



Empowering Students for the 21st Century

ASCEND LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

2019-20 Student-Parent Handbook

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Vision: "Empower Students for the 21st Century"

Mission: The mission of Ascend Leadership Academy is to develop successful student leaders by growing their self-efficacy, intellectual understanding, and social competence. ALA will accomplish this by applying innovative teaching methods, incorporating student cultural realities and cultivating student ownership in the learning community.

Culture of Innovation and Creativity

Research shows that high-performing schools award greater decision-making influence to teacher teams and in particular, students, than do low-performing schools. At ALA, we create a school environment where students are empowered and take ownership of their learning. Our school culture requires students to build problem solving skills that will help them have a positive impact on their community. Students are provided with a rigorous academic program that will prepare them for college and life in the 21st Century. Our innovative approach includes the combination of Project-Based Learning techniques with our Leadership program to develop our Project-Based Leadership pedagogy. This high-stakes method of instruction requires students to use their unique talents and academic knowledge to complete projects that have a positive impact on their local community.

Values

Respect: Our teachers, students, staff, and families show respect for one another.

Accountability: We hold students, teachers, and staff accountable for their responsibilities and their actions. Our classrooms and lessons are held accountable to state standards.

Integrity: We value and expect honesty and adherence to principle.

Service: We seek after and organize opportunities for service, both in and out of school.

Excellence: We hold ourselves to high standards and seek constant improvement.

Project-Based Learning

We are committed to practicing the principles of Project-Based Learning (PBL). PBL addresses each student's cognitive growth through assignments that develop higher order thinking, require research and experimentation, and teach critical academic skills and knowledge. Through Project-Based Learning Instruction we train our students to THINK. Project-Based Learning is rigorous, but the quality and depth of cognitive advancement through PBL produces an empowered lifelong learner.

Essential Project Design Elements include:

- **Key Knowledge, Understanding, and Success Skills** - The project is focused on student learning goals, including standards-based content and skills such as critical thinking/problem solving, collaboration, and self-management.
- **Challenging Problem or Question** - The project is framed by a meaningful problem to solve or a question to answer, at the appropriate level of challenge.
- **Sustained Inquiry** - Students engage in a rigorous, extended process of asking questions, finding resources, and applying information.

- **Authenticity** - The project features real-world context, tasks and tools, quality standards, or impact – or speaks to students’ personal concerns, interests, and issues in their lives.
- **Student Voice & Choice** - Students make some decisions about the project, including how they work and what they create.
- **Reflection** - Students and teachers reflect on learning, the effectiveness of their inquiry and project activities, the quality of student work, obstacles and how to overcome them.
- **Critique & Revision** - Students give, receive, and use feedback to improve their process and products.
- **Public Product** - Students make their project work public by explaining, displaying and/or presenting it to people beyond the classroom.

Section 1: Attendance and Student records

Attendance

All students must be fully enrolled and should attend school regularly. ALA does not accept partial enrollment. Regular attendance is the best way to ensure that students master the curriculum. ALA will make every effort to protect instructional time from interruption and we ask that, whenever possible, parents/guardians schedule appointments (doctor, dentist) after school hours. For record keeping purposes, a child is marked absent when he or she misses half of the school day.

Excused Absences (All absences not listed below are unexcused)

Illness or injury: When the absence results from illness or injury preventing the student from being physically able to attend school. The Managing Director or designee may require an official note from a physician.

Quarantine: When isolation of the student is ordered by the local health officer or by the State Board of Health.

Death in the immediate family: When the absence results from the death of a member of the immediate family of the student. The immediate family of a student includes, but is not necessarily limited to, grandparents, parents and siblings.

Medical or dental appointments: When the absence results from a medical or dental appointment of a student. A written excuse should be presented with a doctor's signature or stamp.

Court or administrative proceedings: When the student is a party to or is under subpoena as a witness in the proceedings of a court or administrative tribunal.

Religious observances: When the student or the student's parent/guardian or custodian adheres to a religion whose tenets require or suggest the observance of a religious event. The parent/guardian or custodian must seek prior approval of the Managing Director for such absences [and the approval should be granted unless the religious observance or the cumulative effect of religious observances is of such duration as to interfere with the education of the student].

Educational opportunity: When the student obtains the Managing Director's prior approval of a valid education opportunity, such as travel.

Procedures for Notifying ALA about Absences

On the day of the absence(s), parents/guardians should provide written documentation to a member of ALA's staff (Teacher or Administrator) stating the reason for the absence. This can include an email, doctor's note, or written note from the parent. If you do not notify ALA ahead of time or on the day of the absence(s), the student must bring an explanatory note within three days of their return to school. If ALA does not receive the explanatory note within three days, the absence will be marked unexcused.

Truancy (Recurrent unexcused absences)

If a student is truant, the first step will be a conference with the parents/guardians. Should this prove unsatisfactory, next steps include possible notification of appropriate legal authorities and/or possible recommendation for long-term suspension or expulsion. Students absent more than 20 days may not be promoted and must meet with the Managing Director to determine next steps, which could result in expulsion.

Tardiness & Late Pick-up

Tardiness interrupts instruction for the entire class. Students who are tardy must go to the office to sign in. The only excused tardies are student illness, medical or dental appointments, and death/illness in the immediate family. All other tardies are unexcused.

Students must be supervised at all times while on campus. Parents who arrive after carline has ended infringe on the time of the classroom teacher or ALA staff who must change their afternoon schedule to accommodate. Though emergency late pick-ups are understandable, routinely picking up students late will receive the same consequences as tardies.

The table below outlines the consequences for cumulative absences, tardies or late pick-ups.

| Number of Occurrence(s) | Action to be Taken |
|--------------------------------|---|
| 0-4 | No Action |
| 5-9 | Letter home to parent/guardian and student. Late pick-up may need to have a conference with an administrator. |

| | |
|-------|---|
| 10-19 | Required conference with the Attendance Committee that includes an Administrator and the School Counselor |
| 20+ | Parent/guardian and student required to conference with the Managing Director. |

Releasing Students from School

Parents/guardians are the only people allowed to take a student from school. Prior arrangements with the Managing Director, however, may allow for others to do so. If a parent or guardian would like their child to be released to another adult, the request must come to ALA's administration in writing prior to school dismissal. ALA staff will not release a child to anyone other than the student's parent or guardian without written documentation from the student's parent/guardian.

Discipline for Attendance

Rewards and penalties in the form of grades shall not be used as attendance incentives. The school may develop attendance incentives that do not involve grades to encourage attendance. ALA's administration does reserve the right to apply discipline consequences for students who knowingly "skip" classes or leave campus without permission. This shall be considered a behavioral issue and disciplinary action shall be appropriate if the behavior is excessive.

Minimum Attendance Requirement

A student is absent from school for the purposes of this section when the student is not present for at least half of the school day, whether the absence is excused or unexcused. A student is absent from a class for the purposes of this section if the student misses more than half the class period, whether the absence is excused or unexcused. Absences resulting from participation in school-sponsored activities will not count against the minimum attendance requirement. This policy does not limit a teacher or Managing Director from imposing disciplinary sanctions for students who miss portions of the school day or a class without excuse.

Providing Support to Students with Excessive Absences

The Managing Director and school staff shall take appropriate action to help prevent excessive absences and provide counseling for students with a history of excessive absences. A student's parent/guardian must be notified of excessive absences, and the teacher and counselor then shall work with the student and family to analyze the causes and determine steps to eliminate the problem. The Managing Director shall designate a school employee to assist parents or other caretakers, Managing Directors and counselors with chronic cases of absenteeism.

Unexcused/Unlawful Absences and Tardies

An absence/tardiness with or without parental permission which does not come under one of the lawful absence/tardiness categories. Examples: Hair appointment, oversleeping, car trouble, shopping, traffic, DMV etc. (reasons not limited to those listed above)

Section 2: Code of Conduct, Consequences and Interventions

Code of Student Conduct

Each student in the Ascend Leadership Academy Charter School is responsible for exhibiting the highest standards of behavior. The Code of Student Conduct sets out school wide expectations for student behavior designed to provide the best possible school climate. This code does not restrict the authority of teachers, site-based teams or Managing Directors to make individual school or class rules, not inconsistent with this code.

All students shall comply with the Code of Student Conduct while on educational property, which includes any school building, school campus, grounds, recreational area, athletic field, or other property under the control of the Ascend Leadership Academy Charter Schools. Students may also be disciplined for conduct that occurs off educational property that violates this Code of Conduct if the conduct has or is reasonably expected to have a direct and immediate impact on the orderly and efficient operation of the school or the safety of individuals in the school environment.

Restorative Justice and the Student Justice Council

ALA's mission requires a school culture where students are accountable to all stakeholders for their behavior. This will be supported through the implementation of Restorative Justice practices and a Student Justice Council. Restorative justice emphasizes student accountability for their actions through the facilitation of small group sessions where offenders and the offended are given the opportunity to talk, air grievances, and ask questions. These small group sessions will follow a specific protocol and the team will provide a recommendation to administration of how the offending student should make amends to reintegrate into the learning community. These sessions will be known as the Student Justice Council and will consist of students, teachers, and administrators. Restorative justice practices have been proven to strengthen campus communities, prevent bullying, and reduce the amount of student to student conflicts.

