ASCEND

LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

Empowering Students for the 21st Century

2026-27 ALA Student-Parent Handbook

283 Harvey Faulk Road

Sanford, NC 27332

www.ascendleadershipacademy.org

ALA does not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, height, weight, physical or mental ability, genetic information, political affiliation, veteran status, military obligations, or marital status.

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Welcome to Ascend Leadership Academy

"Empowering Students for the 21st Century"

ALA Community,

We are excited about the possibilities the 2026–2027 school year holds and look forward to reaching full capacity with approximately 810 in-person and remote students. It remains our privilege to offer a tuition-free, public charter school of choice for families in Lee County, Harnett County, and the surrounding areas. We are honored to serve this community and do not take that responsibility lightly.

At ALA, we are committed to developing student *problem solvers* who use their unique talents to positively impact their local community. We believe every student is a leader, and it is our duty to nurture those leadership qualities by providing meaningful opportunities to lead and grow. Our students are true stakeholders in their education, and we expect them to be active participants in the learning process.

As we prepare to graduate the **Class of 2027**, I want to take a moment to reaffirm our vision for ALA graduates. Our goal is for all students to be:

- **College and Career Ready**
- **Skilled in Digital Media**
- **Leaders and changemakers in their communities**

This year, we will continue to deepen our Project-Based Learning model, host dynamic two Exhibition Nights, and provide engaging, real-world learning experiences. A key part of this initiative includes our *Late-Start Wednesdays*, which allow our staff to collaborate weekly and grow as professionals. These intentional planning sessions empower educators to create innovative projects and instructional strategies that promote lasting understanding.

I also encourage all families to thoroughly review our updated **2026–2027 Student & Parent Handbook**, including the revised **Code of Conduct**. As we enter our ninth year of operation, we remain focused on refining our systems and practices to better serve our students and community.

Let's make this our best year yet! Thank you for your continued partnership and support as we work together to empower students for success in the 21st century.

Warm regards,

Justin Smith

Justin Smith
Managing Director

Mission/Vision/Core Values

Mission

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

Vision

*ALA aims to provide a **community based** public charter school to the residents of Lee and Harnett Counties where financial systems and operation programs are **efficient** and ALL stakeholders are **empowered**. Student academic growth and proficiency exceeds the local district by 10%, with the use of innovative instructional practices including Project Based Leadership.*

Core Values

Respect: Our teachers, students, staff, and families show respect for one another.
Accountability: We hold students, teachers, and staff accountable for their responsibilities and their actions. Our classrooms and lessons are held accountable to state standards.
Integrity: We value and expect honesty and adherence to principle.
Service: We seek after and organize opportunities for service, both in and out of school.
Excellence: We hold ourselves to high standards and seek constant improvement.

Governance & Board of Directors

ALA is a non-profit organization. As a non-profit, ALA is governed by the Board of Directors. The Board of Directors currently has 9 members. The Board ensures that the school is achieving its mission, creates and follows board policies, oversees the strategic plan for the school, and approves and tracks the annual budget. The board is also responsible for the hiring and termination of employees at the recommendation of the Managing Director. The board usually meets on the fourth Wednesday of each month at 6:30 PM with the specific meeting dates available on ALA's website. All board meetings are open to the public. Citizens may address the Board during the period set aside for this purpose during its regular action meeting. The Board Chairperson will grant 1- to 3-minutes to speak per person, depending on the number of citizens wishing to address the Board.

Ascend Leadership Academy Board of Directors
Kipp Thompson, Board Chairperson
Nathan Weidner, Vice Chairperson
Leslie Paynter, Treasurer
Jason Smith, Secretary
Paul Torrez, At Large Board Member

Sharon Mason, At Large Board Member
Rex Scott, At Large Board Member

School Administration Responsibilities

Administrative and Support Staff Job Responsibilities 26-27

Managing Director Justin Smith	**HS Principal** Robert Sims	**Middle Grades Principal** Miryah Walters	**HS Assistant Principal** Katie Ross
Main Point of Contact for … Student Discipline: Level 3 & 4 and Disciplinary Hearings Department: CTE & AdminTeam School Business, Operating Budget and Fiscal Management ALA Board Policy and Procedures Board of Directors Engagement School Grants Marketing and Student Enrollment School Improvement and Strategic Plan Teacher Recruitment and Retention Manage and Evaluate the Administrative Team	**Main Point of Contact for …** Student Discipline: 9th-12th Department: Math Day to Day Operations 9-12 Employee Grievances 9-12 Student Accountability and Data Analysis 9-12 Substitute/PTO Management 9-12 Teacher Evaluations Code of Conduct and Discipline Program Parent Grievances 9-12 LEA for IEP Meetings	**Main Point of Contact for …** Student Discipline: 5th-8th Department: Exceptional Children Day to Day Operations 5-8 Employee Grievances 5-8 Student Accountability and Data Analysis 5-8 Substitute/PTO Management 5-8 Teacher Evaluations Carline Arrival and Dismissal Procedures Parent Grievances 5-8 LEA for IEP Meetings	**Main Point of Contact for …** Student Discipline: 9th-12th Department: Social Studies HS Course Registration and Scheduling Day to Day Operations Parent Grievances 9-12 HS Teacher Duty Schedules Advanced Placement Courses Coordinator NCVPS Courses LEA for IEP Meetings
Middle Grades Dean/Testing Molly Poston	**Dean of Student Success** Kasey Graf	**Curriculum Facilitator** Michelle Bailey	**Director of Operations** Damien Perez
Main Point of Contact for … Student Discipline: 5th-8th Department: Science EOG/EOC Testing NC Check-Ins PreACT, ACT, WIDA, ASVAB Teacher Duty Schedule 5-8 Parent Grievances Day to Day Operations	**Main Point of Contact for …** Department: ELA/English 504 Coordinator MTSS Data Driven PLCs Teacher Evaluation i-Ready Assessments and Data	**Main Point of Contact for …** Department: Electives Late Start Wednesdays and Teacher Professional Development Instructional Coaching and Support RAISE Leadership Program PBL Exhibition Days ALA Beginning Teacher Program Instructional Materials and Resources	**Main Point of Contact for …** Military Families/Purple Star Keys/Facility Access Vendor Contact/Management ALA Support Staff Management Building Rental & Lease Facility/Campus Maintenance & Mgmt Equipment/Supplies Inventory Furniture and Instructional Equipment School Transportation and Parking Crisis and Emergency Management

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Administrative and Support Staff Job Responsibilities 26-27

Director of Community Engagement and Special Projects Ashley Thompson	**Technology Director** Tamara Lamb	**Transportation Director and Facilities Manager** Bruce Parsons	**CSP Project Manager** Sherrie Brown
Main Point of Contact for … ALA Annual Fund Aviator Nation Parent Organizations and Relations Community Events and Programs Enrollment Tours Social Media Parent Education Programs	**Main Point of Contact for …** Liaison to Emerge Consulting Firm 1:1 Student Chromebook Program Technology (Hardware/Software) Management Canvas, Infinite Campus, Talking Points and other Teacher Software Remote Academy Technical Support School Library Media Coordinator Instructional Technology Professional Development Papercut/Printing	**Main Point of Contact for …** Vehicle Maintenance Bus Driver Schedule Bus Routes/Stops Building Maintenance and Groundskeeping Afterhours Point of Contact	**Main Point of Contact for …** Invoices/Accounts Payable Employee Onboarding Payroll/Benefits/Human Resources Cash/Deposits and Banking Receive/distribute/send postal mail Edutrak Student payments PEX Card Storage Program Background Checks
Data Manager Holly Cord	**Administrative Assistant** Madeline Guerra	**Administrative Assistant** Aliyah O'Quinn	**Subject Department Heads**
Main Point of Contact for … Infinite Campus/Student Information Registrar/ Student Registration SchoolMint/School Lottery Federal Impact Aid	**Main Point of Contact for …** Campus Parking School Lunch Fundraisers Phone Communications School/Staff Calendar Infinite Campus Payments School Pictures Copy Machines Community Event and Fundraiser support	**Main Point of Contact for …** Student Health/Medication Student Attendance Lost/Found Program Before/After School Care Office Supplies / Inventory Ident-A-Kid Program	**Main Point of Contact for …** Curriculum Programming/Alignment Vertical Meeting Agendas Subject Area best practices/support Instructional Framework Chair Annual Department Initiatives Participation on Instructional Chairership Team (ILT)

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Administrative and Support Staff Job Responsibilities 26-27

School Counselor/Social Worker Brianna Taylor	**HS School Counselor** Badya Ghyll	**Middle Grades School Counselor** Kimberly McNeill	**EC Facilitator** Ashley Parson
Main Point of Contact for … Homeless Liaison/McKinney Vento Migrant Students Foster Care liaison Say Something/Gaggle First Responder Attendance/Truancy Intervention	**Main Point of Contact for …** Guidance Counseling 9-12 College and Career Counseling College and Career Promise Program (CCCC) Transcripts/College Applications Career Week Say Something/Gaggle First Responder	**Main Point of Contact for …** Guidance Counseling 5-8 Middle School and 5th grade Classroom Guidance Title IX Coordinator Say Something/Gaggle First Responder Restorative Justice/Student Justice Council	**Main Point of Contact for …** IEPs EC Case Managers Academic student referrals Classroom interventions Accommodations and modifications Related service providers (OT, Speech, Psychologist) OCS program

School Administration Roles & Contact Information

Name	Job Title	Email Address
Justin Smith	Managing Director (5-12)	jsmith@alaschoolsnc.org
Robert Sims	Principal (9-12)	rsims@alaschoolsnc.org
Katie Ross	HS Assistant Principal (9-12)	krsoss@alaschoolsnc.org
Miryah Walters	Principal (5-8)	mwalters@alaschoolsnc.org
Molly Poston	Dean of Middle Grades/School Testing Coordinator	mposton@alaschoolsnc.org
Kasey Graf	Dean of Student Support (5-12)	kgraf@alaschoolsnc.org

Kimberly McNeil	Middle Grades Counselor (5-8)	kmcneill@alaschoolsnc.org
Badya Ghyll	High School Counselor (9-12)	bghyll@alaschoolsnc.org
Taylor Cotten	Remote Academy Administrator (6-11)	tcotten@alaschoolsnc.org
Tanya McPherson	Remote Academy Success Administrator	tmcpherson@alaschoolsnc.org
Michelle Bailey	Curriculum Facilitator (5-12)	mbailey@alaschoolsnc.org
Tamara Lamb	Technology Director (5-12)	tlamb@alaschoolsnc.org
Brianna Taylor	Social Worker (5-12)	btaylor@alaschoolsnc.org
Damien Perez	Director of Operations	dperez@alaschoolsnc.org

Calendar of Events

Date	Event
August 4, 2026	Open House
August 5, 2026	First Day of School
August 19, 2026	Senior Parent Night
September 7, 2025	Labor Day Holiday
September 18, 2026	Teacher Workday
October 8-9, 2026	Fall PBL Exhibition Days (Last Day of 1st Quarter)
October 12, 2026	Teacher Workday
October 16, 2026	Report Cards
November 11, 2026	Veteran's Day Holiday
November 23-24, 2026	Teacher Workdays
November 25-27, 2026	Thanksgiving Day Holiday
December 18, 2026	Last Day of 2nd Quarter (Early release)
December 21 - January 1, 2027	Winter Break
January 4-5, 2027	Teacher Workdays
January 8, 2027	Report Cards
January 18, 2027	Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday
February 12 & 15, 2027	Teacher Workdays
March 11-12, 2027	Spring PBL Exhibition Days
March 15, 2027	Teacher Workday
March 29 - April 2, 2027	Spring Break
May 19, 2027	High School Graduation
May 21, 2027	Last Day of School (Early Release)

School Hours & Daily Schedule

Ascend Leadership Academy's school hours are from 8:10am – 3:10pm **Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, & Friday.** On **Wednesday,** students begin classes one hour later and the school day is from 9:10am -3:10pm. Doors open daily at 7:30am for all students. This includes Wednesdays during our late start. All students are expected to be picked up at dismissal.

Earliest Drop-Off: 7:30am (Monday – Friday)
Instructional Day: 8:10am – 3:10pm (Wednesdays 9:10am – 3:10pm)

Latest Pick-Up: 3:40pm

Daily Schedule

High School students participate in a 4x4 90-minute block schedule. They participate in 8 classes throughout the school year, four in the Fall (August – December) and four in the Spring (January – May). Middle School students participate in 5 year long classes. Each class is 70 minutes long and consists of 4 core classes (Math, Science, Social Studies, and Digital Media) and one elective course.

Middle & High School Bell Schedules

5th Grade

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5th Grade Bell Schedule ***(Monday & Friday)***

	8:00 – 9:00	9:00 – 10:00	10:00 – 11:00	11:00 – 12:00		12:00 – 1:00	1:00 – 2:00	2:00 – 3:10
5th	Interv/MTSS 8:15 – 8:45 (30 min.)	Math/ELA 9:00 – 10:10 (70 min.)	Specials 10:15-11:05 (50 min.)	Lunch 11:05 – 11:30	Recess 11:30 – 12:00	Math/ELA 12:10 – 1:20 (70 min.)	Social Studies/Science 1:25-2:10 (45min.)	Social Studies/Science 2:15-3:00 (45min.)

5th Grade Bell Schedule ***(Tuesday & Thursday)***

	8:00 – 9:00	9:00 – 10:00	10:00 – 11:00	11:00 – 12:00		12:00 – 1:00	1:00 – 2:00	2:00 – 3:10
5th	Interv/MTSS 8:15 – 8:45 (30 min.)	Specials 9:00 – 9:45 (45 min.)	Math/ELA 9:50 – 11:00 (70 min.)	Lunch 11:05 – 11:30	Recess 11:30 – 12:00	Math/ELA 12:10 – 1:20 (70 min.)	Social Studies/Science 1:25-2:10 (45min.)	Social Studies/Science 2:15-3:00 (45min.)

5th Grade Bell Schedule ***(Wednesday)***

	8:00 – 9:00	9:00 – 10:00	10:00 – 11:00	11:00 – 12:00		12:00 – 1:00	1:00 – 2:00	2:00 – 3:10
5th	ALA Teacher PD 7:30 – 9:00	Interv/MTSS 9:15 – 9:45 (30 min.)	Specials 10:15 – 11:05 (50 min.)	Lunch 11:05 – 11:30	Recess 11:30 – 12:00	Math/ELA 12:10 – 1:20 (70 min.)		Math/ELA 1:25-2:55 (45min.)

MS Bell Schedule

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Search documents and file names

2026-27 ALA Middle School Daily Bell Schedule

Middle School Bell Schedule ***(Monday, Tuesday, Thursday & Friday)***

	8:00 – 9:00	9:00 – 10:00	10:00 – 11:00	11:00 – 12:00	12:00 – 1:00	1:00 – 2:00	2:00 – 3:10
6th -8th	Block #1 8:10 – 9:20 (70 min.)	RAISE 9:23 – 9:48 (25 min.)	Block #2 9:48– 10:58 (70 min.)	Lunch 11:01 – 11:31	Block #3 11:34 – 12:44 (70 min.)	Block #4 12:47 – 1:57 (70 min.)	Block #5 2:00 – 3:10 (70 min.)

Middle School Bell Schedule ***(Wednesday)***

	8:00 – 9:00	9:00 – 10:00	10:00 – 11:00	11:00 – 12:00	12:00 – 1:00	1:00 – 2:00	2:00 – 3:10
6th -8th	ALA Teacher PD 7:30 – 9:00	FLEX/MTSS 9:10 – 10:10 (60 min.)	Block #1 10:15 – 11:05 (50 min.)	Lunch 11:08 – 11:38	Block #2 11:41 – 12:31 (50 min.)	Block #3 12:34 – 1:24 (50 min.)	Block #4 1:27 – 2:17 (50 min.)	Block #5 2:20 – 3:10 (50 min.)

HS Bell Schedule

ASCEND LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

2026-27 ALA High School Bell Schedule

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, & Friday

	8:00 – 9:00	9:00 – 10:00	10:00 – 11:00	11:00 – 12:00	12:00 – 1:00	1:00 – 2:00	2:00 – 3:10
4X4 Block	Block #1 8:10 – 9:40 (90 min.)		Block #2 9:45 – 11:15 (90 min.)	Lunch 11:20 – 12:00 (40 min.)	Block #3 12:05 – 1:35 (90 min.)		Block #4 1:40– 3:10 (90 min.)

Wednesday (Late Start)

	8:00 – 9:00	9:00 – 10:00	10:00 – 11:00	11:00 – 12:00	12:00 – 1:00	1:00 – 2:00	2:00 – 3:10
4X4 Block	ALA Teacher PD 7:30 – 9:00	Block #1 9:10 – 10:10 (60 min.)	FLEX/MTSS/Advisory 10:15 – 11:15 (60 min.)	Lunch 11:20 – 11:55 (35min.)	Block #2 12:00 – 1:00 (60 min.)	Block #3 1:05– 2:05 (60 min.)	Block #4 2:10– 3:10 (60 min.)

*Attendance will take place during Block #1

This time represents Arrival procedures

Stakeholder Expectations

Each student is expected to:

1. Read and become familiar with ALA's Code of Conduct.
2. Behave in a responsible manner at school, on school buses, at school bus stops, and at all school related functions on or off campus.
3. Demonstrate the RAISE Values consistently.
4. Attend all classes, regularly and on time.
5. Prepare for each class, take appropriate materials to class, and complete assignments.
6. Follow all ALA rules and cooperate with school staff and volunteers in maintaining safety, order, and discipline.
7. Communicate with his or her parent/guardian about school academic progress.

Each parent/guardian may expect that ALA will:

1. Ensure that parents or guardians are treated respectfully by school administration, teachers, and other staff.
2. Provide access to information regarding their student and ALA's policies and procedures.
3. Promote and encourage active participation in their student's education.
4. Promptly notify parents or guardians if a student is disciplined and inform parents of procedures related to disciplinary actions and/or appeals.
5. Inform parents or guardians about their student's academic and behavioral progress.
6. Provide access to information about ALA's policies and procedures.

Each parent/guardian is expected to:

1. Read and become familiar with ALA's Code of Conduct.
2. Use effective communication with School staff, administration, and board members to cultivate open dialogue while seeking peaceful solutions.
3. Make sure their student attends school regularly, on time, and notify the school before the school day if their student is going to be absent.
4. Give the school accurate and current contact information and inform/update the contact information when and if it changes.
5. Inform school officials about any concerns/complaints in a respectful and timely manner.
6. Work with the school Director, administration, teachers, and other staff to address any academic or behavioral concerns regarding their student.
7. Talk with their students about the behavior that is expected at school.
8. Support their student's learning and school activities.
9. Be respectful and courteous to staff, other parents, guardians, and students.
10. Respect other students' privacy rights.

11. Give the school any and all information to assist with the welfare and education of the student and the safety of operations.

To support a peaceful and safe School environment, the School will not tolerate parents, guardians, and visitors who exhibit the following:

- Disruptive actions that interfere or threaten to interfere with the operation of a classroom, an employee's office, board meeting, School event, field trip, car line or parking lot, office area, or any other area of the School grounds (including social media postings or discussions with community members regarding the School or a staff member).
- Using loud/or offensive language, swearing, cursing, using profane language, or displaying temper on or in the sight of campus.
- Threatening to do actual bodily harm to School staff, board members, visitors, fellow parents/guardians, or students, regardless of whether or not the action constitutes a criminal offence.
- Damaging or destroying School property.
- Abusive or threatening e-mails, texts, voicemails, phone messages, or other written communication.
- Defamatory, offensive, or derogatory comments regarding the School or any of the pupils, parents, staff, or board on Facebook or other social sites. Any concerns about the School must be made through the appropriate channels by speaking to the class teacher or the administration team, so they can be dealt with fairly, appropriately and effectively for all concerned.
- The use of physical aggression towards another adult or child. This includes physical punishment against your own child on school premises.
- Approaching someone else's child in order to discuss or chastise them because of the actions of this child towards their own child. Such an approach to a child may be seen to be an assault on that child and may have legal consequences. Please communicate with the School staff so that we may investigate and handle such concerns.
- Carrying weapons, smoking, and/or consuming alcohol or other drugs whilst on School property, unless permitted for a specific event approved by the Board of the Executive Director.
- Animals/pets brought onto the School premises without permission. Please note: *Service animals are permitted.*

Media (Utilizing the School name or brand)

All media utilizing the School name or brand (e.g., logo, mascot, etc.) must have approval by the School's Board of Directors and shall be linked to the School's official websites.

Misuse of the Brand (Defined):

The Board of Directors encourages parents and students to voice their concerns. Any concerns you may have must be addressed through appropriate channels as outlined in this handbook. This includes speaking to the class teacher, the principal, or the Board of Directors, so your concerns can be dealt with fairly, appropriately, and effectively for all concerned. We consider using social media websites to fuel campaigns and complaints against the School, board, staff, students, and, in some cases, other parents, not in the best interests of the children or the whole school community.

In the event that any staff member, pupil or parent/guardian of a child/ren being educated at the School is found to be posting libelous or defamatory comments on Facebook or other social network sites, they will be reported to the appropriate 'report abuse' section of the network site and may be disinvited or otherwise prohibited from the School's official social media pages, including Facebook.

All social network sites have clear rules about the content that can be posted on the site, and they provide robust mechanisms to report content or activity that breaches these rules. The School will also expect any parent/guardian or pupil to immediately remove such comments.

In serious cases, the School will also consider its legal options to deal with any such misuse of social networking and other sites. Additionally, and perhaps more importantly, is the issue of cyberbullying and the use by one child or a

parent to publicly humiliate another by inappropriate social network entry. We will deal with this as a serious incident of school bullying in accordance with the student/parent employee handbook and any other school policies.

We may take any of the following steps if a parent/guardian or visitor does not follow the policy:

1. Request a parent meeting on campus.
2. Ban the parent from campus for a period of time.
3. Contact the appropriate authorities.

Parents or visitors who receive consequences based on their behavior shall follow the School's grievance process as set out in this Handbook or any other policy established by the School. Students engaged in such activity will be addressed in accordance with this Handbook and any other applicable policies. We trust that parents/guardians and visitors will assist our school with implementing this policy, and we thank you for your continued support.

Nothing in this policy is intended or should be construed to interfere with or infringe upon any rights, obligations, or responsibilities under state or federal law, including but not limited to free speech rights. Furthermore, nothing in this policy is intended or should be construed to discourage or interfere with any individual's right or decision to participate in a proceeding with any appropriate federal, state, or local government agency, or to prohibit any individual from cooperating with any such agency in its investigation.

Directory and Photo/Video Permission Granted

Parents/guardians agree, without compensation, to permit the School, its contractors, employees and students to use, reproduce, exhibit, display, broadcast, distribute and create derivative works using their child's photographic image or likeness and/or their child's work product in, including but not limited to, the School's publications, promotional materials, website, alumni materials, and videos for the purposes of promoting, publicizing, illustrating or explaining the School, its activities or programs and otherwise for the use and benefit of the School for other purposes. In most instances, photographs of students are published without names or with first names only. This permission includes print, broadcast, photographs, videotape, video, DVD, CD-ROM, and all present and future forms of electronic, online, or cloud-based media. This release shall continue in force until revoked explicitly by the parents/guardians in writing by email, mail, or fax addressed to Ascend Leadership Academy, except to the extent that the School has already relied upon it. If parents/guardians revoke this release, the School shall have a reasonable time to comply with that request.

Parents/guardians understand and agree that any images or videos posted by the School can be viewed or used by the public, including AI or bots. They understand and agree that any published image or video also carries the risk of deep fakes being created and disseminated. Parents/guardians have the right to opt out or withdraw consent regarding the use of their child's photo or video. Parents/guardians understand and agree that if they do not opt out or withdraw consent, they waive their right to any claim or action against the school arising from the use or misuse of their child's images/video posted by the School.

Third Party Transportation Providers (Uber/Lyft)

Consistent with the School's carpool procedures, any person picking up a student in the carpool line must provide the School with the physical carpool tag listing the student's carpool number. If the carpool tag is not physically with the driver, they must park and walk into the office to request a pick-up of the child and provide the office with their State or Federally issued ID. If the adult picking up is not listed as a parent or guardian on the child's records, nor as an emergency contact, the child will not be released until the front office staff can reach the parent to confirm the pick-up.

School does not condone students leaving campus in third-party car services (outside of child after care providers) and, specifically, ridesharing services whose policies explicitly prohibit minors from using them, such as Uber and Lyft. While some ride sharing services may permit minors to ride without an adult, the School does not permit the use of such services. The School will not allow any student to be picked up or dropped off in a third-party car service, such as Uber or Lyft, and will turn away such ride sharing services from the school.

Student Deliveries

To protect the integrity of the front office and classroom environments, we do not accept the delivery of flowers, food, or gifts for students in the main office. Parents who deliver items for students (lunches, athletic equipment, etc.) should be aware that we do not deliver items to students; they may pick up items in the office at lunch and after school.

Internet Safety Policy

Introduction

It is the policy of the board to: (a) prevent user access via its technological resources to, or transmission of, inappropriate material on the Internet or through electronic mail or other forms of direct electronic communications; (b) prevent unauthorized access to the Internet and devices or programs connected to or accessible through the Internet; (c) prevent other unlawful online activity; (d) prevent unauthorized online disclosure, use, or dissemination of personal identification information of minors; and (e) comply with the Children's Internet Protection Act.

Definitions

Technology Protection Measure

The term "technology protection measure" means a specific technology that blocks or filters Internet access to visual depictions that are obscene, child pornography, or harmful to minors.

Harmful to Minors

The term "harmful to minors" means any picture, image, graphic image file, or other

visual depiction that:

a. taken as a whole and with respect to minors, appeals to a prurient interest in nudity, sex, or excretion;

b. depicts, describes, or represents, in a patently offensive way with respect to what is suitable for minors, an actual or simulated sexual act or sexual contact, actual or simulated normal or perverted sexual acts, or a lewd exhibition of the genitals; and

c. taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value as to minors.

Child Pornography

The term "child pornography" means any visual depiction, including any photograph, film, video picture, or computer or computer-generated image or picture, whether made or produced by electronic, mechanical, or other means, of sexually explicit conduct, where:

a. the production of such visual depiction involves the use of a minor engaging in sexually explicit conduct;

b. such visual depiction is a digital image, computer image, or computer- generated image that is, or is indistinguishable from, that of a minor engaging in sexually explicit conduct; or

c. such visual depiction has been created, adapted, or modified to appear that an identifiable minor is engaging in sexually explicit conduct.

Sexual Act; Sexual Contact

The terms "sexual act" and "sexual contact" have the meanings given such terms in section 2246 of title 18, United States Code.

Minor

For purposes of this policy, the term "minor" means any individual who has not attained the age of 17.

Inappropriate Network Usage

To the extent practical, technology protection measures (or "Internet filters") will be used to limit access to age-appropriate subject matter and materials. The school shall block or filter access to inappropriate information on the Internet and World Wide Web. Specifically, blocking will be applied to audio and visual depictions deemed obscene or to be child pornography or harmful to minors. Student access to other materials that are inappropriate for minors will also be restricted.

The board has determined that audio or visual materials that depict violence, nudity, or graphic language that do not serve a legitimate pedagogical purpose are inappropriate for minors. The superintendent, in conjunction with a school technology and media advisory committee shall make a determination regarding what other matter or materials are inappropriate for minors. School system personnel may not restrict Internet access to ideas, perspectives, or viewpoints if the restriction is motivated solely by disapproval of the views involved.

In accordance with state law, students shall not access social media platforms on school devices or networks except when expressly directed to do so by a teacher for educational purposes. A student or employee must immediately notify the appropriate school official if the student or employee believes that a website or web content that is available to students through the school system's Internet access is obscene, constitutes child pornography, is "harmful to minors" as defined by CIPA, or is otherwise inappropriate for students. Students must notify a teacher or the school principal; employees must notify the superintendent or designee.

Due to the dynamic nature of the Internet, sometimes Internet websites and web material that should not be restricted are blocked by the Internet filter. A student or employee who believes that a website or web content has been improperly blocked by the school system's filter should bring the website to the attention of the principal. The principal shall confer with the technology director to determine whether the site or content should be unblocked. The principal shall notify the student or teacher promptly of the decision. The decision may be appealed through the school system's grievance procedure.

Subject to staff supervision, technology protection measures may be disabled during use by an adult for bona fide research or other lawful purposes.

All users of the school system's technological resources are expected to comply with the requirements established in the student technology acceptable use policy. Users are prohibited from: (a) attempting to gain unauthorized access, including "hacking" and engaging in other similar unlawful activities; and (b) engaging in the unauthorized disclosure, use, or dissemination of personal identifying information regarding minors.

Education, Supervision, and Monitoring

To the extent practical, steps will be taken to promote the safety and security of users of the school system's online computer network, especially when using electronic mail, chat rooms, instant messaging, and other forms of direct electronic communications. The school will also take all reasonable measures to prevent access to websites, web

applications, and/or software that do not protect the disclosure, use, or dissemination of a student's personal information. It is the responsibility of all school personnel to educate, supervise, and monitor usage of the online computer network and access to the Internet in accordance with this policy, the Children's Internet Protection Act, the Neighborhood Children's Internet Protection Act, and the Protecting Children in the 21st Century Act.

Procedures for disabling or otherwise modifying any technology protection measures are the responsibility of the technology director or designated representatives.

The Technology Director or designated representatives shall provide age-appropriate training for students who use the school system's Internet services. The training provided will be designed to promote the school system's commitment to educating students in digital literacy and citizenship, including:

1. The standards and acceptable use of Internet services as set forth in the student technology acceptable use policy.
2. Student safety with regard to safety on the Internet, appropriate behavior while online, including behavior on social networking websites and in chat rooms, and cyberbullying awareness and response; and
3. Compliance with the E-rate requirements of the Children's Internet Protection Act.

Following this training, the student must acknowledge that he or she received the training, understood it, and will follow the provisions of Technology Responsible Use.

Instruction on Social Media Effects

Additionally, the school's standard course of study shall include instruction on social media and its effects on health, including social, emotional, and physical health. Instruction shall be provided at least once during elementary and middle school and at least twice during high school. The topics must include, but not be limited to, all of the following topics:

1. Negative effects of social media on mental health, including addiction.
2. The distribution of misinformation on social media.
3. Methods of manipulating behavior using social media.
4. The permanency of information shared online.
5. How to maintain personal security.
6. How to identify cyberbullying, predatory behavior, and human trafficking on the Internet.
7. How to report suspicious behavior on the internet.
8. Personal and interpersonal skills or character education that enhances individual level protective factors and mitigates or reduces risk-taking or harmful behavior.

The superintendent or their designee shall develop any regulations needed to implement this policy and shall submit any certifications necessary to demonstrate compliance with this policy.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Use Policy

Introduction to Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Artificial Intelligence (AI) refers to the simulation of human intelligence by machines through systems such as Large Language Models (LLMs) like ChatGPT, AskWriter, Claude, and others. These tools can perform tasks including language comprehension, pattern recognition, problem-solving, and decision-making.

Within the educational environment, AI offers opportunities to support personalized learning, streamline administrative tasks, and enhance engagement. However, to ensure these technologies are used responsibly, Ascend Leadership Academy has established policies for both educators and students.

AI Use Policy for 5–12 Educators

Policy Statement

This policy outlines the acceptable and unacceptable uses of AI technologies by staff. It is designed to promote effective instructional use while safeguarding student privacy, security, and well-being.

Policy Scope

Applies to all AI technologies used by staff on school premises, for school-related tasks, or on school-provided devices and networks.

Interaction & High-Stakes Decision Making

AI may assist instruction but must not replace essential teacher-student interactions. Educators must not use AI to make high-stakes decisions—such as final grades, student progression, or disciplinary actions—without human oversight.

Unvetted Educational Content

AI-generated content must be thoroughly reviewed by a licensed educator before classroom use. AI must not be the sole source of instruction or assessment materials.

Annual Review

This policy will be reviewed annually to align with emerging technologies and instructional needs.

AI Use Policy for 5–12 Students

Policy Statement

This policy guides students in using AI tools ethically and effectively to support learning while protecting academic integrity and personal privacy.

Policy Scope

Applies to all student use of AI tools on school property, for schoolwork, or on school-issued devices.

Ethical Conduct

Students may use AI only with teacher permission and must not use AI for cheating, plagiarism, or misrepresenting their own work. AI-generated work may not be submitted in place of original student work.

Review & Disciplinary Action

AI use will be monitored ethically. Violations of this policy will result in disciplinary action:

- 1st Offense: Forfeiture of assignment grade and teacher conference.
- 2nd Offense: Forfeiture of assignment grade and parent/teacher conference.
- 3rd Offense: Forfeiture of assignment grade and administrator conference.
- Subsequent Offenses: Referred to school administration.

Annual Review

This policy is reviewed annually to ensure alignment with evolving technologies and educational standards.

Student Event and Field Trip Fees, Eligibility and Payments

Throughout the year, the school holds several sponsored events and field trips. Parents will be required to RSVP by the designated date for their child to be able to attend. In addition, payment for the field trip must be made by the deadline. If a parent RSVP's that their child will be attending the trip, they will be liable for the full cost of the trip. There are no refunds, and full payment will be expected by the payment deadline, as the school is expected to pay for tickets well in advance of field trips and cannot get a refund. Field trip/Overnight Trip fees must be paid by the

deadline, and the permission slip must be signed for the student to be able to attend the trip. There will be no exceptions to this.

