

**DEMOCRACY PREP  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS**



**SCHOLAR & FAMILY  
HANDBOOK**

**WELCOME TO THE DPPS TEAM AND FAMILY!**

**2017-18**

- Democracy Prep Charter School
- Democracy Prep Harlem Charter School
- Harlem Prep Charter School
- Democracy Prep Endurance Charter School

**Democracy Prep  
Public Schools**  
1767 Park Avenue, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor  
New York, NY 10035

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

MESSAGE TO OUR FAMILIES.....	3
OUR SCHOOLS.....	3
OUR MISSION, VISION, AND CORE VALUES .....	4
TEAM AND FAMILY RESPONSIBILITY CODE .....	5
BASIC OPERATIONAL EXPECTATIONS AT OUR SCHOOLS.....	7
SCHOLAR EXPECTATIONS AND RIGHTS.....	10
HEALTH POLICIES AND ATTENDANCE IMPLICATIONS.....	17
SCHOLAR LIFE.....	18
FAMILY ENGAGEMENT.....	23
DREAM PRIVILEGES.....	26
CODE OF CONDUCT.....	27
THE DREAM DOLLAR SYSTEM.....	30
PROCEDURES FOR DISCIPLINARY VIOLATIONS .....	31
VISITING OUR SCHOOLS.....	33
MISCELLANEOUS POLICIES AND PROCEDURES .....	35
APPENDIX A: UNIFORM .....	38
COMMITMENT TO EXCELLENCE .....	39

## MESSAGE TO OUR FAMILIES

Welcome to Democracy Prep Public Schools! As a part of our team and family, you have joined a community of people who have dedicated their professional lives to helping all children reach their full potential.

The mission of Democracy Prep Public Schools is to educate responsible citizen-scholars for success in the college of their choice and a life of active citizenship.

The motto of Democracy Prep Public Schools is: ***Work Hard. Go to College. Change the World!***

As is the case with any family, the Democracy Prep Public Schools network needs a set of rules and guidelines to help us understand and get along with each other. The purpose of this Handbook is to ensure that we have consistent expectations across our schools. The network Handbook may not answer all of your questions, but it should provide examples of Democracy Prep’s mission, procedures, expectations and guiding principles.

This Handbook replaces any prior years’ Handbooks, including those for Democracy Prep middle schools. As Democracy Prep always seeks to improve, we reserve the right to amend, modify or change the provisions of this Handbook. We will of course provide all scholars and families notice of any significant changes in the policies reflected in the following pages.

Please note that where we refer to “parents” in this Handbook, that term is meant to include both parents and legal guardians even where we do not specifically refer to guardians.

## OUR SCHOOLS

### **Democracy Prep Charter School**

Grades 6-8: 2230 Fifth Avenue  
New York, NY 10037

Grades 9-12: 222 West 134<sup>th</sup> Street  
New York, NY 10030

### **Democracy Prep Harlem Charter School**

Grades K-4: 2005 Madison Avenue  
New York, NY 10035

Grades 6-8: 207 West 133<sup>rd</sup> Street  
New York, NY 10030

Grades 9-12: 212 West 120<sup>th</sup> Street  
New York, NY 10027

### **Democracy Prep Endurance Charter School**

Grades 6-8: 250 West 127<sup>th</sup> Street  
New York, NY 10027

Grades 9-11: 240 East 123<sup>rd</sup> Street  
New York, NY 10035

### **Democracy Prep at the Agassi Campus**

Grades K-12: 1201 West Lake Mead Boulevard  
Las Vegas, NV 89106

### **Freedom Prep Charter School**

Grades K-12: 1000 Atlantic Avenue  
Camden, NJ 08104

### **Democracy Prep Congress Heights PCS**

Grades Pre-K, 3-8: 3100 Martin Luther King Jr. Ave, SE  
Washington, DC 20032

### **Bronx Prep Charter School**

Grades 6-12: 3872 3rd Avenue  
Bronx, NY 10457

### **Harlem Prep Charter School**

Grades K-5 & 9-10: 240 East 123<sup>rd</sup> Street  
New York, NY 10035

Grades 6-8: 232 East 103<sup>rd</sup> Street  
New York, NY 10029

### **Democracy Prep Baton Rouge Charter School**

Grades K-2, 5-8 4055 Prescott Road  
Baton Rouge, LA 70805

## OUR MISSION, VISION, AND CORE VALUES

### Our Mission

The mission of Democracy Prep Public Schools is to educate responsible citizen-scholars for success in the college of their choice and a life of active citizenship.

We will achieve our mission through:

- Rigorous college-prep academics
- Frequent use of data and assessment
- More time to learn
- A respectful and structured school culture
- Exemplary teachers

### Our Vision

Democracy Prep will provide a rigorous academic program focused on the knowledge, skills, and character necessary to master core academic subjects in preparation for success in college. Scholars will receive highly structured civic and leadership education, preparing them to be active citizens in our democratic society.

### Our Core Values: D.R.E.A.M.

**Discipline.** Our scholars, teachers, and staff understand that discipline is the key to success. We have clear rules and high expectations. We expect all adults and scholars in our community to meet these expectations so that our scholars can learn in a safe and orderly environment. Our teachers and staff continuously reinforce these expectations in order to empower our scholars to do what's best for their education and for our community, supporting our scholars as they build the internal discipline necessary to do the hard work that it takes to get them to and through college. Discipline means staying focused, following rules and instructions, studying and reading every night, and establishing and adhering to personal routines that will lead to success.

**Respect.** Our community is built on respect. Teachers respect scholars by expecting them to achieve great things and by treating them with dignity and fairness. Scholars respect all teachers and staff because they understand the importance of their education and the need to preserve precious learning time. Scholars respect each other because we are a team and family who work together to achieve our goals. Each member of our community treats every other member with respect in everything we do and say, creating a productive and supportive school environment that brings out the best in all of us.

**Enthusiasm.** When you work hard, it is essential to find joy in your work. We believe in teaching our scholars how to be joyful in their learning by approaching it with curiosity, gratitude, and spirit! We also believe in creating opportunities for our scholars to play together as a team, as enthusiasm is created both by working hard and playing hard. Enthusiasm means actively participating in every moment of class, attempting to answer questions even when you are confused, walking with urgency to and from classes, taking a risk to try something difficult, staying positive when confronted with a challenge, and finding ways to show that you love what you do.

**Accountability.** Accountability is the conscious and public act of taking responsibility for something you have done. In order to work in a community with high expectations, respectful conversations, and positive attitudes, scholars, teachers, and staff will hold each other accountable for our words, actions and decisions. Accountability means accepting the consequences of our decisions, accepting praise, being proud of amazing accomplishments and hard work, acknowledging and apologizing for mistakes, changing hurtful



behavior into supportive behavior, and letting an adult know if someone in our community is not upholding our values. Accountability shows that we are honest and responsible with ourselves and with each other and are therefore prepared to reach our fullest potential.

**Maturity.** To be mature means that you do the right thing because it is the right thing to do, even if no one is watching. Mature citizen-scholars find ways to be kind to their teams and families — even toward the people that you may not like. Maturity means that you work hard and put forth 100% effort because your future is important to you.

## TEAM AND FAMILY RESPONSIBILITY CODE

**Teachers, Administrators, and Staff:** We fully commit to Democracy Prep in the following ways:

- We will arrive at Democracy Prep each day at the time determined by our school leader and stay until the end of the workday, ensuring before we leave that our classrooms and lessons are prepared for our scholars' success on the following day.
- We will work harder and longer than others because we will do whatever it takes for our scholars to learn.
- We will dress professionally at all times in order to convey a seriousness of purpose and to create a learning environment characterized by maturity.
- We will make ourselves available to scholars and parents by phone, email, and in person, and we will respond respectfully to any concerns they have.
- We will always protect the safety, interests, and rights of all individuals in the classroom.
- We will prepare engaging and rigorous lessons with meaningful homework assignments and frequent assessments.
- We will use data from assessments and assignments to make sure every scholar succeeds.
- We will fulfill all of our school-wide obligations — including upholding hallway expectations and performing necessary coverage duties — in order to foster a cohesive, unified team dynamic.
- We will provide individual and small group tutoring to ensure our scholars succeed.

Failure to adhere to these commitments can lead to our removal from the DPPS Team and Family.

**Scholars:** I fully commit to Democracy Prep in the following ways:

- I will arrive to school each day on time and ready to learn.
- I will remain at school until dismissal.
- I will complete my homework every evening and to the best of my ability.
- I will attend required tutoring sessions, detentions, and homework club after school as assigned and on Saturdays when necessary.
- I will attend Summer Academy if it is necessary for promotion or success.
- I will share reports of my academic and behavioral progress with my family whenever I am asked.
- I will study the DPPS Handbook and abide by the rules contained within.
- I will ask appropriately for clarification if I am confused about why something is important. I will remember that my teachers and my school want what is best for me, even when I do not always understand how.
- I will use DISCIPLINE to complete my homework, prepare for tests and quizzes, arrive at school on time, and wear the proper uniform.
- I will act with RESPECT towards my peers, my teachers, all adults in the community, and all school property.

- I will show ENTHUSIASM in all that I do — learning in class, participating in after-school activities, attending a field trip or lecture, or presenting in front of the school.
- I will show ACCOUNTABILITY by admitting when I have made a mistake and by not blaming other people for my actions.
- I will strive for MATURITY in my actions and thoughts, which means figuring out the right thing to do and doing it even when no one is watching.

I am responsible for my own behavior and I will follow my teachers' directions. I understand that failure to adhere to these commitments can lead to appropriate consequences, including the loss of privileges.

**Families:** We fully commit to Democracy Prep in the following ways:

- Our family will ensure our child arrives at school on time or before the start of the scheduled school day Monday through Friday.
- We will make arrangements so that our child can remain at Democracy Prep until he or she is dismissed.
- We will make arrangements so that our child can attend any and all required after school activities and provide documentation when necessary family affairs conflict with detention or school events.
- We will ensure our child attends Summer Academy if deemed necessary by the school.
- We will always help our child to learn in the best way we know how.
- We will review all communication from the school and the teachers, check and assist with homework and review planners nightly, allow our children to call their teachers for help when necessary, and make sure that our child reads every night.
- We will call our child's teachers when we have a concern about our child's academic or behavioral performance or progress.
- We will support the school's civic initiatives by being, when eligible, a registered voter, attending advocacy events, and attending at least one civic field trip.
- We will make ourselves available to the school, attend as many school events as we are able, and be in close contact with our child's teachers.
- We will volunteer, contribute to, and support the school in every way possible.
- We will provide the school with our most up-to-date contact information.
- We will allow our child to participate in field trips if he or she has earned them.
- We will ensure our child understands and follows the school's attendance, tardiness, and uniform policies.
- We will support Democracy Prep in enforcing the school rules so as to protect the safety, interest, and rights of all individuals in the classroom. We, not the school, are responsible for the behavior and actions of our child.