Disciplinary Procedures

It shall be the goal of ALA's administration to provide appropriate interventions for students that will allow them to remain in the educational environment. Unless the student's behavior is a direct threat to student safety, ALA's administration shall apply behavioral interventions before arriving at an out of school suspension.

There will be some student infractions that will require ALA's administration to implement more extensive disciplinary actions to curb negative student behaviors.

School administration shall inform students at the beginning of each school year of the contents of this policy and any school rules that may result in discipline. ALA's goal is for most disciplinary consequences to occur with the student remaining in an educational environment.

Consequences and Behavioral Interventions

When, in the judgment of ALA's administration, a student's behavior warrants an out-of-school suspension, the Managing Director (or designee) may impose a short-term suspension or, for more serious violations of the Code of Conduct, may recommend a long-term suspension, a 365-day suspension, expulsion, or exclusion pursuant to G.S. 115C-218.60

In determining the appropriate consequence for a violation of this Code, ALA administration shall consider all aggravating or mitigating circumstances they deem relevant. Examples of aggravating or mitigating circumstances that may be considered include but are not limited to:

- The student's age;
- The student's intent;
- The student's disciplinary history, including number of infractions and prior discipline for the same violation;
- The student's academic history;
- Whether the conduct caused a threat to safety;
- Whether school property or personal property was damaged;
- Whether the conduct caused a substantial disruption of the educational environment;
- Whether a weapon was involved and whether any injury resulted.

The Student Code of Conduct Rules are leveled, indicating the severity of the violation and the type of consequence. The Managing Director shall inform students of local school rules that, if broken, may result in suspension from school. While this policy attempts to address inappropriate student conduct, the ALA Board of Directors recognizes that all inappropriate behaviors cannot be defined within the context of these sections. Therefore, the ALA Board of Directors delegates to the ALA lead administrator the authority to determine the appropriate discipline and consequences for inappropriate behaviors not specifically addressed in this policy and for student violations of other Ascend Leadership Academy policies.

In-school discipline (ISD)

Any and all disciplinary measures imposed on a student during school hours or on school property are considered examples of ISD and are subject to the provisions of this part of the Code of Student Conduct. Students shall be supervised at all times during any period of ISD. Types of ISD include, but are not limited to, the following:

- **Warning** issued to a student by a school employee gives verbal or written notice that the student's behavior has violated a board policy or school rule or regulation and that future violations may result in disciplinary measures.
- **Conference** with the Managing Director or his/her designee regarding the student's behavior or violation of the Code of Student Conduct may be conducted in conjunction with or in lieu of other disciplinary actions.
- **Parent Conferences** may be called by a school employee with the approval of the Managing Director or his/her designee to discuss a student's behavior as per the Code of Student Conduct. The school employee who calls the conference must make reasonable efforts to accommodate restrictions in the parent(s)' accessibility to schedule the conference and parents must make every possible effort to attend called conferences.
- **Timeout or Lunch Detention** (or the equivalent) is the separation of a student from other students for a period of time less than one class period to a monitored setting on school property, or the removal of a student from his or her assigned classroom or activity to another designated monitored setting on school property for a period of time

less than one class period. Timeout or Lunch Detention may be assigned by the Managing Director or his/her designee or by other school employees, provided that the student is allowed to eat his/her lunch during the period of assigned lunch detention if such period of time encompasses the student's regular lunch time.

- **School Service** may be assigned by the Managing Director or his/her designee for a period of time in lieu of or in conjunction with other disciplinary measures. If the student does not complete the assigned school service within the assigned time period, other – presumably stricter – disciplinary measures appropriate to the original violation will be imposed.
- **Mandatory Restitution** may be imposed by the Managing Director or his/her designee, requiring a student who removed, took, stole, secreted, lost, destroyed or damaged the real or personal property of another person or entity to give back, return, reimburse the cost of, or reimburse for damages to the property in question. An administrator may also require restitution by a student if the student's behavior directly resulted in or was a proximate cause of the property of another person or entity being removed, taken, stolen, secreted, lost, destroyed or damaged.
- **Confiscation** of any item of personal property from a student when such personal property is, in the discretion of a school employee, potentially dangerous, used inappropriately, prohibited, or relates to any investigation by the Board or its employees is authorized.
- **Loss of Privileges** may be imposed for a specified period of time by the Managing Director or his/her designee, including participation in school activities (including interscholastic athletics, clubs, and all extracurricular activities), driving and/or parking privileges, or any other privileges previously proffered.
- **Student Justice Council** are small group sessions that will follow a specific protocol and the team will provide a recommendation to administration of how the offending student should make amends to reintegrate into the learning community. These sessions will be known as the Student Justice Council and will consist of students, teachers, and administrators. Restorative justice practices have been proven to strengthen campus communities, prevent bullying, and reduce the amount of student to student conflicts.
- **Detention** requiring a student to report to and remain at a specific area on school property for a designated period of time prior to the beginning of or after the conclusion of a school day or on a Saturday may be assigned by the Managing Director or his/her designee. The student and his/her parent(s) shall be given at least 24 hour notice before the student is to report to a specific area for detention. Parents are responsible for transportation. If the parent cannot or will not provide transportation, other – presumably stricter – disciplinary measures will be substituted.
- **In-School Suspension (ISS)**, the removal of a student from his or her assigned classroom to a different designated learning space for more than one class period during school hours, may be assigned by the Managing Director or his/her designee only. Students may not attend or participate in any school activity or event occurring on any day or during any time while they are assigned to ISS, including before or after school hours on those days, whether such activity occurs on or off campus.

Out-of-School Suspension (OSS)

Students assigned to OSS are prohibited from attending school, being on school property, attending as an observer, or participating in any activities or events sponsored by the school or that the school or any of its organizations or elements are participating in during the period of time assigned to OSS.

- **Summary Suspension**, or the immediate removal of a student from the school grounds for a period of time to be specified following an investigation of the incident precipitating imposition of the suspension, may be imposed by the Managing Director or his/her designee in situations where circumstances point to the possibility of continued or serious disruption of school operations or activities if the student is not removed immediately. When Summary Suspension is imposed, an investigation must follow. If the student is absolved of guilt or blame, teachers shall make all reasonable allowances for makeup of missed school work without penalty and all record of the action shall be expunged from the student's disciplinary record. If the student is found responsible, any time missed during the period of Summary Suspension will be considered to be part of his/her subsequent OSS assignment.
- **Short-Term Out-of-School Suspension** of 10 consecutive school days or less may be imposed by the Managing Director or his/her designee.
- **Long-Term Out-of-School Suspension** for more than 10 consecutive school days may be imposed by the Board upon recommendation by the Managing Director. If the offense leading to the long-term suspension occurs before the final quarter of the school year, the period of suspension shall be no longer than the remainder of the school year in which the offense was committed. If the offense leading to the long-term suspension occurs during the final quarter of the school year, the period of suspension may include a period up to the remainder of the school year in which the offense was committed plus the first semester of the following school year.
- **365 Day Suspension** for a full calendar year from the date of the infraction may be imposed by the Board in accordance with NC state law upon recommendation by the Managing Director.
- **Expulsion**: Permanent separation of the student from Ascend Leadership Academy, imposed by the Board in accordance with NC state law upon recommendation by the Managing Director. Once expelled, a student is no longer considered to be enrolled at Ascend Leadership Academy. Any student who is expelled is prohibited from being on any school property and from attending and/or participating in any extracurricular or co-curricular activities that are conducted or sponsored by the school or in which the school is participating or involved, with the exception of events open to the public such as athletic contests (unless the student is barred from such events as a separate, specific action of the Board at the time of the expulsion).

Class I Infractions

Class I infractions are code of student conduct violations typically handled by school employees at school – through imposition of In School disciplinary consequences and/or short-term Out of school suspension – without further approval or involvement by the Board or other agencies.

Such infractions include – but are not necessarily limited to – the following:

Insubordination: Students shall comply with all directions of school employees and all other personnel who are authorized to give such directions during any period of time in which students are subject to the authority of such school personnel. The following actions are violations of these expectations: - Impolite, uncooperative, disrespectful attitude towards school employees. - Deliberate failure to comply with directions given by school employees.

Flagrant Disrespect: Students are expected to address and converse with teachers and other school employees with polite respect and cooperative attitudes at all times, in all situations. The following are violations of these expectations: - Disrespectful, arrogant, sarcastic, flip, or mocking tones of voice used when speaking with school employees or campus visitors. - Arguing with and/or disputing the authority of school employees. Walking away and/or failure to answer when addressed by school employees.

Falsification / Providing False Information: No student shall falsify information that is in any way presented to any school employee. Falsification includes the electronic, verbal or written statement, communication or creation of any untruth or any act or electronic, verbal or written statement or communication intended to give a wrong impression or deceive, including, but not limited to, forgery of someone else's signature.

Class Disruption: Students shall refrain from any action or speech which substantially disrupts the classroom atmosphere, rendering it impossible (or nearly so) for the teacher to continue instruction.

Prohibited items, materials, or substances: Students shall not possess, use, or distribute any of the following:

- Obscene or explicit photographs, illustrations, or printed material.
- Clothing, literature, photographs, illustrations, printed material, or other symbols, slogans, and/or language designed to promote racial, ethnic, religious, or other discriminating intolerance, hate, or violence.
- Tobacco products.
- Alcohol.

