff need the ability to use and access a variety of technology resources, including the Internet, as part of their educational process.

### **Conditions for Technology Use**

**Purpose:** To support its commitment to providing access to information necessary for education, Uncommon's system of electronic communication shall include access to the Internet for students and instructional staff.

### **Acceptable Use**

The purpose of information technology is to facilitate communications in support of education by providing access to informational resources and the ability to collaborate. All users of information technology must follow the existing rules and acceptable use policies incorporated into this document. Transmission of any material in violation of any United States or state regulation is prohibited. This includes, but is not limited to, copyrighted material, threatening or obscene material, or material protected by trade secret. Use for commercial activities is not acceptable. Use for product advertisement or political lobbying is also prohibited.

### **Access to Technology Resources**

The use of Uncommon Schools' information technology is not a right. Access is provided in a manner that is at Uncommon's discretion in order to support educational outcomes for our students. Inappropriate use, including any violation of these conditions and rules, may result in cancellation of access. Uncommon may determine appropriate use and may deny, revoke, or suspend any user access based upon a determination of inappropriate use.

## **Oversight**

In order to comply with State and Federal regulations, Uncommon reserves the right to review any material accessed or transmitted by users, including email, therefore users should have no expectation of privacy. Certain aspects of your use are being recorded in logs either for the purpose of system performance monitoring or for assistance in authorized legal investigations of alleged misbehavior under the policy. The actual contents of these logs or email will only be reviewed by authorized personnel. In accordance with the law, messages relating to, or in support of illegal activities will be reported to the authorities and will result in the loss of user privileges.

Each school shall coordinate access to technology resources in each school by ensuring that teachers and students receive proper training in the use of the system and ensuring that students are adequately supervised when using the system.

## **User Expectations**

All users are expected to abide by the generally accepted rules of network etiquette. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Be polite. Do not create or send harassing, obscene, offensive, threatening, sexually oriented or otherwise illegal or inappropriate messages or depictions to other users.
- Use appropriate language.
- Do not engage in activities that are prohibited under state or federal law.
- Do not reveal full name, personal address or phone numbers of yourself, other students, staff or colleagues, including by inputting into AI tools.
- Do not attempt to read, delete, copy, modify, view, send or otherwise use, without permission, another user's account.
- Do not use the Internet in such a way that you would disrupt the use of the network by other users.
- Do not install unauthorized software.
- Do not attempt to harm, modify, or destroy data of another user, Uncommon information systems, or the information technology provider. This includes, but is not limited to, the uploading or creating of computer viruses.

## **No Warranties**

Uncommon makes no warranties of any kind, whether expressed or implied, for the service it is providing. Uncommon will not be responsible for any user damages including, but not limited to, loss of data resulting from delays, no-deliveries, misdeliveries, or service interruptions caused by Uncommon's negligence or by the

user's errors or omissions. All users need to consider the source of any information they obtain and how valid the source of that information may be. Use of any information obtained via information technology is at the user's own risk. Uncommon is not responsible for the accuracy or quality of information obtained through its services and shall not be responsible for any financial obligations arising through the unauthorized use of the system.

### **Security**

Users should never share their passwords or allow others to use their password. Users should also protect their password to ensure system security and their own privileges and ability to continue their use of the system. Attempts by a student, or non-authorized user, to log on to any Uncommon information systems as another user may result in the cancellation of user privileges. Users shall not install or download software or other applications without permission of the supervising staff person.

### **Procedures for Use**

While using school equipment, a student or staff member may only use Uncommon information technology accounts. Student users must always get permission from their instructors before using information technology or accessing any specific file or application. Users shall not use computer resources for nonacademic activities.

### **Controversial Material**

While access to the Internet, through school computers, is administered by school personnel, Uncommon may not be able to technologically limit access to only those online services that have been authorized for study.

Uncommon has installed technology protection measures for all computers in the school district that block and/or filter visual depictions that are obscene as defined in the United States Code. Although Uncommon has installed filtering software, it is impossible to control the content of all data and a user may discover controversial materials when using the Internet. Users may be able to access services and communicate with people on the Internet that the district has not authorized for educational purposes. Also, by participating in the use of the Internet, students may intentionally or unintentionally gain access to information and communications that they or their families or guardians find inappropriate, offensive, controversial, or otherwise objectionable. By consenting to allow your child to use the Internet, you assume the risks spelled out in this paragraph.