*By working with Democracy Prep, we are building a partnership that prepares my child for success in scholarship and citizenship.*

## BASIC OPERATIONAL EXPECTATIONS AT OUR SCHOOLS

### Arrival and Dismissal

An on-time arrival is crucial to laying the foundation for academic success. Being on time also communicates important values. We expect all of our scholars to prioritize punctuality and to adopt the belief that being on time shows accountability, discipline, and respect. Scholars are always expected to arrive on time for school and for school events. Tardiness will not be tolerated. A scholar will receive an appropriate consequence each time he or she is tardy. Repeated infractions will result in further consequences.

After dismissal from Democracy Prep, scholars are required to go directly home. Within 15 minutes following dismissal, no Democracy Prep scholars may be outside of the school building. Scholars who do not follow staff directions to enter the school building urgently, or are found waiting outside instead of entering the building, and who violate Democracy Prep's Code of Conduct while on the surrounding streets or playgrounds surrounding Democracy Prep will receive the appropriate consequences from school leadership.

Please note that Democracy Prep teachers are not available after dismissal hours to supervise scholars.

WEEKDAY	ARRIVAL	DISMISSAL:
Monday-Thursday	In the building by 7:45 a.m.	4:00 p.m. (4:45 for tutoring)
Friday	In the building by 7:45 a.m.	1:00 p.m.

*Please note that scholars arriving late will not have time to eat a full breakfast and may not be provided with a breakfast by the school.*

### Transportation

Democracy Prep will help to ensure safe transportation as per state or city regulations. All requests or concerns regarding transportation must be submitted in writing. The school will provide busing for scholars to travel to/from school if required under an Individualized Education Program (IEP). MetroCards will be provided by the State of New York for all other scholars who qualify. As MetroCards are distributed by the State, Democracy Prep does not have the ability to replace lost or stolen cards.

Democracy Prep scholars are expected to live the DREAM values all of the time, including on their way to and from school while on the train, on the bus, or within the local community.

### Attendance and Punctuality

Attendance is vital for the educational well-being of individual scholars and the school community. Parents and guardians are expected to ensure that their child attends school every day and are strongly discouraged from scheduling appointments for their children during school hours. **If your scholar must be absent due to illness or an emergency, please contact the school with as much advance notice as possible, and no later than 7:30 a.m. on the day of the absence.** Arrangements should be made to pick up homework. In order for the absence to be verified, you must both afford the school as much advance notice as possible and also provide documentation following the absence explaining the nature of the illness or emergency (e.g. a doctor's note or a detailed letter including the date(s) and reason for the absence).

Undocumented absences are never acceptable. Excessive undocumented absences (more than 9) in a year may lead to no credit and a zero percent average in each class for the trimester and/or year, may require

scholars to attend Summer Academy in order to secure promotion to the next grade, and may possibly result in retention. Further, every three tardy arrivals to school equal one absence. A record of all absences and absence notes will be maintained by the school and consulted if retention becomes a possibility.

Excessive absences, even when documented and verified, will result in parents and guardians being asked to meet with school officials. Democracy Prep may contact appropriate authorities if a scholar is repeatedly absent from school. Democracy Prep also reserves the right to require scholars who have accumulated in excess of nine absences during the school year to make up all lost instructional time during Summer Academy irrespective of whether the absences are documented. Scholars who are absent will not receive DREAM Dollars for missed days.

#### Attendance – Consequences for Absences

While scholars with superlative attendance records receive recognition for their discipline, accountability, and maturity, those who fail to meet expectations receive appropriate consequences.

***No Absences in a Trimester:*** The scholar and family are congratulated and recognized for exceptional attendance and commitment to education.

***Three Absences in a Trimester:*** Democracy Prep considers three absences in a single trimester a serious issue. When this occurs, the school reserves the right to notify the scholar’s parent/guardian, and further steps such as requiring families to attend formal meetings and creating attendance “action plans.”

***Six Absences in a Year:*** When a scholar accumulates six absences, the school reserves the right to call the scholar’s parent/guardian to the school to meet with the social worker and/or school leader. At such a meeting, the team will discuss any barriers to attendance and develop an attendance action plan.

***More than Nine Absences in a Year:*** If a scholar is absent more than nine times in a year, the scholar may be considered a truant. When this occurs, the scholar is at risk of not being promoted to the next grade. The parent/guardian will be called to the school to meet with the social worker and school leader. Any scholar with more than nine absences will be required to recover any lost instructional time in excess of nine days during Summer Academy. Additionally, the school leader reserves the right to retain any scholar who misses more than nine days of school. In addition, a report may be filed with the New York City Administration for Children’s Services or the New York State Office of Children and Family Services.

***Twenty Absences in a Year:*** If a scholar is absent twenty times in a year, the scholar may be considered a habitual truant. At this point, the school administration may file a written complaint with a relevant court or child services agency alleging the belief that the acts or omissions of the child are such that his/her family has service needs. The Board of Trustees or its designee will submit an annual report to the New York State Office of Children and Family Services that reports the number of habitual truants at its school.

#### Attendance – Tardiness and Early Dismissals

Arriving to school on time and remaining for the full day is key to each scholar’s success — at school and in life. At Democracy Prep, learning begins the moment scholars walk in the door and continues to dismissal. Scholars who leave before the close of the school day miss essential instruction, disrupt the learning of other scholars, and risk falling behind on our ambitious curriculum.

#### Definition of Tardiness

Our doors open at 7:30 a.m. each morning. Scholars must arrive between 7:30 a.m. and 7:45 a.m. Scholars who have not entered the school building by 7:45 and scholars who are not prepared and seated in



homeroom at 7:50 a.m. are considered tardy. In cases when a school bus arrives late, those scholars riding the bus are not considered tardy.

### Consequences for Tardiness

The following is an outline of consequences for tardiness and early dismissals:

**No Tardies in a Trimester** – The scholar and family are congratulated and recognized for being “on time” and for their commitment to education.

**Three Tardies in a Trimester** – If a scholar arrives late or is released before the close of the school day three times in a Trimester, it is considered a serious issue. Should this occur, the school reserves the right to call the parent/guardian to discuss the problem and develop an “On Time” plan.

**Seven Tardies in a Year** – Should excessive tardiness or early dismissals occur, the school reserves the right to call the parent/guardian to the school to meet with a social worker, the Registrar and/or school leader. At such a meeting, the team will discuss any barriers to on-time arrival and dismissal and develop an “On Time” plan, or — if such a plan is already in place — modify or reinforce the plan as needed.

Excessive tardiness and early dismissal mean lost instructional time, and may place a scholar at risk of not being promoted to the next grade.

### Educational Neglect

Habitual absence significantly harms a scholar’s educational progress. Democracy Prep is required to file a report with the State Central Register when a parent or guardian fails to ensure his or her scholar’s prompt and regular attendance in school or keeps a scholar out of school for impermissible reasons to the detriment of the scholar’s education. Democracy Prep reserves the right to notify the appropriate authorities about parents who exhibit a pattern of leaving their scholar at school after dismissal.

### School Closings

Democracy Prep generally follows the same calendar for weather-related emergencies as the NYC Department of Education. Families will receive an automated call from the school notifying them of any weather-related closings, even those that occur despite the district electing to remain open.

### Food and Meals

Democracy Prep participates in the National School Lunch Program, which provides free or reduced-price lunches to eligible scholars. Applications and eligibility criteria are provided to all parents, and applications are required to be completed by all families every year.

A healthy breakfast and snack is available each day for DPPS scholars. Scholars must adhere to the school rules regarding appropriate time and place to eat any food items not provided by the school.

Lunch is available for scholars on all full-length school days. Lunch choices and cost may vary by school. Scholars whose families meet the eligibility requirements and complete the requisite paperwork will receive free or reduced-price lunch.

Scholars may bring their lunch from home in a closed lunch bag with a zipper and a clear label of the scholar’s name. Each scholar may bring an unfrozen transparent water bottle with him or her each day. The following items will be immediately confiscated and not replaced if brought onto school grounds:

1. Gum
2. Candy

3. Soda
4. Fast food
5. Coffee

**Parents are responsible for informing the school of any allergies that their scholars may have prior to the school year.**

### Scholar Uniform

All Democracy Prep scholars must come to school every day, including required Saturdays, wearing the required uniform. They must also wear the required uniform on all school field trips. Scholars must be in *full uniform* when they arrive at school, when they leave, and at all times in between (please refer to Section 1.6 of the Code of Conduct). A notice on the required uniform policy will be sent home with each scholar violating this code of conduct. For details regarding the required uniform, please see *Appendix A*.

### Scholar Supplies

Democracy Prep makes every effort to equip scholars with the supplies they need for the start of the year. In order to successfully complete nightly homework, DPPS recommends that families provide the following supplies at home:

- pencil sharpener
- many pencils
- crayons and markers
- wide ruled lined paper
- scissors
- erasers

Scholars should not purchase any in-school supplies (except pencils) for the beginning of the school year, but may be required to replace any supplies that become worn down or depleted throughout the year. Scholars must also maintain their binders, folders and other organizational supplies with high standards of neatness and cleanliness. Democracy Prep expects its scholars to show respect for their belongings, whether they were purchased by their family or by the school.

Scholars must be prepared each day with the required supplies, including homework and handouts, appropriate writing utensils, and independent reading books. Failure to be prepared with materials will result in appropriate consequences.

## **SCHOLAR EXPECTATIONS AND RIGHTS**

### Personal Belongings

Democracy Prep Public Schools are rigorous instructional settings. Therefore, personal belongings that distract from the safe, respectful, and fast-paced instructional environment are not permitted.

Examples of items not allowed in Democracy Prep schools include:

- gum and candy of any kind;
- permanent markers of any kind;
- real, toy, or model weapons including pocket knives, box cutters, X-acto knives, or water guns;
- excessive amounts of cash;
- any illegal substance (including cigarettes, e-cigarettes, hookah pens, alcohol, or any other substance not mentioned directly here);

- stuffed animals, dolls, and any toys, including but not limited to fidget spinners (unless used in accordance with a documented behavior plan);
- materials (e.g. songs, papers, lyrics, art, or notes) that contain inappropriate or offensive language, images or suggestions; and
- fireworks, sparklers, poppers, snappers, fountains, bottle rockets, and any other explosive devices.

Any of the items in the list above may be confiscated at the discretion of the school principal and not returned until a parent or guardian meets with the school leadership. **All confiscated electronics must be picked up by parent/guardian.**

**Note:** Cell phones, radios, iPods, portable gaming systems, smartwatches and other non-instructional electronic devices must be turned over to their advisors to be safely stored upon entering the school property. Storing electronics in book bags or in the scholar's pocket is not an option unless explicit permission has been given by the school leader to do otherwise. Any electronic equipment used without permission may be confiscated.



Scholars may bring cell phones to school for safety reasons, but phones may never be turned on or used in the school building without explicit permission and supervision from a DREAM team member. . Failure to comply with this expectation may result in confiscation or another consequence. Scholars must wait for a parent or guardian to pick up confiscated items from the school leader or the appropriate administrative staff member. School staff are not responsible for the damage and loss of any electronic devices that have not been confiscated by a school administrator. Cell phones are not permitted on school field trips.