School Event Eligibility

Students may not attend a school sponsored event (clubs, field trips, overnight trips, dances, athletic games etc.) if they have any outstanding fees due – including but not limited to device repairs, club dues,, etc. The Principal or designee will not sign any prom date forms for other schools for students with outstanding fees. Seniors will not be eligible to walk at graduation unless all fees have been paid.

Overnight Field Trips

Field trips are an important part of enhancing a student's learning experience. The School provides field trip opportunities that provide academic value or community-building time for our students. Field trips and overnight trips are a privilege at School. Please review eligibility requirements above prior to paying for a field trip or signing a permission slip.

No school student will be permitted to leave a field trip early except in the case of an emergency or unless requested by a member of the School staff for disciplinary reasons. All students must remain with the group for the duration of the field trip. Due to the responsibilities of a chaperone to supervise the students in their care, we are not able to accommodate bringing additional children who are not in the designated class or course.

Students and families should be aware that any student who chooses to participate in a school-sponsored field trip is subject to a search of their room or belongings if there is a reasonable suspicion that the student may be in violation of school policy or law. Local law enforcement may also be called to investigate if there is a belief that the student's behavior violated the law. Students involved in serious disciplinary action may lose the opportunity to participate in future field trips scheduled in the same school year. Upper School Students not in good academic standing may not be allowed to participate in field trips, which involve missing instruction time.

Overnight Trip Parent and Student Expectations

Overnight trips are optional for all students. Students not in good academic and behavioral standing will not be able to attend trips as they are offered. Deposits and payments made towards trips are nonrefundable, as vendors are paid well in advance of trips and will not refund the money to the school. Student accommodations will be made on trips per the student's IEP or 504 Plan, but special accommodations for dietary requests, rooming preferences, and parent or student desires will not be honored.

Eligibility for Overnight Trips

1. Students must be in good academic standing (grades 6-12).
    a. Students may not be failing any classes (F1 grade – cumulative grade for the year) - grades will be checked two weeks prior to field trips/overnight trips. If a student is failing any classes at that time, they may not be able to attend the trip or school event.
2. Students must meet the following behavior requirements:
    a. Student may not have accrued more than 10 After School Detentions during the school year for any reason;
    b. Student may not have more than 6 Full Day In-School Suspensions;
    c. Student may not have 3 or more out-of-school suspensions; and
    d. Students may not have a 10-day suspension.
3. Student must meet the following attendance requirements:
    a. Students may not have more than 15 absences (excused and unexcused), and
    b. Students may not have more than 20 unexcused tardies or early dismissals.
4. The permission slip must be received by the due date.

5. Payment must be made on time per the due dates scheduled for the field trip and overnight trip information.
6. Students may not have any outstanding fees due, including but not limited to device repairs, club dues,, etc.

No refunds will be given for students who become ineligible to attend the trip due to one of the reasons above. All final decisions regarding student participation on overnight trips are at the discretion of the administrative team.

Educational Field Trip

For an absence to be excused for an educational opportunity, the intent of the experience should have been educational from the outset and should be comparable to that which the student would have experienced in school. Family trips and vacations that were not initially designed to be educational will not be excused. Signing this form ensures that this absence is for a valid educational opportunity.

Financial Assistance

If there is a financial hardship in the family, the parent/guardian should contact the Managing Director directly via email. The Managing Director, Principal or designee will communicate directly with the parent/guardian regarding financial assistance that can be provided for each event, fee, or trip. Requests for financial assistance must be received at least two weeks prior to the payment deadline to allow for adequate planning. Any partial payment required for those with financial assistance will still be due by the payment deadline.

ALA Procedures and Programs

Admissions and Enrollment

Ascend Leadership Academy is a tuition-free public school. Any child who is qualified under the laws of North Carolina for admission to a public school is qualified for admission into Ascend Leadership Academy. To qualify to attend a North Carolina public school, a student must be a resident of North Carolina. Ascend Leadership Academy does not limit admission to students on the basis of intellectual ability, measures of achievement or aptitude, athletic ability, disability, race, creed, gender, national origin, religion or ancestry.

Ascend Leadership Academy may give enrollment priority under the following circumstances, as stated in G.S. 115C-238.29F(g). The priorities shall be executed in the following order:

1. Children and/or Grandchildren of Ascend Leadership Academy board members and full-time employees are admitted before the public lottery, regardless of impact on the enrollment cap for those grade levels in which they are admitted. Students given this priority must not exceed 15% of ALA's total school enrollment.
2. Siblings of currently enrolled students who were admitted to the charter school in a previous year. For the purposes of this section, the term "siblings" includes any of the following who reside in the same household: half-siblings, step-siblings, and children residing in a family foster home.
3. Siblings of students who have completed the highest grade level offered by that school and who were enrolled in at least four grade levels offered by the charter school or, if less than four grades are offered, in the maximum number of grades offered by the charter school.
4. A student who was enrolled in another charter school in the State in the previous school year, that does not offer the student's next grade level.
5. If siblings apply for admission to ALA and a lottery is needed, ALA will allow the family to enter one surname into the lottery to represent all of the siblings applying at the same time. If that surname of the siblings is selected, then all of the siblings shall be admitted to the extent that space is available

and does not exceed the grade level capacity.

Application and Lottery

Ascend Leadership Academy's open enrollment period for new applicants will be for at least 30 consecutive calendar days. Once enrolled, students are not required to enroll in subsequent enrollment periods. In order to properly plan, the school will routinely inquire of parents in early spring through a Letter of Intent to ascertain if students will return to Ascend Leadership Academy the following year. Applications for new students will be made available on the school website. If families do not have access to the internet, paper copies will be provided, or families can call the school for assistance in completing an application for enrollment.

After the open enrollment period, Ascend Leadership Academy shall enroll an eligible student who submits an application, unless the number of applications exceeds the capacity of the program, class, grade level, or building. If the number of applications exceeds the number of available spaces, a lottery will be held to fill vacant seats for the next school year. ALA's Board of Directors will hire a third-party firm to administer the public lottery to ensure transparency in the lottery process. After seats are filled, the drawing will continue to determine the order of the waiting list. Current year waiting lists dissolve when the next enrollment period begins. Any applicant who knowingly provides incorrect information on the enrollment application will be disqualified from consideration for acceptance to ALA upon discovery. If a student's retention decision at another school is made after the child's name was drawn for enrollment in a specific grade level, the managing director reserves the right to withdraw or uphold acceptance.

Applicants drawn during the application process must reply to accept or decline admission to Ascend Leadership Academy within 48 hours from notification. Should a parent decline the enrollment offer or not respond before the deadline, the school may offer admission to the next name on that specific grade's waiting list. Registration must be completed within five business days from acceptance, or Ascend Leadership Academy reserves the right to revoke the offer of admission and move to the next person on the waitlist.

Applicants who are accepted off the waitlist have 48 hours from notification to accept or decline admission.

Lottery procedures will comply with the North Carolina Open Meetings Law provided in G.S.143-218.10(a). The school will publicize the date, time, and location of the meeting and allow anyone to attend.

Lunch Service Plan

Ascend Leadership Academy's goal is to provide a quality nutritious lunch to all students who need it due to financial hardship. The lack of a school provided lunch shall not be a barrier for students who want to attend Ascend Leadership Academy. To understand eligibility requirements please visit this website:
https://aspe.hhs.gov/topics/poverty-economic-mobility/poverty-guidelines

Free and Reduced Lunch: Although ALA will not participate in the National School Lunch Program, ALA shall use the same family income standards to identify students who qualify for free or reduced lunch. ALA will use the qualifying criteria below to identify students who will qualify for free and reduced lunch:

Free Lunch: Children from families with incomes at or below 130 percent of the Federal poverty level are eligible for free school-provided meals.

Reduced Lunch: Children from families with incomes between 130 percent and 185 percent of the poverty level are eligible for reduced-priced school-provided meals.

Full-Price Lunch: Children from families over 185 percent of poverty pay full price for school provided meals. ALA's administration will develop and distribute a form to be filled out by every student family that identifies their income with respect to the poverty level. This form will be distributed and collected at the beginning of each school year. The data collected in this form will be confidential and kept in each student's cumulative record.

Myhotlunchbox.com:

ALA utilizes local vendors to provide hot lunch options for students daily. ALA uses myhotlunchbox.com as a 3rd party to broker these transactions. Families can visit this site daily to purchase hot meals for their students daily. Once ordered these meals will be delivered to students on campus. **Orders to myhotlunchbox.com must be in 24 hours prior for students to receive the order.** All inquiries or questions related to myhotlunchbox.com should be directed to myhotlunchbox.com customer service. Links to online lunch vendors can be found on ALA's website.

Lunch Delivery Guidelines and Expectations

To minimize disruptions to the school day, delivering lunch directly to students is not permitted. Occasional deliveries to the front office (e.g., for forgotten lunches or birthday celebrations) are allowed, but students must pick up the lunch on their way to their respective classroom.

Please label all lunchboxes with your child's name. If a lunch is forgotten, parents/guardians should make every effort to deliver it before lunchtime. In rare cases where this isn't possible, the school will provide a small, adequate lunch and charge $4 to the student's account. A note will be sent home.

If lunch delivery becomes a recurring issue, administration will contact the family directly.

Late Lunch Deliveries

If a parent or guardian brings a student's lunch **after the student's scheduled lunch period has ended**, the following procedures will apply:

- The lunch will be held at the front office.
- Students will **not** be called out of class to retrieve the lunch.
- The student may pick up the lunch **at the next scheduled break**, such as recess or dismissal.
- **Instructional time will not be interrupted** for late lunch deliveries.

Please ensure all lunch deliveries are made **prior to your child's designated lunch time** to avoid delays or missed meals. Repeated late deliveries may prompt outreach from administration.

Arrival and Dismissal Procedures

In the interest of safety, parents are encouraged to drop off and pick up their children within the timeframe outlined by the school. Below are the outlined procedures for student arrival and dismissal.

Morning Arrival

ALA will begin accepting students for drop-off each morning at 7:30 AM. Prior to this time, there is no adult available to supervise your child. All students will be supervised by ALA staff from 7:30am until the beginning of class at 8:10am. At 7:50 am students will be released to prepare for instruction.

Parents should abide by the following procedures when participating in ALA's morning carline.

- Please proceed to Building B and wait in line to drop off your student in the designated lanes in the front of the building.

- When departing, please exit through the parking lot making a right turn at the soccer field to proceed back toward Harvey Faulk Road.
- **At the stop sign at the top of the hill, all families will turn right and follow the traffic flow past Building A.**

Afternoon Pick-Up

ALA will begin releasing students for pick-up each afternoon beginning at 3:10 PM. Student drivers will be released first, then Bus Riders will load shortly after school dismisses at 3:10 pm. Carline procedures will begin as soon as student drivers and ALL buses have left campus.

Parents should abide by the following procedures when participating in ALA's afternoon carline.

- All cars entering from Harvey Faulk Road, should remain in the designated lanes.
- Cars are to remain in place until the buses have transitioned off-campus
- Cars are to remain in place until all student drivers have transitioned off-campus
- Commuter families will then follow staff directions for pickup in front of Building B.
- Once their child is secured they will exit through the parking lot making a right turn at the soccer field to proceed back toward Harvey Faulk.
- **At the stop sign at the top of the hill all families will turn right and follow the traffic flow in front of Building A.**

The dismissal window ends at 3:40 PM.

*****At all times, Please follow all directions from ALA staff members who are assisting with dismissal to ensure the safety of all ALA stakeholders.*****

Third-Party Rides

Consistent with ALA's policies, parents and guardians must provide ALA with the identity, by name, of persons permitted to pick up their children from school and students will only be released to such designated individuals. **This notification must be in writing and delivered to an ALA administrator or front office staff member. Emails qualify as an acceptable form of written notification.** ALA does not condone students leaving campus in third-party car services and, specifically, ridesharing services whose own policies explicitly prohibit minors from using them such as Uber and Lyft. ALA **will not** allow any student to be picked up from school in a third-party car service, such as Uber or Lyft, unless a parent/guardian is in the car, and will turn away such ride sharing services from the school.

Student Walkers

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

ALA Student Movement Procedures

Beginning of School Day/Arrival

- **7:30am:** Doors open for students. All students grades 7 - 12 are housed in the gym. Grades 5 and 6 are housed in Building A.
- **7:50am:** Bell rings to dismiss students to appropriate hallways.
- **8:05am:** Tardy bell rings alerting students to head to their 1st period class
- **8:09am:** Warning bell rings alerting students that they have 1 minute to get to 1st period.
- **8:10am:** Tardy bell rings. All students not in classrooms are swept to the main office or designated spot.

Notes: Students who are tardy to class are required to have a tardy slip before entering 1st period classroom.
Interventions: Tardy students will receive detention (9-12) with their tardy slip.

HS Lunch

- **11:15am:** Dismissal for students who receive lunch and have Off-campus lunch privileges.
- **11:18am:** Dismissal of all remaining High School students for lunch
- **11:57am:** Bell rings for lunch cleanup
- **12:00pm:** Dismissal to 3rd period

Notes: All students should be on the 2nd floor of Building B. Those HS students who need to be on the 1st floor must have a pass from a teacher or be in the classroom by 11:20am.
Interventions: Tardy students to lunch detention shall receive an additional day of detention

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End of School Day/Dismissal

- **3:05pm:** Bell rings to dismiss Building A students (STUDENTS DO NOT ENTER BUILDING B. Bus riders walk around Building B to the bus parking lot. Car riders remain in front of Building B.)
- **3:10pm:** Bell rings dismissing student drivers and bus riders
- **3:12pm:** Bell rings dismissing **all remaining students** to the front of the building (including clubs, athletics, aftercare, extracurricular activities, etc.). ALL STUDENTS ARE TO BE MOVED OUTSIDE AND NOT REMAIN IN THE BUILDING.
- **3:15pm:** Buses leave campus and Commuter carline begins
- **3:20pm:** Students participating in extracurricular activities are dismissed with advisor, coach, etc.
- **3:45pm:** All remaining commuter students are sent to aftercare.

Notes: All students should remain in the classroom until the dismissal bell rings.
From 3:15 - 3:20pm, teachers should help sweep all students out of the building.

Instructional Day Hallway Traffic

- Building A is off limits to HS students from 7:30am - 3:30pm
- Students who travel in the hallways must have an official pass from a teacher.
- Only one student at a time should be permitted to leave each classroom at a time.
- No hallway traffic first 15 minutes and last 15 minutes of class period.
- Students traveling to the main office, nurse, east wing from the west wing should exit the building and re-enter at the front entrance. (Students can not cut through the gym)
- Students traveling from the main office, nurse, to the west wing should exit the building and re-enter at the west wing entrance. Students should ring the bell and wait to be buzzed into the building.

After School/Extracurriculars

- **3:20pm:** Students participating in extracurricular activities will be met by their advisor, coach, or designated staff member in front of Building B. **Middle Grades students** will be picked up at the Main Office entrance, while **High School students** will be picked up at the West Wing entrance.
- **3:20-3:30pm:** Under the supervision of their advisor, coach, or designated staff member, students will transition to their designated changing areas. **Middle Grades students** will use the East Wing bathrooms, and **High School students** will use the West Wing bathrooms, as applicable.

- **3:30pm:** With their advisor, coach, or designated staff member, students can begin their transition to the location of their assigned extracurricular activity, including the practice field, gymnasium, or designated classroom.
    - **Bathrooms:** Students participating in extracurricular activities, practices, or outdoor events should use the designated **Building B bathrooms** throughout the duration of the activity. **Middle Grades students** should use the East Wing bathrooms, and **High School students** should use the West Wing bathrooms. For soccer/rugby/flag football games we will use the Building B West Wing bathrooms for spectators and participants.
    - **Middle Grades Activities:** Middle Grades teams and activities should be based in classrooms located in the East Wing of Building B.
    - **High School Activities:** High School teams and activities should be based in classrooms located in the West Wing of Building B.
    - **Building A:** Extracurricular activities should only take place in Building A when the activity requires access to a specific facility or resource, such as the Maker Space or Library. **Prior administrative approval is required prior to using Building A for extracurricular activities for all grade levels.**

Attendance and Tardies Policy

Attendance

All students must be fully enrolled and should attend school regularly. ALA does not accept partial enrollment. Regular attendance is the best way to ensure that students master the curriculum. ALA will make every effort to protect instructional time from interruption and we ask that, whenever possible, parents/guardians schedule appointments (doctor, dentist) after school hours. **All students are marked absent when he or she does not attend at least 60% of the school day.** This means that students must check in by **10:58am** and not check out before **12:22pm** to be counted present.

Abscences

Excused Absences (All absences not listed below are unexcused)

- *Illness or injury.* When the absence results from illness or injury, which prevents the student from being physically able to attend school. The Managing Director or designee may require an official note from a physician.
- *Quarantine.* When isolation of the student is ordered by the local health officer or by the State Board of Health.
- *Death in the immediate family.* When the absence results from the death of a member of the immediate family of the student. The immediate family of a student includes, but is not necessarily limited to, grandparents, parents and siblings.
- *Medical or dental appointments.* When the absence results from a medical or dental appointment of a student. A written excuse should be presented with a doctor's signature or stamp.
- *Court or administrative proceedings.* When the student is a party to or is under subpoena as a witness in the proceedings of a court or administrative tribunal.
- *Religious observances.* When the student or the student's parent/guardian or custodian adheres to a religion whose tenets require, or suggest the observance of a religious event. The parent/guardian or custodian must seek prior approval of the Managing Director for such absences [and the approval should be granted unless the religious observance or the cumulative effect of religious observances is of such duration as to interfere with the education of the student].
- *Educational opportunity.* When the student obtains the Managing Director's prior approval of a valid education opportunity, such as travel.

Releasing Students from School

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

Procedures for Notifying ALA about Absences

On the day of the absence(s), parents/guardians should provide written documentation using this email: attendance @alaschoolsnc.org stating the reason for the absence . This can include an email, doctor's note, or written note from the parent. If you do not notify ALA, when the student returns to class, **he or she must bring an explanatory note within THREE days**. If ALA does not receive the explanatory note within three days, the absence will be marked unexcused.

Truancy (Recurrent unexcused absences)

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

Tardiness & Late Pick-up

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

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

Minimum Attendance Requirement

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

Attendance monitoring and consequences

As per NC State Law, students are allowed up to 10 excused or unexcused absences per year for semester classes (High School) and 20 for yearlong class. After 10 absences, excused or unexcused, students in high school must make up seat time, hour for hour, minute for minute. This will be at the school's discretion.

- Parents must be notified as soon as students have three and six absences, and will be mandated to work with a school counselor to identify causes of the attendance problem, and create solutions to improve it.
- Students with documented absences will be marked as 'excused' by their teachers, they will be held responsible for making up any missed work as well as quizzes and tests.
- Students who miss multiple days over a two-week period will receive a phone call home by counselor or admin regardless of excused/unexcused status. Calls will continue until contact is made with the parent/guardian.
- Students who miss more than 3-4 days unexcused over a one-month period will be required to have a parent meeting with a counselor or administrator in order to identify factors hindering student attendance and overall progress.

- Students who meet the 10 day unexcused limit will be required to meet with both a counselor and administrator. School staff will work with parents and families to overcome attendance challenges, however, action will be taken as per state law should students remain out of compliance.
- Students will be given the opportunity to make up work after school, during their lunch block, or before school on Wednesday mornings.

Number of Occurrence(s)	Action to be Taken
0-2	No Action
3-5	Notification Letter and Invitation to Saturday School
6-10	Notification Letter, Invitation to Saturday School, and contact from School Administration
10+	Notification Letter complete with possible consequences from the number of absences. Contact from School Administration.

Discipline for Attendance

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

Providing Support to Students with Excessive Absences

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

10/20 Day Rule (High School)

In compliance with State Board policy, ALA students may drop a course with a required end-of-course assessment within the first 10 days of enrollment in a semester class and the first 20 days of a yearlong class. Students who are enrolled after the 10/20 day mark shall not drop a course with a required EOC assessment and shall participate in the appropriate EOC assessment at the completion of the course. Exceptions to the 10/20 day rule are allowed in individual cases where circumstances are in the best interest of the student to be removed from a course requiring an EOC assessment. These cases should be evaluated individually, and consideration should be given to make certain the accountability of the school is not being compromised. In any case, the Managing Director shall consult with the teacher and parent/guardian and sufficient documentation must be kept that explains why the student was withdrawn from the course. If it is determined the student should withdraw from the course (after 10/20) days the school must request approval from the NCDPI Director of Accountability Services.

Saturday School Attendance & Behavior Success Program Overview

The Ascend Leadership Academy Saturday School Attendance & Behavior Success Program is designed to provide students with an opportunity to make up missed instructional time and address behavioral issues in a structured environment. The program operates on select Saturdays from 8:30 AM to 11:30 AM.

What rationale exists for Saturday School?

1. Saturday School provides a level of intervention between lunch detention, ISS/OSS.
2. To make-up truant days or accumulated period absences.
3. Sports and activities are abundant and can be a hindrance to a student making up attendance or behavioral issues served during the school week.
4. Student/parent accountability for misbehavior. A Saturday time frame allows for students who have multiple detentions/ISS assignments to serve them accordingly.
5. It provides time for restorative practice and guided reflection that focuses on decision making.

Attendance and Make-Up Policy

- Each full Saturday School attendance allows students to make up 1/2 of a school day or 2 instructional blocks.
- Students can make up a maximum of 5.5 school days per semester through this program.
- Attendance recovery through Saturday School does not count towards exam exemption attendance.
- Students have a 10-minute grace period for attendance.
    - Arriving more than 10 minutes late or leaving more than 10 minutes early will result in attendance not being counted.
- Students may be able to make up late work beyond ALA's 3-day late policy for a maximum grade of 50%.

Communication and Academic Work Instructions

- Teachers will fill out a Google form providing information on the assignments to be completed.
- Students will receive an email receipt with the Saturday School request and work instructions.

Behavior and Conduct

- There is a zero phone/headphone policy (phones will be returned during the break).
- Loaner computers will be provided if necessary, but students should come prepared with their own device.
- Students are expected to maintain appropriate and respectful behavior and follow all instructions given by the staff.
- Infractions such as sleeping, not working, or exhibiting behavioral issues will result in a referral to administration and the attendance for the day not being counted.

Procedures

1. **Arrival and Check-In**:
    - Students arrive between 8:20 AM and 8:30 AM.
    - Upon entry, students turn in their phones to be placed in a secure location at the front of the room.
    - Students are seated and ready to begin academic work by 8:30 AM.
2. **Academic Work Time**:
    - From 8:30 AM to 10:30 AM, students work on assignments provided by their teachers.
    - Assignments are to be completed as specified in the email instructions .
    - Teachers or staff monitor progress and provide assistance as needed.
    - If a student finishes their academic work early, they will supplement the remaining time with additional community service.
3. **Break**:
    - At 10:30 AM, students have a 5-minute break where they can check their phones.
    - Phones must be returned to the front of the room after the break.
4. **Community Service**:
    - From 10:35 AM to 11:30 AM, students engage in community service activities.
5. **Dismissal**:
    - Students collect their phones and any personal belongings.

- Dismissal is at 11:30 AM sharp.

Compliance and Infractions

- Non-compliance with the zero phone/headphone policy, sleeping, not working, or any behavioral issues will result in:
  - Immediate referral to administration.
  - Attendance for the day not being counted.

Program Dates

Semester 1 (August - December 2026)	Semester 2 (January - May 2027)
August: n/a	January: 30
September: 12, 26	February: 6, 20
October: 3, 17, 24	March: 6, 13, 20, 27
November: 8, 15	April: 17, 24
December: 6, 13	May: 1, 8, 15

Please contact Beulah Palmer, Saturday School Coordinator at bpalmer@alaschoolsnc.org with any questions.

Student Parking

Driving a personal vehicle to school and parking on campus is a **privilege** ALA extends to all students with a current and valid North Carolina driver's license. To ensure safety and security, the following rules and regulations are important and **MUST BE FOLLOWED**:

1. All vehicles must be registered with the front office and display the appropriate hang tag from the rearview mirror. A student who temporarily drives a vehicle other than his/her registered vehicle must have a slip from the office and must register that vehicle with the office.
2. Students who qualify for on campus parking will be assigned a parking space by administration. You may park only in your assigned space, and only the individual registered to a space may park there. Do not give your pass to another student for any reason! Students CANNOT buy, sell, transfer or share their parking space or pass with another student. Lost parking passes may be replaced for a fee that will be established by ALA.
3. A driver is responsible for this vehicle should it be involved in any violation while on school property. **Students should not allow others to drive their vehicle.**
4. If a student driver has riders, he/she must insist that they follow the school policies when in the parking lot/vehicle. He/She should make certain that they do not cause him/her to lose their parking privileges by their behavior or conduct.
5. Unless you are leaving on early dismissal through the office, or receive special permission from an administrator, you are not allowed to return to your vehicle, or be present in the parking lot during the school day. Any riders must follow the same procedure and drivers should notify riders of this rule.
6. The vehicle must remain in the assigned space during school hours, unless otherwise approved by administration. Students who drive themselves must wait to be dismissed to the parking lot by a school staff member. Any riders must follow the same procedure and drivers should notify riders of this rule.
7. Students are not allowed to leave campus for lunch. Violators will have their parking privileges suspended for an indefinite period of time. This also applies to student drivers who allow others to use their vehicles to leave for lunch.

8. Students may not break in the bus line when the buses are moving. On highways, it is expected that drivers follow the driving rules and regulations of the State of North Carolina.
9. Students who operate a motor vehicle on campus should fully understand their duties and responsibilities. School administrators or school resource officers may search all vehicles parked on the ALA campus if school officials have reasonable suspicion to believe that unlawful, dangerous, or prohibited items may be contained inside the vehicle. Students may **NOT** possess tobacco products or smoke/vape in cars at any time while on school campus.
10. Use of personal vehicles as a means of skipping school will result in the loss of parking privileges on campus for up to ten days for the first offense, and indefinitely for any subsequent offense.
11. The speed limit in all parking lots and on campus is 5mph. Any student speeding or driving carless and recklessly on the ALA campus will have his/her parking privileges suspended for an indefinite period of time.
12. Students are not to ride in the back of trucks, or on the hoods of vehicles.
13. Students are not allowed to play loud or vulgar music at any time while on campus. Students are not allowed to race engines and or produce loud muffler noise on campus or in any parking lot.
14. ALL vehicles must be parked correctly between the lines in the designated parking space.
15. Receiving a traffic ticket within one mile of campus may result in suspension of parking privileges on campus for up to ten days.
16. If you are involved in an accident on campus, do not move the vehicle(s) until you are advised to do so by a school official or law enforcement agent.
17. Secure (lock doors) your vehicle before leaving the parking lot. **ALA will not be held liable for damage to vehicles, vandalism, or stolen items.**
18. Students are not allowed to loiter in the parking lot. Once your vehicle is parked in your assigned parking space, you are required to leave your vehicle and report to the building.
19. Students that drive to school and arrive late will be subject to disciplinary action; numerous tardies will result in the revocation of a student's parking privileges.
20. Penalties for parking violations are as follows: First Offense - Suspension of parking privileges/permit for one week, Second Offense - Suspension of parking privileges for two weeks, Third Offense - Loss of parking privileges. For serious violations, parking privileges may be lost on the first offense.

Off Campus Lunch

Juniors (11th grade) and Seniors (12th grade) who meet specific eligibility requirements are able to receive off-campus privileges throughout the school year. It is important for all participants to remember that **going off campus for lunch is a privilege that can be revoked at any time if participants do not comply with the guidelines and requirements** of the program.

Eligibility

1. Students must have enough credits to be deemed a Junior (11th grade) or Senior (12th grade) according to ALA's promotion and retention policy. Review ALA's Promotion and Retention Policy.
2. Students must maintain **a grade of 75 or higher in all classes** throughout the school year based on quarterly report cards. **First quarter eligibility is based on overall GPA, and only students with an overall GPA of 3.0 or higher will be eligible during the 1st Quarter.**
3. Students can not have any major behavioral infraction or have been assigned in-school or out of school suspension at any point in the current school year. **If a student is assigned in-school or out of school suspension, their off-campus privileges will be revoked immediately for the remainder of the school year.**
4. Students must not have more than five (5) absences in the previous quarter.

Qualifications to participate in this program are reviewed at the end of each academic quarter, and privileges will be revoked if students do not meet the above academic or disciplinary standards.

Guidelines/Expectations

1. The lunch pass is the property of Ascend Leadership Academy and may be revoked at any time in case of inappropriate use.
2. A lunch permit allows the student to leave campus during the scheduled lunch period. Each student must be in possession of his/her pass that indicates administrative approval to leave campus. Students without the pass will be required to remain on campus.
3. **The student and parent are responsible for where the student goes for lunch and for his/her transportation.**
4. The school assumes no liability for any accident or injury in the exercise of this permit.
5. Students exercising off-campus lunch privileges are subject to the rules of student conduct as applicable to the regular school day adopted by Ascend Leadership Academy. As a result, students who commit disciplinary infractions while at lunch will be disciplined by the school according to the **Code of Student Conduct**.
6. Being tardy or failing to return from off-campus lunch carries the same consequences of the normal school attendance policy for skipping and may result in revocation of student off-campus privileges.
7. Providing transportation to students who do not have lunch passes is prohibited and will result in the **immediate loss of privilege** and will jeopardize a student's ability to secure off-campus privileges in the future.
8. **Lunch passes must be shown to campus security or an ALA administrator when leaving campus.**
9. **No Outside Food is allowed in the building.** Students with off-campus lunch privileges must consume their lunch off-campus.
10. Students with off-campus lunch **may not purchase food to be brought to other students** that do not participate in the program including underclassmen**.**
11. Students will be required to pay a $10 replacement fee in the event the original pass was lost.

Infractions and Consequences

The following infractions may result in a revoked or suspended off campus lunch pass:

- Loaning off-campus lunch pass to another student
- Borrowing the off-campus pass of another student
- Excessive tardies or unexcused absences
- Transporting a student without off-campus lunch privileges off-campus
- Driving or parking violations
- Leaving campus without having your pass inspected by the Campus Security Officer and/or School administrator.
- Bringing food back into the school building for yourself or another student
- Failure to adhere to policies in this document

Violation	Consequence
1st Offense	Loss of Privilege for one (1) week
2nd Offense	Loss of Privilege for remainder of the current quarter
3rd Offense	Loss of Privilege for remainder of the semester or school year

Wellness & Sick Child Policy

To support the health and wellness of all students, staff, and faculty at Ascend Leadership Academy, students should remain at home when they are visibly unwell and may require evaluation by a healthcare provider if necessary. In cases of certain reportable communicable diseases, students will be excluded from school as required by the NC Division of Public Health. While the full list of reportable conditions is extensive, only a limited number are common among school-age children; this list is available upon request from the ALA Health Office. If parents or guardians are unsure whether their child should attend school, they are encouraged to consult their child's physician or contact a school administrator for guidance.

When a student is suspected of having one of those reportable communicable diseases, it is the responsibility of the parent or guardian to take the child to the local health department or primary health care provider for verification and treatment before that student can return to school. Students should be temporarily excluded from school if they present symptoms of a reportable disease. In each case, readmission to school should also take into account whether the student is able to participate in school. In some cases, a student with a disabling disease, who is no longer contagious but may require ongoing care, may be eligible for additional services under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

A list of students who have not been vaccinated for bona fide religious or medical reasons or who have illnesses that cause immunosuppression will be maintained in the ALA Health Office so that appropriate action can be taken to protect these individuals when serious communicable disease outbreaks do occur.

School staff make every effort to reduce the prevalence of disease-causing organisms by ensuring the environment's cleanliness, emphasizing frequent handwashing of students and staff, and following proper decontamination procedures of items used in mealtime and other activities. Despite those actions, the school-age child is often the source and conduit for communicable diseases ranging from the "common cold" to ringworm, among many. Most such illnesses are not among the diseases for which the state Division of Public Health, following guidelines issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, has issued mandatory isolation rules.

- **Chickenpox (Varicella)**: Student is excluded until all blisters have formed scabs.

- **Fever**: The parent/guardian of any student with an oral temperature >100.4 degrees will be notified and asked to pick up their child. The student should remain at home until fever-free for 36 hours without medication.

- **Head Lice (Pediculosis)**: The parents/guardians of any student found with lice will be notified and asked to pick up their student. If the student cannot be picked up and must remain at school, they will remain in the Health Office until a parent can pick them up. The parent/guardian may consult their medical provider or treat with an over-the-counter product. The student may return to school after receiving treatment for lice and removing nits.

- **Impetigo**: Students are excluded from school if they have more than three to four sores until they are seen by a medical provider and treated with a prescription antibiotic for a minimum of 24 hours.

- **Measles (Rubeola/Rubella)**: Student is excluded until the physician's approval is given and the student is no longer contagious.

- **MRSA (Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus)**: All suspected cases should be referred to their healthcare provider, and if possible, lesions should be kept covered while at school. Exclusion from school and sports activities should be reserved for those with wound drainage that cannot be covered and contained with a clean, dry bandage and those who cannot maintain good personal hygiene.

- **Nausea, Vomiting, Diarrhea**: The parent/guardian of any student experiencing nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea will be notified and asked to pick up their child. The student may return to school 36 hours after the symptoms have abated.