**Improper Use**

Any violation of these rules, or applicable state and federal laws, may result in revocation of a user's access to district technology and/or discipline, up to and including suspension or expulsion.

**Notification**

Students must sign a "Technology Use Agreement" in order to use Uncommon technology resources. Students must also have the form signed by a family member or guardian.

**Student Use of Technology Agreement**

Uncommon Schools, Inc. ("Uncommon") authorizes students to use technology owned or otherwise provided by Uncommon as necessary for instructional purposes. The use of Uncommon technology is permitted at Uncommon's discretion and is subject to the conditions and restrictions set forth in applicable policies, administrative regulations, and this Acceptable Use Agreement. Uncommon reserves the right to revoke access at any time, without notice, for any reason.

Uncommon expects all students to use technology responsibly. Uncommon may place reasonable restrictions on the sites, material, and information that students may access through the system.

Each student, and a family member or guardian, who is authorized to use Uncommon technology must sign this Acceptable Use Agreement as an indication that they have read and understand the agreement.

**Definitions**

Uncommon technology includes, but is not limited to, computers, Uncommon's computer network, including servers, and wireless computer networking technology, the Internet, email, wireless access points, tablet computers, smartphones and smart devices, telephones, any wireless communication device whether accessed on or off site or through Uncommon-owned or personally owned equipment or devices.

**Student Obligations and Responsibilities**

Students are expected to use Uncommon technology safely, responsibly, and for educational purposes only. The student in whose name Uncommon technology is issued is responsible for its proper use at all times. To ensure security, students

should not share their assigned account information, passwords, or other information used for identification and authorization purposes, and should use the system only under the account to which they have been assigned.

Students are prohibited from using Uncommon technology for improper purposes, including, but not limited to:

- Access, create, post, display, or otherwise use material that is discriminatory, libelous, defamatory, obscene, sexually explicit, or disruptive.
- Bully, harass, intimidate, or threaten other students, staff, or other individuals.
- Disclose, use, or disseminate personal identification information (such as name, address, telephone number, Social Security number, or other personal information) of another student, staff member, or other person, including by inputting into AI tools, with the intent to threaten, intimidate, harass, or ridicule that person.
- Infringe on copyright, license, trademark, patent, or other intellectual property rights.
- Intentionally disrupt or harm Uncommon technology or other operations (such as destroying Uncommon equipment, placing a virus on computers, adding or removing a computer program without permission from teacher or other Uncommon personnel, changing settings on shared computers). Install unauthorized software.
- Unauthorized manipulation of Uncommon data or other users' data. Engage in any activity that is unethical or violates any law or Uncommon policy.

## **Privacy**

Uncommon technology is intended for educational purposes. In order to comply with State and Federal regulations, Uncommon reserves the right to review any material accessed or transmitted by users, including email, therefore users should have no expectation of privacy.

Uncommon reserves the right to monitor and record all use of Uncommon technology, including, but not limited to, access to the Internet or social media, communications sent or received from Uncommon technology, or other uses. In order to comply with State and Federal regulations, monitoring, review or recording may occur at any time without prior notice for any legal purposes including, but not limited to, record retention and distribution or investigation of improper, illegal, or prohibited activity.

All passwords created for or used on any Uncommon technology are the sole



property of Uncommon. The creation or use of a password by a student on Uncommon technology does not create a reasonable expectation of privacy.

### **Personally Owned Devices**

If a student uses a personally owned device to access Uncommon technology, the student must still follow all applicable policies, administrative regulations, and this Acceptable Use Agreement. Any such use of a personally owned device may subject the contents of the device and any communications sent or received on the device to disclosure pursuant to a lawful subpoena or public records request.

### **Reporting**

If a student becomes aware of any security problem (such as any compromise of the confidentiality of any login or account information) or misuse of Uncommon technology, the student must immediately report such information to a teacher or other Uncommon personnel.