#### Scholar-Family Contact During the Day

Scholars will be able neither to receive messages from parents nor to transmit messages to parents during the school day except in the case of emergency. Scholars will only be given permission to use the school phone in cases of emergency or at the school's discretion.

#### Search of Scholar Belongings

Democracy Prep must maintain a safe and orderly environment for all our scholars and staff. In order to do so the school reserves the right to search any and all persons or belongings on school property for illicit material. Such searches can be either random or with reasonable suspicion and may include a scholar's

person, backpack pockets, lockers, cell phones, other belongings, etc.

#### Book Borrowing at Democracy Prep Public Schools

Democracy Prep is extremely proud of how much our scholars love books. We are also proud of our book collections. In order for the collections to be maintained, they must be respected. Scholars must be accountable for any books they have borrowed and must return them in a timely manner and in the same condition as when borrowed. Damage to books may result in loss of book borrowing privileges, financial responsibility for the book, or community service.

#### Computer/Internet/Email Acceptable Use Policy

This policy outlines guidelines for responsible use of Democracy Prep's Information Technology, and is designed to protect Democracy Prep's information and scholars from the possible consequences of inappropriate use of Democracy Prep Information Technology. The term "Democracy Prep Information Technology" as used herein includes, but is not limited to, Democracy Prep computers (desktop and laptop), networks (wired and wireless), telecommunications devices (fixed and wireless), facsimile machines, photocopiers, printers, software, storage media (disks, CDs, USB drives), and other technologies that may be provided to Users by the Democracy Prep for use in the course of Democracy Prep business. The guidelines provided in this policy apply to all Democracy Prep employees, or any other persons who are provided with access to Democracy Prep Information Technology in the course of providing services of any kind to Democracy Prep ("Users").

Democracy Prep Information Technology provides critical support to Democracy Prep and its scholars in the achievement of the Democracy Prep's mission, and all Users of Democracy Prep Information Technology are expected to use it responsibly and in compliance with Democracy Prep policies and applicable law.

#### **Privacy and Monitoring**

Users should have no expectation of privacy while using Democracy Prep Information Technology. All communications sent, received, transmitted or stored on Democracy Prep Information Technology are the property of Democracy Prep. In order to implement the Democracy Prep information security program effectively and enforce Democracy Prep policies, Democracy Prep must have the ability to monitor the use of Democracy Prep Information Technology. Democracy Prep may monitor any activity on Democracy Prep Information Technology and Users should use Democracy Prep Information Technology accordingly. Authorized Democracy Prep staff may disclose, monitor, access, review, copy, store, move, edit, delete, or otherwise manipulate any electronic information residing on Democracy Prep Information Technology as is necessary to allow for the proper functioning of Democracy Prep Information Technology, compliance with Democracy Prep policies and applicable law, or for any other appropriate purpose.

#### **Prohibited Activity**

Democracy Prep Information Technology shall not be used to engage in illegal, threatening, discriminatory, defamatory, slanderous, obscene, or harassing activity, including cyberbullying. "Cyberbullying" means bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, including, but not limited to, a transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data or intelligence of any nature transmitted by the use of any electronic device, including, but not limited to, a computer, telephone, cellular telephone, text messaging device and personal digital assistant. Democracy Prep Information Technology may not be used to solicit for any reason, or for sending mass emails ("spamming").

#### **Intellectual Property and Licensing**

Users of Democracy Prep Information Technology must not infringe on intellectual property rights, copyrights, trademarks, or other licensing restrictions. Users must not illegally copy software, data, or other information without the express permission of its owner. Users who have questions about the licensing arrangement for any Democracy Prep Information Technology should direct questions to the Information Technology department.

## **Software Installation**

Only software approved by Democracy Prep may be installed on Democracy Prep Information Technology. Users who wish to have software installed on Democracy Prep Information Technology should direct requests to the Information Technology department and should not install any software on Democracy Prep Information Technology without express permission.

## **Malicious Code and Viruses**

Users may not knowingly create, execute, forward, or introduce any malicious computer code (e.g., viruses, Trojans, worms) into Democracy Prep Information Technology. Democracy Prep provides software tools that are designed to assist in the protection of Democracy Prep Information Technology from malicious code, but Users still must be alert and take appropriate steps to limit the risk of malicious code attacks. Users may not disable any anti-virus or any other security software. If a User suspects a malicious code attack, he or she should contact the Information Technology team immediately.

## **Use of E-mail and Instant Messaging Technology and Electronic Communications**

Electronic communications such as e-mail and instant messages (collectively, “Electronic Messaging”) must be treated carefully. These electronic messages can be misdirected or misinterpreted causing damage to Democracy Prep, its employees, students, and others. Democracy Prep e-mail and instant messaging technology do not provide data privacy while in transit over other, non- Democracy Prep networks. Users are not to use Electronic Messaging, other than those that are internal to Democracy Prep, to send or receive sensitive information that requires privacy protections.

Users should consider the following guidance when using Electronic Messaging:

- demonstrate the same respect when using Electronic Messaging as you use communicating verbally or in a more formal written document such as a memorandum or letter;
- do not forward chain or “spam” messages;
- keep personal messages to a minimum, and be mindful of the fact that even personal messages from Democracy Prep accounts may be viewed as statements authorized or made by or on behalf of Democracy Prep, particularly when Democracy Prep’s name or a User’s title appears in the message’s return address or in its closing; and
- do not send hateful, angry, or otherwise inappropriate messages.

## **Protection of Credentials**

Users should exercise their best efforts to protect their Democracy Prep passwords from disclosure and prevent unauthorized access to Democracy Prep Information Technology. Accounts and passwords are for individual use only.

## **Enforcement**

Appropriate action may be taken against a User if it is found that the User violated this policy. Discipline may range in severity as provided elsewhere in this Student & Family Handbook. Further, if appropriate, a User’s privileges regarding and access to Democracy Prep Information Technology may be revoked or limited without notice at the sole discretion of Democracy Prep.

## Internet Content Filtering Policy

### **Undesirable Materials**

Democracy Prep will take all possible precautions to restrict access to undesirable materials including, but not limited to, installing content filtering software/hardware solutions on its network or using an Internet provider that uses content filtering software on its equipment to screen all Internet websites by URL and/or by keyword search. However, scholars must also accept responsibility for restricting their own access to

these materials. Scholars who gain access to undesirable Internet materials must report these materials to their teacher immediately.

### **Security**

Scholars must not allow others to use their network accounts. Designated school officials may review files and communications to maintain system integrity and ensure that users are using the system responsibly. Users should not expect files stored on school servers to be private. Democracy Prep has the right, but not the duty, to inspect, review, or retain electronic communication created, sent, displayed, received or stored on and over Democracy Prep's Computer Information Systems (CIS) and to monitor, record, check, track, log, access or otherwise inspect its CIS. Passwords and message delete functions do not restrict Democracy Prep's ability or right to access such communications or information. Democracy Prep further reserves the right to allocate filespace as it deems appropriate.

**SCHOLARS SHOULD HAVE NO EXPECTATION OF PRIVACY IN ANYTHING THEY CREATE, STORE, SEND, RECEIVE, OR DISPLAY ON OR OVER DEMOCRACY PREP'S CIS, INCLUDING THEIR PERSONAL FILES OR ANY OF THEIR USE OF THESE SYSTEMS, OR WHILE PRESENT ON DEMOCRACY PREP GROUNDS.**

Democracy Prep reserves the right to access, view, record, check, receive, monitor, track, log, store, and otherwise inspect and utilize any or all Democracy Prep CIS, and to monitor and allocate filespace. Users of Democracy Prep's CIS who transmit or receive communications and information shall be deemed to have consented to having the content of any such communications accessed, viewed, recorded, checked, received, monitored, tracked, logged, stored, and otherwise inspected or utilized by Democracy Prep.

### **Email**

Only school-approved email will be allowed on school premises. Scholars must receive explicit permission from their teacher to engage in any other email activity.

### **Downloading**

Downloading from the Internet without approval from a member of the DREAM Team is not allowed.

### Social Media Policy

When used inappropriately, social media can transform from a powerful educational tool that allows scholars to connect, communicate, and access a wealth of informational resources into the source of serious long-term consequences. College admissions officers and prospective employers will not hesitate to use any social media missteps — even those made when a scholar is quite young — when considering an individual's candidacy for admission or employment. For Democracy Prep scholars to succeed in the college of their choice and a life of active citizenship in a hypercompetitive environment, it is imperative that they maintain digital footprints as impressive as their academic records of achievement.

In recognition of both the educational purpose that social media can serve and the necessity of certain restrictions, this policy is designed to foster the responsible and appropriate use of social media at Democracy Prep Public Schools. DPPS defines "social media" as "any method of communication in cyberspace." For the purposes of this policy, this includes, but is not limited to, any website, program or application that involves Internet forums, weblogs, social blogs, microblogging, wikis, podcasts, and the sharing or posting of photographs, pictures or videos and the rating or tagging of the same. This includes, but is certainly not limited to, the following examples: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Wikipedia, Skype, LinkedIn, Flickr, YouTube, Vimeo, WhatsApp, Bebo, Snapchat, Musical.ly and other platforms not explicitly listed or yet to be invented.

This social media policy applies any time scholars are on school grounds, using school property, under the supervision of school authority, or using social media anywhere in a manner that endangers a scholar's or staff member's physical or emotional safety, security, or well-being and materially and substantially interferes with the requirements of appropriate discipline in the operation of the school. Such activity may include, but is not limited to, threats, ethnic slurs, personal insults, obscenity, drug or alcohol related content, content of a sexual nature, and content involving violence. Scholars are responsible for their own behavior when communicating with social media and will be held accountable for the content of the communications that they transmit or post. Scholars may not disrupt the school's learning atmosphere, educational programs, or activities, and may not violate the rights of others. What would be considered inappropriate in the school or classroom is inappropriate online. Scholars who comment, share or endorse in any manner activity that is in violation of this social media policy will also be held accountable with appropriate consequences. This policy does not apply to a scholar's private use of social media that in no way involves or impacts upon Democracy Prep, staff, or other scholars, though Democracy Prep strongly encourages all scholars to make intelligent and safe choices when using social media.

Democracy Prep expressly reserves the right both to monitor scholar use of social media while present on Democracy Prep grounds, regardless of whether such use is done using Democracy Prep resources or the scholars own personal resources, and to monitor and inspect any device brought onto school grounds for compliance with this policy.

Social media may only be used with the explicit permission of a DREAM Team member and for educationally related purposes while on Democracy Prep grounds. Social media is not to be used at any time, when on school grounds or when participating in a school activity, to fraternize with any other individual or to communicate non-educational messages or information. In accordance with Democracy Prep Public Schools Code of Conduct, scholars are prohibited from posting or publishing any insensitive or inappropriate information or content on any social media and from viewing any insensitive or inappropriate social media content. Should a scholar at any time post, publish, or view such social media content, he or she must notify a teacher or administrator immediately. Immediately reporting the posting, publishing or viewing of such inappropriate content will be given significant weight in considering the level of discipline issued.