- **Pink Eye (Conjunctivitis)**: A student exhibiting symptoms of pink eye should be evaluated by their medical provider. The student may return when treatment has begun, the eye has minimal drainage & the student is able to keep their hands away from their eyes. The student is allowed to return to school with a physician's approval.

- **Scabies**: Student is excluded until one (1) treatment with prescription medication has been completed for at least 24 hours.

- **Strep Throat (Streptococcal and Staphylococcal Infections)**: Student is excluded from school until treated with a prescription antibiotic for 24 hours and has been fever-free for 36 hours.

If a student has a communicable disease—including but not limited to HIV/AIDS, hepatitis B, and tuberculosis—the parents are encouraged to notify ALA Health Office. This information will be kept confidential in accordance with the law.

If notified that a student suffers from such immunodeficiency, the ALA Health Office will request that the notifying party provide information about what types of exposures might put the student at risk and what reasonable practices can be taken in the school setting to minimize the risk to the student. Whenever possible, the ALA Health Office will notify the parents or guardians (or the student himself where appropriate) of an infected or immunodeficient student of the existence of chicken pox, influenza, meningococcus, measles, tuberculosis, or other contagious diseases occurring in the school that may represent a serious threat to the student's health. Students who are removed from school as a result of such conditions will be provided instruction in an appropriate alternative educational setting.

In the event that more than **25%** of Ascend Leadership Academy's student population is absent due to illness, the school shall close temporarily to sanitize the buildings and allow all students the opportunity to recover. Administration will resume classes when there is significant evidence that illness will not be spread further.

Student Health and Administration of Medication

Ascend Leadership Academy recognizes that students may occasionally require medication during school hours to support their health and continued presence in the classroom. While the administration of medication at school is discouraged when not medically necessary, school personnel may administer medications—both prescription and over-the-counter—with proper written authorization from both the parent/guardian and the student's licensed healthcare provider, in accordance with N.C. General Statute 115C-375.1.

General Guidelines

- Parents/guardians are encouraged to work with healthcare providers to adjust medication schedules so that medications may be taken at home before or after school, when feasible.
- All medications (prescription and non-prescription) must be accompanied by a completed Medication Administration Authorization Form, signed by both the parent/guardian and a licensed healthcare practitioner authorized to prescribe in North Carolina.
- Prescription medications must be brought to school in a **pharmacy-labeled container** with the student's name, medication name, dosage, timing, and method of administration.
- Over-the-counter medications must be in the **original manufacturer's container** and labeled with the student's full name.
- All medications must be brought to the **ALA Health Office** by a parent or responsible adult when possible. If this is not possible, the parent/guardian must notify the ALA Health Office or school administrator in advance by phone, stating what the student is bringing and the quantity.

Storage and Administration Procedures

- All student medications are stored in a **secure, locked area**. Only designated personnel trained by the ALA Health Office may access and administer medications.
- **Two adults**—designated by the ALA Health Office and approved by the school administrator—must be present during the administration of all medications except in life-threatening emergencies.
- A **Medication Administration Record (MAR)** must be completed each time medication is administered, including the student's name, date, time, dosage, name of medication, administrator's signature, and the witness's initials.

- Parents/guardians must provide updated medication and forms whenever there is a change in prescription, and all medications must be picked up at the end of the school year. Medications left unclaimed will be safely discarded.

Emergency Medications and Individualized Health Plans

Students with chronic or life-threatening conditions such as diabetes, asthma, or severe allergies must have an **Emergency Action Plan or Individual Health Plan (IHP)** on file with the ALA Health Office. These plans must be developed by the student's health care provider and must include:

- Written orders for medication administration;
- Emergency procedures;
- Authorization for school personnel to administer medication;
- Parent/guardian consent using the Medication Administration Authorization Form.

Emergency medications (e.g., epinephrine auto-injectors, inhalers, glucagon) may be stored in an accessible but supervised location. School personnel are not liable for complications when medications are administered in accordance with written instructions.

Student Self-Administration

In accordance with North Carolina law, students may carry and self-administer medications related to chronic health conditions such as asthma, diabetes, or anaphylaxis, provided all required documentation is submitted and approved.

The Student Medication Authorization Form must be fully completed and on file with the ALA Health Office prior to any self-administration of medication. This form specifically includes documentation of the following:

1. Written authorization from the parent/guardian.
2. A healthcare provider's statement confirming:
    a. The student's diagnosis;
    b. The need to carry and self-administer medication;
    c. That the student has been trained and is capable of self-administration.
3. A signed waiver from the parent/guardian releasing ALA from liability related to the self-administration of medication.
4. (If possible) A backup dose of the medication to be stored in the ALA Health Office.

Misuse or unauthorized sharing of self-administered medication may result in disciplinary action per the Student Code of Conduct. However, disciplinary action shall not impede access to necessary medication for students with qualifying health needs.

Field Trips and Off-Campus Activities

Medication should only be administered during school-sponsored trips when medically necessary and previously administered at school. The parent/guardian must:

- Provide a properly labeled single-dose container from the pharmacy; or
- Request that the school send the medication bottle from the ALA Health Office (returned after the trip).
- Options for administration include:
    - A parent/guardian accompanying the student;
    - School personnel designated by the ALA Health Office and approved by the school administrator.

Documentation must be completed on the MAR upon return.

Note on Privacy

All health-related records and documentation are kept confidential in accordance with the **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)** and applicable state law. Staff with access to health information will be trained on privacy and confidentiality procedures.

7th and 12th Grade Required Vaccinations

North Carolina law requires that all children present in the state receive the appropriate immunizations. It is the responsibility of each parent, guardian, or person acting in loco parentis to ensure that their child is properly immunized and to provide the child's immunization record to the school. This record must be submitted **within 30 calendar days of the student's first day of attendance**. Failure to provide a valid immunization record within this timeframe will result in the student's suspension from school until the required documentation is received.

7th Grade

Vaccination requirements for 7th grade age children can be found below:

Vaccine	Number Doses Required Before School Entry*
Diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis	5 doses
Polio	4 doses
Measles	2 doses
Mumps	2 doses
Rubella	1 dose
Haemophilus Influenzae type B (Hib)	4 doses
Hepatitis B (Hep B)	3 doses
Varicella (chickenpox)	1 dose
Tetanus/diphtheria/pertussis	1 dose
Meningococcal conjugate	1 dose

12th Grade

Vaccination requirements for 12th grade age children can be found below:

Vaccine	Number Doses Required Before School Entry*
Diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis	5 doses
Polio	4 doses
Measles	2 doses
Mumps	2 doses
Rubella	1 dose
Haemophilus Influenzae type B (Hib)	4 doses
Hepatitis B (Hep B)	3 doses
Varicella (chickenpox)	1 dose
Tetanus/diphtheria/pertussis	1 dose
Meningococcal conjugate **(Effective 20-21 School Year)**	2 doses

If you have specific questions regarding your child, please contact the ALA Health Office, your child's health care provider, or your local health department.

Garrett's Law

North Carolina law mandates that at the beginning of every academic year, local boards of education shall provide parents and guardians with information about meningococcal meningitis, influenza, Human Papillomavirus (HPV), and their vaccines. This important information is available online for parents/guardians on our website.

Discrimination, Harassment, and Bullying

Students, school employees, volunteers, visitors, and Board members are expected to behave in a civil and respectful manner. The Board expressly prohibits unlawful discrimination, harassment, and bullying.

Students are expected to comply with the behavior standards established by Board policy and the Code of Student Conduct. Employees and Board members are expected to comply with Board policy and school regulations. Volunteers and visitors on school property and/or at school-sponsored activities or activities in which the Board is involved and/or participating are also expected to comply with Board policy and established school rules and procedures.

- Any violation of this policy is serious and school officials shall promptly take appropriate action.
- Students will be disciplined in accordance with the school's Code of Student Conduct.
- Employees who violate this policy will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including possible dismissal.

Volunteers and visitors who violate this policy will be directed to leave school property, may be barred from returning to school property, may be reported to law enforcement, and may or may not be prosecuted, as appropriate to the situation. When considering if a response to violations of this policy beyond the individual level is appropriate, school administrators should consider the nature and severity of the misconduct to determine whether a classroom or school-wide response is necessary. Such classroom or school-wide responses may include staff training, discrimination, harassment and bullying prevention programs, and/or other measures deemed appropriate by ALA Administration, or the Board to address the behavior.

Retaliation

The Board prohibits reprisal or retaliation against any person for

(a) reporting or intending to report violations of this policy; or

(b) supporting someone for reporting or intending to report a violation of this policy; or

(c) participating in the investigation of reported violations of this policy.

After consideration of the nature and circumstances of the reprisal or retaliation and in accordance with applicable federal, state, and/or local laws, policies and regulations, school officials shall determine the consequences and remedial action for a person found to have engaged in reprisal or retaliation.

I. APPLICATION OF POLICY

This policy prohibits unlawful discrimination, harassment, and bullying by students, employees, Board members, volunteers, and visitors to the schools. "Visitors" includes all persons, agencies, vendors, contractors, and other persons and organizations doing business with or performing services for the school.

This policy shall apply to, but is not limited to, behavior that takes place in the following circumstances:

- in any school building or on any school premises owned or operated by the Board during or after school hours;
- on any bus or other vehicle owned or operated by the Board during or after school hours;
- during or at any school function, extracurricular activity, or other school activity or event sponsored by the school or in which the school is involved or represented;

- at any time or place when the individual is subject to the authority of school personnel;
- while the individual is using school electronic communications;
- at any time or place while the individual is using personal electronic communications and any of the above situations or circumstances apply; or
- at any time or in any place when the behavior of the individual has an effect on maintaining order and discipline in the school or with regard to appropriate staff and student relations, appropriate relationships between students, or an appropriate and positive learning environment for students.

II. DEFINITIONS

For purposes of this policy, the following definitions will apply.

A. **Discrimination:** any act that unreasonably and unfavorably differentiates treatment of others based solely on their membership in a socially distinct group or category, such as race, ethnicity, sex, religion, age, or disability. Discrimination may be intentional or unintentional.

B. **Bullying and harassing behavior:** any single act, pattern of gestures, written or electronic communication or transmission, verbal communications, physical act, or threatening communication which:

1) places a student or employee in actual and reasonable fear of harm to his or her person or damage to his or her property; or

2) creates or is certain to create a hostile environment by substantially interfering with or impairing a student's educational performance, opportunities or benefits.

Bullying and harassing behavior may also include unwanted, unwelcome, and/or uninvited behavior which a reasonable person would consider demeaning, threatening, or offensive to the victim and which results in a hostile environment for the victim.

Harassment and bullying may include, but are not limited to, behaviors described above which are reasonably perceived as being motivated by any actual or perceived differentiating characteristic or motivated by any individual's association with a person who has or is perceived to have a differentiating characteristic, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, socioeconomic status, academic status, gender identity, physical appearance, sexual orientation, or mental physical, developmental or sensory disability.

Examples of behavior that may constitute bullying or harassment include, but are not limited to, verbal taunts, name-calling and put-downs, epithets, derogatory comments or slurs, lewd propositions, exclusion from peer groups, extortion of money or possessions, implied or stated threats, assault, impeding or blocking movement, offensive touching or any physical interference with normal work or movement, and visual insults, such as derogatory posters or cartoons. Legitimate age-appropriate pedagogical techniques are not considered harassment or bullying.

C. **Hostile environment:** created or established when the victim subjectively views the conduct in question (see above) as harassment or bullying and that the conduct is objectively severe or pervasive enough so that a reasonable person would agree that it is harassment or bullying. A hostile environment may be created through pervasive or persistent misbehavior or by a single incident, if sufficiently severe.

D. **Sexual harassment:** Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when:

1) submission to the conduct is made, either explicitly or implicitly, a term or condition of an individual's employment, academic progress, or completion of a school-related activity; or

2) submission to or rejection of such conduct is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual, or in the case of a student, submission to or rejection of such conduct is used in evaluating the individual's performance within a course of study or other school-related activity; or

3) such conduct is sufficiently severe, persistent or pervasive so that is has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an employee's work or performance or a student's educational performance, limiting a student's ability to participate in or benefit from an educational program or environment, or creating an abusive, intimidating, hostile, or offensive work or educational environment.

Sexually harassing conduct includes, but is not limited to:

- deliberate, unwelcome touching that has sexual connotations or is of a sexual nature;
- suggestions or demands for sexual involvement accompanied by implied or overt promises or preferential treatment or threats;
- pressure for sexual activity;
- continued or repeated offensive sexual flirtations, advances, and/or propositions;
- continued or repeated verbal remarks about an individual's body;
- sexually degrading words used toward an individual or to describe an individual; or
- the display of sexually suggestive drawings, objects, pictures, written materials or body parts.

Acts of verbal, nonverbal, electronic or physical aggression, intimidation, or hostility based on sex, but not involving sexual activity or language, may be combined with incidents of sexually harassing conduct to determine if the incidents of sexually harassing conduct are sufficiently serious to create a sexually hostile environment.

E. **Gender-based harassment:** may include acts of verbal, nonverbal, or physical aggression, intimidation, or hostility based on sex or sex-stereotyping but not involving conduct of a sexual nature.

F. **Electronic communication:** includes, but is not limited to, communications or transmissions through employee and/or student emails, text messaging, instant messaging, chat rooms, blogging, websites and social networking websites.

G. **Situational / relationship circumstances:** It is possible for harassment, bullying, sexual harassment, and gender-based harassment to occur in various situations. For example, it may occur between fellow students or coworkers, between supervisors and subordinates, between employees and students, or imposed by non-employees, including visitors, employees, and/or students. Harassment or bullying may occur between members of the opposite sex or between members of the same sex.

III. REPORTING AND INVESTIGATIONS

Employees are required to report any actual or suspected violations of this policy. Students, parents, volunteers, visitors, and all others are strongly encouraged to report any actual or suspected incidents of discrimination, harassment or bullying. All reports should be made to the ALA administration. Reports may be made anonymously and all reports shall be investigated.

IV. RECORDS AND REPORTING

The Managing Director and any employee investigating a complaint under this policy shall maintain confidential records of complaints of reports of discrimination, harassment or bullying which identify the names of any individuals accused of such offenses and the resolution of such reports or complaints. The Managing Director and any other Administrator shall also maintain records of training and corrective action or other steps taken to help provide an environment free of discrimination, harassment and bullying.

The Managing Director and any other administrator shall report to the Board and to the North Carolina State Board of Education all verified cases of discrimination, harassment or bullying through the Discipline Data Collection Report or through other means required by the State Board of Education.

Social Media Citizenship Standards & Expectations

Faculty, Staff, and Board Member Guidelines

Students should understand that as members of the School community, they represent the school at all times. When using social media sites, including but not limited to Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Vine, and Snapchat, they must do so responsibly and are accountable for their actions at all times. Students should also understand that when using social media, they are bound by the rules of student behavior as outlined in the School's student handbooks. The School will only intervene in a student's use of social media if a parent, teacher, coach, administrator, or student reports an issue

that is harmful to the health and well-being of the school community. Cyberbullying, in the form of student-to-student or student-to-teacher, will be handled as any other form of physical or emotional bullying.

Personal use of social networking sites, including Facebook, X, and Instagram

- Ascend Leadership Academy staff, employees, and board members are personally responsible for all comments/information and hosted content they publish online. Be mindful that things such as *Tweets* and *Status Updates* will be visible and public for a long time.
- By posting comments, having online conversations, etc. on social media sites you are broadcasting to the world, be aware that even with the strictest privacy settings, what you 'say' online should be within the bounds of professional discretion. Comments expressed via social networking pages under the impression of a 'private conversation' may still end up being shared into a more public domain, even with privacy settings on maximum.
- Comments related to ALA, its employees, staff and/events related to ALA, should always meet the highest standards of professional discretion. When posting, even in the strictest settings, staff should act on the assumption that all postings are in the public domain.
- Before posting photographs and videos, permission should be sought from the subject where possible. This is especially the case where photographs of professional colleagues are concerned.
- Photographs relating to alcohol or tobacco use may be deemed inappropriate. Remember, your social networking site is an extension of your personality, and an extension of your professional life and classroom. If it would seem inappropriate to put a certain photograph on the wall, then it should be considered inappropriate to post online.
- Microblogging (Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr, Instagram, etc.) comments made using such media are not protected by privacy settings. Employees should be aware of the public and widespread nature of such media and refrain from any comment and/or #hashtags that could be deemed unprofessional. #(Hashtags) that tag students and provide personal financial gain are prohibited. ALA students are not to be used as promotional audiences.
- ALA employees are not permitted to solicit or accept "Friend" Requests from enrolled ALA students on any personal Social Media Account. This includes student's accounts and ALA employee personal accounts.
- ALA employees are not permitted to encourage students enrolled at ALA to create Social Media Accounts of any kind.
- All ALA employees who choose to utilize Facebook, Twitter or Instagram or any other Social Media Platform to provide classroom information to students and parents must create a "teacher" page. Post must be exclusively about classroom or school activities.

Staff-Student Relations

Employees are prohibited from establishing personal relationships with students that are unprofessional and thereby inappropriate. Examples of unprofessional relationships include, but are not limited to: employees fraternizing or communicating with students as if employees and students were peers such as writing personal letters or emails; "texting" students; calling students on cell phones or allowing students to make personal calls to them unrelated to homework or class work; sending inappropriate pictures to students; discussing or revealing to students personal matters about their private lives or inviting students to do the same (other than professional counseling by a school counselor); and engaging in sexualized dialogue, whether in person, by phone, via the Internet or in writing.

Employees who post information on Facebook, Twitter or other similar websites that include inappropriate personal information such as, but not limited to: provocative photographs, sexually explicit messages, use of alcohol, drugs or anything students are prohibited from doing must understand that if students, parents or other employees obtain access to such information, their case will be investigated by the school and if warranted, will be disciplined up to and including termination, depending on the severity of the offense, and may have their case forwarded to the appropriate state department for review and possible further sanctions.

The managing director or designees reserve the right to periodically conduct Internet searches to determine if employees have posted inappropriate materials online. If inappropriate use of computers and websites is discovered, the managing director's designees will download the offensive material and promptly bring misconduct to the attention of the managing director.

Email

All electronic or any other communications by employees to students or parents at any time, from any email system shall be expected to be professional, acceptable in content to any reasonable person, and limited to information that is school-related or is acceptable to both student and parent. Email between employees, students and parents shall be done through the school provided email application.

CYBERBULLYING and SEXTING:

Cyberbullying by an ALA student directed toward another ALA student or school staff member is conduct that disrupts both a pupil's ability to learn and a school's ability to educate its pupils in a safe environment.

ALA prohibits acts of cyberbullying by ALA students using any ALA owned, operated, and supervised technologies. The school's administration may report allegations of cyberbullying to law enforcement authorities.

Any act online, the Internet or through electronic devices (cellular phones, tablets) that deliberately threatens, harasses, intimidates an individual or group of individuals; places an individual in reasonable fear of harm to the individual or damage to the individual's property; has the effect of substantially disrupting the orderly operation of the school is considered cyberbullying.

While ALA acknowledges that it cannot control all that students or their families post online, especially when it is not posted during school hours, any off-campus posts that constitutes cyberbullying and carries over to the school environment, will be treated as a school issue and handled by the school's administration or local authorities.

If a student is found to be sharing or distributing sexting material on ALA property, they will be handled individually and as a violation of the ALA's behavioral policies, and parents/guardians will be notified of the incident. In addition, as all members of school staff are legal, mandatory reporters of serious harm, and because an offense of this type is categorized as child pornography, school officials will be required by law to report known occurrences to North Carolina law enforcement.

Any student or school staff member that believes he/she has or is being subjected to cyberbullying, as well as any person who has reason to believe a student or school staff member has knowledge or reason to believe another pupil or school staff member is being subjected to or has been subjected to cyberbullying shall immediately make a report to school administration.

ALA has a zero tolerance against cyberbullying and each reported instance will be handled in accordance with school, local and state rules, policies, and guidelines.

For violations of the policy, see Code of Conduct.

School Dress Code

Student Dress Code Policy

The purpose of the Ascend Leadership Academy (ALA) dress attire policy is twofold. As an aspect of a student's personal education, it helps develop a positive self-image and promotes a sense of personal responsibility. As an organizational benefit, this policy keeps our focus on the academic process, minimizes disciplinary disruption, and helps assure the safety of our students. In this context, student dress should demonstrate modesty, be appropriate to an academic setting, and contribute to a sense of school pride.

Presenting a bodily appearance or wearing clothing that is disruptive, provocative, revealing, profane, vulgar, offensive, or obscene, or that endangers the health or safety of the student or others, is prohibited.

Restricted Dress and Appearance

This list is not intended to be exhaustive, and ALA administration reserves the right to determine whether clothing or appearance is inconsistent with the expectations of this policy.

- Pajamas, sleepwear, robes, slippers or clothing designed primarily to be worn as sleepwear
- Non-religious hats, hoods, or headgear of any kind, unless specifically permitted by school administration
- Jeans or other clothing with rips, tears, or holes that expose skin
- Students must wear appropriate footwear at all times. Footwear must provide reasonable protection and allow students to safely walk throughout the school and participate in normal school activities. Bare feet are not permitted. Specific activities may require closed-toe or other protective footwear.
- Clothing or accessories with messages, images, symbols, or illustrations that are lewd, indecent, vulgar, profane, or otherwise inappropriate for a school setting
- Clothing or accessories that advertise or promote any product, service, activity, or substance that is not permitted by law to minors
- Chains, spikes, or other adornments that could reasonably be perceived as or used as a weapon
- Clothing, accessories, or appearance that is reasonably likely to create a substantial and material disruption to the educational process or the operation of the school
- Clothing or items intended to intimidate, threaten, demean, or harass other students on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, age, religious affiliation, or other protected category
- Any other attire or appearance that ALA administration determines to be unsafe, disruptive, excessively revealing, or inappropriate for an academic environment

Students should wear clothing that provides appropriate coverage for a school environment and allows them to comfortably participate in normal school activities. To maintain a consistent and respectful learning environment:

- Undergarments and private areas must remain covered during normal movement, including sitting, standing, bending, and walking.
- Tops must provide coverage of the chest and torso. Spaghetti-strap, strapless, and halter tops are not permitted.
- Bottoms must provide full coverage of the buttocks and private areas.
- Clothing that is sheer or transparent must have appropriate clothing underneath that meets these coverage expectations.
- Clothing should fit in a manner that maintains the required coverage throughout the school day.

ALA Administration shall exercise appropriate discretion in implementing this policy, including making reasonable accommodations to these rules for religious, cultural, or medical reasons.

If a student's dress or appearance violates this dress code, it will result in a Level 1 infraction, and the student may be required to change into appropriate attire. Students may also be asked to remove or secure an item that does not comply with the policy.

Dress-up days are encouraged for project celebrations, special events, spirit activities, and other occasions as noted on the school calendar or directed by school leaders. Dress-up days do not exempt students from expectations related to safety, modesty, appropriateness, or prohibited content.

ALA's Athletics/Extracurricular Program: Purpose

At Ascend Leadership Academy, athletics and extracurricular activities are designed to enrich the student experience by promoting teamwork, discipline, and personal growth. Through participation in sports, students develop physical skills, improve fitness, and learn the values of sportsmanship and collaboration toward a common goal.

To ensure a strong and balanced program, the ALA athletic department has established minimum expectations for all student-athletes. These standards support the integrity of our extracurricular offerings while keeping athletics in perspective with the overall educational mission.

All athletic staff, coaches, and student-athletes are expected to adhere to these policies. Any exceptions must be approved by the Athletic Director or School Administration.

ALA's Athletic Eligibility/Participation Policy

Extracurricular activities include ANY athletic team, as well as middle and high school sports or clubs that represent Ascend Leadership Academy (ALA) in competitions. To be eligible to try out and remain eligible to participate in any sport, extracurricular competition, or club leadership role at ALA, students must meet the following criteria:

- All students must be enrolled in Ascend Leadership Academy (ALA) to participate.
- All students must be in good disciplinary standing throughout the entire time of their respective sport season or extracurricular activity. This means that if a student is suspended for any period of time, their status as a team or club member may be revoked by the Coach or Administration. The student is not allowed to participate in or attend any sports or co-curricular events during the time of suspension. Violations of the school's Student Code of Conduct are subject to review by the Administration and may result in a student being placed on probation or removed from the team or club.
- All students absent or removed from school for more than half of the day of a contest for any reason may not be in the contest that school day. To participate in a competition, students must be present for a half-day of school. Please review the Attendance section of the handbook for specific times.
- Student athletes must receive a health screening each year (365 days) by a duly licensed physician, nurse practitioner, or physician assistant.
- Any athlete who quits a team voluntarily, not including medical reasons, could potentially forfeit being eligible to participate in School athletics for one year, as determined by the administration. This one-year period also applies to any athlete who has been dismissed from a team by a coach or administration.
- Parents and students are responsible for monitoring the progress of their grades throughout the quarter.
- Physical and Concussion Forms must be completed and on file via (Dragonflymax.com)for each school year.

At the beginning of each season, School Administration will provide the Athletic Director and coaches with copies of each student athlete's most recent report card and attendance record.

Sports Pre-Participation and Medical Examination Forms

To be eligible for practice or participation in interscholastic athletic contests, the student must receive a medical examination once every 395 days by a duly licensed physician, nurse practitioner, or physician assistant, subject to the provisions of G.S. 90- 9, 90-18.1, and 90-18.2. The recommended Sports Pre-participation and Medical Examination Form can be found here: https://www.nchsaa.org/health-and-safety-physicials/. The student-athlete must submit the physical form, concussion statement, NCHSAA athlete participation form (for high school athletes only), and a signed student-athlete handbook to the office prior to the first day of practice or tryouts. The student shall not participate in any tryouts, practice sessions, or contests until the completed physical form has been submitted.

All documents should be uploaded to the Dragonflymax.com website prior to any tryout during Fall, Winter and Spring seasons.

Process for submitting required documentation to Dragonfly

1. **Create account:** Dragonflymax.com School code: **SLH8R2**
2. Update Medical & Demographic Info
3. *Choose all sports interested in for the 2025-20226 school year*
4. NCHSAA Eligibility, Consent to Participate and Release Form 2025-26
5. NCHSAA PPE Health History Form (2025 Version)
6. NCHSAA - PPE - Physical Examination Form
7. NCHSAA Gfeller-Waller Student-Athlete & Parent/Legal Custodian Concussion Info Sheet
8. NCHSAA - PPE - Medical Eligibility Form

Concussion Awareness

On June 16, 2011, the Gfeller-Whaller Concussion Awareness Act was signed in an attempt to educate student athletes, parents, coaches, and first responders on the symptoms and expectations related to concussions. To meet these regulations, student athletes as well as their parent/guardian are required to read and sign the NCHSAA Gfeller-Waller Student-Athlete/Legal Custodian Concussion Information Sheet. *This is an annual requirement for participation in school athletics*. The document is meant to help educate families on the symptoms and obligations associated with concussions. *Information regarding the Gfeller-Waller Concussion Awareness Act can be found at https://gfellerwallerlaw.unc.edu/.*

Insurance Coverage

It is recommended that players be covered by adequate medical and accident insurance. A Lifetime Catastrophic Liability Insurance plan is available to middle and junior high athletes through the North Carolina High School Athletic Association (NCHSAA).

Academic Eligibility

Coaches will review academic progress at the 4.5 and 9-week reporting periods. If concerns arise—such as low grades or missing assignments—the Athletic Director and Head Coach will take immediate action.

To remain eligible for participation in the ALA athletic program, student-athletes must:

- Maintain a **minimum cumulative average of 70%** across all classes with **no failing grades (F = below 59%)**
- Maintain **90% attendance**
- Avoid disciplinary actions resulting in **detention, in-school, or out-of-school suspension**

Any student failing to meet these requirements will be placed on **probation** and deemed ineligible to **practice, dress out, or compete** during that period. Probation lasts until the next mid-quarter progress report or report card is issued, at which point eligibility will be re-evaluated.

ALA currently operates on the 10-point grading scale listed below:

100 – 90 = A | 89 – 80 = B | 79 – 70 = C | 69 – 60 = D | 59 below = F

Attendance at Athletic Practices and Competitions

Students are expected to be in attendance during both contests and practice sessions. Students must be in school attendance for at least half of the school day (four classes–HS and five classes–MS) to participate in practice or contests on the same day or evening. If a student is absent due to illness, injury, or another required school or family commitment, the student should make prior arrangements with the coach to obtain an excused absence. Students will be excused from team practices and/or contests during regular school vacation periods. It is the expectation of the coach and athletic department that the student will notify the coach at least 2 weeks prior to the excused absence.

A participant who fails to attend a regularly scheduled practice session or contest and receives an unexcused absence may be withheld from the next scheduled contest. If an additional unexcused absence occurs, the participant may be dismissed from the team for the remainder of the sports season. Excused and unexcused absences may affect a student-athlete's playing time, as new plays, stunts, and formations may have been missed.

Students absent from athletic practice for five or more consecutive days due to illness or injury must receive a medical release from a physician licensed to practice medicine before remittance to practice or contests. Students with potential head injuries must obtain a medical release from a physician licensed to practice medicine before remittance to practices or contests.

Playing Time

One of the most emotionally charged issues surrounding an athlete's involvement in athletics is the allocation of playing time. Although attendance, attitude, commitment, effort, and ability all play a role in determining playing time, it is ultimately the coach's decision. At ALA, our sports teams are competitive, and playing time is not equal across the team. It is the responsibility of each coach to decide who starts a contest, what position the athletes play, and how long they should play. All students, parents, and community members are asked to respect this model and the coach's decision. If a parent or student has a concern about their playing time in a match, a meeting should be scheduled with the coach to discuss the issue. If the parent or student is not satisfied with the resolution, the parent or student should follow the grievance policy set forth in this handbook.

Quitting Policy

If a student-athlete quits or refuses to participate after the first contest, they will be ineligible to try out for the **next sports season** (e.g., quitting a Fall sport means no participation in Winter sports; Spring tryouts remain open). The student is responsible for the full cost of any ordered player pack items.

Appeals due to medical or other extenuating circumstances may be submitted to the Athletic Director.

Uniform/Equipment Policy

Student-athletes are responsible for the proper care and return of all uniforms and equipment issued by the school. Items must be used **only for athletic participation** and not for personal use.

- Uniforms will be distributed **on game day** and must be **returned immediately after the contest** so coaches can collect and launder them.
- Lost, damaged, or unreturned items will result in a **replacement fee**.
- Until fees are paid, the student will be **ineligible for future athletic participation, school events, field trips, and overnight trips**.

Coaches and athletes are jointly accountable for all issued equipment.

Travel and Transportation

Parents are responsible for transporting their student-athlete to and from all practices, games, meets, and team events. While ALA has one bus, **priority will be given to the team traveling the furthest** for away games.

Coaches will communicate expected arrival times, and **parents are expected to pick up their child promptly**. Coaches are only required to stay **up to 10 minutes** past the stated return time. Repeated late pickups will be referred to Administration and may affect the student's eligibility to participate.

Code of Conduct

ALA Athletics is grounded in the RAISE values of **Respect, Accountability, Integrity, Service, and Excellence**. All members of the athletic community—students, parents, and coaches—are expected to uphold these principles at all times.

The Coach, Athletic Director, Dean of Students, and Director reserve the right to deny athletic participation to any student whose inappropriate actions or conduct are not explicitly covered in this handbook or individual team rules.

Unsportsmanlike conduct, insubordination, inappropriate behavior/conduct in school or at home or away contests, etc., are not representative of School students, teachers, or families and will not be tolerated. Exemplary actions, behavior, and conduct are expected from all parties in attendance.

Most importantly, success in athletics requires a unified effort from **coaches, student-athletes, and parents**. Parents play a critical role by offering **positive support**, respecting the coach's leadership, and modeling good sportsmanship. Trusting the coach's decisions is essential to reinforcing the life lessons athletics can teach.

Parents, players, and spectators are expected to:

- Support coaches, teammates, and officials at all times
- Demonstrate respect and sportsmanship during all events
- Commit fully to the team and its values

Unsportsmanlike conduct, **insubordination**, or **inappropriate behavior**—in school, at events, or online—will not be tolerated. The Coach, Athletic Director, Principal, or Director may deny athletic participation for conduct not in line with ALA expectations, even if not explicitly stated in this handbook.

Exemplary behavior is expected from all students, parents, and community members.

Expectations for Student-Athletes

Student-athletes are representatives of ALA and must demonstrate strong character both on and off the field. They are expected to:

- **Live the RAISE Values** in every aspect of participation
- **Respect the coach's decisions** and accept roles and responsibilities assigned to them
- **Respect teammates** and contribute to a culture of trust and unity
- Show **good sportsmanship** toward opponents, officials, and spectators
- Maintain academic **eligibility** and meet behavior and attendance standards
- **Communicate responsibly** with coaches about absences, injuries, or concerns
- **Attend all practices and games**; absences must be pre-approved by the coach

Expectations for Parents/Guardians

Parents and guardians play a critical support role in student-athlete success. They are expected to:

- **Support the coach's decisions** and refrain from coaching from the sidelines
- Maintain open and respectful **communication** with coaches and staff

- Model appropriate **behavior at games**, showing respect to officials, coaches, and players
- Provide **timely transportation** and ensure student-athletes arrive and are picked up as scheduled
- **Address concerns professionally** by first speaking with the coach or staff member involved, following the established chain of command

Expectations for Coaches

Coaches are leaders and mentors who set the tone for the athletic experience. They are expected to:

- Demonstrate **respect** for athletes, parents, officials, and opposing teams
- Create a **positive and safe environment** that fosters learning, growth, and teamwork
- Be **prepared and organized** for practices and games
- Maintain open and consistent **communication** with players and parents
- Actively **promote sportsmanship** on and off the field
- **Address and discipline inappropriate behavior** in a fair and consistent manner
- Stay current on all required **coaching certifications** and safety training

By meeting these expectations, our entire athletic community helps build a program rooted in excellence, mutual respect, and lifelong learning.