### **Consequences for Violation**

Violations of the law, policy, or this Agreement may result in revocation of a student's access to Uncommon technology and/or discipline, up to and including suspension or expulsion. In addition, to comply with the law, violations may be reported to proper authorities as appropriate.

# Appendix

## High School Graduation Requirements

- **New Jersey State Credit Requirements:**

- English: 4 years
- Math: 3 years
- Science: 3 years
- History: 3 years
- Foreign Language: 1 year or testing exemption
- Physical Education: 4 years
- Visual and Performing Arts: 1 year
- 21st Century Life and Careers: 1 year
- Financial, Economic and Entrepreneurial Literacy: ½ year

- **North Star College Prep Requirements:**

- English: 4 years
- Math: 4 years
- Science: 3 years
- History: 3 years
- Foreign Language: 2 years
- Physical Education: 4 years
- The Arts: 2 years
- College Readiness: 2 years
- Financial Literacy: ½ year
- SAT Requirements: SAT must be taken a minimum of two times o Applications to a minimum of two colleges
- Summer Enrichment---Attend/participate in a minimum of two summer programs (this includes camps, college programs, outdoor education programs, and internships)
- Pass Senior Research Project

\*Note: Graduation requirements may increase for specific Majors.

## College Placement Program

North Star Academy high school college placement programs include individualized student advising, class curriculum for juniors and seniors, college visits, and family workshops.

The Office of College Access and Success focuses on building relationships with college admissions representatives and with our students and families. The Office of College Access and Success hosts a number of activities throughout the year. During the academic year sponsored activities may include the following:

- **College Admissions Visits to North Star Academy:** Admissions officers

from all over the country come to North Star Academy to talk about their schools and recruit Uncommon Schools students. These include a variety of public and private institutions, both in-state and out-of-state.

- **North Star Academy College Trips:** Beginning junior year, North Star Academy will coordinate various college visits where students will have the opportunity to talk to college students and admissions counselors as well as tour campuses. Depending on the campus, they may have some of the following opportunities: attending college classes, visiting college dorm rooms, eating in college cafeterias, and talking with university professors and admissions officers.
- **Family-Student College Nights:** Students and a family member(s) or guardian(s) are required to attend workshops focused on getting ready for college, beginning freshman year. Presentation topics include: saving for college/financial planning, college research, college admissions process, the Educational Opportunity Fund Program, and financial aid workshops.
- **College Fairs:** High school students will be invited to attend college fairs and provide information about various other off-campus college opportunities.

### **Informal Complaint Procedures**

An informal complaint is a complaint that does not concern the alleged violation of law or charter (examples include, but are not limited to, the following: a concern about an academic grade, the school's uniform policy, the school's cell phone policy, or the bus schedule, etc.). If you have an informal complaint, you are encouraged to contact the appropriate staff member at the School. All staff members are committed to responding promptly to informal complaints, either in person, by telephone, or in writing.

If an informal complaint is not responded to and resolved promptly or satisfactorily, you may contact the Principal or Director of Operations to discuss the matter; the Principal or Director of Operations shall respond in person, by telephone, or in writing.

### **Formal Complaint Procedures**

Should any complaint involve a potential violation of law, please contact your school's Principal or Director of Operations for a copy of North Star's complete Complaint Policy.

**Board of Trustees**

The school is governed by a Board of Trustees that brings educational and professional perspectives to maintaining a viable and thriving school. Members of the Board of Trustees include:

<b>Name</b>
Rick Rieder, Chair
Nicole Bearce
Ann D. Borowiec
Ravi Bellur
Lawrence Evans
Thomas Redburn
Scott Sleyster
James Verrilli
Trisha Scipio
Ezdehar Abuhatab
Steven Creekmur

**Title I Family Involvement Policy**

As a Title I Schoolwide district, each North Star Academy (NSA) charter school implements a family engagement policy in adherence to the Elementary and

Secondary Education Act, providing for outreach to all family members and offering programs, activities, and procedures for the involvement of families in all of its schools with Title I, Part A programs, consistent with section 1118 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). These programs, activities and procedures are planned and operated annually with the consultation of a familial representative group and Title I Stakeholders Committee. This Family Engagement Policy amends and restates the policy set forth in the Student and Family Handbook, previously

distributed to all families. Each Uncommon charter school commits to the following:

In carrying out the Title I, Part A family involvement requirements, to the extent practicable, each Uncommon Schools school will provide full and meaningful opportunities for the participation of all families, including without limitation, family members with limited English proficiency, family members with disabilities, and family members of migratory children, including providing information and school reports required under section 1111 of the ESEA in an understandable and uniform format and, including alternative formats upon request, and, to the extent practicable, in a language families or guardians understand.