Scholars are prohibited from communicating with teachers, administrators, staff members, or contracted workers via social media. The only permissible electronic method of email communication with a teacher is through emailing the teacher or administrator at his or her Democracy Prep email account.

Scholars are prohibited from impersonating or assuming the identity of any other individual while using social media. Scholars are prohibited from posting or publishing any information about themselves or another individual that is confidential or of a private nature. This includes posting information such as last names, school names, addresses, email addresses, phone numbers, other contact information, or any other information a scholar might reasonably expect another individual to want to keep private.

Scholars are prohibited from using any device capable of capturing video, pictures, or audio to record or take pictures of any other individual without their express consent and permission. Scholars are not allowed to "tag" an individual in a picture or recording without their express consent and permission. Scholars must immediately comply with any request that infringing materials be removed from any social media platform.

The use of social media is a privilege, not a right, and the violation of any provision of this policy will result in the restriction of a scholar's social media access at Democracy Prep and/or the imposition of additional appropriate consequences, and in some cases, subject to state and/or federal law.

Scholars should always be mindful of the fact that material posted or published online will be public for a very long time and may perhaps become a permanent part of their record. Scholars should be sensitive of others, should avoid posting or publishing anything distasteful, and should not post or publish anything they would not be willing to say to an individual in person.

### Education Records

Federal and state laws provide parents or guardians and eligible scholars (those who are age 18 or older) with rights of confidentiality, access, and amendment relating to their education records. Copies of the regulations detailing these rights are available from the Scholar Registrar. The following is a general overview:

*Review and Amendment:* A parent or eligible scholar has the right to inspect and review his or her or the eligible scholar's own educational records and to seek amendment if the parent or eligible scholar believes them to be inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the scholar's privacy rights.

*Confidentiality:* Confidential records include grades, evaluations, disciplinary actions, and health records. Release of scholar records generally requires written consent of the parent or eligible scholar. However, the regulations provide certain exceptions. For example, staff members and employees of the district have access to records as needed to perform their duties. Scholar records will also be sent to schools as required by New York law and regulation. *Please note that at Democracy Prep scholar work and results are prominently displayed in classrooms and in the community as part of our educational program.*

### Student Employment

Democracy Prep scholars are not allowed to work during any times that interfere with school hours, including tutoring and required Saturdays. We encourage eligible scholars to only work during the summer and on Sundays whenever possible, as being a scholar at Democracy Prep is a full-time job. The Registrar or Social Worker should be contacted for all Permission to Work forms. The school may require a family conference if the scholar has failing grades or an unacceptable attendance record.





## HEALTH POLICIES AND ATTENDANCE IMPLICATIONS

Scholars must be in attendance in order to achieve academic success. To that end, DPPS has clear policies regarding absences, late arrivals, and early dismissals for appointments. Democracy Prep strongly encourages all doctors' appointments to be scheduled outside of school hours, as every late arrival, early dismissal, and absence will have a detrimental effect on a scholar's academic grade.

If a scholar has a doctor's appointment for which he or she must leave the school early, the parent or guardian must notify the school with as much advance notice as possible and provide proper and adequate documentation to the school upon the scholar's return.

Scholars may not miss a full day of school for a doctor's appointment. **In the event that a doctor's appointment cannot be scheduled after school or on an early dismissal day, scholars must come to school prior to and following all appointments.** Excessive absences will be considered a violation of the Commitment to Excellence.

Whenever a scholar has to miss a school day or a single class due to a doctor's appointment or required family affair, the school requires advance notice before the absence and official documentation after the absence. Democracy Prep does not have excused or unexcused absences. Missing school for illness or for a family event has the same effect: missed instruction. **Families must always provide documentation for any absence.** Frequent absences may result in required Summer Academy or retention.

### Medication While at School

Without written approval from the licensed healthcare practitioner and parental consent on the Medication Administration form, scholars are not permitted to self-administer medication. Parents must ensure that all medications are transferred into the custody of either the school nurse or a trained school employee along with an Authorization to Dispense Medication form. If a scholar requires medication of any kind, including both prescription and over-the-counter medication (such as, but not limited to: asthma inhalers, prescription drugs, insulin, Sudafed, Benadryl and generic equivalents, Tylenol and generic equivalents, Advil and generic equivalents, aspirin, stomach remedies):

- Parents must submit a Medication Administration form including authorization from a licensed healthcare practitioner.
- Prescription medications must be given to the nurse or to a trained school employee by a parent or responsible person in the original container with the prescription label.
- Over-the-counter medications must be given in the original sealed container or box. The school cannot accept partially used or opened over-the-counter medications.

(Over the-counter medications can have adverse effects and are therefore subject to the same restrictions as prescription medications.)

If school personnel find any scholar in possession of medication, such medication shall be promptly delivered to the school nurse or receptionist, and the scholar's parent will be contacted to retrieve it or transfer the medication to the custody of the nurse or trained school employee using the aforementioned process. The scholar may be subject to disciplinary action for being in possession of unauthorized medication.

Any student who is required to carry an emergency asthma inhaler, an epinephrine auto-injector, or insulin, glucagon or other diabetes supplies with him/her must provide:

- A Medication Administration form stating that the student needs to carry the inhaler, injector, or diabetes supplies with him or her and is permitted to self-administer if applicable; and
  - A second inhaler, injector, or diabetes supplies to be kept in the nurse's office.

### Immunization

State law where applicable requires that all children entering school must provide proof of immunization against DTaP (diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis), IPV/OPV, MMR (Measles, Mumps, Rubella), Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, Meningococcal Disease, Varicella (chicken pox), and the annual Influenza vaccine. These requirements can be waived only if a properly signed health or religious exemption is filed with the school. All scholars must have on file proof of the required immunizations before they can be enrolled at a DPSS school. Failure to comply with immunization requirements may result in exclusion from school and missed school days.

## SCHOLAR LIFE

### Advisory

Each scholar at Democracy Prep has at least one advisor or homeroom teacher. This teacher may serve as the primary contact person for families with academic or behavioral concerns.

### Town Hall

Once a week, each school has a special schedule for Town Hall. Town Hall is a weekly celebration of academic achievement, team building, and competition. Scholars participate in school-wide cultural routines such as school pledges, chants and songs, compete against their peers and teachers in academic and problem-solving situations, and celebrate their accomplishments as a student body.

The purposes of Town Hall are to:

- celebrate students' academic achievement;
- recognize individual student accomplishment;
- build community through performances, skits, songs, and chants;
- bring parents, families, and members of the Democracy Prep community together to see what our students are learning and mastering each week; and
- build school identity and cohesiveness.

Parents are often welcome to attend Town Hall. Invitations and open dates will be provided to families.

### After-School Activities:

Democracy Prep Public Schools is committed to providing a college prep education to its students. To this end, each school may offer activities that foster team building, leadership, athletics, and fine and performing arts.

Specific activities may include:

- A Cappella • African Dance and Hip Hop • Art • Basketball • Book Club • Cheerleading • Chess • Choir
- Choreography • Community Theatre • Debate • Fencing • Film to Print • Flag Football
- Gardening Club • Independent Study • Knitting • Korean Mask Dance • Lacrosse • Latino Caucus
- Math Counts • Men's Group • Moth Storytelling • Music Composition • Programming/Robotics
- Running Club • Science Club • Soccer • Softball • Step Team • Student Activities Committee
- Student Government • T'ai Chi • Tae Kwon Do • Tennis • Theater • Track • Typing • Volleyball
- Word Wizards • World Percussion Ensemble • Zumba

Homework club and detention will always take precedence over after-school activities. A scholar may never skip or reschedule a consequence to attend an after-school event. Scholars must remain in good academic and behavioral standing in order to participate in after-school activities. Scholars who wish to remain after school to participate in an approved extracurricular activity may only do so when the faculty member responsible for the activity is present. Scholars who remain after school in this way, must remain in the specific areas of the building where the activity is held. Scholars must follow the Code of Conduct during after-school activities and may be removed and/or issued consequences for failure to do so.

Participation in Arts & Athletics

All scholars who participate in an after-school arts or athletic activity will have their academic progress monitored by their respective teacher/director frequently during the season(s) of participation and must satisfy eligibility criteria established by school leadership and Democracy Prep arts and athletics directors.

Sample Schedule

7:45-8:00am	Advisory
8:02-8:47am	Science
8:49-9:34 am	Math B
9:36-10:21am	Elective
10:23-11:08am	Social Studies
11:10-11:55am	Literature Studies
12:00-12:45pm	Lunch/Recess
12:47-1:32pm	Science
1:34-2:19pm	Math A
2:21-3:06pm	Writing
3:08-3:38pm	DEAR (Drop Everything and Read)
3:40-4:00pm	Advisory/Dismissal
4:00-4:35pm	Tutoring, Book Club, Detention (as needed)
4:35-4:45pm	Advisory/Dismissal
4:45-5:15pm	Extracurricular Activities

Academic Program

The Democracy Prep Public Schools Core Curriculum includes:

- **READING:** A robust reading program that includes both close reading of a diverse set of non-fiction texts and whole-class instruction using an on-grade-level text. Scholars also use an additional English Language Arts block to ensure they can appropriately express the ideas and themes they study in Reading.
- **MATH:** Over an hour of Math each day focused on fluency and automaticity with math facts, problem solving, logic, and critical thinking.
- **WRITING:** Scholars practice writing throughout the curriculum and benefit from a dedicated writing block each day. This course combines grammar, structural writing and creative writing to ensure scholars fully develop as writers.
- **SCIENCE:** Scholars will engage in a variety of hands-on, inquiry-based lessons that explore such topics as Earth Sciences, Life Sciences, Physical Sciences, and Technology.
- **SOCIAL STUDIES & CIVICS:** Every scholar at Democracy Prep will study Geography, Government, and History.
- **ELECTIVES:** Every DPPS scholar participates in co-curricular activities such as Music, Performing Arts, and Physical Education on a regular basis.

## Our Instructional Model

Our success as a network of schools lies partially in our clear and structured routines found in every Democracy Prep classroom. Our instructional model consists of measurable aims, direct instruction, guided practice, and independent practice. Additionally, each class has regular and frequent assessments that measure each scholar's level of mastery with the content and skills.

## Homework

Homework is an important element of our model and is essential for academic success. **We expect scholars to read every evening for at least 30 minutes.** In addition to completing daily homework assignments, scholars must have an opportunity each night to practice the skills and content learned in class. Democracy Prep staff hold scholars to high levels of accountability with regard to homework, evaluate homework based on neatness and accuracy, and check homework completion each day. **Homework is evaluated and contributes to a scholar's final evaluation/report card.**

At home, scholars must have a quiet place to complete homework and review class work. Democracy Prep staff members are available in person during regular school hours and via email and cell phone up until 9 p.m. each evening to answer homework questions.

*Democracy Prep believes that the reward for hard work is an opportunity to be challenged even more. Scholars who show they are capable of excelling in one area will be challenged to excel in other areas.*

Scholars are accountable for completing all assigned work. A scholar's ability to make up work and receive credit may be conditioned on the documentation surrounding an absence. Scholars who do not turn in homework or turn in incomplete or unacceptable homework will be required to attend Lunch Detention or Homework Club.