24 Hour Rule

To ensure that we handle concerns with clarity, respect, and thoughtfulness, we are implementing a 24-Hour Rule for addressing grievances following sporting events. This policy is designed to promote constructive communication and a positive environment for our students, coaches, and families.

The 24-Hour Rule:

1. Wait 24 Hours: If you have any concerns or grievances following a sporting event, we ask that you wait at least 24 hours before reaching out to coaches, staff, or school administration. This cooling-off period allows time for everyone to reflect on the situation calmly and objectively.
2. Schedule a Meeting: After the 24-hour period has passed, please feel free to contact the coach or relevant school personnel to schedule a meeting or phone call. This ensures that discussions are held at an appropriate time and in a constructive manner.
3. Maintain Respectful Communication: During any discussions, we ask all parties to communicate respectfully and focus on finding solutions that are in the best interest of our students and the school community.

We believe this policy will help us better address concerns and create a more positive atmosphere for all involved. Thank you for your cooperation and support.

Athletic Grievance Policy

If a parent or guardian has a concern, a respectful and timely conversation is encouraged—but **not before or after a game or practice**, as these are emotional times and not conducive to resolution.

Grievance Procedure:

1. Contact the coach by phone or email **the following day** to request a meeting.
2. If the coach does not respond within **48 hours**, contact the **Athletic Director** to schedule a meeting.
3. If the issue remains unresolved, follow the chain of command:
    - Coach
    - Athletic Director
    - Principal
    - Managing Director

Important Notes:

- Discussions must take place **privately** at a scheduled time—**never in front of students**.
- Coaches make playing time and team decisions based on what is best for the team and are not open to debate.
- Concerns must be addressed **at the appropriate level** before escalating. Upper-level staff will redirect concerns back to the proper step if the chain of command is not followed.

Athletics Tryout Policy

ALA Middle & High School Student-Athletes

Purpose

The purpose of this tryout policy is to establish consistent expectations and procedures for all student-athletes seeking to participate in school-sponsored athletic teams. This policy ensures a fair, transparent, and developmentally appropriate process for middle and high school sports programs

The Head Coach of the sport will determine roster sizes. Students are strongly encouraged to be at each tryout session and must be in attendance for *AT LEAST* two tryout sessions to be deemed eligible to make a team. An athlete who does not make a team may try out for another sport, provided that the tryout for that sport has not already been completed. Athletes are allowed to play only one sport at a time during a season. Only students currently enrolled at the School are eligible to attend tryouts.

Eligibility Requirements

To participate in tryouts, all student-athletes must:

1. **Be Academically Eligible**
    - Must meet the school's academic eligibility standards (e.g., passing all classes or maintaining a minimum GPA).
    - Academic standing will be verified prior to tryouts.
2. **Submit Required Documentation to Dragonfly**
    - Dragonflymax.com School code: SLH8R2
    - Update Medical & Demographic Info
    - Choose all sports interested in for the school year
    - NCHSAA Eligibility, Consent to Participate and Release Form 2025-26
    - NCHSAA PPE Health History Form (2025 Version)
    - NCHSAA - PPE - Physical Examination Form
    - NCHSAA Gfeller-Waller Student-Athlete & Parent/Legal Custodian Concussion Info Sheet
    - NCHSAA - PPE - Medical Eligibility Form
3. **Demonstrate Good Conduct**
    - Must have no recent major behavioral infractions.
    - Must follow the school's code of conduct and RAISE values.
4. **Attend Tryout Sessions in Full**

    Student-athletes must attend all scheduled tryout sessions unless excused by the coach in advance (due to illness, family emergency, etc.).

Tryout Process

- Tryouts will be held over three days. Student-Athlete's must attend a minimum of **two sessions** to ensure adequate evaluation.
- Coaches may assess student-athletes using a rubric that may include:
    - Skill level and fundamental ability
    - Athleticism and fitness
    - Coachability and attitude
    - Teamwork and communication
    - Work ethic and effort
- Coaches may invite external evaluators or assistants for objective assessment when needed.
- All decisions will be made based on performance during tryouts—not past participation or external influence.

Team Selection & Notification

- After the final tryout session, coaches will communicate team selections within **48–72 hours**.
- Roster decisions are final and will not be subject to appeal.
- Athletes not selected are encouraged to meet with the coach to receive feedback and be considered for future opportunities or development programs.

Additional Considerations

- **Returning Athletes** are not guaranteed placement and must try out each season.
- **Multi-Sport Athletes** may coordinate overlapping tryout schedules with athletic staff.
- **Injured Athletes** may be offered an extended evaluation period at the coach's discretion with medical documentation.

Coach Responsibility

- Maintain transparency and fairness in evaluations.
- Clearly communicate expectations and timelines to all tryout participants.
- Submit final rosters to the athletic director by the set deadline.

Parent & Guardian Involvement

- Parents/guardians are welcome to attend an informational meeting prior to tryouts but are not permitted to attend or observe tryout sessions.
- Communication about team selection must go through appropriate channels (coach, athletic director) after a 24-hour "cooling-off" period if concerns arise.

Inclement Weather Hot Weather Guidelines for Outdoor Sports

All outdoor sports should follow the Inclement/Hot Weather Guidelines found at
https://www.nchsaa.org/health-and-safety-physicials/

These guidelines are reviewed/revised annually by the Sports Medicine Advisory Committee of the NCHSAA.

Starting a New Club at School

ALA offers a variety of opportunities for students to engage in clubs and extracurricular activities. Oversight of all student clubs is managed by the Assistant principals. Students interested in forming a new club to meet specific interests or goals must follow the procedures outlined below:

1. **Acquire sponsorship from a staff member.** Every club must have a faculty member willing to serve as the advisor/sponsor for the club. The faculty member must agree to attend all club meetings.
2. **Recruit members.** Each club must have no less than three members to be recognized as a club.
3. **Develop the club's vision/objective.** The club's vision must be aligned with the mission of the School. The club must also clearly state its objective.
4. **Present the club's vision to the administration for approval.** Once the club has a faculty advisor, members, and a vision/objective, it must be presented to the student's assistant principal for approval. This should be done before the club participates in any events on or off campus. Administration will notify the faculty advisor within one week of the presentation with approval by Administration.
5. **Submit the club's documents to the Assistant Principal for initial review and consideration. The Assistant Principal will review and give final approval. All required documents should be submitted by email no later than 10 school days following the club approval notification.**
    - Club Information Form
    - Action Plan/Events Calendar
6. **A club application will be denied for the following reasons:**
    - Serving the same or similar purpose as another club that currently exists;
    - Requiring mandatory fees from members;
    - Requiring transportation off campus;
    - Requiring off-campus duties to be functional or to fulfill the club's purpose;
    - Requiring activities that must obtain permission slips; and/or
    - Requiring physical fitness waivers or medical clearance.

7. Clubs may not raise money for their operation and may only raise money for charitable purposes with the written approval of the Administration.

The School shall comply with *the federal Equal Access Act, which guarantees inclusion and non-discrimination with respect to extracurricular clubs. The School does not discriminate nor sanction the views/objectives/'vision of any club.*

Clubs/Organizations

Club/Organization	Grade Level(s)	Sponsor
Animation Club	6-12	Hue Zhang
Aviator Advocates	6-12	Damien Perez
Black Student Union	9-12	Trenee Fennell (Martin) &Nicole Kimble
Cultural Enrichment Club	TBD	Jackie Forte & Tanya McPherson
Drama Club	9-12	Samantha Anderson
E-Sports	6-12	Michael Markofski
International Thespian Society	9-12	Brianna Grimm
Japanese Club	9-12	Michael Markofski
National Honor Society	9-12	Felicia Wickes
National Junior Honor Society	6-8	Erica Westbrook
Theatre/Arts	9-12	Samantha Anderson & Brianna Grimm

Robotics	6-8	Megan Williams
Rugby-Sandhills Sharks	6-12	Michael Markofski
Science Olympiad	6-8	Jettie McGraw
Student Government Association (S.G.A)	6-8	Rylie Torretti
Student Government Association (S.G.A)	9-12	Catherine Griffin
Sportsman Club	6-12	TBD
Tech Crew	6-12	Sara Boileau

Video Monitoring

School recognizes that the use of video monitoring/surveillance systems is warranted to maintain campus security, to increase student and employee safety and to assist with the enforcement of the school's policies and rules concerning student and employee conduct, safety and security.

School buildings and grounds may be equipped with video monitoring devices, but such devices shall not be placed where there are reasonable expectations of personal privacy, such as in locker rooms, changing rooms, nursing and health room areas, or bathrooms.

Use of Video Recordings

- Video recordings will only be utilized for official School business.
- Administrators or the Board may use a video recording of actions by students as evidence in any disciplinary action brought against students arising out of the student's conduct on or about school property.
- The video surveillance recordings may not be used in connection with instructional observations of professional staff. This policy does not prohibit the administration from establishing other methods of videotaping lessons for the purpose of instructional observation.
- Video surveillance recordings of students, staff and/or others may be reviewed for the purpose of determining adherence to school policy and rules.
- Such recordings may be used to detect or deter criminal offenses that occur in view of the camera(s) and may be shared with law enforcement officials.
- Video surveillance recordings will be released to others only in accordance with applicable state and/or federal law or regulation.

Student Camera Phones/ Recording Devices

Students are prohibited from audio or visual recording of teachers, classrooms, lessons, or students while on campus during school hours unless express permission is given by their teacher, an administrator, or the Managing Director.

Student Search Policy and Procedures

To maintain order in the school and to protect the welfare of students and the school community, school officials have the authority to conduct reasonable searches of students and to seize students' unauthorized materials. Any searches or seizures must be conducted in accordance with the standards described in this policy and any other applicable legal requirements. All school officials carrying out a search or seizure are expected to be knowledgeable about the legal rights of students and the appropriate procedures for conducting the search or seizure. A search must be justified at its inception, permissible in scope, and conducted using narrowly tailored methods to be minimally intrusive. School officials shall make reasonable and good-faith efforts to investigate allegations of misconduct before a student search is conducted.

This policy applies to searches conducted on school grounds, in school facilities, or at school-sponsored events. This policy does not apply to technology, which is addressed through other policies.

Searches Based on Individualized Reasonable Suspicion

A student or the student's possessions may be searched when a school official has reasonable suspicion that the search will turn up evidence that the particular student has violated or is violating a specific law, expectation, or school rule. This reasonable suspicion must be based upon specific and articulable facts, which have been acquired through reliable and/or corroborated information from employees, students, law enforcement officers, or other credible sources, or upon visual or other evidence (e.g., the smell of alcohol or marijuana, an alert from a metal detector or drug dog) viewed in light of the totality of the circumstances and the school official's professional judgment. The scope of the search must be reasonably related to the objectives of the search, and the methods used to conduct the search must be narrowly tailored to be minimally intrusive in light of the age and sex of the student and nature of the infraction.

Reasonable suspicion is not required if a student's parent or guardian freely and voluntarily consents to the search of their person or possessions.
In accordance with the standards described above, the Board authorizes the following types of searches based on reasonable suspicion:

Searches of Personal Effects

School officials may search a student's desk, locker, and/or personal effects, including but not limited to purses, book bags, and clothing not currently being worn by the student. School officials may also request that the student empty pockets, remove shoes and outerwear. School officials may also search a student’s personal electronic devices pursuant to the school's Wireless Communication Device policy.

Searches of Motor Vehicles

Students are permitted to park on school premises as a matter of privilege, not by right. The school retains the authority to conduct routine patrols of student parking lots and inspect student automobile exteriors on school property. School officials may search the interior of a student’s vehicle based on reasonable suspicion. Such patrols and inspections may be conducted without notice, without student consent, and without a search warrant.

Seized Items

Any illegal contraband seized by school officials shall be promptly turned over to the proper law enforcement authorities.

Failure to Cooperate

A student's failure to cooperate with a reasonable search or seizure as provided in this policy will be considered a violation of the expected standard of behavior, and will subject the student to appropriate consequences.

Academic Policies and Procedures

Project-Based Learning (PBL)

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

Essential Project Design Elements include:

- **Key Knowledge, Understanding, and Success Skills** - The project is focused on student learning goals, including standards-based content and skills such as critical thinking/problem solving, collaboration, and self-management.
- **Challenging Problem or Question** - The project is framed by a meaningful problem to solve or a question to answer, at the appropriate level of challenge.
- **Sustained Inquiry** - Students engage in a rigorous, extended process of asking questions, finding resources, and applying information.
- **Authenticity** - The project features real-world context, tasks and tools, quality standards, or impact – or speaks to students' personal concerns, interests, and issues in their lives.
- **Student Voice & Choice** - Students make some decisions about the project, including how they work and what they create.
- **Reflection** - Students and teachers reflect on learning, the effectiveness of their inquiry and project activities, the quality of student work, obstacles and how to overcome them.
- **Critique & Revision** - Students give, receive, and use feedback to improve their process and products.

Grading Systems

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

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

Grading Scale

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

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

Grading Parameters

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

The following grading parameters are in place and will be followed by all teachers at Ascend Leadership Academy:

- **Make-up policy –** when a student is absent, the student has **3 instructional days** to turn in missed work upon returning to school. The day the student returns to school is Day 1 of the 3 days.
- **Late work –** students have **3 instructional days** after the due date to turn in assignments. Each day the work is late, 10 points will be deducted from the grade. At the end of the third day, a zero may be given for that assignment.
    - Teachers can require that late work still be turned in before a student moves to the next step of an assignment or project, even if that work will no longer receive credit.
- **Academic Dishonesty / Plagiarism –** Any act of academic dishonesty may result in loss of credit for the assignment and/or other disciplinary action. Depending on the nature of the assignment and dishonesty, a teacher may offer to let the student complete the assignment or an alternate assignment for a maximum grade of 50%.
- **Group work -** When completing team/group assignments, students shall not be penalized for the incomplete work of others. In some situations, the student could receive a group grade and an individual grade. Teachers will determine whether they assign a group and individual grade.
- **Extra credit -** a challenge question on a quiz or test or a higher-level requirement on a project may be given. However, extra credit assignments intended to raise overall grades or replace missing or low-grade assignments are not allowed. Points should not be given for bringing in classroom supplies, returning forms that require parent signatures, etc.
- **Categories and Weighting -** Teachers will have autonomy when determining grade categories weights/percentages. (classwork, homework, Tests, etc.) Teachers will communicate these weights/percentages with ALA's administration and parents at the beginning of each school year.
- **Final Grade -** may include tests, quizzes, projects, group work, labs, research papers, homework, class participation, classwork, etc. The final grade for the first three quarters will not be less than 50.

High School Pathway Selection Policy

Ascend Leadership Academy provides multiple high school pathways designed to support students in pursuing rigorous academics, college preparation, career readiness, and individualized postsecondary goals. These pathways allow students to focus their coursework in areas aligned with their interests, abilities, and future plans while ensuring all students meet state and school graduation requirements.

Purpose

The purpose of the High School Pathway program is to provide structured academic and career-focused options that support student success after graduation. Each pathway includes a sequence of courses and expectations that guide students through high school while allowing them to develop specialized skills and experiences.

Available Pathways

Ascend Leadership Academy offers the following high school pathways:

- **Advanced Placement (AP) Capstone Pathway** – A rigorous academic pathway designed for students seeking advanced coursework and college-level academic preparation. Students complete multiple AP courses including AP Seminar and AP Research.

- **College and Career Promise (CCCC) Pathway** – A pathway that allows students to earn college credit through dual enrollment courses while completing high school graduation requirements.
- **Double Digital Media CTE Pathway** – A career and technical education pathway that allows students to complete two CTE concentrations with an emphasis on digital media, technology, and related career fields.
- **Early Graduation and Work Pathway** – A pathway designed for students who plan to complete graduation requirements early and transition into the workforce while completing the required senior project and internship components.

****All pathways require students to meet the school's graduation requirement of 23 credits and maintain a full course load each semester unless otherwise approved by administration.****

Eligibility

Eligibility requirements for each pathway are based on the academic criteria outlined in the High School Pathways program description. These criteria may include factors such as:

- Performance on state assessments
- Grade point average
- Teacher recommendation
- Classroom performance
- Completion of prerequisite coursework

Students interested in specific pathways must meet the stated requirements in order to participate.

Students in the AP Capstone Pathway are identified beginning in 8th grade based on academic performance and are encouraged to continue in this pathway upon entering high school.

Students in College and Career Promise pathway must have a cumulative grade point average of 2.8.

Pathway Selection Process

Students formally select their high school pathway during the course registration process at the end of 10th grade. As part of this process:

1. Students will review pathway options with school staff and counselors.
2. Students will complete a High School Pathway Selection Form indicating their chosen pathway.
3. Parents or guardians must review and sign the form to acknowledge the student's pathway selection and expectations.

Commitment to Pathway

Selection of a pathway represents a commitment to the sequence of courses and expectations associated with that pathway.

Once a pathway is selected at the end of sophomore year:

- Students are expected to remain in their selected pathway through graduation.
- Changes to a pathway may only occur during the following year's course registration period or with administrative approval.

- Requests for pathway changes outside of the registration window will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and must be approved by school administration.

Counseling and Support

School counselors and administrators will work with students to ensure that pathway selections align with academic performance, graduation requirements, and postsecondary goals. Students and families are encouraged to communicate with school staff if questions arise regarding pathway expectations or course sequencing.

Graduation Requirements

Regardless of pathway selection, all students must complete the required coursework and credit requirements established by Ascend Leadership Academy in order to graduate.

Student Promotion and Retention

ALA's Managing Director has the authority to promote and to retain students based upon the standards set by the Board of Directors and by the State Board of Education. Students are required to meet promotion standards that include demonstrated grade level proficiency on local assessments, standardized tests, report cards, and student work. To be promoted to the next grade levels, students in all grades should be proficient in reading and mathematics, which may be demonstrated through North Carolina End-of-Grade tests, school assessments, student portfolio of work, and report card grades. A promotion decision should not be made solely based on a state assessment.

6th – 8th Grades

The Managing Director shall consider the following criteria when making decisions regarding student promotions:

1. Satisfactory performance on all relevant state End-of-Grade (EOG) assessments
2. Passing final grades in core academic classes
3. Satisfactory performance on PBL project content and presentations
4. Satisfactory classroom performance on all teacher-initiated standards and criteria for advancement and promotion in core academic classes
5. Daily Attendance records

9th – 12th Grades

Classification as Freshman: All students are classified as Freshmen in their first two semesters of high school, regardless of credits earned

Classification as Sophomore: A student must have passed the number of units equal to his/her maximum potential less than 2 units. One credit must be English I.

Classification as Junior: A student must have passed the number of units equal to his/her maximum potential less than 3 units. One credit must be English II.

Classification as Senior: Enough earned course credits to be within reach of graduation by the end of that school year. One credit must be English III.

*Maximum potential is defined as an individual student's opportunity to have earned high school credit. For example, a freshman enrolled at ALA for a full academic year has the maximum potential to earn 8 credits per year. To be classified as a sophomore, that student must pass 6 credits, one of which must be English I.

Students With Disabilities

To the extent possible, students with disabilities shall be held to the same promotion standards as all other students. However, for students with IEPs who take alternative assessments in lieu of the EOG or the EOC tests in their respective grades and/or high school courses, promotion decisions shall be based on criteria as recommended by the IEP team. Such decisions may or may not be tied to passing or failing course grades and/or other promotion requirements.

All intervention strategies and other opportunities, benefits, and resources that are made available to students without disabilities shall be made available to students with disabilities who are subject to these promotion standards. Such opportunities must be in addition to the special education services provided to students with disabilities.

Each IEP team, with the student's parent(s) or guardian(s) as members (and the student himself/herself as member, also, where appropriate) shall work together to determine the appropriate course of study for that student.

Retention

If a student appears likely to be retained, then the parent/guardian of the student shall receive at least two (2) notices. The first notice may be a conference; the second notice must be in writing and must be provided by the end of the third quarter. The Director's office must provide in writing an official notice of retention to the parent/guardian by the last day of school.

Report Cards and Progress Reports

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

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

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

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

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

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

Acceptable Use Policy

Ascend Leadership Academy's Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) governs the responsible use of the internet and school-issued Chromebooks for educational purposes. Access to these resources is a privilege, and users must comply with guidelines to ensure a safe, productive, and ethical learning environment. The AUP outlines acceptable and

unacceptable uses, emphasizing online safety, digital citizenship, and the protection of school resources and other users. Violations of the AUP may result in disciplinary action, including the loss of network or Chromebook privileges.

General Guidelines:

- **Educational Purposes:** Chromebooks are to be used for assigned classwork, projects, and educational activities.
- **School-Related Collaboration:** Using Chromebooks to collaborate with other students and teachers on school-related projects using approved online tools is acceptable.
- **Proper Care:** Students are expected to keep the Chromebook clean and in good working condition and report any damage or malfunctions.
- **Preparedness:** Keeping the Chromebook charged and ready for use in class.
- **Following Instructions:** Students must follow all instructions and guidelines provided by teachers and staff regarding Chromebook use.

Internet Safety:

Ascend Leadership Academy is committed to providing a safe online environment for all students. In compliance with the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA), we utilize technology protection measures, including content filtering, to block access to inappropriate material. Students are expected to practice safe browsing by using the internet for educational purposes, avoiding harmful content, and protecting personal information, as detailed in the Acceptable Use Policy."

Prohibited Activities: The following activities are strictly prohibited. For a complete list and further details, please refer to the Acceptable Use Policy (AUP).

- **Inappropriate Content:** Accessing obscene, pornographic, or harmful material.
  Cyberbullying/Harassment: Threatening, harassing, or bullying others online.
- **Unauthorized Access:** Hacking, bypassing security, or disrupting the network.
- **Privacy Violations:** Disclosing personal information without authorization.
- **Copyright Infringement:** Violating copyright laws.
- **Account Misuse:** Using another user's account.
- **Circumventing Filters:** Attempting to bypass content filters.
- **Unauthorized Changes:** Installing unauthorized software or damaging devices.
- **Personal Use:** Using school technology for non-educational purposes (unless permitted).
- **Unauthorized Connections:** Using personal cellular connections on campus.

Student Responsibilities

- Bring the Chromebook to school each day, fully charged.
- When not in use at school or at home, the Chromebook should be closed and left on a sturdy flat surface, if not in a backpack. Backpacks should not be left in a location where they may be kicked, stepped on or dropped as this may result in damage to the chromebook.
- Close the Chromebook screen before moving it.
- Do not lean on the top of the device when it is closed.
- Do not place anything near the device that could put pressure on the screen.
- Do not poke the screen
- Do not place anything on the keyboard before closing the lid.
- Clean the screen with a soft dry cloth or anti-static cloth.
- Do not bump the device against tables, walls, car doors, floors, etc. as it will eventually break the screen.
- When moving around the classroom or in the halls, the Chromebook should be closed and carried under the student’s arm or in his or her backpack.

- Students should not watch videos or play games on the Chromebook if they are not seated. Students should not watch videos or listen to music with their Chromebook while walking through the halls between classes or around the classroom.
- Students should only touch and use their own assigned chromebook.
- Avoid using any part of the screen to carry the Chromebook
- Students should not pick or pull at the keys, labels, or bezel surrounding the screen.
- Use the Chromebook for educational purposes only. Chromebooks should only be used as a computer. Don't use the Chromebook for any other purpose other than assigned work and things that computers are designed to do.
- Follow the school's Acceptable Use Policy (AUP).
- Keep the Chromebook in good condition and report any damaged or lost Chromebooks immediately.
- To conserve battery life the chromebook should be shut down before moving it.
- Chromebooks must never be left in a car or unsupervised area.
- Never share login credentials with others.
- Other than school appropriate, decorative stickers, students are not to put or mark anything else on the Chromebook. Stickers must only be placed on the case and must be easily removed
- Do not eat or drink around the Chromebook.
- Return the Chromebook at the end of the academic year or upon withdrawal from the school.
- Students may be selected at random by teachers or administrators to provide their device for inspection for damages or misuse.

Failure to comply with the general policies listed above may result in the loss of 1:1 privileges for a time period to be determined by the school administration.

Parent/Guardian Responsibilities

- Encourage proper care and handling of the Chromebook.
- Monitor appropriate use at home.
- Ensure the Chromebook is charged and ready for school each day.
- Report any issues or damages to the school promptly.
- Support the school's digital citizenship initiatives.
- Pay for any damages to the device caused by the student

Device Care Guidelines

- Keep the Chromebook in its protective case at all times.
- Do not eat or drink near the device.
- Avoid extreme temperatures and direct sunlight.
- Do not attempt to repair or modify the Chromebook.
- Keep the device clean and free of stickers or decorations that could damage it.

Access to Information

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

Acceptable Uses

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

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

Unacceptable Uses

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

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

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

Safety and Ethical Use

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

Email, forums, instant messaging, and other online messaging

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

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

Unauthorized access / hacking and general unlawful activity

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

Academic Integrity

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

ALA 1:1 Technology Policy (7-12)

Device Program and Access

A. High School & Upper Middle School (7-12): 1:1 Take-Home Model

The 1:1 Take Home Program is designed to provide students with 24/7 access to digital tools to support advanced coursework and college readiness. The 1:1 Chromebook Program allows students to take home a school-issued Chromebook for educational purposes. The goal is to support digital learning, facilitate research, and enhance collaboration between students and teachers. Ascend Leadership Academy requires all students to use the school-issued Chromebook for their coursework.

Device Distribution:

Students will receive their Chromebook on the first day of the academic year or upon enrollment at Ascend Leadership Academy. To receive the device, students and parents must review and sign the 1:1 Chromebook Program Agreement Form, view and complete the Student Responsibilities Edpuzzle, and choose their participation in the technology access charge program. The Chromebook will be assigned to the student for the entire school year. The same device will follow the student until graduation or withdrawal from the school. The device must be returned upon graduation, withdrawal, or the end of the academic year.

Charging Policy (New for 2026–27): ALA does not provide or issue new chargers with the 1:1 Chromebook program.

- **Returning Students (Grades 9–12):** Retained their chargers from the 25/26 school year. If a student does not have their charger, they must provide their own.
- **Returning Students (Grades 7–8):** Turned in their chargers and will receive them back at the start of the year.
- **Newly Enrolled Students (Grades 7–12):** Will be issued a charger upon enrollment.

    - Purchase from ALA: For your convenience, compatible high-speed USB-C chargers will be available for purchase through the front office for $20. *(Please note: ALA reserves the right to adjust this price based on changing market costs.)*
    - Third-Party Purchase: Parents may choose to purchase a charger from a third-party retailer. To ensure the safety and longevity of the device battery, the replacement charger must be a minimum of 45W and utilize a USB-C connection.

- Students are expected to arrive at school with a fully charged device daily.

Technology Access Charge Structure and Benefits:

The annual Technology Access Charge ensures students have full access to their assigned school device, required instructional software licenses, and coverage under the ALA Self-Funded Device Insurance Plan.

Families with multiple upper school students at ALA are eligible for a multi-student discount. Those who qualify for free/reduced lunch will either have a reduced cost or automatically qualify for the access charge program benefits.

Technology Access Charge Schedule & Eligibility:

Enrollment and payments for the Technology Access and Insurance Protection program are processed during registration and must be completed by August 30th.

To support our families, students who are actively enrolled in the federal free and reduced lunch program will automatically receive adjusted rates:

- **Standard Protection Rate: $80** annual non-refundable tech access charge per student.
- **Automatically Reduced Rate (Qualifying for Reduced Lunch): $40** annual charge per student.
- **Automatically Waived Rate (Qualifying for Free Lunch):** Fee is fully **waived**; student automatically receives standard program protection benefits.

Accounts that remain unpaid after August 30th will be registered as "Declined Protection" for the school year. Families who do not participate assume full out-of-pocket financial responsibility for all device repairs or replacements.

Loaner Device & Take-Home Policies:

- **Enrolled Students (Fee Paid):** Students covered by the insurance plan will receive a take-home loaner device while their primary device is being repaired.
- **Non-Enrolled Students (Unpaid/Declined):** Students without insurance protection will **not** be permitted to take a school device off campus. Instead, they must check out a "classroom-only" loaner at the start of each class period and return it before the bell rings. Families who decline take-home privileges assume full responsibility for ensuring their student has a means to complete any digital coursework outside of school hours.

- Chromebook Replacement: $250
- Screen Replacement: $105
- Keyboard/Missing Keys Replacement: $45
- Replacing Battery: $75
- Plastic LCD Bezel or Hinges: $20

Students who are not enrolled in the technology access program will be provided with a loaner device for use during the school day when their issued device is out for repair. In this case students will be required to return the loaner before leaving campus each day. Loaner devices for home use are only available to students participating in the access program.

ALA Self Funded Device Insurance Overview:

- Coverage Includes:
    - 1 instance of accidental damage per year.
    - Damage beyond this instance may incur additional charges.
    - Any purposeful or neglectful damage will not be covered, and the student (or family) will be responsible for the full cost of repairs or replacement.

- Accidental Damage vs. Neglect or Intentional Damage
    - **Accidental Damage:** Accidental damage refers to unintentional harm to the Chromebook that results from circumstances beyond the student's control. This type of damage is typically unavoidable and occurs while the device is being used in a normal, everyday manner.
    - Examples of Accidental Damage:
        - Dropping the device accidentally during regular use (e.g., in a backpack or on a desk

        - A device that malfunctions due to a manufacturer defect that was not evident when it was issued.
    - **Neglect:** Neglect refers to damage resulting from improper care, lack of proper maintenance, or failure to follow guidelines provided by the school for the safe use of the device. While it is not intentional, neglect typically occurs due to a lack of attention to care or maintenance.
    - Examples of Neglect:
        - Not using the protective case provided by the school, leading to easily avoidable damage.
        - Allowing the device to come into contact with hazardous substances (e.g., putting food or drink near the device and not properly cleaning spills).

    - **Intentional Damage:** Intentional damage is any damage to the Chromebook that occurs as a result of deliberate actions meant to harm or destroy the device.
    - Examples of Intentional Damage:
        - Throwing the device, purposely dropping it, or intentionally damaging the screen.
        - Using tools or objects to physically break or damage the device, such as scratching the screen or prying off keys.
        - Tampering with internal components (e.g., attempting to take the device apart).
        - Deliberately breaking or damaging the Chromebook in any other way with the intent to harm the device.
- Procedure for Reporting Damage:
    - Students should report damage immediately to the designated tech coordinator or school official.
    - A Damage Report Form should be submitted, including a description of the damage and how it occurred.
    - The school will assess the damage and determine whether it falls under the category of accidental damage, neglect, or purposeful damage.
    - If the damage is covered under accidental damage, the school will facilitate repair at no cost.
    - If the damage is due to neglect or purposeful actions, the family will be billed for repairs or replacement.

Device Ownership:

The Chromebook issued as part of the 1:1 Chromebook Take Home Program is the property of Ascend Leadership Academy. This means:

- The school retains full ownership of the device at all times
- The student is granted permission to use the Chromebook for educational purposes
- The Chromebook must be returned to the school when requested
- School officials may inspect the device at any time
- There should be no expectation of privacy regarding its contents
- Do not store personal information or data on the Chromebook
- You must return the Chromebook:
    - At the end of each school year
    - If you transfer to another school
    - Upon graduation
    - When requested by school administrators
    - Failure to return the device may result in fines or other consequences.

A. Lower Middle School (Grades 5-6) Shared Classroom Carts

To ensure hardware longevity and focused classroom instruction, 5-6 grade students utilize a shared-access model.

- **Access Model:** Technology is accessed via designated Chromebook carts located in core and elective classrooms. **Devices do not go home.**
- **Classroom Procedures:** Students will use the specific device number assigned to them by the teacher in that classroom.
- **Charging:** when teachers ask the students to return the devices to the cart they must be put in their assigned slot and plugged into the cart charger.
- **Care & Stewardship:** Students are responsible for the device while in their possession. Any damage found at the start of a period must be reported immediately to the teacher to avoid liability.
- **Damage Policy:** Parents/Guardians are financially responsible for the full cost of repair or replacement if a device is damaged through **intentional misuse, vandalism, or gross neglect** (e.g., picking off keys, drawing on the chassis, or purposeful dropping).
- **Chargers:** Chargers are semi-permanently installed in classroom carts and are never to be removed by students.