Academic policy infractions: Students must adhere to the ALA Academic Policies for assigned both in- and out-of-class work. The following are violations of these expectations:

- Copying another student's work and/or turning in another student's work as one's own.
- Giving or receiving any unauthorized aid or assistance in the preparation of one's own or another student's academic work.
- Plagiarism, including the unauthorized use of uncredited material, from internet sources or otherwise.
- Any kind of cheating.

Unauthorized absences and tardies: Students are to be in attendance at school every day when school is in session, in the class or classroom where they are assigned, on time, unless authorized by a school employee to be elsewhere or excused by the school administration for illness or other approved reason for absence. Leaving campus without authorization is a

violation of this policy; “skipping” class, either on- or off-campus, is also a violation of this policy.

Defamation of character: No student shall make or publish false statements on the Internet, electronically, or by any other means of communications, that defame the character or reputation of a school employee or fellow student. While students have a constitutional right to question and voice disagreement with school personnel and other students in a respectful manner in an academic setting, that right does not include making false statements or statements intended to injure, harass, and/or harm an individual.

Dress code violations: Students are to be in compliance with ALA’s dress code policy at all times except on special “dress down” days scheduled by administration. When they are not, their parents will be contacted to bring appropriate replacement attire. For more specific information about ALA’s dress code policy review section 3 of this handbook.

Physical or verbal harassment: All students are expected to treat all other students and all school employees with respect and polite courtesy at all times while on the ALA campus and while engaged in any school-sponsored activities and/or events off-campus as well. Anything less is considered harassment and will not be tolerated, but will instead be subject to disciplinary consequences. Written notes, postings on social media, e-mails, and other examples of harassment that occur off-campus or outside of school time but create disturbances at school and/or disrupt the school environment will be handled in exactly the same manner as if they occurred at school.

Acceptable use: The school’s computers, its internet connectivity and hardware, and its licensed software are the property of Ascend Leadership Academy and are to be used strictly in accordance with the ALA Acceptable Use policy. Any inappropriate or unacceptable use is subject to disciplinary consequences.

Second and third violations: Second and third violations of the same or different Class I Code of Student Conduct provisions are typically assigned increasingly strict In School Discipline or short-term OSS consequences.

Class II Infractions

Class II infractions are code of student conduct violations that may be handled by school employees at school through imposition of limited In School Discipline consequences, but are more frequently handled through short-term or long-term OSS, depending upon the severity of the infraction.

Such infractions include – but are not necessarily limited to – the following:

Bullying: Systematic physical, verbal, written, mental, or emotional harassment that creates serious stress and/or significant distress on the part of any student or school employee is classified as a Class II offense. Students found in violation may be suspended out-of-school and required to undergo counseling prior to return to classes.

Threatening or aggressive behavior: No student shall create or engage in any communication by electronic, verbal, photographic, or written means, or by signs, gestures, displays or other acts that are or convey, suggest, or promote a message that is aggressive or threatening to any school employee, visitor, or fellow student while on campus, while engaged in any school-related event or activity off-campus, or while not at school but which finds its way back to create disruption at school. No student shall engage in any behavior or conduct or commit any act that could reasonably result in or cause physical injury to any student or other person.

Communicating threats: No student shall communicate any threat of force or violence in any form to or about any student or other person.

Physical Violence: With possible exceptions depending upon the grade level of the student(s) involved and the severity of the offense, engaging in any form of violence will result in out-of-school suspension or permanent expulsion. This includes, but is not necessarily limited to: fighting, hitting, striking, kicking, shoving, scratching, biting, blocking, emitting bodily fluids upon, using force upon, or passing or throwing objects, items or fluids at a student. Any student who is assaulted may use reasonable force in self-defense but only to the extent necessary to free himself/herself from the assault and notify proper school authorities. A student who exceeds this reasonable force may be disciplined even though he/she may not have provoked the fight.

Theft or damage to property: No student shall steal or attempt to steal school property or the private property of any individual, organization or entity or knowingly be in possession of stolen property. No student shall damage or attempt to damage any school property or the private property of any individual, organization or entity.

Extortion: No student shall engage in extortion, defined as the use of one's position or power to obtain property, funds or patronage.

Unauthorized possession or use of medications or foreign substances: No student shall possess or administer any medication to his/her own person except as provided in the ALA medications policies. No student shall administer any medication to any other person. No student shall insert a foreign substance into the food or drink of another person with the intent to injure or harm or that, in fact, injures or harms the other person or causes an adverse reaction including, but not limited to, alteration of the mind, hallucinations, sleep or euphoria.

Repeated Class I Infractions: Repeated Class I infractions which, in the opinion of the Managing Director, have reached the point where continued In School Discipline and short-term OSS are ineffective. In most of these cases, the Managing Director will bring a recommendation for board approval of long-term OSS.

Class III Infractions

Class III infractions are conduct violations that may occasionally be handled through short-term OSS, but which sometimes result in the involvement of law enforcement and most often carry automatic long-term OSS consequences requiring Board action upon recommendation of the Managing Director, depending upon the severity of the infraction.

Such infractions include – but are not necessarily limited to – the following:

Threat of violence toward school employee: Any communications, behaviors, conduct, or actions that threaten force or violence or could reasonably result in or cause physical injury to a school employee. It shall be a Class IV Violation if a student commits an assault upon any person that causes serious injury.

Sexual harassment/assault: Unwanted physical contact of an overtly sexual nature on any person, student or adult.

Robbery: Taking another person's money or possessions by force or threat of force.

Counterfeit substances: No student shall possess, use, or distribute counterfeit drugs, medications, or illegal substances.

Explosion or attempted arson: No student shall use any material, item or substance in any manner in an attempt to cause or start a fire or explosion or in a manner that could reasonably cause or start a fire or explosion.

Breaking and entering school property: No student shall force his/her way onto ALA property or into any ALA building or room through the breaking or disabling of any security system designed to keep unauthorized persons out.

False fire alarm: No student shall deliberately "pull", initiate or make a false fire alarm.

Assault on Another Student: No student may cause or attempt to cause serious physical injury to another student.

Repeated Class II Infractions: Repeated Class II infractions which, in the opinion of the Managing Director, have reached the point where continued short-term OSS are ineffective. In most of these cases, the Managing Director will bring a recommendation for board approval of long-term OSS or permanent expulsion.

Class IV Infractions

Code of Student Conduct violations which may carry mandatory involvement of law enforcement and automatic Managing Director recommendations for long-term OSS consequences requiring board action. Such infractions include – but are not necessarily limited to – the following:

Weapons: No student shall possess, use, or distribute any of the following:

- Firearms.
- Any explosive objects, devices, or materials.
- Any weapon, or any object or material which is usually identified as a weapon or which can be used as a weapon (except common educational tools, such as pens, etc.).
- Anything which masquerades as a weapon, a firearm, or explosive, even if essentially harmless.

Drugs and/or controlled substances: No student shall possess, use, consume, transmit, distribute, sell, exchange or be under the influence of any drug or controlled substance. No student shall possess, use, consume, transmit, distribute, sell, exchange or be under the influence of any chemical, chemical compound or product with the intention of using it or enabling another student to use it to bring about a state of exhilaration or euphoria or otherwise alter the student's mood or behavior.

Assault with serious injury: It shall be a Class IV Violation if a student commits an assault upon any person which causes serious injury while on ALA property or while engaged in any school-sponsored event or activity off-campus.

Assault with weapon: It shall be a Class IV Violation if a student commits an assault upon any person involving the use of a weapon or other object that could reasonably be considered a weapon while on ALA property or while engaged in any school-sponsored event or activity off-campus.

Rape: It shall be a Class IV Violation if a student commits rape upon any person while on ALA property or while engaged in any school-sponsored event or activity off-campus.

Arson or explosion: It shall be considered a Class IV Violation if any student intentionally sets a fire on any school property, burns any school property, causes any school property to be burned, or intentionally causes an explosion on school property.

Bomb threat or hoax: No student shall, by any means of communication, make a report, knowing or having reason to know the report is false, that there is located on any school premises a device designed to cause damage or destruction by explosion, blasting or burning. No student shall place on any school premises with the intent of perpetrating a hoax, any device that would appear to a reasonable person to be a bomb or similar instrument capable of causing injury or damage.

Expulsion

Permanent separation of the student from Ascend Leadership Academy, imposed by the Board in accordance with NC state law upon recommendation by the Managing Director. Once expelled, a student is no longer considered to be enrolled at Ascend Leadership Academy. Any student who is expelled is prohibited from being on any school property and from attending and/or participating in any extracurricular or co-curricular activities that are conducted or sponsored by the school or in which the school is participating or involved, with the exception of events open to the public such as athletic contests (unless the student is barred from such events as a separate, specific action of the Board at the time of the expulsion).

Effective Discipline Procedures and Student Control

When corrective actions are necessary, the following options are available to those authorized to discipline or control students. This list is not intended to restrict in any way the authority of the Managing Director or teachers to discipline and control students in a manner consistent with Board policies.

The Board encourages and supports the right of school employees to employ a variety of control techniques and disciplinary actions with respect to students including, but not limited to, the following:

Reasonable Force

School employees may use physical restraint only in accordance with NC G.S. 115C-391.1. School employees may use reasonable force to control behavior or to remove a person from a scene in those situations when necessary for any of the following reasons:

- 1) To correct students.
- 2) To quell a disturbance threatening injury to others.
- 3) To obtain possession of a weapon or other dangerous object on the person or within the control of a student.
- 4) For self-defense.
- 5) For the protection of persons or property.
- 6) To maintain order on educational property, in the classroom, or at a school-related activity on or off educational property.