If a scholar is absent, his or her homework assigned on the previous school day should be dropped off at school by 3:00 p.m., or it will be marked as late. Scholars who are absent will receive make-up work on the day that they return. **This work must be completed within the next three days.** Scholars who are suspended may come to school in full uniform between 3:00 and 3:30 p.m. to collect their homework to avoid late marks. Scholars who come outside of the designated time, or without complete uniform, will not receive their work, and will receive zeros on those assignments that are not submitted on time.

## Academic Assessment

At the middle and high school level, Democracy Prep issues numeric grades that correlate to the listing below:

### Grading Scale

A+	= 97-100	B	= 83-86	C-	= 70-72
A	= 93-96	B-	= 80-82	F	= Below 70
A-	= 90-92	C+	= 77-79		
B +	= 87-89	C	= 73-76		

NOTE: Democracy Prep does not give Ds. We are aware that the lowest grade most colleges and universities will accept for entry is a C-. Because our mission is to send every DPPS student to the best colleges and universities, we align our grading practices with these standards.

## External Assessments and Standardized Tests

Democracy Prep prepares students to succeed on standardized tests required for promotion, high school graduation (State Tests, Regents), and college (SAT). As other measures of student progress, DPPS also administers the MAP examination at the regular intervals. Standardized test scores are used to help DPPS teachers develop strategies to improve the academic achievement of each student.

### Internal Assessments

Internal Assessments	Purpose
Midterm exams in each subject	To assess mastery and growth of subject specific skills and content as aligned with the state and national standards for that subject
Unit tests (may double as midterm in some cases)	
Regular quizzes and/or exit tickets	
Trimester exams in each subject	
MAP Assessment – Nationally-normed Computer-based adaptive exam in core academic subjects	
Comprehensive exams	

### Academic Support and Enrichment

Democracy Prep Public Schools is committed to seeing substantial growth and achievement in every scholar. Therefore, Democracy Prep schools provide many opportunities for academic support and enrichment. These opportunities may include:

After-School Tutoring: Targeted instruction for individual students who need extra support in any of their academic areas. Teachers may select students based on various criteria: classwork, homework, quizzes, or exit tickets.

Homework Club is an adult-supported opportunity for students who require organizational and homework support. It may also provide students with the opportunity to work on technology-based skills such as PowerPoint, word processing, and keyboarding.

Enrichment may be available to those students who are in good academic standing as determined by school leaders. At the middle-school level, enrichment may include project-based art, theater, and P.E. classes as well as *Accelerated Math*, *Khan Academy*, and language and culture clubs.

Reading Intervention/Support: Students may be selected to participate in a phonics or reading program based on their needs.

Tutoring and Required School Activities: To improve their academic performance, students may be required to attend tutoring or study sessions at any time during the day, after school or on a Saturday at the discretion of the school leader and the classroom teachers. Whenever your child is unable to attend a required school event, it is imperative that the school receive a phone call from a family member informing the school of the absence and documentation justifying the need for the absence.

Saturday Field Trips: In order to maximize instructional time during the week, scholars may take field trips on Saturdays. Field trips improve academic performance and prepare scholars for college schedules. The purpose of these trips is academic enrichment and/or exposure to colleges and universities that the scholars may attend in the future.

### Summer Academy

Summer Academy is offered to scholars for additional academic support. To improve their academic performance, some scholars may be required to attend Summer Academy in order to be considered for

promotion. Summer Academy will provide support in basic skills and may also address content area gaps. All Summer Academy classes have the goal of closing the achievement gap and have the purpose of ensuring that scholars are performing at or above the expected level.

### Special Needs & English Language Learners

Democracy Prep provides special education services and English Language Learner (ELL) services for scholars in accordance with state and federal special education laws, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and the regulations implementing those laws. The Academic Collaboration Team (ACT) Program staff:

- maintain all special education records in accordance with state and federal laws;
- schedule all annual IEP reviews;
- organize professional development for teaching staff; and
- support teachers in making appropriate curriculum and instruction modifications

Although Democracy Prep offers Special Education and ELL scholars accommodations befitting their needs, we modify promotional criteria based on a scholar's classification only in isolated circumstances.

### Promotion to the Next Grade

Democracy Prep has rigorous promotional standards. It is not automatically assumed that a scholar will pass from one grade to the next: the scholar must earn promotion by demonstrating mastery of the essential knowledge and skills in their current grade level. Scholars may not be promoted if they are performing significantly below grade-level standards. Promotion decisions will be based on a scholar's course and exam grades, attendance, homework completion record, adherence to DREAM values, and other measures including teacher observations. A scholar may be retained if he or she misses 10 days in a school year, misses a significant amount of instructional time, or if the scholar fails to complete and hand in a high volume of required assignments.

To be considered for promotion, scholars at Democracy Prep must score a minimum of 70 percent in each class AND on each comprehensive exam. Scholars must also make adequate growth as reflected by MAP testing. Criteria that also influence a scholar's prospective promotion include maintaining an attendance rate of 90% or above and consistently adhering to the DREAM values and Democracy Prep behavior standards.

Scholars who fail three or fewer combined comprehensive exams and classes may be eligible to attend Summer Academy in order to earn promotion to the next grade. If a scholar fails more than three classes and exams combined, he or she will not be promoted and, accordingly, will NOT be eligible for Summer Academy.

### Consequences for Not Meeting Promotional Criteria

Students whose final assessments and final course evaluations do not meet expectations in any class are required to attend DP Summer Academy unless it is determined that the students must repeat the grade in the following academic year.

Students whose final assessments indicate significant growth but for whom there are substantial academic skill deficiencies or content gaps may be required to attend Summer Academy at the discretion of the school leader.

Any Democracy Prep student who does not show substantial growth or mastery in three or more subjects may be subject to repeating the grade in all classes. Consistently poor behavior by Democracy Prep standards may result in a summer character education course at the discretion of the school.

## FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Democracy Prep is committed to having families contribute to the academic success of their scholars. As such, we use a variety of methods of communication. Communication may include:

- **Regular Progress Reports:** A progress report that includes academic and behavioral updates as well as a brief overview of important school events.
- **Emailing Lists:** Parents may receive email messages including electronic copies of letters, fliers, and forms as well as school and grade level announcements.
- **Automated Phone System:** Parents may receive a pre-recorded message from DPPS for the following reasons:
  - to issue school-wide reminders and updates,
  - to alert families to weather-related school closings,
  - to notify families that their scholars are late or have been assigned after-school detentions,
  - to remind families of important documents requiring signatures, or
  - to inform families of meetings for parents or scholars.

### Phone Calls

Every member of the Democracy Prep DREAM team publishes his or her cell phone number at the beginning of the year. Scholars and parents are encouraged to call teachers. If a teacher does not return a message within 24 hours, the school leader should be informed. Abuse of the phone numbers of the DREAM team will result in the imposition of appropriate consequences.

### Opportunities for Family Involvement

Democracy Prep is a partnership made up of the school leadership, teachers, scholars, and families. Although the job of making decisions about school policy belongs to the school leaders, the superintendent, and the CEO, family involvement is not only welcome but also absolutely necessary for the success of the school. The Family Leadership Council (FLC) is the family involvement organization at each Democracy Prep school. The mission of the Family Leadership Council is to promote family involvement, to advocate politically for our community, and to support the school, our scholars, and their families. The FLC organizes volunteer opportunities and creates ways to support our scholars in their achievements. The Family Impact Coordinators (FICs)—personnel who serve as the necessary link between families and the school—hold regular meetings of the Family Leadership Council; all families are welcome and encouraged to get involved. Additionally, we rely on our families, under the leadership of the FLC, to support our efforts for civic engagement through:

- registering to vote (if eligible)
- assisting with voter registration drives
- joining scholars and the DREAM Team for primary and election day activities

### Expectations for Families

Teachers may request mandatory family conferences with families of scholars who are in need of academic and behavioral support. All families are invited to schedule appointments or to stop by to connect with their scholars' teachers. As teachers and leaders are extremely busy during the school day, family members who stop by without having scheduled an appointment are not guaranteed an opportunity to speak with a DREAM Team member immediately upon their arrival.

Democracy Prep families must:

- reinforce Democracy Prep academic and behavior standards at home
- check homework nightly for completion

- help with homework
- call teachers with concerns
- read and sign all notices sent home by the school
- read and respond to family communications when necessary.
- respond promptly to disciplinary calls
- attend school-wide events
- pick up report cards and attend trimester conferences

### Procedures for Resolution of Parent/Guardian Concerns

Democracy Prep Public Schools is committed to maintaining a strong partnership and ongoing dialogue between its teachers, staff, scholars, and families. If you have a concern about a school policy, academic grade, discipline decision, or anything else, we welcome your input and encourage you to contact the appropriate staff member at the school. We are committed to addressing the concerns of our families and seeking a resolution that first and foremost benefits the academic development of your child toward success in the college of his or her choice.

*Informal Complaint Process.* If a parent or guardian has a concern or disagreement about a classroom event, curricular or disciplinary decision, or other academic issue, he or she should first contact the teacher to attempt to resolve the disagreement through *informal* discussion. If the concern is not adequately resolved, the parent or guardian should request a further meeting. The teacher will contact the school leader and schedule the follow-up conversation. All Democracy Prep staff members are expected to respond to a parent/guardian complaint. Every effort will be made to respond to a parent/guardian complaint as quickly as possible.

*Formal Complaint Process.* If the informal complaint process fails to produce a satisfactory resolution, a parent or guardian may initiate a *formal* complaint by submitting a letter in writing to the school leader outlining, in detail, the events, policies, or decisions at issue. The school leader will promptly conduct a thorough investigation into the matter and issue a response in writing detailing his or her findings and recommendations. If the parent or guardian is still not satisfied, he or she may appeal the school leader's determination to the superintendent of Democracy Prep Public Schools.

*Board of Trustees.* If the matter still remains unresolved, the parent or guardian may write to the Board of Trustees to request a review. A designated Board committee will schedule a meeting, at which time the parent will have an opportunity to address his or her concerns. The committee will issue a report on its findings to the Board prior to the next regular meeting, and the Board may take action as appropriate based on the committee's recommendations. A parent wishing to attend a Board meeting will be permitted to speak but will be asked to limit his or her comments to 3 minutes. If additional time is necessary for public participation and comments, an extra 30 minutes will be allotted at the end of the Board meeting. A parent or guardian may address the Board at any meeting without going through the informal and formal complaint processes outlined above, but the Board encourages these constructive conversations with the relevant parties prior to direct outreach to the Board. The Board has the power and duty to take action as appropriate.

*Authorizer.* If, after presentation of the complaint to the Board of Trustees, the parent or guardian believes that the Board has not adequately addressed the complaint, the parent or guardian may present the complaint to the school's authorizer, which may investigate and respond. The authorizer has the power and duty to take remedial action as appropriate.