Loaner Device Policy (7-12)

Purpose	• To support uninterrupted learning, ALA provides loaner Chromebooks to students whose assigned devices are under repair.
Eligibility	• Available to students who report issues through the tech support ticket system. • Issued at the technology department's discretion, based on availability and responsible use history. • Students with unpaid damage fees may be ineligible until fees are resolved.
Availability	• Loaners are limited and prioritized for critical academic needs.
Checkout Process	• Submit a tech support ticket. • Return assigned device when receiving a loaner (unless instructed otherwise).
Student Responsibilities	• Handle the loaner with care and follow the Acceptable Use Policy. • Prevent damage, loss, or theft. • Return the loaner promptly when the original device is ready. • Report issues immediately to the tech department.
Return Procedures	• Loaners must be returned to retrieve the repaired device. • Devices should be in original condition, minus normal wear. • Late returns may result in consequences.
Liability	• Parents/guardians are financially responsible for loss or damage due to neglect or intentional harm. • Repair/replacement costs will be determined by the tech department.
Loss, Theft, & Damage Procedures	

Loss/Theft	• Report immediately to the tech department. • File a police report and submit a copy within 5 school days. • Cooperate with investigations.
Damage	• Report to a teacher or tech department immediately. • Complete a Damage Report Form with: **ala.vizor.cloud** • **Description, date, time, cause and witness (if any).**
Assessment of Damage The school's technology department will assess the reported damage to determine its cause and extent. Damage will be categorized as one of the following	
Accidental Damage:	Unintentional damage resulting from normal use (as defined in the "ALA Self Funded Device Insurance Overview" section).
Neglect:	Damage resulting from improper care or failure to follow device care guidelines (as defined in the "ALA Self Funded Device Insurance Overview" section).
Intentional Damage:	Damage caused by deliberate actions with the intent to harm or destroy the device (as defined in the "ALA Self Funded Device Insurance Overview" section).
Financial Responsibility	Parents/guardians are financially responsible for the repair or replacement of the Chromebook in cases of loss, theft (if due to negligence, as determined by the school), neglect, or intentional damage.

ALA Self Funded Device Insurance:

- The annual technology access charge includes enrollment in the ALA Self Funded Device Insurance Plan.
- The insurance plan covers **one** instance of accidental damage per year.
- There is a lifetime maximum of **two** instances of accidental damage covered by the plan (across the student's entire time in the program).
- Any damage beyond the covered instances or any damage due to neglect or intentional actions will result in the parent/guardian being responsible for the full cost of repair or replacement.

Schedule of Costs:

The following is the schedule of costs for repairs or replacements not covered by the insurance plan:

- Chromebook Replacement $250
- Power Supply/Cord Replacement $30
- Screen Replacement $105
- Keyboard/Missing Keys Replacement $45
- Replacing Battery $75
- Plastic LCD Bezel or Hinges $20

Costs may vary depending on the extent of the damage and the availability of parts.

Consequences

In addition to financial responsibility, students may face disciplinary action for:

- Neglect or intentional damage to the Chromebook.
- Failure to report damage, loss, or theft in a timely manner.
- Misuse of the Chromebook that contributes to its damage or loss.

Disciplinary actions may include e.g., loss of technology privileges, detention, suspension

Cellular Phones and other Wireless Communication Devices Policy

Section 1. Overview

North Carolina recently joined more than 20 other states and the District of Columbia by passing a law that restricts the use of cellular phones and other wireless communication devices during instructional time. HB 959, a bipartisan bill that Governor Josh Stein signed into law on July 1, 2025 requires each board of public school units (which include charter schools) to establish a wireless communication policy that "prohibit[s] students from using, displaying, or having a wireless communication device turned on during instructional time."

The law and this policy recognize that such devices can disrupt the learning environment and should therefore only be permitted by students in limited and clearly defined circumstances.

A Wireless Communication Device is a wireless, portable device that can provide voice, messaging, or other data communication between two or more parties. The following is a non-exhaustive list of wireless communication devices prohibited by this policy: cellular phones, laptops, gaming devices, smart watches, and any personal technology device.

The instructional day for all students begins at 8:10am and runs to 3:10pm. **Parents should have no expectation of reaching their students via text or cell phone during those hours.**

Section 2. Exceptions

Wireless Communication Devices are not allowed during instructional time except for the following situations:

1) When expressly authorized by a teacher for educational purposes.
    a. A teacher must clearly state the intended educational purpose to students and shall have documentation available to support the use (e.g., lesson plans detailing why devices would be needed).

    b. The teacher shall only allow devices for the duration and purpose allowed.
2) When expressly authorized for a teacher for use in an emergency.

3) When required by the student's individualized education program or Section 504 plan;

4) As required to manage a student's health care, in accordance with a documented medical condition.
    a. Students who need wireless communication devices to manage health care must request access from the school and as part of that request, must provide documentation from a licensed medical professional outlining the necessity of access to the device.

    b. If approved by administration, students with documented medical condition(s) shall be granted permission to use the wireless communication device only as necessary for their condition.

    c. The school shall make accommodations as needed to ensure the student has access to their device but without compromising the educational environment.

Section 3. Procedures

Students may keep their wireless communication devices on their person, but any device (including a watch) must be turned off and put away. Simply having the device on airplane or silent mode is not sufficient and could subject the student to discipline. Any student found in violation of this policy shall be subject to discipline in accordance with the Code of Conduct. Staff members *may* give students permission to call or text parents during the school day for an emergency and schedule changes. For non-emergency situations, students should use ALA's office/classroom phones to contact parents or guardians.

Section 4. Consequences

The first violation of this policy is a Level 1 violation under the Student Code of Conduct (see below). Disciplinary measures can include parent/guardian notification; Saturday-school detention; permanent ban of wireless communication devices on campus; and/or ISS. Repeated violations of this policy will lead to more serious progressive consequences in accordance with the school's Code of Conduct.

1.7 Misuse of Electronic Communication Devices: Unauthorized possession, displaying or using a cell phone, pager, or other electronic communication device during the school day without the consent of the principal or his/her designee.

Section 5. Legal Authority

This policy aligns with North Carolina General Statute § 115C-76.100.

Exceptional Children

The mission of the School's Department of Exceptional Children is to ensure that children and youth with disabilities develop educationally, socially, emotionally, and vocationally through the provision of a free, appropriate education and related services in the least restrictive environment. We will continue to educate, support, and advocate for students with disabilities and assist them in achieving their true potential. The School adheres to the North Carolina's Policies Governing Services for Children with Disabilities, which is published by the Department of Public Instruction and can be found here: https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/classroom-resources/exceptional-children.

Through the Individual Education Program (IEP) process, Ascend Leadership Academy (ALA) offers a free, appropriate public education to each of its students with special needs. This includes delivering the Occupational Course of Study courses to our high school students if determined to be appropriate by the student's IEP Team. Further information about occupational course of study courses can be found at the OCS website maintained by the North Carolina Department of Public
Instruction: https://ec.ncpublicschools.gov/disability-resources/intellectual-disabilities/occupational-course-of-study.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA) is the federal law. Article 9, Section 115C of the North Carolina General Statutes is the State law concerning the education of students with disabilities.

Who does this Program serve?
Children with disabilities include those with autism, deaf-blindness, deafness, developmental delay, serious emotional disability, hearing impairment, intellectual disability, multiple disabilities, other health impairment, orthopedic impairment, specific learning disabilities, speech and/or language impairment, traumatic brain injury, and visual impairment.

What is an IEP?
The IEP, Individualized Education Program, is a written document developed for each public-school child eligible for services. The IEP is created through a team effort and reviewed at least once a year.

Before an IEP can be written, your child **must** be eligible for special education. By federal law, a multidisciplinary team must determine that (1) the child has a disability **and** (2) the child requires special education and related services to benefit from the general education program.

The School's Exceptional Children programs are designed to support students with disabilities as they acquire academic, social, and functional skills.

For more information: https://ec.ncpublicschools.gov/parent-resources/ecparenthandbook.pdf
Who should I contact if I suspect my child may have a disability?
Contact your building principal or guidance counselor.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is a civil rights law that protects individuals with disabilities from discrimination. Section 504 protects qualifying students by prohibiting them from being excluded from public schools or denied the benefits of public schools because of their disability. For more information, visit the Department of Education website at http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/504faq.html
What is A 504 Plan?
A 504 plan provides equal access to educational services for students with a qualified disability. It is designed to make appropriate changes to the classroom environment or the delivery of instruction to provide the student with equal access to the educational curriculum. This plan is individualized to the needs of the student.

What is considered a disability under Section 504?
A student must have a physical or mental impairment. The Department of Education describes "physical or mental impairment" as follows:

> (A) Any physiological disorder or condition, cosmetic disfigurement, or anatomical loss affecting one or more of the following body systems: neurological; musculoskeletal; special sense organs; respiratory, including speech organs; cardiovascular; reproductive; digestive, genito-urinary; hemic and lymphatic; skin; and endocrine; or
>
> (B) any mental or psychological disorder, such as mental retardation, organic brain syndrome, emotional or mental illness, or specific learning disabilities. 34 CFR 104.3(j)(2)(i).

The disabling condition must substantially limit one or more major life activity: A "major life activity" includes (but is not limited to) learning, concentrating, thinking, communicating, reading, walking, seeing, breathing, eating, lifting, bending, and primary bodily functions/systems (neurological, immune, respiratory, etc.)

Who should I contact if I suspect my child may have a qualified disability and needs a 504 Accommodations Plan?
Your building principal and/or guidance counselor.

Child Find

Ascend Leadership Academy participates in Project Child Find, an effort coordinated with the Exceptional Children Division of the State Department of Public Instruction, to locate and identify children and youth ages birth through 21 with disabilities who are in need of special education and related services. The School informs parents and/or guardians of the services available from the School and other state and community agencies. The children who qualify for these services have been diagnosed with or are suspected to have intellectual, physical, or emotional disabilities and are unable to benefit from a regular school program without special assistance. School identifies these students through our Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) as well as from parent and teacher referrals and provides the following help:

- A complete evaluation, and if appropriate and within the guidelines of eligibility in NC, eligibility in one of the 14 disabling conditions;
- An Individualized Education Program for children with a disability; and
- A referral to other agencies when needed.

Outside Providers and Dual Enrollment

The School prohibits outside providers from providing services to students on our campus unless the outside provider is contracted directly with the School to provide such services. Dual enrollment in any program during the regular school day is also prohibited unless expressly authorized by State Law or approved by the Board of Directors.

High School Credits and Summer Recovery

Ascend Leadership Academy (ALA) is committed to ensuring all students remain on track toward graduation. This policy outlines opportunities for students to recover credit for failed core courses required for graduation.

Credit Recovery Options

Students who earn a **59 or below** in a core course (English, Math, Science, or Social Studies) may recover credit through one of the following options:

1. **Course Retake** – Re-enrollment in the full course during a subsequent semester.

2. **Credit Recovery Program** – Completion of an approved online credit recovery course.

Students who earn a **grade between 50–59 may choose** either option upon receiving their final grade.

Students who earn a **grade of 49 or below** are required to retake the full course in a subsequent semester and are **not eligible for credit recovery** initially. After a student has taken the course twice, they will automatically be enrolled in the Credit Recovery Program for that course.

Program Structure

ALA will implement a seated Credit Recovery model in place of traditional summer school.

- Credit Recovery sessions will be held weekly on **Wednesdays from 7:30 AM – 9:00 AM**.
- Students will complete coursework through an approved online platform (e.g., BrightThinker, Edmentum Courseware, etc).
- Students will be enrolled in one course at a time and must complete each course before beginning another.
- Students are expected to complete the assigned credit recovery course within the same semester (Fall or Spring) in which it is assigned.
- Students who do not successfully earn credit for the course will be **required to conference** with ALA Administration along with their parent/guardian on next steps.
- Students may also work on assigned coursework outside of scheduled sessions.

Course Availability

Credit recovery will be available for the following core subject areas:

- English I, II, III, IV
- Math I, II, III, IV
- Physical Science, Earth/Environmental Science, Biology
- World History, Civic Literacy, American History, Economics & Personal Finance

The following courses are **not eligible** for credit recovery and must be retaken in full:

- Digital Media courses
- World Language courses (Student who qualify may apply for a World Language Credit Waiver)
- Health & Physical Education
- Electives
- Students enrolled in Math I during 8th grade who do not pass the course will not receive high school credit. These students will be required to retake Math I in 9th grade and not participate in credit recovery.

Summer School

Ascend Leadership Academy will not offer a traditional summer school program. Instead, credit recovery opportunities will be provided during the fall and spring semester as described above.

Future summer school offerings will be determined annually based on student need and program capacity, including options for graduating seniors who require a course to complete graduation requirements. Any summer credit recovery opportunities will be offered at the discretion of ALA administration.

Enrollment and Attendance

Students must be registered for the Credit Recovery program by a parent/guardian. Consistent attendance during scheduled sessions is expected. Failure to meet these expectations may result in removal from the program and requirement to retake the full course.Transportation accommodations may be provided based on need and availability but are not guaranteed.

State Testing

All school students in grades 5th -12th will take the North Carolina required state tests. These tests include the following:

5th Grae	6th & 7th Grade	8th Grade	9th - 12thGrade	ESL Students Only (K-12)
• Reading EOG • Math EOG 8th Grade • Science EOG	• Reading EOG • Math EOG	• Reading EOG • Math EOG or Math I EOC if taking Math I in 8th Grade • Science EOG	• Biology • ELA II • Math I • Math III	• ACCESS

Withdrawal Procedures

If a parent would like to withdraw their child from School, they should fill out the online Student Withdrawal Form or the Paper Student Withdrawal Form. Parents are required to list their student's next school on the form at the time of withdrawal. If the student will be homeschooled, the state-issued homeschool identification number must be provided for the student to be withdrawn. A records request for one of our current students from a new school can be considered a withdrawal request; if a legitimate records request is received, the records will be sent, and that student will be withdrawn from Ascend Leadership Academy (ALA).

Parents Families Volunteers and Visitors

School and Family Communications

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

Parent Communication and Conferences

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

Parent and Family Engagement (Title I)

The Ascend Leadership Academy Board of Directors recognizes the value of family engagement in a child's academic success and believes that the education of children is an ongoing cooperative partnership between the home and the school. Parents and other family members are their children's first teachers; therefore, the continued involvement of parents and family members in the educational process is most important in fostering and improving educational achievement. The School shall strive to support parents and provide parents and family members with meaningful opportunities to become involved in the programs offered by the Title I program for Targeted Assistance in our school. The Board encourages parents and family members to participate in the design and implementation of the programs and activities in order to increase the effectiveness of the school system's Title I program in helping students meet state and local achievement standards.

A. DEFINITION OF PARENT AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

For the purposes of this policy, the term "parent and family engagement" means the participation of parents, guardians, and other family members in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student learning and other school activities, including ensuring the following:

1. that parents and family members play an integral role in assisting their child's learning;
2. that parents and family members are encouraged to be actively involved in their child's education at school;
3. that parents are full partners in their child's education and parents and family members are included, as appropriate, in decision making and on advisory committees to assist in the education of their child; and
4. that the school system utilizes activities to support parent and family engagement in the Title I programs.

B. PURPOSE AND OPERATION OF TITLE I PROGRAM

The Title I program is a federally supported program that offers assistance to educationally and economically disadvantaged children to help ensure they receive an equitable, high-quality, well-rounded education and meet the school system's challenging academic standards. The Title I program provides instructional activities and supportive services to eligible students over and above those provided by the regular school program.
Through the school-wide Title 1 Program, School, we offer a Targeted Assistance program that will provide services to eligible students most in need of assistance in the school, as determined by objective criteria established by the Board in cooperation with our Managing Director. Eligibility criteria includes, for example, standardized test scores, teacher observations and input, and other measures of student progress.
Ascend Leadership Academy's targeted assistance program shall be based on effective means of improving student achievement and shall include evidence-based strategies to support parent and family engagement.

C. ANNUAL MEETING AND PROGRAM EVALUATION

Each year, school administration must invite parents of students participating in the Title I program to a meeting to explain parental rights, discuss the programs and activities to be provided with Title I funds, and solicit input on the Title I program and this policy. In addition, school administration must provide parents and family members a meaningful opportunity annually to evaluate the content and effectiveness of the Title I program and the parent and family engagement policies and plans. This information will be collected in the form of parent surveys specific to the Title 1 program and its offerings. Data collection will include learning gains and end of year proficiency scores of those children served in the program. Climate surveys related to parent involvement in activities and events will also be used to assess the overall program. Information collected from these proceedings will be used to revise Title I programs and parent and family engagement plans.

D. PARENT AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT EFFORTS

The Board believes that the involvement of Title I parents and family members in the design and implementation of the Title I program will increase the effectiveness of the program and contribute significantly to the success of the children. The Title I staff and all school personnel shall strive to conduct outreach to parents and family members and involve them in activities throughout the school year. Outreach will include messages and invitations in our weekly newsletter, on our website and targeted email campaigns for parents of student participants. These meetings and activities will also be advertised on the school published calendars and on the website.

The Managing Director shall ensure that this system-level parent and family engagement policy and plan is developed with, agreed upon with, and annually distributed to parents and family members of participating students. Our Title I program shall jointly develop and annually distribute to parents and family members a written parent and family engagement plan that describes the means for carrying out school-level policy, sharing responsibility for student academic achievement, building the capacity of school staff and parents for involvement, and increasing accessibility for participation of all parents and family members of children participating in Title I programs, including parents and family members who have limited English proficiency, who have disabilities, or who are migratory. The plan will involve parents in the planning and improvement of Title I activities and will provide for the distribution to parents of information on expected student achievement levels and the school's academic performance. This effort will work in tandem with our School Improvement Team which shall have members that represent students in the Targeted Assistance program, students who are ELL and students with disabilities. Should the School Improvement Team prove unable to achieve enough membership of these parent representatives, we will create a subcommittee specifically designed to include parents of students in the TAP and ensure their input is included in the development of the Title 1 program and that the Title 1 program is represented in the yearly School Improvement Plan.

School officials will invite appropriate personnel from private schools, business leaders, non-profit organizations and other individuals or consulting firms with expertise in effectively engaging parents and family members in education. Outreach will include invitations to private and non-profit agencies in Lee County who provide equity and access to resources and support for at-risk families and private consultants or business leaders who can provide additional support, resources and expertise for at-risk students and families. The Managing Director or designee shall establish any additional procedures necessary to achieve timely and meaningful consultation with these groups in accordance with federal law.
In addition, the administration and Title I school personnel shall do the following:

1. Involve parents and family members in the joint development of the Title I program and school support and improvement plan and the process of school review and improvement by including parents on the established School Improvement Team and any other appropriate committees that review the Title I program;
2. Provide coordination, technical assistance, and other support necessary to assist and build the capacity of all participating members in planning and implementing effective parent and family engagement activities that are designed to improve student academic achievement and school performance; these include Title 1 Family nights, parent conferences, and Curriculum nights

3. Coordinate and integrate parent and family engagement strategies in the Title I program to the extent feasible and appropriate with parental engagement strategies established in other federal, state, and local laws and programs; these include mandatory notices of student eligibility criteria, identification process, and serve

expectations as well as parent participation in required meetings including IEP and ELL placement or evaluation meetings.

4. Conduct an annual evaluation of the content and effectiveness of the school's parent and family engagement policies and program in improving the academic quality of the school and assisting students to meet the school system's academic standards; During this process the School will identify:
    - barriers to greater participation of parents (with particular attention to parents who are economically disadvantaged, disabled, have limited English proficiency, limited literacy, or are of any racial or ethnic minority background);
    - the needs of parents and family members to assist with the learning of their children, including engaging with school personnel and teachers; and
    - strategies to support successful school and family interactions. This includes collecting data through climate surveys, disaggregating student performance data on state exams, interpreting student learning gains data on internal benchmarking and progress monitoring tools and interpreting the Internal Ready Reports that demonstrate the Schools ability to meet established targets and goals by subgroup. We will use these findings to design evidence-based strategies for more effective parental involvement, and revise, if necessary, the PFE policy.
5. Strive to eliminate barriers to parental participation by assisting parents who have disabilities and parents who are economically disadvantaged, have limited English proficiency, are migratory, or have other backgrounds or characteristics that may affect participation; this includes scheduling parent meetings when convenient for families and offering multiple opportunities for these meetings, providing child care during these meetings and events, providing home language materials and documents, and providing multiple means of communication including hard copy invitations and information in the parent's home language.

6. Provide outreach and assistance to parents and family members of children who are participating in Title I programs in understanding the state's testing standards, the assessments used, Title I requirements, and all national, state, and local standards and expectations through such efforts as community-based meetings, posting information on school websites, sending information home, newsletters, workshops, and newspaper articles;

7. Design a parent-student-school staff compact that sets out respective responsibilities in striving to raise student achievement and explains how an effective home/school partnership will be developed and maintained; this is included in our family handbooks and the Title 1 participation documents and agreement.

8. With the assistance of parents, ensure that teachers, specialized instructional support personnel, principals, and other staff are educated in the value of parents as partners in the educational process and understand how to work with, communicate with, and reach out to parents as equal partners in education; this is included in our Staff handbooks and Board operating manuals which outline expectations for instructional staff to include parents in their child's education, offering a variety of parent volunteer and participation opportunities and providing targeted parent conference dates in fall and spring.

9. Distribute to parents information on expected student proficiency levels for their child and the school's academic performance, and provide materials and training to help parents monitor their child's progress and work with educators to improve achievement through such methods as literacy training or using technology; this is accomplished in our weekly newsletters, website and published calendars. This is also expressly communicated in all Title 1 family nights, Curriculum nights, and one on one parent conferences.

10. Coordinate and integrate, to the extent feasible and appropriate, parental involvement programs and activities with federal, state, and local programs, including public preschool programs, and conduct other activities in the community that encourage and support parents to more fully participate in the education of their child; this is accomplished through our wide-spread outreach for parent participation driven by the School, the PTO, and the School Improvement Team for a variety of academic and extracurricular activities that involve parents in their students education

11. Strengthen the partnership with agencies, businesses, and programs that operate in the community, especially those with expertise in effectively engaging parents and family members in education; this will be accomplished through our general outreach programs led by the Managing Director and including Board members and Foundation Board members in recruiting community and business leaders' support

12. Ensure that parents are involved in the school's Title I activities; and

13. Provide such other reasonable support for Title I parental involvement activities as requested by parents.

E. NOTICE REQUIREMENTS

The Managing Directors and Title I school personnel shall provide effective notice of the following information as required by law. The notice will be in an understandable and uniform format and, to the extent practicable, in a language the parents can understand.

Program for English Learners

Each year the principal or designee shall provide notice of the following to parents of English learners identified for participation in a Title I, Part A or Title III funded language-instruction educational program:

1. the reasons for the child's identification;
2. the child's level of English proficiency and how such level was assessed;
3. methods of instruction;
4. how the program will help the child;
5. the exit requirements for the program;
6. if the child has a disability, how the language instruction educational program meets the objectives of the child's individualized educational program (IEP);
7. any other information necessary to effectively inform the parent of the program and the parental rights regarding enrollment, removal, and selection of a program for English learners; and
8. notice of regular meetings for the purpose of formulating and responding to recommendations from parents.

These expectations will be met through proper notice to all meetings related to IEP or ELL plans and may be given in the parent's home language. Access to the Parents Rights is also made available on our Website;

School Report Card

Each year, the School shall disseminate the school report card containing information about the school including, but not limited to:

- Information, both in the aggregate and disaggregated by category, about:
  - Student achievement,
  - Graduation rates,
  - Performance on other school quality and/or student success indicators,
  - Progress of students toward meeting long-term goals established by the state,
  - Student performance on measures of school climate and safety, and, as available,
  - Rate of enrollment in post-secondary education;
- Performance of the School on academic assessments as compared to the state as a whole, and the performance of each school on academic assessments as compared to the state and the School as a whole;
- Percentage and number of students who are:
  - Assessed,
  - Assessed using alternate assessments,
  - Involved in preschool and accelerated coursework programs, and;
  - English learners achieving proficiency;
- Per-pupil expenditures of federal, state, and local funds; and
- Teacher qualifications.

Teacher Qualifications

At the beginning of each year, the School will notify parents of students who are participating in Title I programs of the right to request certain information on the professional qualifications of the student's classroom teachers and paraprofessionals providing services to the child.

The principal or designee of a Title I school shall provide timely notice informing parents that their student has been assigned to or has been taught for at least four consecutive weeks by a teacher who does not meet applicable state certification or licensure requirements at the grade level or subject area in which the teacher has been assigned.

Student's Academic Growth and Achievement
School officials shall provide information on the student's level of achievement and academic growth, if applicable and available, on each of the state's academic assessments to each parent of a student participating in a Title I program.

Parental Rights and Opportunities for Involvement
Each year, the principal or designee of a Title I school shall provide notice to parents of the school's written parent and family engagement policy, parents' right to be involved in their child's school, and opportunities for parents and family members to be involved in the school.

At the beginning of each school year, the principal or designee of a Title I school shall provide notice to parents of (1) their right to request information regarding student participation in state-required assessments and (2) that such information will be provided in a timely manner.

Website Distribution of Information
Each year, School officials shall publicize on the School website and, where practicable, on the website of each school:

1. The School Report Card, as described above; and
2. Information on each assessment required by the state and, where feasible, by the School, organized by grade level. The information must include:
    a. the subject matter assessed;
    b. the purpose for which the assessment is designed and used;
    c. the source of the requirement for the assessment;
    d. if available, the amount of time students will spend taking the assessments and the schedule of the assessments; and
    e. if available, the time and format for distributing results.
    f.

The Head of School/Director/Executive Director shall develop any administrative procedures necessary to implement the requirements of this policy.

Campus Visitors

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

Procedures

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

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

2. After having been approved to be on school grounds during instructional hours, visitors must display whatever identification is required by the school throughout their stay during instructional hours.

3. School visitors shall comply with all school rules and Board policies.

4. Individuals who are discovered on-campus during instructional hours without having received permission to visit and/or who are not displaying visitor's identification will be instructed to report to the administrative office immediately, and may be ordered off the premises, or subject to possible arrest for criminal trespass.

School Expectations

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

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

School Volunteers

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

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

Student/Parent Grievances

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The decision of the Board will be final and is the last step for all grievances.

Parent Organizations

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

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

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

B. Parent/guardian organizations or booster clubs that are involved with school activities or students should establish a document that sets forth the purposes of the organization and the general rules and procedures by which it will operate.

C. Parent/guardian organizations, such as the PTO, and booster clubs shall secure the advice and approval of the Managing Director in planning any function in which students will participate while under the jurisdiction of the Ascend Leadership Academy.

D. A parent/guardian organization or booster club shall secure advance approval of the principal before planning a fund-raising activity intended to benefit a school program.

E. School Administration should assist parent/guardian organizations and/or booster clubs in planning activities, not limited to fund raising, that serve school needs and involve significant numbers of interested parents/guardians in meaningful service to schools and their students.

F. Parent/guardian organizations and booster clubs are responsible for maintaining adequate financial records and ensuring that such records are accessible to parents/guardians and school officials on request.

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

Parent and Family Engagement - Aviator Nation

Ascend Leadership Academy (ALA), recognizes the value of family engagement in a child's academic success and believes children's education is an ongoing cooperative partnership between the home and the school. Parents and other family members are their children's first teachers; therefore, the continued involvement of parents and family members in the educational process is most important in fostering and improving academic achievement. School officials shall strive to support parents and provide parents and family members with meaningful opportunities to become involved in the programs offered by the Title I schools. The Board encourages parents and family members to participate in the design and implementation of the programs and activities to increase the effectiveness of the School's Title I program in helping students meet state and local achievement standards.

Welcome to Aviator Nation
Aspiring. Voices. Inspiring. Action. Through. Opportunity. & Relationships

At Ascend Leadership Academy, we believe that strong schools are built on strong relationships—with families, students, educators, and the wider community. That's why we're proud to introduce our newly reimagined parent organization: **Aviator Nation**.

Aviator Nation is more than just a parent group—it is a collective force of Aspiring Voices, Inspiring Action through Opportunity & Relationships. Together, we create the runway for every student to take flight—academically, socially, and emotionally. This vibrant organization represents our commitment to shared leadership, authentic collaboration, and creating space for every stakeholder to be heard, valued, and empowered. Whether you're a parent, guardian, educator, or community member, there is a seat for you at the table—and a role for you in our shared success.

> **"Aviator Nation empowers every stakeholder—students, families, staff, and partners—to rise up as leaders, innovators, and community builders through engaged, student-driven learning and shared ownership."**

We are **One Nation. All In. Rising Together.**

Join us as we lift our voices, build meaningful connections, and take bold action to shape a future where every student is equipped to soar.

Banning From Campus

The School reserves the right to ban any person, including parents, separated personnel, or those under investigation, from campus where there is a safety or security concern, actual/potential disruption to the school environment, or

where it is in the best interest of the School to do so. The Head of School, their designee, or the Board may issue such a ban.

Emergency Management

Emergency Management

Ascend Leadership Academy has developed a comprehensive **Emergency Management Plan** to ensure the safety and well-being of all students and staff. The plan is developed, maintained, and implemented by the Director of Operations, in collaboration with ALA Administration, and outlines procedures for responding promptly and appropriately to a range of potential hazards. These include severe weather, fire, chemical incidents, and security-related threats during school and business hours. ALA works closely with emergency management, law enforcement, public health, and other local, county, state, and federal agencies to support effective emergency planning and response. The Board affirms that student and staff safety is best supported through a plan that minimizes disruption to the educational program while incorporating regular drills and training exercises to reinforce preparedness.

Inclement Weather / Emergency Closings and Delays

The Managing Director is responsible for establishing and administering procedures related to the temporary closing of school due to inclement weather or any unforeseen event that presents a risk to the safety of students, staff, or property. Ascend Leadership Academy (ALA) follows the inclement weather advisories issued by Lee County Schools but may implement additional closings or delays if necessary to ensure the safety of ALA students and staff, many of whom reside in counties outside of Lee.

When severe weather is predicted, ALA monitors conditions closely and will notify families and staff of any emergency closures or delays through the following communication channels:

- The ALA website: www.ascendleadershipacademy.org
- ALA's mass communication system (email, text, and phone call)
- Local news stations: WRAL (Channel 5) and WTVD (Channel 11)

Ice and Snow

In the event of ice or snow, ALA will assess whether early dismissal is necessary. An administrator will remain on campus until all students have been safely picked up.

Storms and Tornadoes

Storm-safe areas are designated for each classroom and office suite. If the National Weather Service issues an imminent threat of severe storms or tornadoes, the Managing Director or a designated representative will notify all personnel to move immediately to the assigned storm-safe locations.

Storm drills are conducted at the beginning of each storm season as part of ALA's Emergency Management Plan to ensure preparedness and reinforce response procedures. In the event of an actual severe weather emergency, all staff will be expected to follow the protocols outlined in the Emergency Management Plan.

First Aid and Emergency Care Procedures

In the event of a serious injury to a student, staff member, or visitor, school staff are responsible for instituting appropriate first aid procedures.

First Responders

A first responder is defined as a staff member who:

- is currently certified in CPR/AED and First Aid by the American Red Cross (ARC) or the American Heart Association (AHA);
- is trained in OSHA procedures;
- is available to aid in school emergencies;
- has been offered the hepatitis B vaccine; and
- agrees to follow the first aid procedures the ARC and AHA set forth.

First Aid Preparation and Training

At the beginning of each school year, all staff will receive a brief overview of first aid procedures. The names of designated building first responders will be posted in the ALA Health Office, Building B Front Office (Main Office), and Building A Front Office (Satellite Office) for quick reference. Additionally, all Physical Education teachers, coaches, trainers, athletic directors, and after-school staff are required to maintain current CPR and first aid certification.

ALA shall maintain current information on students, including:

- parent/guardian's name
- where the parent/guardian can be located during the school day
- emergency contact(s) other than parent/guardian
- the name of a licensed health care provider.

ALA shall maintain up-to-date emergency contact information for all staff members. Additionally, ALA will provide access to AHA Heartsaver First Aid and/or ARC Standard First Aid and Safety training for designated school personnel.

First Aid Response: General

- School employees are expected to act in loco parentis. They are not expected to determine the cause or extent of injury.
- School-designated First Responders will follow procedures in accordance with ARC or AHA certification.
- An Incident Report Form must be completed within 24 hours whenever school personnel provide first aid for an injury serious enough to warrant parental notification, and when the incident occurs during the school day, at school after events, on field trips, or during athletic events or practice. If blood or body fluid exposure occurs, the ALA Health Office must be contacted within 2 hours, or as soon as possible. The ALA Health Office reviews Incident/Injury Reports to ensure adherence to school first aid and OSHA regulations.
- In the event of a 911 emergency transport, an Incident Report must be completed by the supervising adult and submitted to the ALA Health Office on the same day of the incident or by the morning of the next school day for athletic-related injuries.
- A trainer or coach trained in CPR/First Aid must attend every athletic event.
- Students with health problems requiring special care shall have an individualized Health Plan on file, available in the ALA Health Office.
- A sick or injured student can be released only to parent/guardian(s), listed emergency contacts, or Emergency Medical Services (EMS) personnel.

First Aid Response: Emergencies

- Staff members are responsible for calling EMS (911) when necessary in an emergency. Administrators and parents/guardians must be notified as soon as safely possible after EMS has been called.
- School staff or students are not to transport students in their own cars for emergency treatment.
- Under all circumstances, upon arrival at a school, EMS personnel will become the primary care providers of the injured party for whom they were called. School personnel will remove other students and staff from the scene to allow EMS personnel space and safety to deliver appropriate care.