Searches of Students, Student's Property, Student Lockers and Student Desks

- 1) Student lockers and desks are the property of Ascend Leadership Academy and may be searched or inspected at any time without prior notice to or consent of the student or his/her parents and without a search warrant. While students may store necessary classroom tools and materials as well as personal items in their assigned lockers and desks, students shall not place any item or substance that is prohibited on school premises in any desk or locker.
- 2) The Managing Director or his/her designee may search a student's person, possessions (such as a purse, book bag, gym bag, electronic device) or motor vehicle if reasonable grounds exist for suspecting the search will turn up evidence that the student has violated or is violating either the law or the policies, regulation or rules of the Board or the school. A search will be permissible in its scope when the manner in which the search is conducted is reasonably related to the objectives of the search and not excessively intrusive in light of the student's age and sex and nature of the infraction.
- 3) Reasonable suspicion may be based on information provided by a confidential informant, circumstantial evidence, and/or the administrator's "common-sense conclusions about human behavior" upon which "practical people," including government officials, are entitled to rely in making decisions.
- 4) Anything seen by a school employee in plain view, including items in plain view inside a student's vehicle, may be used as evidence to discipline, suspend or expel a student. Otherwise, the Managing Director or his/her designee needs reasonable suspicion to search a student's person, motor vehicle or possessions.
- 5) If any school employee has any reason to suspect a bomb or firearm is on the premises and students are at risk of serious bodily injury or death, the Managing Director or his/her

designee may conduct a complete search of the school as well as student vehicles and student possessions for any weapon, bomb or other explosive device.

- 6) The use of trained drug or bomb sniffing dogs to detect the presence of a controlled substance or explosives in a student's desk, locker, vehicle or personal possessions is acceptable. If a dog "hits" on an item, such a "hit" constitutes reasonable suspicion that the item contains a controlled substance or explosive and the item may be searched.

Corporal Punishment

Corporal punishment may not be used by any school employee under any circumstances at Ascend Leadership Academy.

Use of Tobacco Products

The Board of Directors recognizes that the use of tobacco products is a health, safety and environmental hazard for students, employees, visitors and school facilities. The Board also acknowledges that adult employees serve as role models for students and that the Board's acceptance of any use of tobacco products implies school approval, if not endorsement, of such use. In addition, the Board recognizes that it has an obligation to promote a healthy learning and working environment, free from unwanted smoke, for the students, employees and visitors of the Ascend Leadership Academy Charter Schools. This includes all forms of tobacco, including E-Cigarettes and paraphernalia.

Alcoholic Beverages

The possession or consumption of alcoholic beverages is not permitted on property owned or occupied by the Ascend Leadership Academy Charter Schools. Any school visitor who possesses or consumes any alcoholic beverage on school property or comes on school property after consuming excessive alcoholic beverages may be asked to leave the premises.

Section 3: Dress Code Policy

School Dress Code

ALA's Board of Directors believes the dress code was created to help promote unity by encouraging a sense of belonging and pride and helping discourage bullying, victimization and socio-economic discrimination.

It reduces social pressure and peer conflicts and encourages students to concentrate more on their studies than on their wardrobe by creating a learning environment free of unnecessary distractions. ALA's dress code is designed to promote school unity and pride.

TOPS

Top colors are solid grey, white, or navy. All tops should be either a collared shirt, polo shirt or official Ascend Leadership Academy apparel. Tops must be solid in color; see-through material is not permitted. Shirts may not have logos other than an authorized school logo. Other shirts cannot be layered on top of the official school shirt.

Sweater Vest or Sweater: Crew or V-neck, solid in color, flat or cable-knit, no logo other than school authorized logo.

Knit Cardigan: Crew or V-neck, solid in color, flat or cable-knit, button or zipper front, no logo other than school authorized school logo, must have a dress code shirt underneath.

Jackets & Coats: Long sleeved, button or zipper front, pullover, or hoodie, no logo other than school authorized logo. All jackets, coats, pullovers and hoodies, worn in the classroom, must be solid in color and worn with a dress code shirt underneath.

BOTTOMS

Bottom colors are solid navy, black, khaki and tan.

Pants, Capris or Shorts: Must be solid in color, not faded, sized appropriately, and hemmed at the bottom with no holes. Jeans, sweatpants, leggings, pants with drawstring closures, tights or leggings are not to be worn in place of pants.

Skirts: Pleated, straight, or A-line and must be to the knee or longer. Must be worn in “bottom colors.” No denim, no lace, no leather, no slit above knee level. Solid tan, white, navy or black leggings may be worn underneath.

OTHER

Socks/Shoes: Must be matching with no holes. No flip flops, no slides, no slippers, no characters, no lights, and no wheels. Sandals must have a back/heel strap on them.

Hats, Bandanas, Sunglasses and Beanies: Items are not allowed inside the school building at any time. Students are permitted to wear items outside of the school building. These items should not display any obscene, profane, gang related, or drug related messages or ideas.

Spirit Day Guidelines: You may wear a grey, white or blue dress code shirt, spirit shirt or ALA issued shirt in dress code colors. You may wear jeans. No sweatpants or basketball shorts.

College Day Guidelines: You may wear a top with a College/University logo or lettering displayed on it. You may wear jeans. No sweatpants or basketball shorts.

Dress Down Day Guidelines: You must be in modest clothes, with no offensive, or gang references. Administration’s discretion is applied.

Section 4: Technology and Internet Policies

Internet Acceptable Use Policy

Ascend Leadership Academy provides students with Internet access to support education and research. Access to the Internet is a privilege subject to restrictions set by the Board of Directors. Violation of any provisions in the Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) may result in disciplinary action and/or cancellation of student access to the Ascend Leadership Academy network. This policy applies to all Internet access on ALA property, including Internet access using mobile devices.

Access to Information

The Internet gives students access to sites all over the world. Ascend Leadership Academy cannot completely control the information available to students. However, ALA will monitor the online activities of students and use content filtering software to provide Internet monitoring and content filtering for all students, staff, and visitors on the ALA network. The filtering software is intended to allow valuable Internet content, while prohibiting access to obscene material, including pornographic and other content that is harmful to minors. Although it may be possible for a student to find inappropriate material, ALA feels the educational benefit provided by the Internet outweighs any possible disadvantages. We encourage parents to talk with their students about sites and material which the parents believe are inappropriate. ALA cannot accept responsibility for enforcing specific parental restrictions that go beyond those imposed by the school. Furthermore, students who bring their own devices to campus are encouraged to take reasonable precautions to ensure the security of those devices. This includes operating system updates and virus scanning.

Acceptable Uses

All Internet use by students at Ascend Leadership Academy must have an educational purpose and comply with student behavior guidelines. Acceptable uses for students include:

- Visiting websites or databases that pertain to classroom activities or lessons.
- Creating or maintaining school or individual web pages or conducting email communications, all under the direction of staff
- Using search engines to access information, websites, or pictures that pertain to classroom material or projects

Unacceptable Uses

The transmission of materials that violate state/federal law or ALA policy is strictly prohibited. Unacceptable uses include, but are not limited to:

- Taking any actions that may disrupt the ALA network; this includes knowingly introducing a virus and “hacking”
- Disclosing, using, or disseminating personal information about any minor on the Ascend Leadership Academy network
- Accessing threatening or obscene materials
- Using language that threatens another individual
- Violating copyright laws and/or clickable licensing agreements
- Accessing personal email accounts or other forms of direct electronic communication including chat rooms for non-educational purposes
- Using the name and password of another user

Additionally, students may not use personal cellular connections to access the internet while on ALA campus. All student access to the internet must be via ALA’s network.

Staff Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of ALA staff members who have direct contact with students to educate students on online safety and cyberbullying prevention. Education related to online safety and cyberbullying prevention may include in-class discusses and assignments, webinars, parent meetings, or online courses. ALA staff members are also responsible for supervising students during class time internet use.

Student Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of ALA students to abide by the school AUP and participate in online safety education offered by the school.

Safety and Ethical Use

Any internet user must take reasonable precautions to protect him or herself online. Students, staff, and visitors should use the guidelines listed in this section.

Email, forums, instant messaging, and other online messaging

Never share personal information online. This includes, but is not limited to: real full name, postal address, social security number, and passwords. Sharing the information of another individual, especially minors, is unethical, strictly forbidden by the AUP, and may be unlawful. In the case of students, the privacy of student educational data is protected by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). When in doubt, do not release student data and consult a school administrator for further advice.

Special care must be taken when sending mass emails. Email addresses themselves are private information, and improper mass emailing can result in inadvertent sharing of addresses. Improper mass emailing can also allow recipients to reply to the mass message and send their own messages to the entire group. This is preventable by using a blind carbon copy (Bcc) feature or a mass emailing service. It is the responsibility of all ALA staff and students to use Bcc or a mass emailing service and to protect private information and data when sending mass emails.