Contact Information for Authorizers:

For Democracy Prep Charter, Democracy Prep Harlem, and Harlem Prep Charter School:

SUNY CSI

Grievance Desk

Charter Schools Institute

41 State St., Suite 700

Albany, NY 12207

[charters@suny.edu](mailto:charters@suny.edu)

518.433.8277 (ext. 2045)

For Democracy Prep Endurance Charter School

New York State Education Department

Charter School Unit

Room 465, EBA

Albany, New York 12234

518.474.3852



## DREAM PRIVILEGES

Although everyone at Democracy Prep works hard for the sake of going to college and changing the world, we also believe that hard work should pay off in opportunities to have fun and enjoy life! Scholars who exhibit the DREAM values every day and who have earned DREAM dollars will have the opportunity to redeem those dollars through amazing celebrations, trips, college visits, and other fun experiences.

### In-school privileges may include:

- Dress down days
- Lunch privileges
- Classroom jobs
- Advisory/grade level parties

### Extended opportunities may include:

- DREAM Dollar Auction Event
- End-of-trimester and end-of-the-year trips, which begin small and become increasingly more distant, complex, and exciting. Trips have included:
  - Local museum visits
  - Sporting activities, including ice skating and bowling
  - Picnics at Universities
  - New York City college tour
  - Washington D.C. with an overnight stay in a college dorm
  - Boston with whale watching
  - Montreal and Ottawa, Canada with white water rafting
  - Spirit Cruise

These opportunities work as positive motivators for our scholars to continue working hard, both on their academics and their behavior. Scholars who regularly live the DREAM values will earn these great opportunities. More importantly, scholars who regularly show DREAM values are learning and practicing the behaviors that will lead to college and life success.



## CODE OF CONDUCT

Democracy Prep is committed to providing a safe and orderly school culture in which scholars can improve their academic achievement. Scholars whose conduct does not meet the school community's clearly defined standards for reasonable and acceptable behavior will not be permitted to disrupt the education of others. Therefore, every misbehavior will result in an appropriate consequence. This is the basis of our scholar Code of Conduct. Consequences may vary based on the age and grade level of the scholar, the severity of the incident and the frequency with which the incident takes place.

### DEMOCRACY PREP CODE OF CONDUCT:

#### 1. Disrupting the School Environment

- 1.1 Arriving late to school or class:** Scholar tardiness disrupts class, inconveniences others, and often results in academic difficulties. Scholars may not be late to school or class.
- 1.2 Choosing NOT to attend required school, school functions or school support:** Scholars are required to attend all academic and enrichment classes, assigned consequences, and assigned support opportunities. Scholars are not permitted to leave the building without permission.
- 1.3 Misbehaving on the way to or from school:** Our scholars, while in uniform, are our ambassadors to the community and should embody the DREAM values of Democracy Prep. Disciplinary action may result from choices made outside of the school building. Scholars may not misbehave while traveling to or from school or while engaged in school-sponsored activities, such as field trips or after-school activities. Misbehavior includes, but is not limited to, using inappropriate language, making excessive noise, touching other scholars, being disrespectful to others, and instigating, encouraging, recording, or promoting others to fight and/or engage in criminal or otherwise inappropriate behavior. Scholars who misbehave on the way to or from school may have to be escorted by a parent or guardian, in addition to other consequences.
- 1.4 Access to the Building:** Scholars are not permitted to block access to any room or part of the school building. Scholars may not leave the building through any exits except those officially marked.
- 1.5 Leaving Campus Building without Permission:** Once scholars arrive on campus, they may not leave campus without permission.
- 1.6 Violating the Dress Code:** Scholars will not be permitted to attend class when not in proper uniform. Only designated clothing items are allowed to be worn in school and must be worn appropriately (according to the school's Dress Code). Parents may be required to pick up children who are not properly dressed for school, bring the missing Dress Code item to the school, or authorize the scholar to return home to retrieve the necessary items.
- 1.7 Gum, Food, and Beverages:** Scholars may not chew or carry gum at any time at Democracy Prep. Scholars may not eat or drink at unauthorized times or places at Democracy Prep.
- 1.8 Hallway Behavior:** Scholars may not disrupt the instructional environment while in the hallway.
- 1.9 Disrupting Class and Preventing Teaching:** Democracy Prep can fulfill its mission only if classrooms are safe and teaching is uninterrupted. Scholars may not disrupt class.
- 1.10 Arriving to Class Unprepared:** When class begins, scholars must be prepared and have all necessary materials (books, pencils, portfolio, paper etc.).
- 1.11 Entering or Leaving Classrooms Without Permission:** Scholars may not enter a classroom without permission, nor may they leave a classroom without having obtained a pass. Scholars must report to locations as directed by staff, and remain in a designated location.
- 1.12 Failing to Complete Homework:** Completing homework is essential to the success of individual scholars and the classroom community. Scholars are expected to complete all of their homework assignments on time.
- 1.13 Cheating, Plagiarism, and Copying Others' Work:** Cheating or copying the work of others (or allowing other scholars to copy work) is unacceptable. This includes any and all talking during exams irrespective of whether the chatter is in reference to the exam. In addition to other disciplinary

consequences, both the scholar who copied and the scholar who allowed the copying will receive zeros on the assignment. This offense may result in in-school suspension, long-term suspension or expulsion.

**1.14 Failing to Submit a Required Signature:** Scholars are required to secure the signature of a parent/guardian on homework, class assignments and forms when requested by any school staff member.

**1.15 Forgery:** Scholars may not forge a signature.

**1.16 Using Objects as Projectiles:** Scholars may not throw or kick objects inappropriately in school.

**1.17 Lying to a Staff Member:** Honesty is an essential element of personal character and is necessary for the school to support the DREAM values. Scholars are not permitted to lie or attempt to conceal the truth.

**1.18 Being Disrespectful to a Staff Member:** A school cannot function properly if scholars are permitted to be disrespectful towards adults. For that reason, scholars may not be disrespectful towards a staff member or any other adult associated with the school. Scholars may not purposely disobey or ignore a staff member's directions.

**1.19 Ignoring or Refusing to Follow a Staff Member's Directions:** Scholars are expected to follow the directions of any staff member the first time and respond in a respectful manner. Ignoring, delaying, or refusing to respond to a staff member's directive is considered defiant and disrespectful.

**1.20 Being Disrespectful to a Scholar:** If scholars do not feel physically and emotionally safe in school, teaching and learning are made more difficult. Therefore, scholars may not be disrespectful toward other scholars.

**1.21 Possession of Inappropriate Property:** Scholars cannot possess any electronic music or game devices in school. Scholars may not possess any printed images, text, or lyrics that are vulgar, profane, or sexually explicit, or any other items inappropriate for school.

**1.22 Gambling:** Scholars may not bet money or wager anything on the outcome of a game, contest, or other event.

**1.23 Filming and Distribution of Media Depicting Code of Conduct Violations:** Scholars may not take, share, or post photographs, pictures, or videos depicting a violation of this Code of Conduct.

**1.24 Violation of the Computer/Email/Internet Acceptable Use Policy:** Scholars may not violate the terms of the Acceptable Use Policy set forth in this Handbook.

## 2. Physical or Verbal Harm, Inappropriate Touching, and/or Threats

**2.1 Causing Bodily Harm:** Scholars may not cause physical injury to a scholar, school employee, or another person. Scholars are not permitted to harm or attempt to harm a scholar, school employee, or another person with a weapon or dangerous object.

**2.2 Causing or Intending to Cause Physical Injury:** Scholars may not cause or attempt to cause physical injury or behave in such a way that could reasonably cause physical injury to any scholar, school employee, or other person.

**2.3 Fighting, Unwanted Physical Contact, or Verbal Altercation:** Scholars may not fight with other scholars from Democracy Prep or persons not enrolled at the school. Harassing, pushing, touching, or any form of unwanted physical contact is not tolerated regardless of the cause of the disturbance. Scholars may not engage in verbal altercations, including but not limited to insults, yelling, or words that are reasonably likely to incite a verbal or physical confrontation.

**2.4 Play-fighting and Threatening:** Play-fighting and/or the use of threats harm the safety of the community. Scholars may not play-fight and/or threaten others.

**2.5 Setting off False Alarms or Making a Threat:** Scholars may not intentionally set off a false alarm or make a destructive threat.

**2.6 Engaging in Sexual Activity or Inappropriate Touching:** A scholar may not engage in sexual activity of any kind or touch himself/herself or others inappropriately.

## 3. Possession or Use of Firearms, Weapons, and/or Dangerous Objects

**3.1 Possession or Use of a Firearm:** Scholars may not possess or use a firearm.

- 3.2 Possession or Use of a Mock Firearm:** Scholars may not possess or use mock firearms
- 3.3 Using or Possessing a Weapon or Dangerous Object:** Scholars are not allowed to bring a weapon of any sort to school, use any object in a dangerous or threatening manner, or have a weapon on him/her or his/her property.
- 3.4 Arson:** Scholars may not set a fire or possess any form of fire-making material, including lighters, matches etc.

4. Possession, Use or Distribution of Controlled Substances, Alcohol, or Tobacco

- 4.1 Using or Possessing Drugs or Alcohol:** Scholars may not use or possess any non-prescribed controlled substance, narcotic drug, hallucinogenic drug, amphetamine, barbiturate, marijuana, alcoholic beverage, or intoxicant of any kind. Prescribed and over-the-counter drugs must be delivered to the nurse or trained school employee by a parent or responsible person with a doctor-signed Authorization to Dispense Medication Form. Scholars may not be in possession of prescribed or over-the-counter drugs.
- 4.2 Selling, Possessing, or Transferring Drugs or Alcohol:** Scholars may not sell, distribute, or possess with intent to sell or distribute prescribed or non-prescribed controlled substances.
- 4.3 Selling, Possessing, or Transferring Tobacco Products:** Scholars may not sell, distribute, or possess with intent to sell or distribute cigarettes, chewing tobacco, or other tobacco products.
- 4.4 Selling or Possessing Mock Controlled Substances, Alcohol or Tobacco:** Scholars may not sell, distribute or possess mock controlled substances, alcohol or tobacco.

5. Harassment and Violation of Civil Rights

- 5.1 Violating the Civil Rights of Others:** Scholars may not violate the others' civil rights—the fundamental rights of freedom and equality that belong to everyone.
- 5.2 Harassment:** Scholars may not make unwanted sexual advances towards or commit sexual harassment of any member of the school community. Harassment or intimidation of any members of the school community on the basis of their racial or ethnic background, gender, age, sexual orientation, or disability is not permitted.
- 5.3 Abusive or Profane Language or Treatment:** Scholars may not use abusive, threatening, vulgar, coarse, or degrading language (including racial epithets or sexist or homophobic remarks) in speech or in writing.
- 5.4 Bullying and Intimidation:** Scholars may not physically, verbally (through speech or writing), or use technology and/or social media in order to intimidate or bully any member of the school community.