- North Star Academy defines family involvement as the participation of families in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities, including ensuring—
  1. that family members play an integral role in assisting their child's learning;
  2. that family members are encouraged to be actively involved in their child's education at school;
  3. that family members are full partners in their child's education and are included, as appropriate, in decision-making and on committees to assist in the education of their child;
  4. the carrying out of other activities, such as those described in section 1118 of the ESEA.
- North Star Academy implements effective family involvement activities throughout the year to improve student academic achievement and school performance. These activities include but are not limited to periodic Report Card Nights, Parent University orientations, math and literacy nights, and college prep evening events for family members. North Star Academy recognizes the important role that family member(s) play in their child's success and requires family member(s) to meet with teachers at the end of each grading period to monitor their child's progress.

North Star Academy as part of its Title I schoolwide plan, will involve the family member(s) of all children in decisions about how the 1 percent of Title I, Part A funds reserved for family involvement is spent, and will ensure that not less than 90 percent of the one percent reserved goes directly to the schools, with priority given to high need schools. This discussion will generally take place at the annual Title I meeting, in conjunction with North Star Academy's Back to School Night and August Orientation. Funded family engagement activities will include not less than one of the following:

- Supporting schools and nonprofit organizations in providing professional development for local educational agency and school personnel regarding family engagement strategies, which may be provided jointly to teachers, principals, other school leaders, specialized instructional support personnel, paraprofessionals, early childhood educators, and family members.
- Supporting programs that reach family members at home, in the community, and at school.
- Disseminating information on best practices focused on family engagement, especially best practices for increasing the engagement of economically disadvantaged families.
- Collaborating, or providing subgrants to schools to enable such schools to collaborate, with community-based or other organizations or employers with a record of success in improving and increasing family engagement.
- Engaging in any other activities and strategies that the local educational agency determines are appropriate and consistent with such agency's family engagement policy.

Families of students are actively involved in the North Star Academy community. North Star Academy families are all eligible to participate in the family representative group, Parent Partners for Advocacy (PPFA) and attend its activities, events, and workshops. PPFA is comprised of family members from all North Star Academy K-12 schools, they meet regularly and at varied days of the week and times in order to ensure maximum participation to organize events and advocate for North Star Academy. PPFA members sit on the Title I Stakeholder committee, which, along with the North Star Academy leadership members, annually develops, reviews, and improves North Star Academy Title I schoolwide plan family involvement plan.

North Star Academy will conduct an annual evaluation of its Parent and Family Engagement Policy. At the annual Title I Stakeholder Committee meeting, PPFA representatives participate actively in this evaluation of family involvement events, communication, and policies, in addition to the thorough evaluation of North Star Academy Title I Schoolwide program as a whole.

During this review, the committee will also review the plan to continue to identify barriers to greater participation especially for family members with limited English proficiency, family members with disabilities, family members of migratory children, family members with limited literacy or who are economically disadvantaged or family members of any racial or ethnic minority background. The committee will seek to continue to identify the needs of families to assist with the learning of their children and identify strategies to support successful school and family interactions

as per ESSA Section 1118(a)(2)(D)(i-iii). These findings will be used to design evidence-based strategies for more effective family engagement and will revise the policies as necessary.