Unauthorized access / hacking and general unlawful activity

Gaining or attempting to gain unauthorized access to ALA resources or using ALA resources to gain or attempt to gain unauthorized access to outside systems is unethical, unlawful, and forbidden by the AUP. This includes bypassing the internet filter without permission or purposefully gaining access to material that is harmful to minors. Assuming the online identity of another individual for any purpose is unethical and forbidden. Use of ALA resources for any unlawful purpose, including, but not limited to, copyright infringement, is unethical and forbidden by the AUP.

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to follow all Board and school handbook policies regarding academic integrity when using technology.

Harassment and Cyberbullying

Cyber bullying may involve any of these behaviors:

1. Accessing, producing, posting, sending, or displaying material that is offensive in nature on the internet
2. Harassing, insulting, or attacking others on the internet
3. Posting personal or private information about other individuals on the internet
4. Posting information on the internet that could disrupt the school environment, cause damage, or endanger students or staff.
5. Concealing one's identity in any way, including the use of anonymization tools or another individual's credentials/online identity, to participate in any of the behaviors listed above.

The Managing Director will determine whether or not specific incidents of cyberbullying have impacted the school's climate or the welfare of its students and appropriate consequences will be issued. Schools are not responsible for electronic communication that originates off-campus.

Section 5: Academics, Curriculum, Testing, Accountability, Grading and Promotion

Curriculum Alignment, Accountability and Assessment

The Ascend Leadership Academy's education plan will provide the framework for curriculum alignment and accountability; as well as provide firm direction for the curriculum as programs change and evolve, and personnel change. This framework will ensure quality control over the Ascend Leadership Academy curriculum while providing for the flexibility to adapt to new state mandates and local adjustments made based on changing student needs, abilities and interests.

Testing accommodations are available for students with disabilities as well as for some students who are English Language Learners. The need for accommodations must be documented in the student's Individualized Education Plan, Limited English Proficient Plan, or Section 504 plan.

High School Credit for Course Taken in Middle School

Students in Sixth through Eighth Grades may earn credit towards high school graduation by successfully completing courses that are described in the North Carolina Course of Study Requirements for Grades Nine through Twelve. Any such courses offered in middle school must be aligned to the Common Core State Standards and the North Carolina Essential Standards and be explicitly approved by the State Board of Education. A student's high school GPA will be calculated using only courses taken during grades 9-12.

High School course credit may be earned for courses taken in middle school through approved online programs.

Grading System

The policy of the Board of Directors is to strive for a consistent and just evaluation of each student at Ascend Leadership Academy. To ensure the effectiveness of this policy, the Board of Directors endorses the following beliefs and best practices:

- Student grades should reflect academic achievement
- While attendance and behavior may influence a student's learning, they should be reported separately, and not a factor in the student's grade
- Teachers should compare each student's performance against pre-set standards, not against the performance of other students.
- For missing work, teachers should provide reasonable opportunities to complete make-up assignment(s) in order to demonstrate the targeted learning
- Teachers should provide students and their parents with a clear explanation of their grading practices including the weighting of formative and summative assessments and rubrics as appropriate.
- All assessments and assignments, including teacher-made tests should be aligned with the Common Core State Standards, North Carolina Essential Standards, and/or the Ascend Leadership Academy Charter and education plan and be designed to assess student achievement accurately.

Grading Scale

In all grade levels in which letter and/or numerical grades are given, the grading scale shall be as follows:

- A = 90-100 Excellent
- B = 80-89 Above Average
- C = 70-79 Average
- D = 60-69 Proficient
- F = 0-59 Not Proficient

Grading Parameters

Students earn grades based on material outlined in the Common Core State Standards and the North Carolina Essential Standards. For the first three grading periods (quarters), the minimum grade is 50. Percentage grades will be used on report cards, cumulative folders, and transcripts.

The following grading parameters are in place for the 2019-2020 school year and will be followed by all Ascend Leadership Academy:

- **Make-up policy** – when a student is absent, the student has 3 days to turn in missed work upon returning to school. The day the student returns to school is Day 1 of the 3 days.
- **Late work** – students have 3 days after the due date to turn in work. Each day the work is late, 10 points will be deducted from the grade. At the end of the third day, a zero may be given for that assignment.
 - Teachers can require that late work still be turned in before a student progresses to the next step of an assignment or project, even if that work will no longer receive credit.
- **Academic Dishonesty / Plagiarism** – Any act of academic dishonesty may result in loss

of credit for the assignment and/or other disciplinary action. Depending on the nature of the assignment and dishonesty, a teacher may offer to let the student complete the assignment or an alternate assignment for a maximum grade of 50%.

- **Group work** - When completing team/group assignments, students shall not be penalized for the incomplete work of others. In some situations, the student could receive a group grade and an individual grade. Teachers will determine whether they assign a group and individual grade.
- **Extra credit** - a challenge question on a quiz or test or a higher-level requirement on a project may be given. However, extra credit assignments intended to raise overall grades or replace missing or low-grade assignments are not allowed. Points should not be given for bringing in classroom supplies, returning forms that require parent signatures, etc.
- **Categories and Weighting** - Teachers will have autonomy when determining grade categories weights/percentages. (classwork, homework, Tests, etc.) Teachers will communicate these weights/percentages with ALA's administration and parents at the beginning of each school year.
- **Final Grade** - may include tests, quizzes, projects, group work, labs, research papers, homework, class participation, classwork, etc. The final grade for the first three quarters will not be less than 50.

Report Cards and Promotion Standards

Teachers shall keep parents/guardians informed of student progress at school. Each family will receive a report card for their student at the end of each 9-week grading period. The report card will include each student's grade in all of the courses they are enrolled in based on the 10-point grading scale (Policy 2.009). The report may also include teacher comments. In addition to the report card that is sent home, additional information may need to be sent to the parent/guardian, or individual conferences may need to be scheduled.

Report cards shall include the number of days absent and the number of days tardy.

Each student receiving exceptional children's services will receive an assessment of the student's progress toward goals on the student's Individual Education Plan (IEP) at the end of each grading period, including whether the student is likely to reach IEP goals by the end of the school year. The student's IEP shall state how the child's parent/guardian will receive this assessment.

Progress Reports

Parental communication of student progress is essential in providing quality instruction. Teachers will communicate each child's progress and identify areas of concern. All parents/guardians will receive communication regarding the progress of each student between report cards, regardless of the level of progress.

Interim Progress Reports Schedule

Interim progress reports shall be distributed to each student according to a schedule determined by ALA's administration.

Interim Progress Reports to Students with Disabilities

Each parent/guardian of a student receiving exceptional children's services will receive an assessment of the student's progress toward goals on the student's Individual Education Plan whenever the student receives a formal progress report under this policy. The student's IEP shall state how the parent/guardian will receive such assessments.

Section 6: Parents, Families, Volunteers and Visitors

School and Family Communications

Ascend Leadership Academy's Board of Directors recognizes that parents/guardians, families, caregivers, schools, and the community share the responsibility for the education of our children. Creating positive home, school, and community partnerships is essential to carrying out this shared responsibility successfully. To promote high student performance, school administrators, teachers and parents/guardians must work as knowledgeable partners and communicate effectively to promote student achievement. In order to encourage effective communication, the Board also encourages parents to participate in activities designed by school personnel to involve them, such as parent conferences.

Parent Communication and Conferences

The Board encourages regular contact with parents by school personnel with notification of both positive and negative interactions with their children. ALA administrators shall plan for periodic communications with parents annually. Teachers are responsible for scheduling and hosting two student-led conferences with parents/guardians, one conference in the Fall and one conference in the Spring.

Annual Notifications

The Lead Administrator or his/her designee shall effectively notify parents each year of the following:

- The Code of Conduct and school rules
- The Student-Parent Grievance Procedure
- Grading Practices
- The manner in which school officials in emergency situations during non-school hours may be reached;
- Procedural safeguards for parents of children with disabilities;
- That the school does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age.
- A list of athletics and extracurricular activities available to students
- Information about meningococcal meningitis and influenza, including the causes, the symptoms, the vaccines, the manner in which diseases are spread, and places at which additional information and vaccinations may be obtained;

- For students in grades five through twelve, information about cervical cancer, cervical dysplasia, and human papillomavirus, including the causes and symptoms of these diseases, the manner in which they are transmitted, the manner in which they may be prevented by vaccination, including the benefits and possible side effects of vaccination, and places where parents and guardians may obtain additional information and vaccinations for their children;

Parental Permission Is Required prior to the following:

- Administration of medications to students by employees of the school
- Any release of student records that are not considered directory information unless the release is allowed or required by law
- off-campus trips
- All decisions or actions as required by the IDEA with regard to providing special education (EC) or related services to children with disabilities
- Certain health services, as required by law
- A student's participation in programs or services providing information about the manner in which students may obtain contraceptives or abortion referral services
- Disclosure of a student's free and reduced lunch eligibility status.

Any parent or legal guardian wishing to withhold consent for any of these program activities must do so in writing after receiving notice. Otherwise, consent for their children's participation in all programs or activities not opted out of are presumed.

Campus Visitors

ALA's Board of Directors encourage parents/guardians and others interested in public education to visit schools. To ensure that school campuses are safe and orderly, ALA's administration may establish rules governing school visitors, consistent with this policy.

Procedures

While the Board welcomes visitors to the school, the paramount concern of the Board is to provide a safe, orderly, and inviting learning environment in which disruptions to instruction and instructional time are kept to a minimum.