6. Theft or Vandalism

- 6.1 Theft, Loss or Destruction of Personal or School Property:** Scholars may not steal, lose, or damage property belonging to someone else or to the school.
- 6.2 Mistreatment or Inappropriate Use of School Technology or School Property:** Scholars must treat computers, printers, and other technology with care. Democracy Prep does not tolerate attempts to access the school's files or other inappropriate uses of technology or the Internet. Scholars do not have the right to use school computers to access chat rooms or emails or to access web sites or files that contain profanity, sexually explicit language or pictures, excessively violent themes, and/or other material inappropriate for minors. Scholars are prohibited from using school telephones. In the event of an emergency, scholars may be allowed to use the school telephones, but only at the discretion of school staff members. Scholars must not mistreat other school property including but not limited to text and reading books. Writing or marking on any desks or school property is strictly prohibited.

7. Gang-Related Activity: Scholars may not engage in any gang-related activity, which shall be defined as any act(s) that promotes gangs or gang-related activities including, but not limited to, (1) communicating either verbally or non-verbally (hand signs, gestures, handshakes, drawings, etc.), to convey membership or affiliation with a gang; (2) defacing school or personal property with gang-related graffiti, symbols or

slogans; (3) requiring payment of protection, insurance, or otherwise intimidating or threatening any person related to gang-related activity; and (4) soliciting others for gang membership

8. Failure to Comply with School-Imposed Consequences: Scholars must comply with school-imposed consequences. In order for the school to maintain high expectations and a safe and respectful school environment — two vital parts of our school culture — scholars must comply with all consequences assigned including any suspension or disciplinary action.

9. Repeated Violations of the Code of Conduct: As outlined below, repeated violations may result in consequences of greater severity or length at the discretion of the school leader. Repeated inability to adhere to the school’s rules may result in the scholar’s removal from the Democracy Prep community.

## THE DREAM DOLLAR SYSTEM

Democracy Prep establishes and maintains a scholar and teacher community that is efficient and orderly, warm and productive. The DREAM Dollar system is one way that our staff, families, and scholars can measure their success in internalizing the school’s DREAM values. The DREAM Dollar system is a merit-based system in which scholars are “paid” DREAM Dollars each day they arrive to school on-time, in uniform, in possession of the necessary materials, and prepared to demonstrate DREAM values. Scholars who go above and beyond the school’s expectations may also earn additional positive DREAM Dollars. When scholars fall short of the expectations established through the DREAM Dollar system (the Code of Conduct), they lose a certain amount of DREAM Dollars as a consequence.

The DREAM Dollar system is adapted appropriately based on the emotional and intellectual development of the child. The expectation is that our scholars are participating appropriately in our community and contributing to our efficient, orderly, warm, and productive environment. The concept of DREAM Dollars as a measure of behavioral success adapts to the grade-level abilities and needs of our scholars. For example, as scholars develop the ability to manage their own engagement in a classroom setting, scholars are held accountable for remaining engaged in a lesson through eye contact and asking and answering questions. As scholars grow older, expectations for engagement may change. What remains constant is our expectation that scholars show the DREAM values; what changes is the specific indicator of that value. Below is a list of specific behaviors that may be expected from Democracy Prep scholars, depending on their grade level.

DREAM Value	Expectations
<b>Discipline</b>	Follow specific directions the first time given.
	Remain silent and focused during instructional and independent work time.
	Adhere to a consistent study schedule at home.
<b>Respect</b>	Be respectful with your body language and attitude.
	Be verbally polite to those around you even when you are given a direction you do not like.
<b>Enthusiasm</b>	Use STAR posture. (Sit straight up and tucked in behind your desk, Track the speaker, Ask and answer questions, and Raise your hand throughout the school day)
	Move quickly from place to place and from task to task.
<b>Accountability</b>	Apologize and take responsibility for mistakes that you might make.
	Come prepared and organized to school each day.
<b>Maturity</b>	When no one is looking still behave as if all of your teachers and family were in the room watching and listening to you.
	Be a responsible role model and leader for yourself and your classmates.

## PROCEDURES FOR DISCIPLINARY VIOLATIONS

At Democracy Prep Public Schools, we are committed to serving all scholars, especially those who need us the most, while simultaneously protecting the strong culture that makes our academic gains possible. All scholars are taught the DREAM values and are held accountable to them throughout the year. As stated above in the general Code of Conduct, misbehaviors at Democracy Prep result in consequences. If negative behaviors persist, or if scholars have not adequately fulfilled the given consequence, more serious consequences may be put in place. Consequences vary based on the grade level of the scholar, the severity of the action, and the frequency of the incident. Such consequences may include

- Scholar reflection on community violation (may be written, private or public);
- Removal of school privileges (including school trips, in-school privileges, etc.);
- Lunch or after-school detention;
- School/community service;
- In-school suspension;
- Short-term out-of-school suspension;
- Long-term out-of-school suspension; and
- Removal from the school community.

To preserve valuable instructional time, Democracy Prep strives to keep its scholars in school and in classrooms. However, allowing the same scholars to commit the same infractions in the same situations can have a deleterious effect on the culture of our schools. Therefore, when a scholar's actions are detracting from the ability of other scholars to learn in a safe, value-added environment, it may be necessary to remove the offending scholar from the classroom and eventually from the school. If a scholar's consequence involves being sent home or suspended for any period of time, a parent or guardian may be asked to meet with an administrator regarding the scholar's behavior prior to his or her return to school. Please note that suspended scholars who are sent to school notwithstanding the consequences outlined in their suspension letters will receive escalating consequences for violating Section 8 of the Code of Conduct (Failure to Comply with School-Imposed Consequences).

### Tiered Behavior Responses

While Democracy Prep strives to implement our behavior system consistently, we also recognize that some scholars' needs may be best met through customized behavior plans. We also seek to tailor consequences to the severity and frequency of the unacceptable behavior and the scholar's individual circumstances. Both the severity of consequences and the scope and depth of structured, proactive support provided by the DREAM Team to troubled scholars will increase commensurate with the severity and frequency of the violations. As the consequences become more severe, we will notify and seek the involvement of families to help design and implement response plans. Democracy Prep's response to behaviors will escalate as negative behaviors escalate, with the most serious infractions of the Code of Conduct receiving the most serious consequences. Violence directed to other scholars or staff will lead to the most serious consequences.

All scholars facing out of school suspension are entitled to due process. For a short-term out of school suspension (i.e., a suspension for less than ten days), the scholar will, prior to the suspension, be told by the principal or school leader the basis for the suspension, the evidence supporting the consequence, and will be able to give his or her side of the story. For a suspension longer than ten days, a scholar will have the opportunity to present evidence to the school leader in a more formal proceeding, is entitled to be represented by counsel, will be provided the evidence supporting the suspension, and will be given the opportunity to confront the evidence against the scholar and to present evidence as well. The scholar can be removed from the school immediately if a danger to others and the school environment. In appropriate circumstances the scholar may also be referred to law enforcement authorities.

The most serious consequence, if all else fails and in extraordinary circumstances, will be expulsion of the scholar from the Democracy Prep school. A scholar facing expulsion and his or her parents or guardians will be afforded all due process protections required under applicable laws and regulations including a full and fair hearing.

### Being Proactive

It is the school's job to connect the dots for scholars and families on exactly why we work so hard and why we hold high expectations for every scholar. This messaging must come through:

- New scholar enrollment;
- Family Orientations;
- Prep Academy;
- Coffee and Conversations;
- Official school notifications; and
- Ongoing informal communication and meetings with staff, scholars, and families.

### Alternative Instruction

DPPS provides scholars with alternative instruction if they are suspended or expelled (until enrolled in another school, or until the end of the school year, whichever comes first). During the period of their removal or suspension, scholars must be provided with alternative instruction, which includes, but is not limited to, classwork and homework assignments. Additionally, scholars will be permitted to take any citywide or state examinations that are administered during the suspension period for which no make up examination is permitted by the testing authority, as well as to make up school examinations that may affect their academic records. Arrangements will be made between the school and each individual family for the delivery of services, pick up/delivery of work, and the making-up of any missed assignments and classroom instructional support. All alternative instructional materials will permit the scholar to make adequate academic progress and must be completed satisfactorily for the scholar to return to school. Nonetheless, alternative instruction cannot replicate all the benefits of full classroom instruction and participation by the scholar.

Alternative instruction will provide the scholar with an opportunity to continue to earn academic credit and must be appropriate to the individual needs of the scholar. All IDEA mandates must be followed for scholars with disabilities. In determining the alternative instruction for a scholar with a disability and for a scholar who has a 504 Accommodation Plan, consideration will be given to the scholar's IEP and behavioral intervention plan, or 504 Accommodation Plan. In addition, if an IEP scholar has already been suspended for more than an aggregate of (10) school days during the school year due to disciplinary actions that create a pattern of removals as determined by Democracy Prep, the scholar must either be reinstated or assigned to an appropriate setting until a Manifestation Determination Review (MDR) takes place.

### Due Process Protections

Democracy Prep holds all scholars to high expectations. Scholars with an identified disability as documented by an IEP or 504 Plan are provided with the accommodations necessary to access the curriculum. This includes accommodations that address social, emotional, and behavior concerns.

Scholars with disabilities have the same rights and responsibilities as other scholars, and are afforded due process protections under the provisions of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and its implementing regulations. A scholar with a disability may be entitled to disciplinary measures that align with his/her needs as outlined in an IEP, 504 plan, and/or determinations from an MDR. Scholars for whom an IEP does not include specific disciplinary guidelines may be disciplined in accordance with the standard school policy. Re-entry meetings occur when a scholar is removed from the environment for a severe or repetitious unproductive behavior. When a parent's presence is mandated, a scholar may not fully integrate



back into the community until a meeting occurs. Failure to meet this request will fall under the vein of failure to comply with school-imposed consequences and may lead to extended disciplinary action.

When a scholar with an IEP has been removed from school for either 10 consecutive days or for more than 10 cumulative school days in a school year based on conduct that forms a pattern of removal and results in a change in placement as determined by the school, he or she is entitled to a prompt review of the causal relationship between his or her disability and the behavior that precipitated the school's disciplinary action. The MDR is designed to determine whether (1) the conduct in question was caused by or had a direct and substantial relationship to the scholar's disability; or (2) the conduct in question was the direct result of the school's failure to implement the IEP. The manifestation team will consist of school officials, the scholar's parent or guardian, and relevant members of the multidisciplinary team. Parents or guardians will receive written notification prior to any manifestation team meeting. This notification will inform the parent or guardian of (1) the purpose of the meeting, (2) the names of the individuals expected to attend, and (3) his or her right to have relevant members of the multidisciplinary team participate at the parent or guardian's request.

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

## VISITING OUR SCHOOLS

Democracy Prep always welcomes and encourages visitors, both from within and outside of our school community, to observe our scholars and DREAM Team members in action. However, in order to ensure the safety and well-being of all scholars and staff, all visitors — including parents and guardians — are required to enter through the front door and provide the security guard with proper photo identification before proceeding to the main office. Visitors may be required to have a visitor's pass once they have checked in with the security guard. Any visitor who does not report to the security guard, or is found in the building without authorization and a visitor's pass, will be asked to leave immediately, and the authorities will be called if the request is not heeded.