Each North Star Academy school will build a capacity for strong family involvement and engagement, in order to ensure effective involvement of family members and to support a partnership among the school, family, and the community to improve student academic achievement, through the following activities specifically described below:

- A. Each school will provide assistance to families of children, in understanding topics such as a description and explanation of the curriculum, the challenging State's academic standards and the form of academic assessments, including alternate assessments utilized. A brief overview of these assessments and standards can be found in the Student and Family Handbook, and these topics are also reviewed at the Annual Title I Meeting. In addition, North Star Academy will work with family members to help them monitor their child's progress and collaborate with educators to further their child's progress.
- B. Each school will provide materials and training to help family members work with their children to improve their children's academic achievement, such as literacy training, and using technology, as appropriate, to foster familial involvement. This includes the periodic offering of Parent University orientations, as well as college-prep evening events, which are open to all families.
- C. North Star Academy will educate its teachers, specialized instructional support personnel, principals and other staff, on how to reach out to, communicate with, and work with families as equal partners, the value and utility of contributions of families, and how to implement and coordinate family programs and build ties between families and schools. These trainings will focus on the school's ongoing familial involvement events, including Parent University, Report Card Nights, and college-prep evening events. This will happen annually during August Professional Development.
- D. North Star Academy will ensure that information relayed at school and family programs, meetings, and other activities, is shared in an understandable and uniform format, including alternative formats upon request, and, to the extent practicable, in a language the families can understand.
- E. North Star Academy will, to the extent feasible and appropriate, coordinate and integrate family engagement programs and activities with other Federal, State, and local programs including pre-school programs. F. North Star

Academy will ensure that resources are provided to families that encourage full participation including staggered start times for different meetings, family selected report card conference times and child care support during conferences.

North Star Academy will make available a copy of the Family Engagement Policy to all families as required by law. This will be distributed annually in the Student and Family Handbook as well as posted on each school's website.

### **Nondiscrimination and Title IX Policy**

North Star Academy does not discriminate in admission to, access to, treatment in, or employment in its services, programs and activities, on the basis of race, color or national origin, in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI); on the basis of sex, in accordance with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972; on the basis of disability, in accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504) and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA); or on the basis of age, in accordance with the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1974 (ADEA).

In addition, no person shall be discriminated against in admission to North Star Academy on the basis of race, sex, color, religion, creed, sex, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, mental or physical disability, age, ancestry, athletic performance, special need, proficiency in the English language or a foreign language, or prior academic achievement. No person shall be discriminated against in obtaining the advantages, privileges or access to the courses of study offered by the School on the basis of any of the categories of discrimination identified above. Finally, pregnant students are allowed to remain in regular education classes and participate in extracurricular activities with non-pregnant students throughout their pregnancy, and after giving birth are permitted to return to the same academic and extracurricular program as before the leave (Title IX).

Inquiries about Title IX may be referred to the School's Title IX Coordinator, the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights, or both. The Title IX Coordinator is the Director of Operations of the relevant school.

The School's nondiscrimination policy and grievance procedures can be located on the relevant school's [website](#) in the Policy and Information section under Family Resources (hereinafter referred to as the "school's website").



To report information about conduct that may constitute sex discrimination or make a complaint of sex discrimination under Title IX, please contact the Director of Operations and refer to the school's [website](#) for additional information.

### **Services for Students with Disabilities**

The Child Study Team (“CST”) has primary authority to direct special education placements and services for all students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). All students that have IEPs will have their program and related services provided as set forth in their current IEP. Our current service delivery model includes ICS (in class support) and Modified Class. We want all of our students to be educated with their peers within the least restrictive environment appropriate for their needs. Please speak with your school’s Special Education Coordinator for more information.

### **Section 504 Plans**

Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504) protects individuals against discrimination on the basis of a disability. Unlike the IDEA which only applies to students with one of the categories of disabilities covered by the law, Section 504 applies to any student who has a disabling condition that could interfere with participation in a major life activity (such as learning). This could be something chronic, such as diabetes or ADHD or short term, like a broken leg. Where a student is otherwise qualified to participate, he or she cannot be excluded solely on the basis of a disability. The School will develop and implement a Section 504 Accommodation Plan tailored to the needs of students evaluated and determined to be eligible for protection under the law. For students who enroll in the School with a Section 504 Accommodation Plan already in place, it is the responsibility of the parent/ caregiver to provide the School with the plan and to have this plan updated annually. All new referrals for Section 504 accommodations are handled by the School’s Special Education Coordinator, who serves as the Section 504 Coordinator.

### **English Language Learners (ELL Services)**

We offer support for all levels of ELL students. ELL services are delivered through our ELL teachers as well as indirect classroom support dependent on student level and need.