1. During instructional hours, all visitors must check in at the school office gain approval from ALA's administration to be on school grounds. Permission to visit classrooms during face-to-face instruction is generally limited to parents of students in those classes who have particular and compelling reasons for such visits, to guests of the teachers in those classrooms designated for those visits, and to professional educators and students who seek to observe the classroom for the purpose of gathering information and deeper understanding of the educational programs and/or methods being used therein.
2. After having been approved to be on school grounds during instructional hours, visitor's must display whatever identification is required by the school throughout their stay during instructional hours.

3. School visitors shall comply with all school rules and Board policies.
4. Individuals who are discovered on-campus during instructional hours without having received permission to visit and/or who are not displaying visitor's identification will be instructed to report to the Administrative office immediately, and may be ordered off the premises, or subject to possible arrest for criminal trespass.

School Expectations

Once visitors gain approval to be on school grounds. The school's administration has the right to establish the following expectations:

1. Administration may limit or prohibit school visitors, during student testing or at other times when visits may disrupt school activities.
2. Parents/guardians wishing to discuss individual student progress should request a meeting with the teacher in advance. Such meetings should take place outside of regular classroom hours.
3. Any person who disrupts school operations, is disorderly, damages school property, threatens students or staff, or otherwise poses a risk to safe and orderly school operations may be asked to leave school property. Administration may prohibit such persons from attending school events or coming on school property. Unless necessary to ensure school safety, such prohibitions may last for no longer than the remainder of the school year.

Parent/Family Involvement

The Ascend Leadership Academy's Board of Directors recognizes that parents/guardians, families, caregivers, schools, and the community share the responsibility for the education of our children. Creating positive home, school, and community partnerships is essential to carrying out this shared responsibility successfully. To promote high student performance, school administrators, teachers and parents/guardians must work as knowledgeable partners.

Ascend Leadership Academy's Board of Directors believes that schools must create an environment that is conducive to learning and supports strong family partnerships. Collaboration between all school personnel and parents/guardians is essential to support student learning. School personnel will encourage and involve parents/guardians of children at all ages and grade levels by providing a variety of opportunities for involvement, while recognizing and respecting the diverse needs of families in their community.

School Volunteers

The Board welcomes persons who wish to volunteer their time in schools. Screening, training and supervision of volunteers is the responsibility of the school Managing Director, following rules and procedures established by the Managing Director. All volunteers must pass the mandatory background check each year.

Volunteers are bound by the standards of conduct applicable to school employees. The Managing Director may terminate the services of a volunteer if the Managing Director deems appropriate.

Parent/Guardian and Booster Organizations

Ascend Leadership Academy recognizes that parent organizations are an effective means of actively involving parents in their children's school; the Board encourages the development and participation of parent organizations that support the goals of the school.

Parent organizations are not considered to be a part of the school. However, because such organizations and their activities reflect upon the school, all parent organizations must be approved for operation within the organizational structure of the school and authorized to operate on campus, use the name of the school, communicate with students and parents through use of the school's internet resources, and do business on school property by the Managing Director in accordance with the criteria set forth in this policy. Parent organizations which are not so approved and so authorized are not entitled to official access to the school's students or parents, free use of Board facilities as "school- related" organizations and shall not use the name of the school in the name of the organization.

The school's administration shall inform approved, authorized parent organizations of specific goals and shall help these organizations identify opportunities to assist the school in achieving these goals.

- a. Parent/guardian organizations or booster clubs that are involved with school activities or students should establish a document that sets forth the purposes of the organization and the general rules and procedures by which it will operate.
- b. Parent/guardian organizations, such as the PTO, and booster clubs shall secure the advice and approval of the Managing Director in planning any function in which students will participate while under the jurisdiction of the Ascend Leadership Academy.
- c. A parent/guardian organization or booster club shall secure advance approval of the principal before planning a fund-raising activity intended to benefit a school program.
- d. School Administration should assist parent/guardian organizations and/or booster clubs in planning activities, not limited to fund raising, that serve school needs and involve significant numbers of interested parents/guardians in meaningful service to schools and their students.
- e. Parent/guardian organizations and booster clubs are responsible for maintaining adequate financial records and ensuring that such records are accessible to parents/guardians and school officials on request.

- f. Any property that a parent/guardian organization or booster club donates for a school or a school activity shall be the property of Ascend Leadership Academy, and the organization should receive prior acceptance of the Managing Director before purchasing such items.

Parent/Student Grievances

Ascend Leadership Academy encourages parents and staff members to communicate any grievances they have with the appropriate school leader. Ascend Leadership Academy encourages parents to contact the involved staff members and set up a meeting to discuss the grievance informally before following the procedure outlined in this policy.

A grievance is defined as a formal, written claim by a student and/or parent alleging that a specific decision made by a school employee has adversely affected the person making the complaint. A grievance may include, but is not limited to, allegations of the following:

- that there has been a violation, misapplication or misinterpretation of state or federal law or regulations, Board policy, or administrative procedure; or
- that a decision made and/or action taken by a Board employee is unfair, discriminatory, or otherwise not in a student's best interest.

The purpose of this Grievance Procedure is to secure, at the lowest possible level, equitable solutions of the problems which arise to affect differences between parents and/or students and employees.

If the grievance cannot be resolved by the parties directly through informal communication, Ascend Leadership Academy will follow the procedures outlined below. Failure of a student to comply with timelines listed below will result in denial of the grievance or appeal. Failure of the school administration to comply with these timelines will result in automatic right of appeal to the next level.

Step 1: The parent or staff member shall communicate their grievance with the Managing Director in writing within five days of the incident. This could include an email or formal letter where the individual bringing the grievance describes the nature of the injustice. The Managing Director will return communication with the person filing the grievance within 48 hours. This communication will include information about how the situation has been resolved or to set up a conference with the individual bringing the grievance. If the grievance involves the Managing Director, the written grievance shall be directed to the Board chairperson and continue through the same process outlined. (The Board Chairman will retain the duties of the Managing Director under this scenario) The Managing Director will conduct an investigation within 10 days of receiving the grievance in writing.

Step 2: If the grievance is not resolved through communication with the Managing Director a conference will be scheduled with the person filing the grievance, the individual accused of wrongdoing, and administration. The administrator will serve as a mediator and allow both parties to share their perspective. Within five days of the conference, the Managing Director will provide both parties with a decision based on the information gathered. If either party disagrees with the Managing Director's decision they will have the opportunity to appeal directly to the Board of Directors.

Step 3: The party requesting an appeal will make a written appeal within 7 days of the Managing Directors decision to the Board of Directors describing the nature of the grievance. The Managing Director will provide objective data that was discovered during their investigation. The Board of Directors will schedule a hearing 14 days from receiving the written appeal request. The appeal hearing will require at least 3 board members and all parties involved will have the opportunity to state their case. After hearing the various testimonies, the panel members will discuss the matter in a closed session and come to a decision. The Board may confirm, overturn, or modify the Managing Director's decision. Within 30 days of the hearing, the board members will communicate their decision with the party filing the appeal. The decision of the Board will be final and is the last step for all grievances.

Section 7: Exceptional Children

Services for Exceptional Children

A free appropriate publicly supported education will be provided, in the least restrictive appropriate environment, to every disabled child with special needs ages four (4) through twenty (20). The Ascend Leadership Academy Charter Schools will comply with the State Board of Education's Procedures Governing Programs and Services for Children with Special Needs, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and its implementing regulations.

The term "special education" means specifically designed instruction, at no cost to the parent/guardian, to meet the unique needs of the exceptional child. Each disabled child will have access to the variety of educational programs and services available to nondisabled children. This includes but is not limited to physical education, art, music, industrial arts, consumer and homemaking education, vocational education, and general interest electives.

- Every child suspected of having a disability is entitled to a multidisciplinary diagnosis and evaluation.
- All testing and evaluation materials and procedures shall be nondiscriminatory and administered in the child's native language.
- Parents/guardians shall be provided in writing with the results, findings, and proposals based upon the evaluation.
- An Individualized Education Plan shall be developed for each disabled child whose parent/guardian consents to special education placement.
- Special education and related services shall be provided in the least restrictive appropriate environment to each child with special learning needs based upon the Individualized Education Program.

Written notice shall be given to parents/guardians of exceptional children a reasonable time before the school system proposes to initiate or change the identification, evaluation, or

educational placement of a child with special needs. The written notice shall give a full explanation of all of the procedural safeguards available to parents/guardians.

Least Restrictive Environment

At Ascend Leadership Academy, children with disabilities shall be educated with children who are not disabled, and special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature of the disability is such that education in the regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.

Separate Setting

Special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only if the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.

Related Services

Related services are defined as transportation and such developmental, corrective, and other supportive services as are required to assist a child with a disability to benefit from special education. Related services include, but are not limited to, speech-language pathology and audiology services, interpreting services, psychological services, physical and occupational therapy, counseling services and recreation.

ALA contracts with a third-party service provider to deliver these services where required by each student's Individual Education Plan.

Accountability

Ascend Leadership Academy's Board of Directors charges the administration to manage the core educational functions of the school in ways that guarantee equity, consistency, and ingenuity with the ultimate intent of maximizing achievement for all students.

Exceptional Children are part of, not separate from, the general education population. Special education accountability should strengthen, compliment, and align with other special education supports and initiatives.