Democracy Prep maintains an open door policy with our parents and families, provided they are not a distraction to the learning environment. Family members who are over 18 are welcome to come and observe classes and school operation on non-testing days. Parents and family members are also welcome to request meetings with any member of the DREAM team. Meetings will be scheduled at the DREAM team member's earliest possible convenience. If requests for a meeting are not met, family members should report the concern to the school leader.

In case of an emergency, parents or guardians should contact the receptionist either by phone or in person. Under no circumstances should parents or guardians contact scholars in their classrooms, or attempt to withdraw scholars from the building without notifying and receiving permission from the school.

*Please note that while families may visit the school at any time, family visitations to their own child's classroom is generally not permitted during the first six weeks of school. This allows teachers to establish a strong classroom culture that is focused on academic learning and is distraction-free.*

#### Disruptive Visitors & Restricted Access

Democracy Prep works hard to maintain a safe and orderly environment for teachers and scholars. To that end, the school reserves the right to restrict visitors (including family members of scholars and staff) who do not display the DREAM values of the larger community while on school grounds, including during drop-off and pick-up. Examples of disruptive visitors include those who raise their voice, use profanity, threaten scholars or staff, or are physically or verbally aggressive in any way.

If a visitor's access must be restricted due to inappropriate behavior of any kind, they will receive a letter outlining the offenses that led to the restricted access and will be notified as to proper procedures for contact and communication with both staff and their scholar while on Democracy Prep property. If visitor continues to disrupt the learning environment after having received a restricted access letter, the school will pursue further measures including notification of law enforcement agencies.

## MISCELLANEOUS POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

### Nondiscrimination

Democracy Prep does not discriminate in admission to, access to, treatment in, or employment in its services, programs and activities, on the basis of race, color, or national origin, in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI); on the basis of sex, in accordance with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972; on the basis of disability, in accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504) and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA); or on the basis of age, in accordance with the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1974 (ADEA). In addition, no person shall be discriminated against in admission to Democracy Prep on the basis of race, color, creed, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, mental or physical disability, age, ancestry, athletic performance, special need, proficiency in the English language or a foreign language, or prior academic achievement. No person shall be discriminated against in obtaining the advantages, privileges or access to the courses of study offered by Democracy Prep on the basis of race, gender, color, religion, national origin, or sexual orientation. Finally, pregnant scholars are allowed to remain in regular education classes and participate in extracurricular activities with non-pregnant scholars throughout their pregnancy, and after giving birth are permitted to return to the same academic and extracurricular program as before the leave (Title IX).

### Harassment

Democracy Prep is committed to maintaining a school environment free of harassment based on race, color, religion, national origin, age, gender, sexual orientation, or disability. Harassment by administrators, certified and support personnel, scholars, vendors and other individuals at school or at school-sponsored events is unlawful and is strictly prohibited. Democracy Prep requires all employees and scholars to conduct themselves in an appropriate manner with respect to their fellow employees, scholars and all members of the school community.

### Public Documents / Freedom of Information Law (FOIL)

Democracy Prep fully complies with all the Freedom of Information Law (FOIL). Any requests for school records or information from the school must be in writing and submitted to the school leader. Within five business days of receipt of a written request, the school, depending on the requested information, will respond by:

- Making the information available at the school itself during normal business hours to the person requesting it;
- Denying the request in writing; or
- Providing a written acknowledgment of receipt of the request that supplies an approximate date for when the request will be granted or denied.

If the person requesting information is denied access to a record, s/he may, within 30 days, appeal such denial to the school leader. Upon timely receipt of such an appeal, the school, within 10 business days of the receipt of the appeal, will fully explain the reasons for further denial or provide access to the record(s) sought. The school will also forward a copy of the appeal, as well as its ultimate determination, to the Committee on Open Government. If further denied, the person requesting information may further appeal through an Article 78 proceeding.

The school may deny access to requested records if:

- Such records are specifically exempted from disclosure by state or federal statute;
- Such access would constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy;
- Such records, if disclosed, would impair present or imminent contract awards or collective bargaining negotiations;

- Such records are trade secrets and which, if disclosed, would cause substantial injury to the competitive position of a commercial enterprise;
- Such records are compiled for law enforcement purposes and which, if disclosed, would meet the conditions set forth in Public Officers Law §87(2)(e);
- Such records, if disclosed, would endanger the life or safety of any person;
- Such records are computer access codes; and/or
- Such records are internal materials which are not statistical or factual tabulations of data, instructions to staff that affect the public, a final policy, nor external audits.

The school may charge a copying fee for each page requested to be copied. The fee can be no more than the fee allowed by state law. Types of records held by the school may include:

- Student Health Records
- Student Immunization Records
- Student Medical Records
- Safety Records
- School SAVE Plan
- Reports of Fire Department Inspections
- School Contracts
- Management Contract Records
- Outside Contract Records
- Personnel Files
- Fingerprint Clearance Records
- Certification Records

#### Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99) is a federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. The law applies to all schools that receive funding under an applicable program of the U.S. Department of Education. FERPA gives parents and guardians certain rights with respect to their children's education records. These rights transfer to the student when he or she reaches the age of 18 or attends a school beyond the high school level. Students to whom the rights have transferred are "eligible students."

In accordance with FERPA law, parents, guardians, or students over 18 years of age have the right to inspect and review the student's education records maintained by the school. Parents, guardians, or students over 18 years of age have the right to request that the school correct records that they believe to be inaccurate or misleading. If the school decides not to amend the record, the parent, guardian, or eligible student then has the right to a formal hearing. The Chief Executive Officer of Democracy Prep Public Schools or the CEO's designee will first hear the issue. If the parent, guardian, or eligible student is still not satisfied with the decision of the CEO or the CEO's designee, a hearing with the board of directors or a designated subcommittee of the board may be requested. The decision of the board of directors or its designated subcommittee is final.

The school may disclose, without consent, "directory" information such as a student's name, address, telephone number, date and place of birth, honors and awards, and dates of attendance. Any parent or guardian who does not want such directory information included should contact the school's Operations Manager.

This listing in the DPPS Middle School Handbook serves as the school's annual notification of parents and eligible students of their rights under FERPA.

Generally, the school must have written permission from the parent, guardian, or eligible student in order to release any information from a student's education record. However, the school may disclose those records, without consent, to the following parties or under the following conditions (34 CFR § 99.31):

- School officials with legitimate educational interest;
- Other schools to which a student is transferring;
- Specified officials for audit or evaluation purposes;
- Appropriate parties in connection with financial aid to a student;
- Organizations conducting certain studies for or on behalf of the school;
- Accrediting organizations;
- To comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena;
- Appropriate officials in cases of health and safety emergencies; and
- State and local authorities, within a juvenile justice system, pursuant to specific State law.

### Board Meetings

Pursuant to the Open Meetings laws, all meetings of the school's Board of Trustees are open to the public. A schedule of all meetings, including date, time and location will be posted in a prominent space at the school and on the school's website.

### Dignity for All Students Act (DASA)

Democracy Prep is committed to maintaining a school environment free of harassment, bullying, taunting, intimidation, and discrimination. Accordingly, Democracy Prep provides education to scholars, training to employees, and reporting to the New York State Education Department in accordance with the requirements set forth in New York State's Dignity for All Students Act (DASA). Democracy Prep prohibits retaliation against any individual who, in good faith, reports or assists in the investigation of harassment, bullying, and/or discrimination. The school social worker serves as the school's mandated DASA Coordinator. Contact information is available at [democracyprep.org](http://democracyprep.org).

### Transfers Within Democracy Prep

In extreme circumstances, scholars may be eligible to transfer to another Democracy Prep school. Transfer requests must be made in writing to the school leader and will be reviewed by the DPSS Superintendent.

### Human Services

Below are several emergency telephone numbers that may be useful to parents/guardians and students:

#### New York Numbers

Child Abuse Care Line	1-800-872-2288
Domestic Violence Hotline	1-800-621-HOPE
Drug Dependence Hotline	311 or 1-800-LIFENET
Mental Health Hotline	311 or 1-800-LIFENET
Police/Fire Emergency	911
NYC Poison Control	1-800-222-1222
Rape Crisis Hotline	1-800-621-HOPE
Runaway Hotline	1-888-83R-OOTS
Suicide Prevention	1-800-273-TALK

## APPENDIX A: UNIFORM

The Democracy Prep uniform always includes required shirt, pants, belt, socks, and shoes. Shoes, belts, and socks must be solid black. Glasses must be worn for scholars who need glasses. Jewelry/Facial jewelry is limited to simple earrings. Necklaces are— if not distracting – are permitted and must be worn underneath the shirt. Nails must be natural, but can be painted with nail polish—no acrylic nails permitted.

### **The Democracy Prep Middle School Uniform**

1. Light blue button-down oxford shirt with DPPS logo
  - a) Shirt neatly tucked into pants.
2. Gray slacks with belt loops
  - a) Slacks may not have pockets anywhere on the leg (no carpenter or cargo pants).
  - b) Slacks may not have any visible logos.
  - c) Slacks may not be made of jean or corduroy material or have metal studs.
  - d) Slacks may not be too loose or too tight.
  - e) Slacks must be worn at or above the hip line.
3. All black belt — no studs, designs, or extra notches.
4. Solid navy blue, black, or white socks.
5. Solid black shoes — no logos or markings of any other color are permitted.
6. Official DPPS sweater during cold months. DPPS oxford must be worn under sweater. Solid navy blue, black, or white undershirts are allowed underneath the DPPS oxford.
7. All hair must be professional. Hair color should be a natural brown, black, red or blonde.
8. No facial jewelry, with the exception of no more than one pair of small earrings (not larger than a quarter) one necklace (worn inside the uniform), and one watch.
  9. In sixth and seventh grade, natural nails may be polished in in non-distracting colors, unless otherwise permitted by the school leader. Permission to wear artificial nails is at the discretion of the school leader.
10. Scholars may not change out of their uniform after school or at any time while still in the school building without permission from a DREAM Team member.

The Democracy Prep uniform NEVER includes tattoos, fake tattoos, any sort of visible writing on the skin, fanny packs, facial piercings, colored hair, hats, kerchiefs, bandanas, hairnets, other head coverings which do not have a religious purpose, or outer garments such as hoodies or sweatshirts not earned as DP swag.

The DPPS gym uniform consists of:

1. Navy gym shirts with DPPS logo on front.
2. Gray gym sweatpants or shorts with DPPS logo (no athletic sleeves, kneepads, or leggings).
3. Solid navy blue, black, or white socks.
4. Solid black sneakers — no logos or markings of any other color are permitted.

Scholars may wear their gym uniform on days permitted by the school principal.

## COMMITMENT TO EXCELLENCE

I fully understand the expectations, standards, and policies set forth in this Handbook and agree to demonstrate my commitment to my education by adhering to the DREAM values in the manner outlined above. I recognize that failure to abide by these standards and policies will result in the imposition of appropriate consequences as described throughout this Handbook. I acknowledge that I am responsible for my own behavior, and I pledge to follow directions issued by my teachers and school leaders. Democracy Prep Public Schools are schools of choice. I understand that my parents or guardians are free to remove me at any time.

Scholar: \_\_\_\_\_ Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Parent/Guardian \_\_\_\_\_ Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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