- EMS personnel responding to a school or school-sanctioned event will attempt to contact the ALA Health Office or certified athletic coach on site.
- In cases where the ALA Health Office, an athletic coach, or an administrator is aware of a student's existing health condition, any health plans or related documents on file—such as medical history, current medications, allergies, or special instructions—will be provided to EMS personnel to assist in the appropriate assessment and care of the student.
- If transportation of the child is found to be necessary by the paramedic or desired by the person acting in loco parentis, then the destination shall be determined by which facility would be most appropriate for the specific condition of the child as best determined by both parties. In some cases, this may involve bypassing the closest facility for a more distant, yet more appropriate, facility for the child.
- In cases where the parents or legal guardians are not present at the school or event, EMS crews will respect the wishes of the person acting in loco parentis in decisions related to transporting the patient.
- If any student requires EMS transport, and a parent/guardian is not available to accompany the child, school personnel will accompany the student during transport. They will remain with the student until the parent/guardian assumes responsibility.

First Aid Response: Injuries and Illness

- Care for injuries and sudden serious illness in the school setting will be in accordance with the American Red Cross or American Heart Association guidelines.
- Parents/guardians will be called when a student's condition prevents participation in normal school activities.
- Students with an undiagnosed rash may be excluded from school. If excluded from school, readmission is contingent upon a note from a physician, being symptom-free, and receiving appropriate treatment.
- Students will not leave or be sent home from school if unattended when exhibiting symptoms of illness for diabetes, head, back or abdominal trauma, severe stomachache, seizures, fainting/dizziness, fever > 100 degrees Fahrenheit (oral), vomiting, diarrhea, or active bleeding.

First Aid: Loss of Change in Level of Consciousness or Concussion

- A concussion is a traumatic brain injury caused by a direct or indirect impact to the head that results in disruption of normal brain function, which may or may not result in the loss of consciousness.
- Nurses, First Responders, PE teachers, Coaches, Assistant Coaches, Athletic Trainers will comply with concussion safety requirements set forth in the Gfeller Waller Concussion Awareness Act of 2011.
    - Parents/guardians of any student with an injury to the head that results in a change in the level of consciousness, even reported dizziness, will be notified.
    - Students may not continue in physical education until a note of clearance is received from a licensed healthcare provider.
    - Any middle or high school athlete with a suspected concussion will not be permitted to return to any participation in practice or event until a written release is provided to the school from a healthcare provider with expertise in the management of concussion
- ALA Health Office will be in charge of guiding return to play progression and have the authority to withhold play.
- Coaches, Assistant Coaches and student athletes must adhere to guidelines set forth in the Athletics Emergency Action Plan.
- Concussion and head injury information must be provided annually to all coaches, athletic directors, first responders, volunteers, student-athletes, and the parents or guardians of student-athletes.
- The School will retain records of training and concussion incidents.

Threats, Violence, and Weapons Policy

Ascend Leadership Academy is committed to maintaining a safe and respectful school environment that is free from intimidation, threats, acts of violence, and weapons. All students, staff, and visitors are expected to contribute to a culture of safety and mutual respect.

Prohibited behaviors include, but are not limited to:

- Intimidating, threatening, or hostile conduct
- Physical abuse or assault
- Vandalism, arson, or sabotage
- Possession or use of weapons of any kind on school property or at school-sponsored events
- Jokes, gestures, or comments related to violent events
- Any other behavior deemed inappropriate or unsafe by ALA administration

Weapons are defined to include, but are not limited to, firearms, knives, destructive devices, or any item—regardless of its nature—used to threaten, intimidate, or cause harm. Possession of such items on school grounds or during school activities is strictly prohibited and may result in immediate disciplinary action, up to and including suspension or expulsion, and possible involvement of law enforcement.

Drug, Alcohol, and Tobacco-Free Campus Policy

Ascend Leadership Academy is committed to providing a safe, healthy, and productive learning environment. As such, ALA maintains a strict drug-, alcohol-, and tobacco-free campus policy that applies to all students, staff, parents, volunteers, and visitors.

Prohibited Behaviors Include:

- Being under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, or misused prescription drugs while on school property or at school-related events
- The use, possession, sale, transfer, or distribution of alcohol, illegal drugs, hallucinogens, stimulants, sedatives, controlled substances, drug paraphernalia, or mood-altering substances
- The misuse of prescription medication, including medical marijuana
- The use or possession of alcohol or drugs in school vehicles or by drivers while operating such vehicles on behalf of the school
- Consumption of alcoholic beverages on school grounds, during field trips, or at any school-sponsored event

Tobacco, E-Cigarettes, and Vaping

ALA is a smoke-free campus. Smoking, vaping, or the use of e-cigarettes is strictly prohibited on school property at all times. This includes indoor and outdoor areas, vehicles owned or operated on behalf of the school, and during all school-sponsored events or field trips. This policy applies to all employees, students, parents, volunteers, and visitors.

Violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including suspension or expulsion for students and appropriate administrative measures for staff or visitors.

Mandatory Reporting Policy

In accordance with N.C.G.S. § 7B-301, all Ascend Leadership Academy personnel are **mandated reporters** and are required to report any suspected abuse, neglect, dependency, or maltreatment of a child. Reports must be made directly to the **Department of Social Services (DSS)** in the **county where the child resides**. While ALA serves students from multiple counties, **Lee** and **Harnett** counties are our primary service areas.

To report suspected abuse:

- Lee County DSS: (919) 718-4690
- Harnett County DSS: (910) 893-7500

In addition, under **N.C.G.S. § 14-318.6**, any person **18 years of age or older** who knows—or should reasonably know—that a juvenile has been or is the victim of a **violent offense, sexual offense, or misdemeanor child abuse** (as defined in **N.C.G.S. § 14-318.2**) must immediately report the matter to the **appropriate local law enforcement agency** in the **county where the juvenile resides or is found**.

In all cases, the **Managing Director must be notified immediately** after a report is made. Any staff member who has questions or concerns about the reporting process should consult with the School Counselor and/or the Managing Director for guidance.

All school personnel will receive **annual training** on how to recognize and report child abuse and other reportable offenses, in compliance with state law and to support the safety and well-being of all students.

Code of Conduct

Adult Code of Conduct

Purpose and scope

As we partner with families to best support students, it is critical that we engage in a way that allows our partnership to flourish. We understand that situations can become stressful, and we want to maintain the best support possible. To ensure that expectations for interaction are mutually held, the *ALA Adult/Visitor Code of Conduct* provides the necessary clarity for those who may not understand the importance of civil behavior when advocating for their children or visiting a school campus. Indeed, the most effective way children learn appropriate behavior is through the example presented by their parents/guardian. So it is important that parents and caregivers, as well as visitors and volunteers, behave civilly whenever they are on a school campus for any reason.

In order to maintain a peaceful, safe, and secure school environment, Ascend Leadership Academy cannot tolerate parents or visitors exhibiting the following:

- Engaging in disruptive behavior that threatens to or actually does interfere with the daily operation of the school – whether in a classroom, hallway, administrative office, parking lot, gym, or otherwise. This includes extracurricular activities, such as meetings, clubs, and athletic events.
- Using loud and/or offensive language, including swearing, as well as displaying any other aggressive, angry, and violent behavior.
- Threatening to physically harm anyone on campus, whether student, staff, or visitor, as well as committing any act of physical aggression.
- Damaging or destroying school property.
- Sending abusive and/or threatening e-mail, text messages, instant messages, voicemail, or phone messages or other written forms of communication to that end.
- Using social media specifically to threaten or to make offensive and/or defamatory comments about any ALA student or staff member. (In such unfortunate instances, ALA will, as necessary, take even greater action against any such adult, including contacting the involved social networking site and the School Resource Officer, as well as potentially taking legal action).
- Making offensive comments regarding the school or any of its students, family members, or staff while on school grounds.

Adult Code of Conduct

All adults entering the school or participating in school events shall adhere to the following rules of conduct:

1. Always be respectful to the staff, students, and other members of the school community.
2. Model appropriate behavior and be good examples to our school community.
3. Check-in and obtain clearance from the office upon entering the building.
4. Do not display dangerous or unsafe behavior when on our campus.
5. Do not disrupt teaching and learning when visiting the school.
6. If you need to speak with a staff member, schedule a meeting.
7. Refrain from using threats, profanity, inappropriate or rude language/gestures, or an aggressive/loud voice.
8. Handle complaints by first seeking a resolution with the staff members involved in a positive and professional manner.
9. Ensure email communications to SCHOOL staff, faculty, or students are respectful.
10. Do not harass, bully, or threaten SCHOOL staff, faculty, or students on school grounds, at school events (whether or not on school grounds), or via email.

Complaint and Conflict Procedures

When engaging in a conversation with another person who is becoming overly aggressive and/or disrespectful, staff members are to follow the steps below:

1. Remind the individual that it is an expectation that all conversations remain respectful.
2. If the disrespectful behavior continues, end the conversation immediately.
   Possible script: "Unfortunately, we need to end this conversation here. I understand you are upset but we cannot continue until we can communicate with a calm tone and appropriate language."
3. Staff members must inform their direct supervisor of the interaction so they can document the situation and follow up as needed.

Progressive Discipline

To the extent an adult's actions/behavior falls below the code of conduct the adult can be subjected to disciplinary action by the administration. The following are the progressive discipline steps ALA will take should any adult breach our code of conduct:

- Upon the first occurrence, the direct supervisor will send a follow up email to the individual.
- Upon a second occurrence, individuals can be:
  - removed from the premises;
  - restricted from re-entry for a period of 30 calendar days; and
  - limited to pick-up and drop-off of students outside the building
- Upon a third occurrence, individuals can be:
  - Removed from the premises; and
  - Permanently restricted from re-entry.

***Violence/Threats:** If the act or action of the individual falls within the category of acts of violence on school premises, threats of violence on school premises, bullying of teachers, students or other parents, the individual can be

immediately removed from the premises and permanently restricted from re-entry.

*While a parent is restricted from re-entry to the school, their access to the school is restricted to external pick-up and drop-off of their student. Any interaction with Ascend Leadership Academy teachers or staff must be done so by electronic means.

*The school reserves the right to restrict any adult, including parents, from coming onto campus for any reason, including drop off or pick up, if the adult has engaged in Violence/Threats as set forth above or if SCHOOL determines that the adult's behavior has created an unsafe or hostile environment.

Student Code of Conduct

Ascend Leadership Academy (ALA) Charter School is committed to allowing every student to reach his or her full potential by providing a rigorous academic program, character education, and meaningful parental participation. We must provide a positive, safe, and orderly environment for our students, staff, and families to fulfill this mission. ALA believes that a consistent code of conduct is critical in building that environment. It reflects what the school believes to be reasonable expectations of conduct for all members of our student body.

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

The importance of a code of conduct is reinforced in North Carolina state law (G.S. 115C-288), stating, “The principal shall have the authority to exercise discipline over the pupils of the school under policies adopted by the local board of education in accordance with G.S. 115C-390.11 through G.S. 115C-390.12.”

ALA’s code of conduct identifies behaviors detrimental to our goal of a positive, safe, and orderly environment. Specifically, it identifies behaviors that interfere with the learning process or disrupt the educational environment for any student at any time. The identified consequences are designed to deter students from engaging in behavior that is counter to the school’s mission, and, in the event that violations do occur, discourage students from committing further violations.

The code of conduct is divided into four classes of violations. The classes are groupings of violations of similar severity. Because of their similarity, each class of violations contains comparable consequences. While these consequences reflect what ALA believes to be fair and reasonable for that class of violations, the school also recognizes that there are times when mitigating or aggravating factors may result in a change in consequences. The school director or their designees have the authority to assign any alternate reasonable consequence based on either mitigating or aggravating factors. Finally, engaging repeatedly in behaviors in any single class of violations will result in consequences from a higher class. This is intended to reinforce the importance of learning from mistakes.

The Code of Student Conduct prohibits discrimination based on an individual's protected classification under federal law, including antisemitism as defined in G.S. 12-3.2.” This should go at the introduction of your Code of Conduct.

General Information

The information contained in this section is designed to address common questions and confusions regarding the code of conduct. Further clarifying these issues will help parents and students successfully navigate the ASCEND LEADERSHIP ACADEMY Code of Conduct requirements.

The Code of Conduct applies to all students at any time they are present on the Ascend Leadership Academy campus, at any Ascend Leadership Academy event, or during any Ascend Leadership Academy-sponsored activity, including Ascend Leadership Academy events or activities held off campus. Additionally, it applies to students at any time or location whose behavior interferes with the learning process, causes serious safety concerns, or disrupts the educational environment. Specific rules apply specifically to different grade levels. If that is the case, it is noted in the violation. Otherwise, the violations apply to all students.

Administration will follow investigatory procedures and make a reasonable attempt to contact parents after it has been concluded that a violation has occurred. During the investigation, students will be interviewed to determine what may have occurred. A student will be notified of the consequences of a violation, as long as notification of the student does not pose a risk to the safety and security of other individuals on campus.

If a student is suspended from Ascend Leadership Academy, the student may not be present on the campus of ASCEND LEADERSHIP ACADEMY, at any Ascend Leadership Academy function, or at any Ascend Leadership Academy-sponsored event, whether on or off campus, without the permission of the Ascend Leadership Academy administration.

Unfortunately, during the Ascend Leadership Academy year, conflict will arise between students. It is the expectation of ASCEND LEADERSHIP ACADEMY that students will not settle conflicts through physical altercation. If there is a fight between two students, both students will be held accountable for the incident. If a student is attempting to engage another student in a fight, it is our expectation that the other student will make every reasonable attempt to walk away and notify a Ascend Leadership Academy employee.

Lockers, desks, Ascend Leadership Academy-issued technology, and other Ascend Leadership Academy property remain at all times the property of ASCEND LEADERSHIP ACADEMY. They are subject to search at the discretion of the Ascend Leadership Academy principals, director, or their designee. Any searches shall comply with all applicable laws.

Corporal punishment is not permitted at ASCEND LEADERSHIP ACADEMY, but there may be times when Ascend Leadership Academy employees need to use reasonable force to control behavior or to remove a person from the scene. In such situations the Ascend Leadership Academy shall comply with all applicable laws including the Ascend Leadership Academy's Seclusion and Restraint Policy. These situations include:

- To quell a disturbance threatening injury to others.
- To obtain possession of weapons or other dangerous objects on the person or within a student's control.
- For self-defense.
- For the protection of persons or property.
- To maintain order on Ascend Leadership Academy property, in the classroom, or at a Ascend Leadership Academy-related activity on or off Ascend Leadership Academy property.

Truancy

Students between the ages of 7 and 16, as well as students younger than 7 who are enrolled in Ascend Leadership Academy, are required by law to attend Ascend Leadership Academy. For students with more than 10 unexcused absences, the student and/or parent may be referred for prosecution.

Possession of Tobacco, Vapes, and Illegal Substances

The possession, use, or distribution of tobacco, vapes, or illegal drugs and/or alcohol by students on Ascend Leadership Academy property or at any Ascend Leadership Academy function is prohibited. Further the use, possession or distribution of legal drugs for which a student does not have a prescription or for which a student has a prescription but is not permitted to have in their possession at Ascend Leadership Academy is prohibited. This includes students distributing or selling legal drugs. In addition to Ascend Leadership

Academy consequences set forth herein, such actions will be reported to local law enforcement and may be required to be reported to the Department of Motor Vehicles. **The Ascend Leadership Academy is not required to test or prove the content of any drug or vape for purposes of providing consequences under the Code of Conduct.**

Possession of Weapons

The possession of weapons or a replica or a weapon by students on Ascend Leadership Academy property or at any Ascend Leadership Academy function is prohibited. In addition to Ascend Leadership Academy consequences, such actions will be reported to local law enforcement and may be required to be reported to the Department of Motor Vehicles.

Personal Technology Devices

A personal technology device (PTD) is a portable Internet-accessing device that is not the property of the Ascend Leadership Academy. A PTD can transmit communications by voice, written characters, words, or images, share information, record sounds, process words, and/or capture images, such as a laptop computer, tablet, smartphone, smart glasses, weaerable technololgy, cellphone, personal digital assistant, or E-Reader. To the extent students are permitted to possess and/or use a PTD on Ascend Leadership Academy property, at after-Ascend Leadership Academy activities, and at Ascend Leadership Academy-related functions, the student is prohibited from doing so during Ascend Leadership Academy hours and must make sure that the PTD is not activated, used, displayed, or visible. Administrators may authorize individual students to use the devices for personal purposes when there is a reasonable need for such communication. Teachers and administrators may authorize individual students to use the devices for instructional purposes, provided that they supervise them during such use. However, students are not required to use PTDs for instructional purposes. Possession of a PTD by a student is a privilege that may be revoked for violations of the *Code of Student Conduct.* Violations may result in confiscation of the PTD (to be returned only to a parent) and/or other disciplinary actions. Ascend Leadership Academy is not responsible for theft, loss, or damage to PTDs or other electronic devices brought onto Ascend Leadership Academy property. Students permitted to use PTDs during Ascend Leadership Academy must follow all Ascend Leadership Academy rules/policies.

Restorative Justice and the Student Justice Council

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

JURISDICTION TO TAKE DISCIPLINARY ACTION

School Administrators are authorized to take disciplinary action for misconduct that occurs:

1. On school grounds;

2. Off the school grounds at a school activity, function or event;

3. Off the school grounds at a non-school activity, function or event, but where the misconduct leads to a potential danger or disruption of school or any other violation of the Student Code of Conduct; and,

4. En route to and from school or any school-related activity, on the bus, and at the bus stop.

Authority to take disciplinary action also extends to any off-campus non-school-related actions by students, *at any time of the year*, which have a direct or immediate impact on school discipline, the educational operation or function of the school, or the welfare of students or staff.

DISCIPLINARY AUTHORITY OF TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS

Teachers: Teachers shall maintain discipline and order in the classroom, and are authorized to give verbal warnings, initiate parent contact (ensuring two-way communication), draft written reprimands, assign students to detention, refer students to the school office, and employ any other discipline and behavior management techniques except for short-term or long-term suspension or expulsion of a student, discipline which is forbidden by law, or discipline which is permitted under the Student Handbook or by Ascend Leadership Academy policy to be administered only by an Administrator.

For any day assigned to detention, students will be required to spend a period of time, not to exceed one (1) supervised hour, completing assigned schoolwork. Students may complete activities centered on social and emotional learning, restorative practices, character education, and other activities that assist students in understanding the root cause of their behavior and how they take responsibility for their actions. Transportation of students assigned to detention is the responsibility of the student and his/her parents. One (1) day advance notice shall be given to allow students to make alternate transportation arrangements for those days when assigned to detention.

School Administrators: Notwithstanding anything to the contrary herein, school administrators (Directors and Deans) have the authority to administer any discipline or behavior management technique which a teacher is permitted to use, may assign students to in-school suspension, assign students short-term suspensions, may assign students Out-of-School Suspension up until the time of a disciplinary hearing (even if for a longer period of time than a short-term suspension) and refer any disciplinary matter to the Student Justice Council for a hearing. Any student who has been suspended pending a disciplinary hearing shall be allowed to make up schoolwork that is missed due to the suspension pending the disciplinary hearing, and shall be permitted onto school grounds to pick up class assignments at the office unless an administrator determines that allowing the student to pick up work assignments at the school office constitutes a danger to other students or staff. **However, students who are suspended pending a disciplinary hearing are not allowed on school grounds to participate in regular school activities, extracurricular activities, athletic participation, and other school events.**

Although generally progressive in nature, discipline should be appropriate for the misbehavior and the age of the student.

Consequently, administrators have the latitude of assigning discipline in relation to the misbehavior. For example, students who engage in more serious acts of misbehavior, such as fighting, are not entitled to a warning before any other disciplinary action is taken.

The Director is the designated leader of the school and, in concert with the staff, is responsible for the orderly operation of the school. In cases of disruptive, disorderly, or dangerous conduct not covered in the Student Handbook, the Director or his/her designee may undertake corrective measures which he/she believes to be in the best interest of the student and the school provided such action does not violate School Board policies or procedures, or state or federal laws.

STUDENT SEARCH AND SEIZURE

To maintain order in the school and to protect the welfare of students and the school community, school officials have the authority to conduct reasonable searches of students and to seize students' unauthorized materials. Any searches or seizures must be conducted in accordance with the standards described in this policy and any other applicable legal requirements. All school officials carrying out a search or seizure are expected to be knowledgeable about the legal

rights of students and the appropriate procedures for conducting the search or seizure. A search must be justified at its inception, permissible in scope, and conducted using narrowly tailored methods to be minimally intrusive. School officials shall make reasonable and good-faith efforts to investigate allegations of misconduct before a student search is conducted.

This policy applies to searches conducted on school grounds, in school facilities, or at school-sponsored events. This policy does not apply to technology, which is addressed through other policies.

Searches Based on Individualized Reasonable Suspicion

A student or the student's possessions may be searched when a school official has reasonable suspicion that the search will turn up evidence that the particular student has violated or is violating a specific law, expectation, or school rule. This reasonable suspicion must be based upon specific and articulable facts, which have been acquired through reliable and/or corroborated information from employees, students, law enforcement officers, or other credible sources, or upon visual or other evidence (e.g., the smell of alcohol or marijuana, an alert from a metal detector or drug dog) viewed in light of the totality of the circumstances and the school official's professional judgment. The scope of the search must be reasonably related to the objectives of the search, and the methods used to conduct the search must be narrowly tailored to be minimally intrusive in light of the age and sex of the student and nature of the infraction.
Reasonable suspicion is not required if a student's parent or guardian freely and voluntarily consents to the search of their person or possessions.
In accordance with the standards described above, the Board authorizes the following types of searches based on reasonable suspicion:

Searches of Personal Effects

School officials may search a student's desk, locker, and/or personal effects, including but not limited to purses, book bags, and clothing not currently being worn by the student. School officials may also request that the student empty pockets, remove shoes and outerwear. School officials may also search a student’s personal electronic devices pursuant to the school's Wireless Communication Device policy.

Searches of Motor Vehicles

Students are permitted to park on school premises as a matter of privilege, not by right. The school retains the authority to conduct routine patrols of student parking lots and inspect student automobile exteriors on school property. School officials may search the interior of a student’s vehicle based on reasonable suspicion. Such patrols and inspections may be conducted without notice, without student consent, and without a search warrant.

Seized Items

Any illegal contraband seized by school officials shall be promptly turned over to the proper law enforcement authorities.

Failure to Cooperate

A student's failure to cooperate with a reasonable search or seizure as provided in this policy will be considered a violation of the expected standard of behavior, and will subject the student to appropriate consequences.

Discipline Definitions

365-Day Suspension - This is an out-of-Ascend Leadership Academy suspension for 365 calendar days. It is the maximum allowed by North Carolina law.

Aggravating Factors - Facts of a discipline incident that suggest consequences beyond what is recommended in the Code of Conduct. These are determined by the Ascend Leadership Academy principal or director, and may include, but are not limited to, repeated violations, lying or refusing to cooperate with Ascend Leadership Academy officials in an investigation, severity of any injury sustained during the incident, and imminent danger to self or others.

Detention - Detention may be used to address Level 1 infractions. For each day assigned to detention, students will be required to spend a period of time completing assigned class work. Students may complete activities centered around social and emotional learning, restorative practices, character education, and other activities that assist students in understanding the root cause of their behavior and how they take responsibility for their actions. No other activity will be allowed during detention.

Exclusion - This consequence prohibits a student from continuing to attend Ascend Leadership Academy, although the student may attend another school.

Expulsion - This is the permanent termination of the student-school relationship. This applies only to students 14 years of age or older whose continued presence constitutes a clear threat to the safety of other students or Ascend Leadership Academy staff. Students considered for expulsion are entitled to a hearing before the Ascend Leadership Academy's Board of Directors as set forth in North Carolina statutes.

Long-Term Suspension - This is an out-of-Ascend Leadership Academy suspension lasting greater than 10 consecutive days, but less than 365 days.

In-School Suspension - This consequence is an alternative to a student's suspension from Ascend Leadership Academy. It is the supervised removal of a student from educational activities to another location on Ascend Leadership Academy property.

Short-Term Suspension–An out-of-school suspension lasting no longer than 10 consecutive days.

Mitigating Factors - Facts of a disciplinary incident that suggest consequences that are less severe than what is recommended in the Code of Conduct. These may include, but are not limited to, self-defense, provocation, student record, and other factors identified by the school principal or director.

Out of School Suspension - This consequence is the prohibition of a student from being on the Ascend Leadership Academy campus, at school events, or participating in Ascend Leadership Academy functions, whether on or off campus.

LEVELS OF DISCIPLINE

The Code of Conduct is generally organized into five (5) levels of prohibited behaviors: *Level 1 Violations, Level 2 Violations, Level 3 Violations, Level 4 and Level 5 violations*. However, it is important for students and parents to note that the circumstances of violations may warrant more severe consequences, even on the first violation. **ALA reserves the right, in administration's sole and exclusive discretion, to take all action necessary to protect its students, provide a safe and secure learning environment, and to ensure the orderly operation of all educational facilities, including without limitation treating a violation as a higher-level violation and/or providing for more severe consequences.** Additional information regarding prohibited behaviors and disciplinary actions follows these sections.

PROGRESSIVE DISCIPLINE

The disciplinary levels below correspond to the progressive discipline levels detailed above within the levels of discipline. However, in serious violations, principals or designees working in conjunction with the School Leadership and Operations Division may use a higher level of progressive discipline.

The Code of Conduct provides examples of violations that may occur and guidelines for the MINIMUM and MAXIMUM consequences. This Code of Conduct is not intended to include all violations for which disciplinary action may be taken as it is not possible to identify all behavior which might result in disciplinary consequences. Similarly, this Code of Conduct is not intended to list every consequence for every violation as it is not possible to anticipate every set of circumstances under which a disciplinary consequence may be appropriate. The student will receive a consequence that is either the minimum, the maximum, or an appropriate consequence in between. Students and parents/guardians should expect that discipline will be progressive, will be equitable, and will be fairly and evenly administered. This Code

of Conduct is meant to be a clear and concise reference guide and students and parents/guardians are encouraged to communicate with school administrators regarding their student's particular situation.

Level 1 Discipline

Level 1 Discipline: Level 1 discipline involves a failure to follow reasonable classroom expectations, procedures, or directions established by the teacher, including repeated noncompliance after a reminder or redirection.

Level 1	
Violations Include:	
1. Disobeying any teacher-established classroom rules or procedures.	
Possible Disciplinary Measures:	
• In-Class disciplinary measures • Conference with an Administrator	
Minimum: Warning	**Maximium:** Detention

Level 2 Discipline

Level 2 Discipline: Level 2 Discipline is generally used for minor acts of misconduct which interfere with the good order of school. Level 2 violations are generally minor violations and may represent a failure to demonstrate universally accepted expectations or social skills. It is the responsibility of all staff to address minor violations as soon as practicable within the environment in which the misbehavior occurred. Following appropriate teacher alternative resolutions, the student may be referred to a school administrator. The accumulation of multiple Level 2 violations could result in more severe consequences.

Level 2
Violations Include:

1. **Detrimental Behavior:** repeated violations of classroom rules
2. **Tardies**: being late for the start of the day or the beginning of classes.
3. **Electronic Devices:** unauthorized use or possession of a cell phone or electronic device on campus or during instructional time.
4. **Skipping:** being absent from class or not at assigned location
5. **Dress Code:** being out of dress code at any time not authorized by the Ascend Leadership Academy administration.
6. **Classroom Disruption:** being in possession of any personal item that distracts from teaching and learning in the classroom.
7. **Physical Contact:** minor incidents of hitting, shoving, kicking, horseplay, spitting, etc., which do not result in physical harm.
8. **Communicating Threats:** An elementary or middle school student threatening another student or staff member in a way that is unrealistic, vague, or poses minimal risk.
9. **Giving False Information:** lying to School personnel
10. **Cheating:** cheating on tests, quizzes, or other school assignments.
11. **Plagiarizing:** plagiarizing school assignments.
12. **Vandalism:** destruction or damage of school property
13. **Displays of Affection:** Inappropriate display of affection.
14. **Inappropriate Language:** disrespectful words or actions or profanity.
15. **Bus Conduct:** Any level 2 violation on ALA transportation.
16. **Insubordination:** being insubordinate to school personnel or school volunteers.
17. **Medication:** using or possessing over-the-counter medication at school without the written consent of the principal or his/her designee.
18. **Gambling:** includes, but is not limited to, betting money or other items on card games, dice games, or the outcome of athletic contests or other activities, and/or possession of gambling materials or paraphernalia.
19. **Possessing Obscene Materials:** Possessing obscene or vulgar materials when such conduct does not involve another student.
20. **Inappropriate Items/Activities:** possessing, using, selling, buying, giving away, bartering, or exchanging any material, substance, food item, or personal belonging that is inappropriate for school. Possession or non-damaging use of a laser pointer.

21. **Encouraging Prohibited Behavior:** inciting, encouraging, counseling, or advising others to engage in prohibited behavior that violates the 5-12 Student & Parent Handbook or any policy of ALA. 22. **Miscellaneous Violations:** Violating any other school policy or school rule, including, but not limited to, failing to report to detention and/or violating rules of the In-School Suspension program.
Possible Disciplinary Measures:
Conference with Administrator Detention In-School Suspension Behavior Contract Administrative Directive

Minimum:	**Maximum:**
Conference with Administrator	1-5 Days of ISS

ALA will generally assign OSS for a Level 1 violation only when the violation is repeated or when prior disciplinary interventions have been unsuccessful. ALA Administration reserves the right to exercise discretion in determining appropriate disciplinary consequences based on the circumstances and severity of the incident.

BUS CONDUCT

Students must obey all bus safety rules and all rules listed in the *Student Code of Conduct.* In addition, North Carolina law prohibits the following acts while on a bus:

1. Acts of physical violence.
2. Bullying.
3. Physical assault or battery of persons on the bus.
4. Verbal assault of persons on the bus.
5. Disrespectful conduct toward bus drivers or other persons.
6. Unruly behavior (*including but not limited to throwing items, excessive movement and noise level*).

7. Students shall be prohibited from using any electronic devices with or without headphones or earbuds during the loading and unloading process. Students should keep electronic equipment packed away when preparing to board and when getting off the bus. Use of electronic devices while onboard the bus with headphones or earbuds is permitted as long as it does not interfere with the driver's operation of the school bus.

8. Using mirrors, lasers, flash cameras, or any other lights or reflective devices in a manner that might interfere with the driver's operation of the bus.

9. Students must maintain silence at all railroad crossings until the driver has crossed and gives the all clear.

Any violation of the Code of Conduct occurring on any bus may have consequences of being suspended from riding on the bus in addition to any other discipline consequences set forth in the Code of Conduct.

Fighting on a bus is among the most serious violations committed by students, as it endangers everyone riding the bus by causing the driver's attention to be diverted. Fighting on a school bus may result in immediate suspension from the bus and/or school with no prior warning or progressive disciplinary action being taken.

BUS CONDUCT	*MINIMUM*	*MAXIMUM*
1st Violation	Parent Contact by Administrator	Bus suspension for three (3) days
2nd Violation	Bus suspension for three (3) days	Bus suspension for five (5) days
3rd Violation	Bus suspension for five (5) days	Bus suspension for ten (10) days
Additional violations beyond the 3rd violation may result in up to ten (10) days of bus suspension or disciplinary hearing. Bus conduct may result in both bus and school-based consequences.		

DRESS CODE Level 1.5	*MINIMUM/ MAXIMUM*
1st Violation	Students may return to regular class upon correction of the dress code violation. Two-way communication with parent/guardian.
2nd Violation	Students will be placed in In-School Suspension for one (1) day. If the violation is corrected before the expiration of the one (1) day, students may return to regular class after serving one full school day in In-School Suspension.
3rd Violation	Students will be placed in In-School Suspension for at least 2 days and then until the violation is corrected.
An explanation of the dress code violation will be provided to students/parents by the administrator, a combination of local interventions, supports, and disciplinary response may be appropriate. Additional violations beyond the 3rd violation may result in additional interventions.	

Unauthorized Use of electronic devices (cell phones)	*MINIMUM/ MAXIMUM*
1st Violation	The device will be turned off and placed in the classroom cell phone pockets located in each classroom.
2nd Violation	The student will receive a warning and the parent is contacted. The phone will be confiscated until the end of the day.

3rd Violation	The student will be written up for cell phone violation. The phone will be confiscated and may be picked up at the end of the day from the office by a parent only. Administration will conference with the student. The student will receive a consequence as per the school administration's discretion.
4th Violation	The student will be written up for cell phone violation. The phone will be confiscated. Administration will conference with the student and parent and the phone will no longer be allowed on campus for the remainder of the academic year. Future offenses will be considered blatant non-compliance and handbook consequences will be followed.

LEVEL 3 VIOLATIONS

Level 3 Discipline: Level 3 discipline violations are generally intermediate acts of misconduct. Level 3 violations are generally mid-level infractions. Mid-level infractions are addressed by administrators. Repeated (two or more) violations of any Level 2 violation can result in that violation being considered a Level 3 violation.

Level 3
Violations Include:
1. **Repeated Level 2 Violations:** repeated violations of Class 2. 2. **Prescription Medication:** possession of prescription or non-prescription medications on one's person without permission from ALA administration. 3. **School Document Alteration:** altering any official ALA document, including report cards, transcripts, or notes from teachers. 4. **Failure to Follow Directions:** Failing to comply with directives provided by ALA personnel. 5. **Disrespect Toward Staff:** addressing staff members disrespectfully. 6. **Inappropriate Language Toward Staff:** Using obscene, offensive, or derogatory language or pictures in reference to a staff member while on ALA property or during ALA functions. 7. **Inappropriate Language Toward Students:** Using obscene, offensive, or derogatory language or pictures in reference to a student while on ALA property or during ALA functions. 8. **Threatening Behavior/Language:** threatening another student or staff member in a way that is unrealistic, vague, or poses minimal risk. 9. **Unsafe Behavior:** Acting in a way that causes or has the potential to cause harm to oneself or others.