When testing of children with disabilities Ascend Leadership Academy shall:

1. provide broad accommodations and alternate methods of assessment that are consistent with a student's individualized education program and section 504 plans

2. prohibit the use of statewide tests as the sole determinant of decisions about a student's graduation or promotion
3. provide parents with information about the Statewide Testing Program and options for children with disabilities.

All students with disabilities enrolled at ALA, including those with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and those identified under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, shall participate in the state assessment program using one of the following assessments as appropriate and as determined by the student's IEP or Section 504 Plan:

- a. The standard test administration with or without accommodations, or
- b. An alternate assessment with or without accommodations, if eligible.

Only students with significant cognitive disabilities may participate in a state-designated alternate assessment based on alternate academic achievement standards.

Child Find

ALA has established procedures that ensure that all children regardless of their circumstances and severity of their disability who are in need of special education and related services, are identified, located, and evaluated. ALA will abide by the following procedures:

1. Classroom teachers will use classroom observations, formative assessment data, and other evaluations to identify students who are suspected of having a disability.
2. Teachers, administration, and parents will join together to create an individualized student success plan that will provide interventions at the classroom level with the goal of addressing any deficiencies the student may have. After 4 weeks, these interventions will be assessed.
3. If the team determines that the interventions put in place were successful, then the Success Plan will continue, and the student's success will continue to be monitored.
4. If the initial interventions are not successful under the Success Plan, the team will move to more intensive research-based interventions under the Student Assistance Program (SAP). If these more intensive interventions do not contribute to improved student achievement it may be determined that the student will need to be evaluated for Special Education services.
5. ALA will utilize the services of a licensed Psychologist to administer the various evaluations that identify learning disabilities. Based on the written evaluation of the Psychologist, the IEP team will determine if the student qualifies for Special Education services.
6. If it is determined that the student qualifies, an IEP will be written and implemented immediately. If it is determined that the student does not qualify for Special Education services, they may or may not be referred for 504 services.

The child find procedures also applies to children with disabilities with varying living circumstances including those who are highly mobile, migrants, and/or homeless.

Parent Requests for EC Services

Parents of a child suspected of having a disability may request to have their child evaluated by Ascend Leadership Academy. This request must be made in writing and should be addressed to ALA's administration.

Within thirty days of receipt of written notification of a request for evaluation, ALA shall issue a written response to the child's parent. The response shall include either an explanation of reasons ALA will not pursue the concerns or a date for a meeting in which ALA and the parent(s) will review existing data and determine whether a referral for consideration of eligibility for special education is necessary. This meeting shall take place in a reasonable amount of time.

Services for Handicapped Students Under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act

No child will be excluded from any educational program or be subject to discrimination because he is an "individual with a handicap," as the term is defined in The Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Protected individuals include any person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of such person's major life activities, has a record of such impairment, or is regarded as having such impairment.

The Managing Director will appoint a school employee to serve as 504 coordinator for the provision of services under Section 504 of The Rehabilitation Act of 1973. A Section 504 contact also shall be designated to serve as a resource for parents/guardians and staff.

- Any student, or his parent/guardian, may file a grievance if they believe their rights under this policy or Section 504 of The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 have been violated.
- The Managing Director shall establish procedures for implementation of this policy. These procedures shall be available through the Section 504 coordinator at each school.

Services for Academically or Intellectually Gifted Students (AIG)

ALA's administration shall develop a plan to identify each academically or intellectually gifted (AIG) student attending the Ascend Leadership Academy Charter Schools and to provide appropriate educational services to such students.

The plan shall include the following components:

1. Screening, identification, and placement procedures that allow for the identification of specific educational needs and for the assignment of AIG students to appropriate services.
2. A clear statement of the program to be offered that includes different types of services provided in a variety of settings to meet the diversity of identified AIG students.

3. Measurable objectives for the various services that align with core curriculum and a method to evaluate the plan and the services offered. The evaluation shall focus on improved student performance.

Section 8: Student Health and School Wellness

Student Health/Administration of Medication

The Ascend Leadership Academy Board of Directors discourages the use and administration of medication at school but realizes it may be sometimes necessary for the health of the student. All medications and medical procedures, which may be taken or given outside school hours without adversely affecting the health of the student, should not be administered at school during school hours. The parent or guardian should make reasonable efforts to obtain permission from the child's health care provider to adjust the dosages of prescribed medication, so such may be provided at home before and/or after school hours.

In accordance with GS 115C-375.1, the Ascend Leadership Academy Board of Directors authorizes school personnel to administer prescription and over-the-counter medications upon receipt of the written authorization of the health care provider and the written authorization of the student's parents or guardian. With prescription medications, possession of the original prescription container with the appropriate name and dosage information shall be deemed to be written authorization of the health care provider.

The responsibilities of the parent or guardian are to:

- a. Provide the school with each different medication in a separate appropriately labeled container:
- b. Place Prescription Medication in a prescription container indicating the child's name, the name of the medication, the unit of dosage to be given, the number of dosage units, the time the medication is to be given, and how it is to be administered. It is recommended the parent ask the pharmacist to provide two properly labeled containers - one for home and one for school.
- c. Keep Over the Counter Medication in the original container that includes the manufacturer's recommendations and label with the student's name.
- d. Provide the "Medication Permission Form" to the school, ensuring the form is completed, signed by the health care provider and parent/guardian. The health care provider may use another format (letter, computer printout, etc.) to authorize the administration of medication as long as all information requested in the Medication Permission Form is provided.

- e. Understand that if the completed form is not received and it is necessary for the medication to be given, the parent may come to the school and administer the medication
- f. Provide new containers with appropriate labeling each time the child's medication changes, and to remove from the school grounds any medications discontinued by the child's health care professional.
- g. Remove all medications from school premises at the end of each school year. If not removed, the school will dispose of all medications in its possession on the last school workday at the end of the school year for students.
- h. Bring medications directly to the school office and avoid sending the medications to school via the student when possible.
- i. Recognize that the authorization for administration of medication will be valid for the current school year or the ending date listed on the medication form.
- j. Recognize that no medication (either prescription or nonprescription) will be administered by school personnel without written order from the health care provider and the signed consent of the parent/guardian.
- k. Recognize that a secure (locked) storage area will be provided at each school for storage of medication. A staff member appointed by the Managing Director shall be responsible for this security and administration of medication. An alternate person shall be identified to fill in when needed.
 - a. The designated individual for each student receiving medication and/or procedure shall maintain a daily medication/procedure log.
 - b. The individual shall record on the log the name of the medication, date, dosage, and time of each administration or date and time of a procedure.
- l. Recognize that students will not be allowed to self-administer medication except as stated in NC law for Diabetes, Asthma, and Anaphylaxis.
- m. Recognize that Ascend Leadership Academy discourages students from bringing prescription and over-the-counter medications to school and administering such to themselves without the assistance of school officials. Students will not be allowed to possess or to self-administer prescription medications, other than asthma medications, diabetic medications, and/or medications for the treatment of anaphylactic reaction, except in cases of extreme health conditions properly documented in an individual health care plan developed by the student's health care provider. The Ascend Leadership Academy Board of Directors and its employees are not responsible for the improper self-administration of over-the-counter or prescription drugs at school by students. The unauthorized possession or use of any medication during the school day is not allowed and in violation of the Ascend Leadership Academy Drug Policy.

School Wellness

Building nutrition knowledge and skills help children make healthy eating and physical activity choices. To make a difference, nutrition education for children should be appropriate for the

students' age, reflect their cultures, and provide opportunities for them to practice nutrition skills in a positive environment.

Physical Activity

Physical activity is critical to a child's healthy weight and healthy lifestyle, as well as to his/her ability to focus in the classroom. To ensure that all children are staying active, physical activity needs to be incorporated into the daily school curriculum and prioritized as essential to each child's social and academic achievement.

Structured/unstructured recess and other physical activity (such as, but not limited to, physical activity time, physical education or intramurals) will be scheduled daily and shall not be taken away from students as a form of punishment or for any unapproved reason. In addition, severe and/or inappropriate exercise may not be used as a form of punishment for students.

Section 9: Emergencies, Crisis Management, School Hours, Contacts, Miscellaneous

Crisis Management Plan

A Crisis Management Plan shall be developed, maintained, and implemented to identify potential hazards, mitigate contributing factors, and prepare our staff and students to respond quickly and responsibly to emergencies. The Board recognizes that the safety of students and staff is best met by a plan that minimizes disruption to the education program, while at the same time provides necessary exercises and drills to train students and employees to respond to emergency situations.

Emergency Preparedness

Ascend Leadership Academy works closely with emergency management, law enforcement, public health and other officials at the local, county, state and federal levels to develop plans for handling emergencies. Each school has an Emergency Preparedness Plan which includes guidelines on how to respond to severe weather, fire, chemical related incidents, and security related incidents during school and business hours.

Emergency Closings

The Managing Director shall be responsible for making provisions for and administering procedures for the temporary closing of school because of inclement weather or other unforeseen occurrence that presents a threat to the safety of students, staff, or property. Ascend Leadership Academy will follow the inclement weather advisories of Lee County Schools and may implement additional closings or delays if deemed necessary to ensure safety for the students and staff of Ascend Leadership Academy, many of whom reside in counties outside of Lee.

Inclement/Severe Weather

When severe weather is predicted, ALA will monitor weather conditions closely. ALA will notify families and staff through:

- An announcement posted on www.ascendleadershipacademy.org
- ALA Mass communication email/text/call system

- TV Channel 5 (WRAL) and TV Channel 11 (WTVD)

Storms and Tornadoes

- Storm safe areas will be designated for each class and office suite.
- In the event that the National Weather Service issues an imminent threat of severe storms or tornadoes, the Managing Director will alert all classes and personnel to proceed to storm-safe areas.
- ALA will conduct storm drills that will occur at the beginning of each storm season.
- Move computers and other items that can be damaged by water away from windows and exterior walls. Unplug electrical items. Turn off air conditioners.
- Store all loose items and move the desks away from windows and doors.

Ice and Snow

At the threat of ice and snow, ALA will determine if an early dismissal is warranted. An Administrator will remain on campus until all students are retrieved.

Special Occasions

If you choose to provide snacks for your child's class, please adhere to the following guidelines:

- a. Please provide enough for the whole class
- b. Please coordinate with your child's teacher to ensure appropriateness of timing for delivery and sharing
- c. Please provide only store-bought items
- d. Please verify any special requirements such as allergy alerts in your child's classroom

Media and Community Relations

The Board of Directors endorses free communication between the public. In the interest of effective school/community communication and media relations, the Board recognizes the public's right-to-know within the limits of established rules of confidentiality and expects the Managing Director to provide information accurately and in a timely and appropriate way.

Student Fees

Ascend Leadership Academy may not charge fees that would not otherwise be statutorily acceptable charges in the LEA. ALA strives to offer its instructional programs without charging fees. Fees, however, are necessary on occasion. Before any fee is charged, it must be approved by the Managing Director.

Special school activities requiring costs to students that might prevent some students from participating are prohibited. No student will be prevented from participating because of an inability to pay. Fees may be waived or reduced in accordance with established procedure.

Hours of Operation & School Contact information

Doors open to students 30 minutes prior to school starting. All students are expected to be in class by or before the posted start times. All students are expected to be picked up at dismissal

unless they are attending After Care. If you are more than 10 minutes late to pick up, students will be moved into the After-Care program for their own safety.

You will be required to sign your child out from the After-Care staff. We know that emergencies can happen! However, if you are consistently late for pick up there will be escalating fees due to the After Care. If they are not attending a club or other school event, it is their responsibility to leave campus at dismissal. The School is not responsible for students who do not exit the campus as appropriate. The front office will close 30 minutes after carline is completed in each building unless we are hosting an after-school event. Once the front office closes, all correspondence will run through our After-Care Program.

Hours of Operation

Earliest Drop-off: 7:30am

Instructional Day: 8:15am – 3:00pm Monday – Friday

Latest Pick-up: 3:15pm

Contact Information

Ascend Leadership Academy

Sanford, NC 27332

Phone: (919) 842-5411

Fax: (919) 842-3545

Section 10: ALA School Transportation Plan

Car Rider/Parent Pick Up

Parents are encouraged to drop off and pick up their children within the timeframe outlined by the school. Below are the outlined procedures for parent/guardian pick-up and drop-off.

Morning Drop-Off



ALA will begin accepting students for drop-off each morning beginning at 7:30am and ending at 8:15am. Students who arrive after the 8:15am tardy bell will be considered tardy. Students will be supervised by Before Care staff until the initial tardy bell rings at 8:10am. At 8:10am students will be released into the hallways to prepare for the instructional day.

Parents should abide by the following procedures when participating in ALA's morning carline. The procedures are also indicated on the image above.

1. All parents should enter ALA's campus via Harvey Faulk Road. An ALA staff member will be stationed at the school's entrance to direct traffic and ensure the flow of traffic on Harvey Faulk Road remains constant. Parents can turn either left or right to enter into ALA's campus from Harvey Faulk Road.
2. Vehicles traveling north on Harvey Faulk Road should turn right into ALA's campus and remain in the right lane. Vehicles traveling south on Harvey Faulk Road should turn left onto campus and remain in the left lane.

3. Once on campus proceed to the back of the campus and follow the queue. **At no point should you pass or cut in front of another vehicle.** All participants should follow the queue and remain in the order in which they arrived on campus.
4. Once your vehicle approaches the front of the school, an ALA employee will direct you to when it is your turn to approach the drop-off lanes in the front of the school. There are five lanes and five cars will enter the drop off zone at a time. An ALA employee will alternate between the left and right lanes to allow five cars to enter at a time.
5. Once the ALA student has exited the car, please continue to follow the queue and **do not pass any vehicles in front of you** to ensure the safety of all participants.
6. When exiting campus please follow the queue and **do not pass or cut in front of other vehicles.** Once at the intersection of Harvey Faulk Road and ALA's campus drive, vehicles are allowed to turn either left or right onto Harvey Faulk Road. Drivers should be vigilant of oncoming traffic. An ALA staff member will be stationed at the school's entrance to direct traffic and ensure the flow of traffic on Harvey Faulk Road remains constant.

Afternoon Pick-Up



ALA will begin releasing students for pick-up each afternoon beginning at 3:00pm and ending at 3:15pm. Students who are not picked up before 3:15pm will be sent to Afterschool care where Parents/Guardians may be required to pay a nominal fee.

Parents should abide by the following procedures when participating in ALA's morning carline. The procedures are also indicated on the image above.

1. Before the first day of school, all parents will receive a **4-digit code** from ALA's administration that is unique to their child and will be utilized only for afternoon pick-up. **When arriving to pick-up your child each vehicle should display the full name and 4-digit code associated with each child being picked up on a sign that is clear and legible.**
2. All parents should enter ALA's campus via Harvey Faulk Road. An ALA staff member will be stationed at the school's entrance to direct traffic and ensure the flow of traffic on Harvey Faulk Road remains constant. Parents can turn either left or right to enter into ALA's campus from Harvey Faulk Road.
3. Vehicles traveling north on Harvey Faulk Road should turn right into ALA's campus and remain in the right lane. Vehicles traveling south on Harvey Faulk Road should turn left onto campus and remain in the left lane.
4. Once on campus an ALA staff member will look for your sign and enter in the student codes into his/her electronic device. This will alert each child's teacher within the building that you are on campus. At this time the student(s) will be released to the front of the school.
5. After showing your sign to an ALA staff member please proceed to the back of the campus and follow the queue. **At no point should you pass or cut in front of another vehicle.** All participants should follow the queue and remain in the order in which they arrived on campus.
6. Once your vehicle approaches the front of the school, an ALA employee will direct you to when it is your turn to approach the pick-up lanes in the front of the school. There are five lanes and five cars will enter the pick-up zone at a time. An ALA employee will alternate between the left and right lanes to allow five cars to enter at a time. **It is imperative that all cars remain in the order in which they entered campus to ensure all students are matched with the appropriate car and for the efficient flow of the carline process.**
7. Once the ALA student has entered the car, please continue to follow the queue and **do not pass any vehicles in front of you** to ensure the safety of all participants.
8. When exiting campus please follow the queue and **do not pass or cut in front of other vehicles.** Once at the intersection of Harvey Faulk Road and ALA's campus drive, vehicles are allowed to turn either left or right onto Harvey Faulk Road. Drivers should be vigilant of oncoming traffic. An ALA staff member will be stationed at the school's entrance to direct traffic and ensure the flow of traffic on Harvey Faulk Road remains constant.

Student Walkers

ALA's Board of Directors takes its responsibility seriously to provide for student safety. Consequently, the Board specifically discourages parents from allowing their children to leave campus at the end of the day bound for home by foot. Because of the high volume of vehicular traffic in and around the campus at the time of day when school dismisses, the Board cannot guarantee the safety of any student who leaves the campus on foot.

Having made its position clear in this statement, ALA's administration will develop and disseminate a waiver form making the Board's position clear, absolving the Board from responsibility, and holding the Board, the Corporation, the school, and all school personnel harmless in the event of an accident involving a student released to walk home according to his/her parents' wishes.

Student Walker Release Form



Student Walker Release Form

Dear ALA Parent/Guardian,

We recommend that all students ride the school bus or are transported to and from school by you via our carline system. We do, however, understand that some parents wish to allow their students to walk to school or walk home after school. Please fill out the form below and return it to the main office for our files if you wish to give such permission. Please understand there are no cross-walks or crossing guards available for students.

Justin Smith
Managing Director

Please return this form to ALA administration before your student walks home.

I, _____ give my permission for

Child(ren) _____ Grade _____ (please print)

Child(ren) _____ Grade _____ (please print)

to walk home after school. I understand that in granting this permission, my child's teacher is authorized to release my child from class at 2:45. I also understand that my child must leave school property at dismissal time and will not be allowed to linger on school grounds unless they are registered in an after-school program and have checked in with the supervising adult/s for that specific after school activity. If my plans change and my child needs to follow a different school dismissal arrangement, I will contact the school office with instructions for my child.

With my signature I absolve ALA's Board of Directors, the school, and all school personnel harmless in the event of an accident involving a student released to walk home according to his/her parents' wishes.

Parent name (Print) _____ Date _____

Parent signature _____

When walking home from school, please remind your children of the following safety guidelines:

- Go directly from school to your home. Students should only return to school in the event of an emergency
- Walk home using the sidewalk or walking path; cross only at designated crosswalks
- Obey all traffic signs and signals
- Check in with a parent or other designated adult/sibling when you get home