10. **Theft:** An elementary or middle school student stealing or taking without permission any possession of a student, volunteer, or staff member.
11. **Possession of Stolen Property:** being in possession of property stolen from a student, volunteer, or staff member.
12. **Fighting:** An elementary or middle school student fighting while on ALA property or during an ALA function.
13. **Disruption of School:** Causing or contributing to the disruption and interference of school operations
14. **Violation of Electronics and Technology Policy:** Misuse of electronic or technological resources or devices, including, but not limited to unauthorized access to the system network, creating or using the email or messaging account of another without permission to send communications.
15. **Violation of Electronics and Technology Policy:** Misuse of electronic or technological resources or devices, including, but not limited to unauthorized access to the system network, creating or using the email or messaging account of another without permission to send communications.
16. **Inappropriate Internet Use:** Using the internet to search for obscene, offensive, or derogatory material during the ALA school day or at any time on an ALA-owned device.
17. **Vandalism or Property Damage:** Intentionally damaging, defacing, destroying, or otherwise misusing school or personal property.
18. **Giving False Information:** Falsifying, misrepresenting, omitting, or erroneously reporting information regarding instances of alleged inappropriate behavior by a teacher, administrator, or other school employee toward a student.
19. **Possessing Hazardous Objects:** Possessing, displaying, using, or otherwise exhibiting intent to use a hazardous object in such a manner that is either dangerous or threatening to the student, other students, personnel or any other person.
20. **Inappropriate Activity of a Sexual Nature:** Such conduct does not rise to the level of severity of a Level 3 violation and may include public displays of affection including, but not limited to, kissing or embracing or groping on school property; sexual harassment that does not involve physical contact such as lewd gestures, or verbal conduct or communication of a sexual nature; unwelcomed sexual advances; “sexting”; requests for sexual favors; gender-based harassment that

creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive educational or work environment.

21. **Viewing Obscene Materials:** Accessing or viewing obscene or vulgar materials.
22. **Verbal Abuse:** Verbally abusing others, including but not limited to, threats, or intimidation, including but not limited to, harassing or taunting in person, on the Internet, or other mode of electronic communications.
23. **Possession or Vaping Devices/Electronic Cigarettes or Related Products:** Possession of electronic cigarettes (includes but not limited to e-cigarettes, e-cigs, Juuls, vapes, vape pens, vaping cartridges, hookah devices, hookah look-alikes, advanced personal vaporizers) and related products. This includes, but is not limited to, cannabidiol (CBD) extract or hemp products.

Possible Disciplinary Measures:

In-School Suspension

Out of School Suspension

Minimum:	**Maximum:**
In-School Suspension 1-5 Days	Out of School Suspension 5 days

Severe Level 3 Violations

Violations Include:

1. **Repeated Violations:** Repeated Level 3 violations.
2. **Leaving School Without Permission:** Leaving ALA without permission and engaging in inappropriate or illegal activity.
3. **Theft:** A middle or high school student stealing or taking possession of an item belonging to a student or staff member without permission.
4. **Offensive Language Toward Staff:** Directing offensive, obscene, or derogatory language toward a staff member.

5. **Offensive Language Toward Students:** Directing offensive, obscene, or derogatory language toward another student.
6. **Threatening Behavior:** Threatening or facilitating a threat against another student in a direct and deliberate manner, where the threat demonstrates forethought and could potentially be carried out, even if it may not be immediately realistic.
7. **Fighting:** Fighting involving a high school student while on ALA property or during an ALA function.
8. **Gambling:** Attempting to gamble or gambling for money or anything of value while on ALA property or during an ALA function.
9. **Bullying:** Engaging in bullying behavior toward another student at the elementary, middle, or high school level.
10. **Physical Force or Violence:** Using physical force or violence toward another student for any reason.
11. **Sexual Harassment:** Engaging in sexual harassment of another student, employee, or other individual.
12. **Unsafe Behavior:** Acting in a manner that causes or has the potential to cause harm to oneself or others.
13. **Intentional Harm:** Intentionally attempting to cause or causing physical or emotional harm to another person or oneself.
14. **Misuse of Technology:** Inappropriate use of technology, including but not limited to recording audio or video on campus using a cell phone or other device without authorization.
15. **Vape Distribution or Sale:** Possession, sale, or distribution of a vape or vaping device, regardless of type.
16. **Failure to Report a Threat:** Failing to report a threat against ALA, ALA personnel, or another student, including any threat made by a student.
17. **Unauthorized Contact:** Engaging in unauthorized contact with ALA staff, volunteers, or their family members.
18. **Threats or Intimidation Toward Staff:** Using intimidation, threats, or force while interacting with an ALA employee.

Possible Disciplinary Measures:	
Out of School Suspension	
Minimum: Out of School Suspension 3 Days	**Maximum:** Out of School Suspension 10 days

*Repeated Level 3 violations may result in additional short-term suspension, long-term suspension, or exclusion. ALA Administration reserves the right to exercise discretion in determining appropriate disciplinary consequences based on the circumstances, severity, and frequency of the violation.

LEVEL 4 VIOLATIONS

Level 4 Discipline: Level 4 Discipline violations are generally serious acts of misconduct including, but not limited to, repeated misbehaviors of a similar nature, serious disruptions of the school environment, threats to health, safety, or property, and other acts of serious misconduct. Level 4 violations are generally major infractions and are serious safety violations. Major infractions should be reported to the school administrator immediately after the incident and may result in the immediate removal of a student from school. Level 4 violations may result in a referral to a Disciplinary Hearing.

Level 4 Violations
Violations Include:
1. **Repeated Violations:** Repeated violations of any of Level 3 violations. 2. **Unauthorized Entry:** Entering ALA property after hours without proper authorization. 3. **Smoking or Vaping:** Smoking or vaping on the ALA campus, at ALA events, or during an ALA-sponsored activity. 4. **Inappropriate Images:** Possession or distribution of offensive, obscene, or derogatory pictures or images, including electronically, while on ALA property or participating in an ALA event or sponsored activity. 5. **False Fire Alarm:** Intentionally activating a fire alarm without a legitimate emergency. 6. **Title IX Violation:** Engaging in conduct that violates applicable Title IX requirements or ALA's Title IX policies. 7. **False Information to Law Enforcement:** Knowingly making a false statement or providing false information to law enforcement concerning ALA, its students, families, Board, employees, contractors, or volunteers. 8. **Violence or Threats Toward Adults:** Using force, intimidation, threats, or violence while being insubordinate toward an adult on ALA property or at an ALA event or sponsored activity.

9. **Alcohol and Other drugs:** Possession or consumption of alcohol or controlled substances (as defined by state law) on the ALA campus, at an ALA event, or during an ALA-sponsored activity. This offense is reportable to law enforcement.
10. **Repeated Violations:** Repeated violations of any of the above classes.
11. **Two or More Level 3 Violations:** Accumulation of two (2) or more Level 3 violations in one academic school year.
12. **Sexual Misconduct:** Any inappropriate act of a sexual nature that involves physical contact or that rises above a Level 3 offense.
13. **Theft Greater than $500:** Theft, including but not limited to, attempted theft, extortion, bribery, theft by deception, and/or possession of stolen property when the value of the property is greater than $500, as estimated by school officials.
14. **Vandalism or damage to property greater than $500:** Vandalizing school or personal property, with the cost of damages being greater than $500, as estimated by school officials.

Possible Disciplinary Measures	
Out of School Suspension Recommendation of Exclusion	
Minimum: Out of School Suspension 10 days	**Maximum:** Recommendation for Exclusion

LEVEL 5 VIOLATIONS

Level 5 Discipline: Level 5 Discipline violations are the most egregious acts of misconduct and generally constitute a serious violation of the law (for example, conduct which would be considered a serious felony criminal act if the student were an adult), and pose a significant safety risk or result in serious bodily injury. Committing a Level 5 violation can result in a recommendation of exclusion or expulsion.

Level 5 Violations
Violations Include:

1. **Repeated Violations:** Repeated violations of any of the above classes.
2. **Unauthorized Sharing of Images:** Sharing or posting offensive, obscene, or derogatory pictures or images, including online, of students, ALA employees, or volunteers without permission, when the conduct interferes with the learning process or disrupts the educational environment.
3. **Robbery or Attempted Robbery:** Using force, intimidation, or violence to take or attempt to take another person's property.
4. **Widespread Disruption:** Inciting or engaging in behavior that results in, or is intended to result in, widespread disruption of the educational process.
5. **Lewd or Sexual Conduct:** Participating in lewd, illegal, or sexual acts while on ALA property, at a school event, or during a school sponsored activity.
6. **Serious Threat:** Making a logical, specific, and realistic threat of serious violence toward a student or ALA employee.
7. **Assault:** Assaulting or attempting to assault a student or ALA employee.
8. **Inappropriate Sexual Contact:** Engaging in inappropriate sexual touching of a student or ALA employee.
9. **Serious Criminal Conduct:** Engaging in conduct that constitutes a felony or serious misdemeanor under North Carolina law when the student presents a safety risk to students or staff or is likely to cause a disruption to the learning environment. A conviction or arrest is not required for this provision to apply.

Special Offenses*

- **Assault Resulting in Serious Injury:** Assault resulting in serious injury.
- **Assault With a Weapon:** Assault involving the use of a weapon.
- **Assault on School Personnel:** Assaulting an ALA official, employee, or volunteer.
- **Bomb Threat or Hoax:** Making a bomb threat or engaging in a bomb hoax.
- **Arson:** Willfully burning or attempting to burn an ALA building.
- **Unlawful Alcohol Activity:** Unlawful or underage sale, purchase, possession, or provision of alcoholic beverages.
- **Controlled Substance:** Possession of a controlled substance in violation of North Carolina law.
- **Weapon Possession:** Possession of a weapon, including a knife or firearm.
- **Armed Robbery:** Robbery involving the use of a dangerous weapon.

• **Sexual Offense:** Committing a sexual offense as defined by applicable law. • **Bullying:** Engaging in bullying behavior. • **Hazing:** Engaging in hazing or hazing-related activities.
Possible Disciplinary Measures
Out of School Suspension Recommendation of Exclusion

Minimum:	**Maximum:**
Out of School Suspension 10 days	Recommendation for Exclusion

*** These offenses are also reportable to law enforcement.**

Severe Level 5 Violations
Violations Include:

1. Offenses*:
    1. Homicide
    2. Kidnapping
    3. Possession of a firearm
    4. Rape
    5. Sexual Assault
    6. Taking indecent liberties with a minor

Possible Disciplinary Measures
10-day suspension with a recommendation for a Long-Term Suspension 365-Day Suspension Exclusion Expulsion

Minimum:	Maximum
10-day suspension with a recommendation for a Long-Term Suspension	Expulsion

*** These offenses are also reportable to law enforcement.**

Procedures for Disciplinary Process and Short-Term Suspension

Upon receiving a report of a potential occurrence of any of the above violations, Ascend Leadership Academy administration will conduct an investigation. An investigation may include interviewing witnesses, reviewing camera footage, speaking with staff members, and searching a student, a student's locker, or a student's belongings. Any student who refuses to permit the search will result in the assignment of consequences commensurate with the suspected violation.

Upon completion of the investigation, Ascend Leadership Academy administration will determine if the preponderance of the evidence weighs in favor of the violation occurring. This means that it is more likely than not that the student committed the violation. If that is the conclusion, the student will be notified of the consequences of the violation, as long as notification of the student does not pose a risk to the safety and security of other individuals on campus. If the violation is an offense that requires a report to law enforcement, the appropriate agency will be notified. The Ascend Leadership Academy administrator will make a reasonable attempt to contact the student's parent or guardian by telephone to communicate the results of the investigation and the assigned consequences.

Due Process Procedures for Long-Term Suspension, Exclusion, and Expulsion

A student accused of a willful violation of the Code of Student Conduct, which, in the opinion of the Managing Director, principal or their designee, may require a 365-day suspension, long-term suspension, or exclusion from the Ascend Leadership Academy, shall be afforded the procedural safeguard described below. The procedures for a short-term suspension must be employed, as well as the following additional steps, prior to the imposition of a 365-day suspension, long-term suspension, or exclusion. The Dean/Assistant Principal/Principal, or the Managing Director, may recommend a 365-day suspension, long-term suspension, exclusion, and/or participation in a Behavioral Contract. Where exclusion, long-term suspension, or a 365-day suspension is recommended, the parent(s)/guardian(s) will be notified in writing within two Ascend Leadership Academy days or as soon as possible.

The notification of the recommendation for long-term suspension or exclusion shall be consistent with NC General Statute § 115C-390.8 and include the following:

1. The conduct that violated the Ascend Leadership Academy's Code of Conduct;
2. The relevant provision in the Ascend Leadership Academy's Code of Conduct that was violated;
3. A deadline for the parents or guardians to request a hearing;
4. A deadline for the parent to notify the Ascend Leadership Academy as to whether they are bringing an advocate and the role of such advocate;
5. The right to review and obtain copies of your child's educational records before the hearing;
6. The time frame or date when the hearing will be held, if one is requested;
7. The right to question the witnesses who appear at the hearing;
8. The right to present evidence on your child's behalf, which can include written or oral statements relating to the incident leading to the suspension and any of the factors listed in N.C. General Statute § 115C-390.2(g);
9. The right to have a record made of the hearing. We will record the hearing and make a copy available at your request. You also have the right to make your audio recording of the hearing;

10. Notice that Ascend Leadership Academy follows the procedures set forth in N.C. General Statute § 115C-402 with regard to the expungement of discipline records; and
11. The right to a written decision, based on substantial evidence presented at the hearing, that upholds, modifies, or rejects the principal's recommendation of suspension and/or exclusion and that contains at least the following information:
    a. The basis for the decision, including a reference to any policy or rule that the student is determined to have violated;
    b. Notice of what information will be included in the student's official record pursuant to N.C. General Statute § 115C-402; and
    c. The student's right to appeal the decision and notice of the procedures for such appeal.

The Ascend Leadership Academy will follow one of the following processes for Exclusion, Long-Term Suspension, and 365-Day Suspension:

Option 1

If a Dean/Assistant Principal/Principal determines that an infraction falls into the category for which a long-term suspension and/or exclusion or a 365-day suspension is appropriate, they will notify the Managing Director of a recommendation for long-term suspension or exclusion. If the parent(s)/guardian(s) request a hearing, it will be before the Managing Director or a hearing officer. At the conclusion of the hearing, the Managing Director will determine if the recommendation for long-term suspension or exclusion should be upheld, modified, or overturned.

If the student is assigned exclusion or a long-term suspension or a 365-day suspension by the Managing Director or a hearing officer, the parent or guardian has two school days to appeal the decision to a panel of the board of directors. This request must be submitted in writing to the Managing Director. The board panel will review the appeal based on the record (no new evidence will be permitted) and make a decision. A hearing before the board panel is at the discretion of the board and is not required. The board panel decision is final, and there is no appeal to the full board. The Ascend Leadership Academy will follow the requirements set forth in North Carolina's General Statutes for any such appeal and hearing.

If the parent or guardian either refuses the hearing or fails to attend the hearing, the Managing Director will make the determination on whether to uphold the recommendation of a 365-day suspension, long-term suspension, or exclusion. Such a decision shall be final.

Option 2

For any offense where a Long Term Suspension, Exclusion, or a 365-Day Suspension is recommended, the Deans/Assistant Principals/Principals and/or Managing Director (and their designees) may recommend a 365-day suspension, long-term suspension, or exclusion. Where: (1) the Ascend Leadership Academy does not employ the process set forth in Option 1, (2) the Managing Director is involved in the investigation of the disciplinary incident or the recommendation for long-term suspension, or (3) the Managing Director wishes to have a board panel hear any appeal, then any hearing shall be conducted by a panel of three board members appointed by the board chair or their designee. Decisions of the Board Panel shall be final, and there will be no further appeal to the full Board of Directors. Ascend Leadership Academy will follow the requirements set forth in North Carolina's General Statutes for any such appeal and hearing.

If the parent or guardian either does not request a hearing or fails to attend the hearing, the Managing Director will make the determination on whether to uphold the recommendation of a 365-day suspension, a long-term suspension, or exclusion. Such a decision shall be final.

Procedures for Expulsion

N.C.G.S. § 115C-390.11 gives the Ascend Leadership Academy's Board of Directors authority to expel any student over 14 years of age whose behavior indicates that the student's continued presence in the Ascend Leadership Academy constitutes a clear threat to the safety of other students or employees or who is subject to the Jessica Lundsford Act (which applies to certain registered sex offenders). The Ascend Leadership Academy will follow legally required procedures for Expulsion. Details of the procedures to be followed for expulsion are provided in North Carolina General Statutes, § 115C-390.11.

Offense Definitions

1. ATTENDANCE (Citizenship/Responsibility/Self-Discipline)

Excessive Tardiness, Leaving Ascend Leadership Academy without Permission, Leaving Class without Permission, Truancy, Skipping Ascend Leadership Academy, Skipping Class, Cutting Class, Late to Class

A student must attend every class every day unless there is a lawful reason for the absence. Students who are tardy, cut Ascend Leadership Academy or class, or have excessive unexcused absences are in violation of this rule. Repeated violations of this rule, if other interventions have been tried, may also result in Class 2 consequences, with the condition that any out-of-Ascend Leadership Academy suspension imposed for conduct related solely to violation of this rule is limited to 2 days per violation.

2. STUDENT DRESS (Responsibility/Respect/Citizenship)

A student will maintain personal attire and grooming standards that promote safety, health, and acceptable standards of social conduct, and are not disruptive to the educational environment. The board prohibits substantially disruptive clothing that is provocative, revealing, profane, vulgar, offensive, or obscene, or endangers the health or safety of the student or others. For more details, please see the Student Dress Code Policy.

3. PERSONAL PROPERTY (Responsibility/Self-Discipline)

A student is permitted to bring or possess only objects that have an educational purpose and will not distract from teaching or learning. Students are permitted to sell items on campus only as part of an approved Ascend Leadership Academy activity. (All other items will be confiscated and returned to the parent at a mutually agreed upon time, not to exceed one calendar week.) The following are among the list of prohibited items:

a. **Personal Technology Devices/Cell Phone Use:**
A personal technology device (PTD) is a portable Internet-accessing device that is not the property of the district that can be used to transmit communications by voice, written characters, words or images, share information, record sounds, process words, and/or capture images, such as a laptop computer, tablet, smartphone, cellphone, personal digital assistant or E-Reader. A student may possess and use a PTD on Ascend Leadership Academy property, at after-Ascend Leadership Academy activities, and at Ascend Leadership Academy-related functions, provided that the PTD is not activated, used, displayed, or visible during Ascend Leadership Academy hours. Administrators may authorize individual students to use the devices for personal use when there is a reasonable need for such communication. Teachers and administrators may authorize individual students to use the devices for educational purposes, provided that they supervise them during such use.

"Educational purposes" include student education, research, and career development. Possession of a PTD by a student is a privilege that may be revoked for violations of the *Code of Student Conduct.* Violations may result in confiscation of the PTD (to be returned only to a parent) and/or other disciplinary actions. The Ascend Leadership Academy is not responsible for theft, loss, or damage to PDTs or other electronic

devices brought onto Ascend Leadership Academy property. Students permitted to use PTDs during the Ascend Leadership Academy day must follow all Ascend Leadership Academy Rules and Policies, including "Responsible Use of Technology and Internet Safety" and "Student Responsible Use of Technology and Internet Safety Agreement."

b. **Toys, games (electronic and other), electronic smoking devices, pagers, personal media devices, other electronic equipment, and any devices that create noise and disturbance:**
Possession of these or any similar devices without permission from the administration is prohibited. Possession of a toy gun that could be mistaken for an actual weapon is a violation of the Offenses pertaining to Weapons and Dangerous Objects.

4. MISREPRESENTATION (Honesty)

A student will be honest and submit his/her own work.

a. **Altering Report Cards or Notes:** Tampering with report cards, official passes, notes, or other Ascend Leadership Academy documents, in any manner, including changing grades or forging names to excuses, is prohibited.
b. **False Information:** Making false statements, written or oral, to anyone in authority is prohibited.
c. **Cheating/*Honor Code Violation:*** Violating rules of honesty and Honor Codes, including but not limited to plagiarism, violating copyright laws, or copying another student's test or assignment, is prohibited. The Managing Director has the discretion to punish violations of this rule as a Level 3 violation if the student's actions have a profound, detrimental effect on other students or staff.

5. INSUBORDINATION (Responsibility/Respect)

A student will obey the lawful direction of any authorized staff member while in Ascend Leadership Academy, participating in an Ascend Leadership Academy activity, or on Ascend Leadership Academy property. All students are expected to behave in a respectful manner. This includes, but is not limited to, complying with the direction or instruction of a staff member, not walking away from a staff member while being spoken to, speaking to staff in an appropriate manner, and completing all assigned work.

6. TRESPASSING (Citizenship/Responsibility/Respect)

A student will not enter Ascend Leadership Academy property or an Ascend Leadership Academy facility without proper authority. This rule includes being on the campus of an Ascend Leadership Academy to which the student is not assigned during the Ascend Leadership Academy day without the knowledge and consent of Ascend Leadership Academy administrators; loitering at any Ascend Leadership Academy after the close of the Ascend Leadership Academy day without any specific need or supervision; or being on the property of any Ascend Leadership Academy during a period of suspension or expulsion without the express permission of the principal. A student who is trespassing on Ascend Leadership Academy property may be criminally prosecuted.

7. MEDICATION (Responsibility/Honesty/Good Judgment)

Students shall not transport prescription medication to or from Ascend Leadership Academy or have prescription medication in their possession at any time without meeting the conditions prescribed in "Administering Medicines to Students."

A student who is allowed to self-administer medicine pursuant to this policy will be subject to disciplinary action if the student uses his or her prescribed medication in a manner other than as prescribed. Elementary students are not permitted to self-administer medication, whether prescribed or non-prescribed, under any circumstances. Middle and high Ascend Leadership Academy students may self-administer non-prescribed over-the-counter medication with a medication authorization signed by a healthcare practitioner and a parent. Distribution and/or consumption of medication may result in an immediate Level 3 consequence. Violation of this rule may also be treated as a violation of drug policies, including possession, use, sale, or distribution.

8. GENERALLY DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR (Responsibility/Respect/Citizenship/Self-Discipline)

A student will maintain appropriate behavior so as to refrain from disrupting class, Ascend Leadership Academy, or bus activity and be prepared for instruction at all times. A student shall not talk out in class or move from his/her assigned seat/area without permission, throw objects (except as directed by staff for an instructional purpose), engage in horseplay, harass, tease, or make rude noises. Repeated incidents of generally disruptive behavior may be considered a Level 3 infraction.

9. UNSAFE ACTION (Good Judgment/Citizenship/Responsibility/Respect)

A student shall not commit any action that has the potential to cause danger or physical harm to himself or others, to include but not limited to: exiting a moving Ascend Leadership Academy bus, exiting a Ascend Leadership Academy bus by way of the emergency exit absent an emergency, attempting to elude Ascend Leadership Academy officials by running through a parking lot or a traffic area, climbing on the roof of buildings, construction areas, boiler rooms, attics or elevator shafts, or any action that has the potential for physical harm to self or others. This includes striking matches, flicking cigarette lighters, or using any instrument capable of producing fire on Ascend Leadership Academy property or at a Ascend Leadership Academy-sponsored or Ascend Leadership Academy-related activity that is on or off Ascend Leadership Academy property. This rule applies only when the unsafe behavior does not meet the standards of any other violation.

10. BULLYING/CYBERBULLYING, PROFANITY, OBSCENITY, AND/OR DEROGATORY LANGUAGE

Bullying and/or harassing behavior are strictly prohibited. It is the policy of the Board of Directors to maintain learning environments that are free from harassment or bullying. Students are expected to use appropriate conduct and language at Ascend Leadership Academy and Ascend Leadership Academy functions, and possess only relevant materials. This rule applies to cursing, possessing, sending, or receiving written materials or electronic text and/or images that convey an offensive, racial, derogatory, bullying, or obscene message to another person. This includes but is not limited to references to race, color, ancestry, national origin, gender, gender identity expression, sexual orientation, religion, and/or physical or sensory disability, physical appearance, or making offensive statements or gestures. In addition, as with other disciplinary violations, any manner of bullying that occurs off campus may violate the *Code of Student Conduct* if it has a direct and immediate impact on the orderly and efficient operation of the Ascend Leadership Academy or the safety of individuals in the Ascend Leadership Academy environment.

11. GAMBLING (Responsibility/Self-Discipline)

A student will not play games of skill or chance for money or property.

12. VEHICLE USE/PARKING (Responsibility/Citizenship/Good Judgment)

A student will not operate any motorized or self-propelled vehicle on Ascend Leadership Academy grounds in a manner that is a threat to health and/or safety, or a disruption to the educational process. Driving to Ascend Leadership Academy is a privilege, which may be limited or revoked at any time by the Ascend Leadership Academy principal. A student will not park a motor vehicle on Ascend Leadership Academy premises unless he/she has complied with all Ascend Leadership Academy vehicle parking requirements. Parking permits must be visibly displayed, and vehicles must be parked only in assigned spaces. Unauthorized vehicles may be towed.

13. VANDALISM (Responsibility/Citizenship/Good Judgment)

A student will not willfully, with or without malice, act alone or participate with others to damage or destroy property of another, including property belonging to the Ascend Leadership Academy or the district, staff, students, or other adults on campus or at a Ascend Leadership Academy-sponsored or Ascend Leadership Academy-related activity on or off Ascend Leadership Academy property. A student or parent/guardian will be held financially responsible, as allowed by law, for the willful or malicious destruction of property.

14. USE OF FIRE

A student will neither set fire nor attempt to set fire to anything on Ascend Leadership Academy property nor participate with others to damage or destroy Ascend Leadership Academy property through the use of fire. (This violation does not include any smoking violations covered under another provision.)

15. THEFT (Responsibility/Respect/Citizenship/Self-Discipline)

A student will not steal or possess stolen property, or participate with others to do so. Stolen property includes any object possessed without the owner's permission. In some instances, violations of this rule may be a Level 2 infraction.

16. BREAKING AND ENTERING (Responsibility/Respect/Citizenship/Self-Discipline)

A student will not break into any district property. This will include any unauthorized entry into Ascend Leadership Academy property with or without destruction to the property.

17. BREAKING AND ENTERING WITH THE INTENT TO COMMIT A FELONY OR THEFT (Responsibility/Respect/Citizenship/Good Judgment)

A student will not unlawfully enter any district property with the intent of committing a felony, to steal and/or take and carry away the property of another, or to attempt to commit the taking of property.

18. ROBBERY (Responsibility/Respect/Citizenship/Self-Discipline)

A student will not take or attempt to take another person’s property by force or violence.

19. EXTORTION (Responsibility/Respect/Citizenship/Self-Discipline)

A student will not take, threaten, or attempt to take the property (including but not limited to money) of others through intimidation.

20. UNAUTHORIZED USE OF TECHNOLOGY DEVICES (Honesty)

a. **Ascend Leadership Academy-owned property:** A student shall refrain from inappropriate use of Ascend Leadership Academy system computers/technology devices or from using the Ascend Leadership Academy's electronic communications and wireless connection network without proper authority. This includes unauthorized use of sign-on codes and the Ascend Leadership Academy telephone system, communication of threats or implied threats, bullying or harassment, and unauthorized attempts to contact any BCS computer site from any computer station.

b. **Personal technology devices:** A student will refrain from any activity or distribution of information from personal technology devices that would constitute a violation of a rule under the *Code of Student Conduct* or a violation of law, as, but not limited to, bullying or harassment on social media or other sites if the conduct has or may have a direct and immediate impact on the orderly and efficient operation of the Ascend Leadership Academys or the safety of individuals in the Ascend Leadership Academy environment. Publication of information on the Internet is considered distribution regardless of the location of the technology device from which the offending content was published.

21. FALSE ALARM (Responsibility/Good Judgment)

In the absence of an emergency, a student shall not call 911 or signal or set off an automatic signal indicating the presence of an emergency.

22. PORNOGRAPHIC, PROFANE, AND/OR VIOLENT MATERIAL (Responsibility/Respect/Citizenship/Self-Discipline)

A student shall refrain from having any pornographic or profane material in his/her possession, including but not limited to pictures, magazines, CD's, DVD's, electronic text or images and sexually explicit or graphically violent materials (including but not limited to documents or instructions concerning the creation and/or the use of weapons. Unclothed (fully or partially) pictures/images of any minor are also not permitted and are covered by this provision.

23. BOMB THREAT (Responsibility/Respect/Self-Discipline/Good Judgment)

A student shall not make any report or notification, knowing or having reason to know the report is false (verbal or written), indicating the presence of a bomb or explosive device on Ascend Leadership Academy grounds, Ascend Leadership Academy bus, or at any Ascend Leadership Academy activity.

24. AGGRESSIVE PHYSICAL/VERBAL ACTION (Responsibility/Respect/Kindness/ Self Discipline)

A student shall not exhibit any form of aggressive physical or verbal action against another student, staff member, or any other adult at Ascend Leadership Academy. Minor incidents of hitting, biting, spitting, shoving, kicking, or throwing objects at a student or adult may be a Level 1 or 2 infraction. A student shall not approach another person in a confrontational, provocative, or bullying manner. This will include attempts to intimidate or instigate another person to fight or commit other acts of physical aggression.

25. FIGHTING

The exchange of mutual aggressive physical contact between students, with or without injury, is prohibited. A student who is physically attacked may act in self-defense without consequence. ***Self-defense is defined as the act by a non-aggressor victim using reasonable force to avoid being hit in order to enable oneself to get free from the attacker and notify Ascend Leadership Academy authorities. It is not self-defense to participate in the fight. Students who exceed reasonable force in protecting themselves will be disciplined for violating this rule, even though another person provoked the fight.*** Administrators will have discretion to recognize the need for self-defense on an incident-by-incident basis.

26. THREATENING/INTIMIDATING

A student shall not threaten to strike, attack, or harm any person, or cause another person to become fearful by intimidation, through any medium, including threats made in person, through another person at the request of the perpetrator, on the telephone, in writing, through the use of gang paraphernalia, or by any digital communication (cyber-bullying) that pose a safety risk to the Ascend Leadership Academy environment. The Class will be determined by the level of risk presented by the threat, whether the threat could have reasonably been carried out, and whether the threatened person was made fearful.

27. ASSAULT ON A STUDENT

A student shall not physically attack another student. See self-defense as defined above.

28. MULTIPLE ASSAULTS

A student shall not act in concert to physically attack another student.

29. ASSAULT ON A STAFF MEMBER

A student shall not physically attack a staff member or adult. See self-defense as defined above.

30. MULTIPLE ASSAULTS

A student shall not act in concert to physically attack a staff member or other adult.

31. HAZING

In addition to any definiatnion set forth in the Ascend Leadership Academy's Harassment and Discrimination Policy, Hazing also includes: any activity that may demean, disgrace, or embarrass a person or that risks endangering the mental, physical, or emotional health of a person, regardless of whether such person has agreed to participation in the hazing activity.

32. SEXUAL BEHAVIOR, *including harassment, indecent exposure, consensual activity, and battery* (Responsibility/Respect/Self-Discipline/Kindness)

A student shall not engage in any sexual behavior on Ascend Leadership Academy property or at a Ascend Leadership Academy-sponsored activity. A student shall not engage in unwanted touching of an offensive or sexual nature. A student shall not engage in unwanted verbal or physical (e.g., gesturing) conduct of a sexual nature which may reasonably be regarded as intimidating, hostile, or offensive. This includes the communication of (by digital or other means) or the intentional display of sexually explicit material. A student shall not intentionally expose private

body parts, including but not limited to the display of the buttocks (mooning). A student shall not engage in consensual sexual activity. "Consensual" means all parties are willing participants in the activity. A student shall not engage in or attempt to engage in sexual activity with another person by force, threat, or fear.

33. ALCOHOL, TOBACCO, AND OTHER DRUGS (Responsibility/Citizenship)

A student shall not use, purchase, sell, distribute, be under the influence of, or possess any kind of tobacco, alcoholic beverage, paraphernalia, controlled substance (as defined by state law), or illegal or counterfeit substance. A student shall not use, sell, distribute, or possess any kind of tobacco product on Ascend Leadership Academy property or at a Ascend Leadership Academy function. A student shall not possess, use, or be under the influence of alcohol on Ascend Leadership Academy property or at a Ascend Leadership Academy function. A student shall not possess, use, or be under the influence of marijuana on Ascend Leadership Academy property or at a Ascend Leadership Academy function. "Marijuana" is defined to also include synthetic cannabinoids and substances intended to mimic the effects of marijuana. Possession of large amounts or of more than one individually wrapped package of marijuana will be deemed to be a violation of Drug Distribution. A student shall not use, possess, or distribute any drug-related paraphernalia, including but not limited to: rolling papers, cigar wrappers, e-cigarettes, vaping/hookah devices, bongs, pipes, or any item intended for the use, storage, or distribution of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, or other drugs. For drugs other than marijuana, a student shall not use or be under the influence of illegal or controlled substances or possess illegal, counterfeit, or controlled substances (including prescription drugs without a doctor's order filed with the Ascend Leadership Academy) on Ascend Leadership Academy property or at a Ascend Leadership Academy function. Example items include, but are not limited to: Acid, Ecstasy/MDMA, Heroin/Opiates, Cocaine, Xanax/Benzodiazepines.

34. SALE/DISTRIBUTION (ATTEMPT OR ACTUAL)

A student shall not distribute, sell, attempt to sell, or possess with intent to sell any illegal, counterfeit, or controlled substance. Possession of a large amount of or more than one individually wrapped package of a controlled or illegal substance will be considered evidence that the student intended to sell or distribute the product.

35. WEAPONS AND DANGEROUS OBJECTS – NOT INCLUDING FIREARMS (Responsibility/Citizenship/Good Judgment)

A student will not possess, handle, transport, or use any weapon, object that can be reasonably considered a weapon, dangerous object, or substance that could cause harm or irritation to another individual on Ascend Leadership Academy property or at any Ascend Leadership Academy function. All items will be confiscated and will not be returned except with the mutual agreement of law enforcement. This rule does not apply to Ascend Leadership Academy supplies (e.g., pencil, laser pointer) unless used as a weapon. Note: Any item thrown from a Ascend Leadership Academy bus will be treated as a weapon for the purpose of this rule. See Offense 37[AK1] for rules on firearms. *Special note: See the Safe Harbor Provision on page 5.[AK2]*

Prohibited items include, but are not limited to:

a. Toy knife or look-alike knife
b. Toy gun or look-alike gun
c. Weapon not capable of propelling a missile
d. Knife, switchblade knife, Bowie knife
e. Box cutter/razor blade
f. Camouflaged weapon
g. Object thrown from a bus

h. Gun powder, ammunition, bullets
i. Fireworks
j. Bomb (includes destructive devices such as an explosive, incendiary, or poison gas, grenade, rocket having a propellant charge of more than 4 ounces, or missile with an explosive charge of more than ¼ ounce, mine or similar device
k. Airsoft gun, BB gun, pellet gun, air rifle
l. Any object or substance that could cause injury, including but not limited to, slingshots, ice picks, multi-fingered rings, metal knuckles, nun chucks, dirks, daggers, lead canes, clubs, stun guns, flare guns, paint ball guns, mace, pepper spray, fire extinguishers and/or the use of any object or any substance that will potentially cause harm, irritation or bodily injury.

36. GANG AND GANG-RELATED ACTIVITIES (Responsibility/Respect/Citizenship/Good Judgment)

No student shall commit any act that furthers gangs or gang-related activities. A gang is any ongoing organization, association, or group of three or more persons, whether formal or informal, having as one of its primary activities the commission of criminal acts, or the purposeful violation of any district policy, and having a common name or common identifying sign, colors, or symbols.

"Gang-Related Activity" includes:

a. **Clothing:** Wearing, possessing, using, distributing, displaying, selling, or selling any clothing, jewelry, emblems, badges, symbols, signs, visible tattoos and body markings, or other items, or being in possession of literature that shows affiliation with a gang, or is evidence of membership or affiliation in any gang or that promotes gang affiliation;
b. **Communication:** Communicating either verbally or non-verbally (gestures, handshakes, slogans, drawings, etc.) to convey membership affiliation in any gang or that promotes gang affiliation;
c. **Vandalism or Destruction of Property:** Tagging, or otherwise defacing Ascend Leadership Academy or personal property with gang or gang-related symbols or slogans;
d. **Intimidation/Threats:** Requiring payment for protection, money, or insurance, or otherwise intimidating or threatening any person related to gang activity;
e. **Coercion:** Inciting other students to intimidate or to act with physical violence upon any other person related to gang activity;
f. **Solicitation:** Soliciting others for gang membership;
g. **Conspiracy:** Conspiring to commit any violation of this policy or committing or conspiring to commit any other illegal act or other violation of Ascend Leadership Academy district policies related to gang activity.

37. FIREARMS (Loaded or Unloaded) (Responsibility/Respect/Self-Discipline/Good Judgment)

A student shall not possess, handle, or transport any handgun, rifle, starter gun, shotgun, or any other weapon that will or is designed to or may be readily converted to expel a projectile by action of an explosion, including camouflaged guns or any firearm muffler or silencer. By law, students violating this rule are subject to a 365-day mandatory suspension.

38. PERSISTENTLY DANGEROUS STUDENTS (Responsibility/Caring/Justice and Fairness)

Students shall not frequently engage in conduct that is in violation of other code of conduct rules and is a danger to others in the Ascend Leadership Academy environment. Targeted conduct for this rule is multiple events over an extended period of time, including previous Ascend Leadership Academy years. Examples of misconduct under this rule include, but are not limited to, multiple rule violations for assault, the sale or distribution of illegal drugs, gang-related activities, the possession of weapons, and inappropriate sexual behavior.

[AK1]If you add/remove items from this list, update this reference.

[AK2]Update this reference for the Safe Harbor Provision location.

Discipline of Students with Disabilities

Code of Conduct – Exceptional Children / Section 504 Section

> *Drafting note: This document is intended to supplement — not replace — IC Imagine's separately maintained Policies Governing Services for Children with Disabilities, individual IEPs, and Section 504 Plans. Before adoption, this language should be checked against those existing EC/504 policies and procedures for consistency and to avoid unnecessary duplication; cross-references can be substituted for restated procedural detail where the Ascend Leadership Academy prefers to keep a single source of truth. Bracketed items indicate points for Ascend Leadership Academy leadership to confirm.*

A. General Statement

The obligation and responsibility to attend Ascend Leadership Academy regularly and to comply with the Ascend Leadership Academy's Code of Conduct applies to all students. A principal or designee may discipline a student with a disability who has violated the Code of Conduct, provided the Ascend Leadership Academy complies with the procedural protections of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act ("IDEA"), 20 U.S.C. § 1415(k) and 34 C.F.R. §§ 300.530–300.536; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and its implementing regulations, 34 C.F.R. Part 104; and applicable North Carolina law, including N.C.G.S. § 115C-390.2 and N.C.G.S. § 115C-107.7.

This section applies in addition to, and does not replace, the Ascend Leadership Academy's separately maintained Policies Governing Services for Children with Disabilities, a student's Individualized Education Program ("IEP"), or a student's Section 504 Plan. Where this section conflicts with federal law, IDEA, Section 504, or the Ascend Leadership Academy's EC/504 policies and procedures, the more protective standard controls.

B. Continuation of Educational Services

- A student with a disability who is removed from the current educational placement for more than ten (10) cumulative Ascend Leadership Academy days in a Ascend Leadership Academy year — whether through a single removal or a series of removals that constitute a pattern — must continue to receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE) sufficient to allow the student to participate in the general education curriculum and progress toward IEP goals, and, as appropriate, to receive a functional behavioral assessment and behavioral intervention services.
- A student removed for ten (10) or fewer cumulative Ascend Leadership Academy days in a Ascend Leadership Academy year will receive educational services only to the extent such services are provided to nondisabled students who are similarly removed.
- Whether a series of removals constitutes a "pattern" will be determined on a case-by-case basis, considering the length of each removal, the total time the student has been removed, the proximity of the removals to one another, and whether the behavior is substantially similar across incidents.

C. Manifestation Determination Review (MDR)

Within ten (10) Ascend Leadership Academy days of any decision to change the placement of a student with a disability because of a violation of the Code of Conduct, the Ascend Leadership Academy, the parent, and relevant members of the student's IEP team (or, for a student served solely under Section 504, the student's Section 504 team) will review all relevant information in the student's file — including the IEP or 504 Plan, teacher observations, and any information provided by the parent — to determine whether the conduct in question was:

- caused by, or had a direct and substantial relationship to, the student's disability; or
- the direct result of the Ascend Leadership Academy's failure to implement the student's IEP or Section 504 Plan.

If either is true, the conduct is a manifestation of the student's disability.

D. If the Conduct Is a Manifestation of the Disability

- The Ascend Leadership Academy will not proceed with the proposed disciplinary change in placement, except as provided in Section F (Special Circumstances) below.
- The IEP team (or Section 504 team) will conduct a functional behavioral assessment (when appropriate and required) and implement a behavioral intervention plan, or review and modify an existing plan, and will return the student to the placement from which the student was removed, unless the parent and the Ascend Leadership Academy agree to a change of placement as part of the behavioral intervention plan.

E. If the Conduct Is Not a Manifestation of the Disability

The Ascend Leadership Academy may apply the same disciplinary consequences applicable to students without disabilities, for the same duration, provided that the student continues to receive FAPE consistent with Section B above.

F. Special Circumstances (Weapons, Drugs, Serious Bodily Injury)

Regardless of whether the conduct is determined to be a manifestation of the student's disability, Ascend Leadership Academy personnel may remove a student to an appropriate interim alternative educational setting ("IAES") for up to forty-five (45) Ascend Leadership Academy days if the student:

- carries or possesses a weapon, as defined by 18 U.S.C. § 930(g)(2), at Ascend Leadership Academy, on Ascend Leadership Academy premises, or at a Ascend Leadership Academy function;
- knowingly possesses, uses, sells, or solicits the sale of illegal drugs or controlled substances while at Ascend Leadership Academy, on Ascend Leadership Academy premises, or at a Ascend Leadership Academy function; or
- has inflicted serious bodily injury, as defined by 20 U.S.C. § 1415(k)(7)(D), upon another person while at Ascend Leadership Academy, on Ascend Leadership Academy premises, or at a Ascend Leadership Academy function.

- The manifestation determination review required by Section C above must still be conducted within ten (10) Ascend Leadership Academy days of the decision to remove the student to the IAES.
- The IAES must be determined by the student's IEP team, must enable the student to continue to participate in the general education curriculum and progress toward IEP goals, and must include services and modifications designed to address the behavior so that it does not recur.

G. Placement Pending Appeal ("Stay-Put")

If a parent requests an expedited due process hearing to challenge a manifestation determination or the Ascend Leadership Academy's placement decision under Section F, the student will generally remain in the IAES pending the outcome of the hearing or until expiration of the 45-Ascend Leadership Academy-day period described in Section F, whichever occurs first, unless the parent and the Ascend Leadership Academy agree otherwise. In all other circumstances, a student's placement pending a due process proceeding is governed by IDEA's "stay-put" provisions, 20 U.S.C. § 1415(j) and 34 C.F.R. § 300.518.

H. Students Not Yet Identified as Eligible ("Basis of Knowledge")

A student who has not been determined eligible for special education and who violates the Code of Conduct may assert the protections of this section if the Ascend Leadership Academy is deemed to have had knowledge that the student had a disability before the behavior occurred. The Ascend Leadership Academy is deemed to have had knowledge if, before the behavior occurred:

- the parent expressed concern in writing to Ascend Leadership Academy supervisory or administrative personnel, or to a teacher, that the student needed special education services;
- the parent requested an evaluation of the student; or
- a teacher or other Ascend Leadership Academy staff expressed specific concerns about a pattern of behavior directly to the Ascend Leadership Academy's director of special education (or equivalent) or other supervisory personnel.

The Ascend Leadership Academy is not deemed to have had knowledge if the parent has not permitted an evaluation, has refused special education services, or if the student was evaluated and determined not eligible. If the Ascend Leadership Academy did not have a basis of knowledge, the student may be disciplined in the same manner as a nondisabled student; however, if a request for an evaluation is made during the disciplinary period, the evaluation will be conducted on an expedited basis.

I. Students Protected Solely Under Section 504

A student who has a Section 504 Plan but no IEP is entitled to a manifestation determination before any disciplinary removal that constitutes a "significant change in placement" — generally, a removal exceeding ten (10) consecutive Ascend Leadership Academy days, or a series of removals totaling more than ten (10) Ascend Leadership Academy days in a Ascend Leadership Academy year that constitute a pattern. The student's Section 504 team will follow the process described in Sections C, D, and E above, substituting the student's Section 504 Plan and Section 504 team for the IEP and IEP team.

J. Homebound Instruction

Consistent with N.C.G.S. § 115C-107.7, if a disciplinary change of placement occurs under this section, the Ascend Leadership Academy will not assign a student with a disability to homebound instruction unless the student's IEP team determines that homebound instruction is the least restrictive alternative for that student. If homebound instruction is approved, the IEP team will meet to determine the nature of the services to be provided, and the continued appropriateness of homebound instruction will be reviewed monthly by the designee(s) of the student's IEP team.

K. Relationship to Other Code of Conduct Procedures

- The due process procedures for short-term suspension, long-term suspension, exclusion, and expulsion set forth elsewhere in this Code of Conduct apply to students with disabilities, but are supplemented by — and must be administered consistent with — this section. In particular, before recommending expulsion, exclusion, or long-term suspension of a student with a disability, the Ascend Leadership Academy will complete the manifestation determination review described in Section C above.
- Nothing in this section limits any additional procedural protections provided in the Ascend Leadership Academy's Policies Governing Services for Children with Disabilities, a student's IEP, or a student's Section 504 Plan.

Parent's Bill of Rights Compliance Policies

THESE POLICIES WILL BE POSTED AND AVAILABLE ON THE SCHOOL'S WEBSITE.

The School believes that parent and family involvement must be aggressively pursued and supported by our communities, in homes, schools/colleges/universities, neighborhoods, businesses, faith congregations, organizations, and government entities by working together in a mutually collaborative effort. As such, the Board is committed to developing policies to involve parents in schools and their child's education effectively. N.C.G.S. § 115C-76.20(b)(3).

All parents/families and educators must prioritize family involvement in education; thus, the Board commits to providing support and coordination for school staff and parents to implement and sustain appropriate parent involvement.

Improved student achievement must be the equally shared responsibility and the goal of parents, teachers, the school system, and the community. Thus, the Board commits to seeing that each school has effective volunteer programs to address student needs and commits to utilizing schools to assist students and families in connecting with community resources.

The Board commits that it will impact student achievement significantly by improving the quality and quantity of parent/family involvement. Consequently, the Board will provide guidance, support, cooperation, and the necessary funding to enable parents to become active partners in education.

A. Parent Rights

A parent has the right to the following:

1. To direct the education and care of their child.
2. To direct the child's upbringing and moral or religious training.
3. To enroll their child in a public or nonpublic school and in any school choice options available to the parent for which the child is otherwise eligible by law to comply with compulsory attendance laws, as provided in Part 1 of Article 26 of Chapter 115C of the General Statutes.
4. To access and review all education records, as authorized by the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1232g, relating to their child.
5. To make healthcare decisions for their child, unless otherwise provided by law, including Article 1A of Chapter 90 of the General Statutes.
6. To access and review all medical records of their child, as authorized by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA), P.L. 104-191, as amended, except as follows:
    a. If an authorized investigator requests that information not be released to a parent because the parent is the subject of an investigation of either of the following:
        i. A crime committed against the child under Chapter 14 of the General Statutes.
        ii. An abuse and neglect complaint under Chapter 7B of the General Statutes.
    b. When otherwise prohibited by law.
7. To prohibit the creation, sharing, or storage of a biometric scan of their child without the parent's prior written consent, except as authorized pursuant to a court order or otherwise required by law, including G.S. 7B-2102 and G.S. 7B-2201.
8. To prohibit the creation, sharing, or storage of their child's blood or deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) without the parent's prior written consent, except as authorized pursuant to a court order or otherwise required by law, including G.S. 7B-2201.
9. To prohibit the creation by the State of a video or voice recording of their child without the parent's prior written consent, except a recording made in the following circumstances:
    a. During or as part of a court proceeding.
    b. As part of an investigation under Chapter 7B or Chapter 14 of the General Statutes.
    c. When the recording will be used solely for any of the following purposes:
        i. A safety demonstration, including one related to security and discipline on educational property.
        ii. An academic or extracurricular activity.
        iii. Classroom instruction.
        iv. Photo identification cards.
        v. Security or surveillance of buildings, grounds, or school transportation.

10. To be promptly notified if an employee of the State suspects that a criminal offense has been committed against their child, unless the incident has first been reported to law enforcement or the county child welfare agency, and notification of the parent would impede the investigation.

B. Limitations on the right to parent:

(1) The requirements of this Article do not authorize a parent to do any of the following:
a. Engage in unlawful conduct.
b. Abuse or neglect of the child, as defined in Chapter 7B of the General Statutes.
(2) The requirements of this Article do not prohibit the following:
a. A State official or employee from acting in their official capacity within the reasonable and prudent scope of their authority.
b. A court of competent jurisdiction from acting in its official capacity within the reasonable and prudent scope of its authority or issuing an order otherwise permitted by law.

C. Pursuant to N.C.G.S. § 115C-76.25, the School shall display on its website the following parental legal rights regarding their child's education:

(1) The right to consent or withhold consent for participation in reproductive health and safety education programs, consistent with the requirements of G.S. 115C-81.30. The School will provide parents with a consent form prior to such programming.
(2) The right to seek a medical or religious exemption from immunization requirements, consistent with the requirements of G.S.130A-156 and G.S. 130A-157. Please consult the Student Handbook for this information.
(3) The right to review statewide standardized assessment results as part of the State report card. The School will provide such information following such assessments.
(4) The right to request an evaluation of their child for an academically or intellectually gifted program or for identification as a child with a disability, as provided in Article 9 of this Chapter. Please consult the Student Handbook for this information.
(5) The right to inspect and purchase public school unit textbooks and other supplementary instructional materials, as provided in Part 3 of Article 8 of this Chapter. Please refer to the School's Policy on Curriculum, Textbooks, Supplementary Materials and Library Materials.
(6) The right to access information relating to the unit's policies for promotion or retention, including high school graduation requirements. Please consult the Student Handbook for this information.
(7) The right to receive student report cards on a regular basis that clearly depict and grade the student's academic performance in each class or course, the student's conduct, and the student's attendance. Please consult the Student Handbook for this information.
(8) The right to access information relating to the State public education system, State standards, report card requirements, attendance requirements, and textbook requirements. Please consult the Student Handbook for this information as well as the Department of Public Instruction.
(9) The right to participate in parent-teacher organizations. This information will be provided directly from the parent-teacher organization.
(10) The right to opt into certain data collection for their child, as provided in Part 5 of this Article and Article 29 of this Chapter. Please consult the Student Handbook for this information.
(11) The right for students to participate in protected student information surveys only with parental consent, as provided in Part 5 of this Article. Please consult the Student Handbook for this information.
(12) The right to review all available records of materials their child has borrowed from a school library. Please refer to the School's Policy on Curriculum, Textbooks, Supplementary Materials, and Library Materials.

D. Parent Guide for Student Achievement Pursuant to 115C-76.30.

The Parent Guide to Student Achievement is an effort by the State Board of Education ("SBE"). The SBE's Guide will be posted on the School's website once it has been provided by the State Board of Education and going forward at the beginning of each school year. The SBE's Guide will be in writing, understandable to students and parents, and

discussed at the beginning of the school year during Open House, Back to School events, or in any forum designated by the School. The SBE Guide shall meet the requirements set forth in N.C.G.S. 115C-76.30.

E. The School's Guide for Student Achievement Pursuant to 115C-76.30.

(1) The School has chosen to comply with these provisions by ensuring the following information is in the Student Handbook available on this School's website:

a. Requirements for students to be promoted to the next grade.

b. School entry requirements, including required immunizations and the recommended immunization schedule.

c. Ways for parents to do the following:

- Strengthen their child's academic progress, especially in reading, as provided in Part 1A of Article 8 of this Chapter.
- Strengthen their child's citizenship, especially social skills, and respect for others.
- Strengthen their child's realization of high expectations and setting lifelong learning goals.
- Enhance communication between the school and the home.

(2) The School has chosen to comply with 115C-76.30, making the following information available through its website; the Student Handbook found on the School's website; School and classroom communications (hard copy or via email); communications from the School's PTO; as well as through any other medium appropriate to communicate in an understandable way with parents and students:

a. Services available for parents and their children, such as family literacy services; mentoring, tutoring, and other academic reinforcement programs; college planning, academic advisement, and student counseling services; and after-school programs.

b. Opportunities for parental participation, such as parenting classes, adult education, school advisory councils, and school volunteer programs.

c. Opportunities for parents to learn about rigorous academic programs that may be available for their child, such as honors programs, Career and College Promise and other dual enrollment opportunities, advanced placement, Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE) courses, International Baccalaureate, North Carolina Virtual High School courses, and accelerated access to postsecondary education.

d. Educational choices available to parents, including each type of public-school unit available to residents of the county in which the child lives and nonpublic school options, educational choice options offered within the public school unit, and scholarship grant programs under Part 2A of Article 39 and Article 41 of this Chapter.

e. Rights of students who have been identified as students with disabilities, as provided in Article 9 of this Chapter.

f. Contact information for school and unit offices.

g. Resources for information on the importance of student health and other available resources for parents, including the following information on available immunizations and vaccinations:

- A recommended immunization schedule in accordance with the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommendations.
- Information about meningococcal meningitis and influenza, as required by G.S. 115C-375.4.

F. Efforts to Increase Parent Involvement Pursuant to § 115C-76.35.

The School shall, in consultation with parents, teachers, administrators, and community partners, develop and adopt policies to promote parental involvement and empowerment. The School will use existing committees, communication mediums, and structures to engage in the consultation requirement set forth in § 115C-76.35 and/or may create new avenues to comply with this provision. Opportunities and information will be available on the Parent's Bill of Rights on the School's website and/or in community and/or school communications. The School will ensure policies provide for parental choices as set forth in SB49, establish parental responsibilities, and provide for parental involvement, which shall include the following:

(1) Providing links to parents for community services.

(2) Establishing opportunities for parental involvement in developing, implementing, and evaluating family involvement programs.
(3) Establish opportunities for parents to participate in school advisory councils, volunteer programs, and other activities.

G. The School has established policies to do all the following:

(1) Provide for parental participation in their child's education to improve parent and teacher cooperation in areas such as homework, school attendance, and discipline that aligns with the parent guide for student achievement required by G.S. 115C-76.30. Please consult the School's website and Student Handbook on the School's website.
(2) Effectively communicate to parents the way textbooks are used to implement the school's curricular objectives. Please refer to the School's Policy on Curriculum, Textbooks, Supplementary Material, and Library Materials; the School's website; and the Student Handbook on the School's website.
(3) Establish a procedure for parents to learn about their child's course of study and the source of any supplementary instructional materials. This procedure shall include the process for parents to inspect and review all textbooks and supplementary instructional materials that will be used in their child's classroom. The policy shall be available for in-person review by parents at the school site and publicly available on the school's website. For this section, a textbook is defined in G.S. 115C-85, and supplementary instructional materials include supplementary textbooks, periodicals, audiovisual materials, and other supplementary materials used for instructional purposes. Please refer to the School's Policy on Curriculum, Textbooks, Supplementary Materials, and Library Materials.
(4) Establish a means for parents to object to textbooks and supplementary instructional materials. Please refer to the School's Policy on Curriculum, Textbooks, Supplementary Materials, and Library Materials.
(5) Establish a process for parents to review materials for and to consent or withhold consent for participation in reproductive health and safety education programs consistent with the requirements of G.S. 115C-81.30. The School already provides such review, notice, and consent requirements and will continue to follow our current procedures. Please consult the Student Handbook available on the School's website for further information.
(6) Establish a process for parents to learn about the nature and purpose of clubs and activities offered at their child's school, including both curricular and extracurricular activities. Such information will be provided through School and/or classroom communications. Please also consult the Student Handbook available on the School's website.

H. Further Compliance

(1) The qualifications of teachers, including licensure status, will be made available to parents at the beginning of each school year and updated from time to time as needed. This information will include teacher degrees, licensure status, and any other information necessary to comply with §115C-76.30(1)(d).
(2) Our School is a school of choice. Parents have other educational choices available to them, including traditional district schools, non-public schools (religious and secular), other charter schools, and home schools. Information on scholarship programs is available at Opportunity Scholarship - NCSEAA (https://www.ncseaa.edu/k12/opportunity/)

I. Student Health Notifications Pursuant to N.C.G.S. § 115C-76.45

(1) The School does not prohibit school employees from notifying a parent about their child's mental, emotional, or physical health or well-being or a change in related services or monitoring.
(2) The School does not encourage or have the effect of encouraging a child to withhold from that child's parent information about their mental, emotional, or physical health or well-being or a change in related services or monitoring.
(3) School personnel shall not discourage or prohibit parental notification of and involvement in critical decisions affecting a student's mental, emotional, or physical health or well-being except where a reasonably prudent person would believe that notification would result in the child becoming an abused juvenile or

neglected juvenile, as those terms are defined in G.S. 7B-101 or jeopardize the student's safety.

(4) Notifications:

a. At the beginning of each school year, the Director of Operations and Culture will notify parents about each healthcare service offered at the school and provide information on how parents can consent to such service. The Dean of Academic Support will notify parents of changes, prior to or contemporaneous with changes, in service or monitoring related to their child's mental, emotional, or physical health or wellbeing and the school's ability to provide a safe and supportive learning environment for that child. (§115C-78.45)

b. The School Counselor shall provide notice of a change prior to any changes in the name of a pronoun used for a student in school records or by school personnel except where a reasonably prudent person would believe that notification would result in the child becoming an abused juvenile or neglected juvenile, as those terms are defined in G.S. 7B-101 or jeopardize the student's safety.

c. The School's policy and procedure for parents to exercise the parental remedies provided by G.S.§ 115.C-76.60 is set forth in this policy, Entitled Parental Remedies.

J. Timelines for parental requests for information under § 115C-76.40.

(1) This information parents have a right to access under this SB49 has been made accessible to parents as set forth in this policy. Parents are encouraged to review this policy and the policies referenced herein before making a request for information under § 115C-76.40.

(2) A parent of a child enrolled at our School may request in writing from the Principal's Designee any of the information the parent has the right to access, as provided in this Part. The request must be made via email sent to contact@alaschoolsnc.org. Within 10 business days, the Principal's Designee shall either (i) provide the requested information to the parent or (ii) provide an extension notice to the parent that, due to the volume or complexity of the request, the information will be provided no later than 20 business days from the date of the parental request.

(3) If the Principal's Designee: (i) denies or fails to respond to the request for information within 10 business days or (ii) fails to provide information within 20 business days following an extension notice as provided in subsection (2) of this section, the parent may request in writing any of the information the parent has the right to access, as provided in this Part, from the Managing Director, along with a statement specifying the time frame of the denial or failure to provide information by the principal.

(4) If the Managing Director denies or does not respond to the request for information within 10 business days, the parent may appeal the denial or lack of response to the governing body of the public school unit no later than 20 business days from the date of the request to the Managing Director, as provided in subsection (2) of this section. The Board shall place the parents' appeal on the agenda for the next regularly scheduled board meeting occurring more than three business days after submission of the appeal. During that meeting, the Board shall make a decision regarding the appeal. The Board's decision under this section is final and is not subject to judicial review.

K. Student support services training § 115C-76.50.

Student support services training developed or provided by the School to the school personnel shall adhere to student services guidelines, standards, and frameworks established by the Department of Public Instruction.

L. Parental rights to opt-in to protected information surveys § 115C-76.65

(1) Definitions:

a. Adult student – An enrolled student who is 18 or older or an emancipated minor.

b. Protected information survey – A survey, analysis, or evaluation that reveals information concerning any of the following:

- Political affiliations or beliefs of the student or the student's parent.
- Mental or psychological problems of the student or the student's family.
- Sex behavior or attitudes.

- Illegal, antisocial, self-incriminating, or demeaning behavior.
- Critical appraisals of other individuals with whom respondents have close family relationships.
- Legally recognized privileged or analogous relationships, such as those of lawyers, physicians, and ministers.
- Religious practices, affiliations, or beliefs of the student or student's parent.
- Income other than that required by law to determine eligibility for participation in a program or for receiving financial assistance under such program.

(2) The School shall make the following available to parents and adult students at least 10 days prior to administration of a protected information survey. The public school unit shall provide opportunities for review of the following both electronically and in person:

a. The process for providing consent to participation in the protected information survey.

b. The full text of the protected information survey.

(3) No student shall be permitted to participate in a protected information survey without the parent or the adult student's prior written or electronic consent.

(4) The requirements of this provision are in addition to the rights provided to parents and students under the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment, which are set forth in the Student Handbook available on the School's website.

M. Procedures and Remedies for Parent Concerns

This provision sets forth procedures and remedies required by § 115C-76.60. A parent has the right to notify the principal about concerns under this policy pursuant to § 115C-76.60. The School's procedures and remedies for parental concerns are as follows:

(1) The parent shall submit in writing a detailed description of their concern to the School via email at contact@alaschoolsnc.org. Such description shall clearly state the SB49 procedure or practice of concern. For a concern to be covered by this Section, it must be a concern about the School's procedure or practice under SB49.

(2) Within seven business days of receiving the concern, the Managing Director, shall either:

a. Resolve the concern and notify the parent of the resolution, or

b. Develop a plan for resolution and notify the parent of the plan to resolve the concern within 30 days of receiving written notification of the concern from the parent, or

c. Notify the parent of why the concern cannot be resolved.

(3) If the concern is not resolved within 30 days, a parent may do one of the following:

a. Notify the State Board of Education and request a Parental Concern hearing, or

b. Bring an action against the school as provided in Article 26 of Chapter 1 of the North Carolina General Statutes for a declaratory judgment that the unit's procedure or practice violates N.C.G.S. § 115C-76.45, §115C-76.50, or § 115C-76.55.

(4) The court may award injunctive relief to a parent and shall award reasonable attorneys' fees and costs to a parent awarded injunctive relief.

N. Reporting requirements under § 115C-76.70

(1) The School shall report annually by September 15 the following information to the State Board of Education in a format designated by the State Board:

a. The most current version of the policies and procedures adopted as required by this Article, with any modifications of the policy or procedure from the prior year's submission clearly delineated.

b. The following information from the prior school year:

- The number of appeals to the governing body under G.S. 115C-76.40 and the percentage of appeals decided in favor of the parent and in favor of the administration in the prior school year.
- The number of statements provided to parents as required by G.S. 115C-76.60(a).
- The number of parental concern hearings involving the public school unit as provided in G.S. 115C-76.60(b)(1).

▪ The number of actions brought against the public school unit as provided in G.S. 115C-76.60(b)(2) and the number of declaratory judgments entered against the public school unit.

O. School's Policy on Curriculum, Textbooks, Supplementary Material, and Library Materials.

(1) Compliance with SB49. In compliance with SB49, this policy serves to communicate understandably and effectively the manner in which textbooks are used to implement the school's curricular objectives. In addition, this policy establishes a procedure for parents to learn about their child's course of study and the source of any supplementary instructional materials. Our procedure includes the process for parents to inspect and review all textbooks and supplementary instructional materials that will be used in their child's classroom. Finally, this policy also establishes a means for parents to object to textbooks and supplementary instructional materials consistent with the requirements of N.C.G.S. 115C-9

(2) Parent Participation. Parent participation in their child's education is important and encouraged. We strongly encourage parents and teachers to cooperate regarding homework, school attendance, and discipline. Information and ways parents can help their children and encourage cooperation with their child's teacher are included in our Student Handbook as well as the following: Parent Communication System, including SMS and email; as well as announcements on social media, the School Website and the School's Learning Management System.

(3) Charter School exemptions. A charter school is exempt from statutes and rules applicable to a local board of education or local school administrative unit. As such, the School determines its own curriculum and textbooks and is not bound by the laws governing local boards of education and local school administrative units. The School has the sole authority to select and procure curriculum, textbooks, supplementary instructional materials, and library materials. Further, the School has the sole authority to determine if the materials are related to and within the curriculum's limits and when the materials may be presented to students during the school day. In general, supplementary books and other instructional materials shall neither displace nor be used to the exclusion of basic textbooks where the School has selected textbooks.

(4) Textbook Definition. For the purposes of this section, a textbook is defined as a systematically organized material comprehensive enough to cover the primary objectives outlined in the standard course of study for a grade or course. Formats for textbooks may be print or nonprint, including hardbound books, softbound books, activity-oriented programs, classroom kits, and technology-based programs that require the use of electronic equipment to be used in the learning process. Textbooks do not include supplementary instructional materials, including supplementary textbooks, periodicals, audiovisual materials, and other supplementary materials used for instructional purposes.

(5) Requirements of § 115C-76.55. Instruction on gender identity, sexual activity, or sexuality shall not be included in the curriculum provided in grades kindergarten through fourth grade, regardless of whether the information is provided by school personnel or third parties. For the purposes of this section, the curriculum includes the standard course of study and support materials, locally developed curriculum, supplemental instruction, textbooks, and other supplementary materials but does not include responses to student-initiated questions. Further, students may discuss gender identity, sexual activity, and sexuality with the school counselor and/or social worker, or any adult they feel comfortable with. This provision shall be implemented consistent with Title IX, and where a conflict arises between the two laws, federal law will control. Nothing in this provision prevents school staff and teachers from appropriate classroom displays not inconsistent with any school policy on such displays.

(6) Use and Purpose of Textbooks. The School selects and uses textbooks as part of its curriculum and course of study. The textbooks selected are intended to advance the school's curricular objectives.

(7) Process For Selecting Curriculum, Textbooks, Supplementary Books And Instructional Materials. The School's process for selecting curriculum, textbooks, supplementary books, and instructional material is as follows: The Department heads for each subject area surveys teachers about their curriculum, textbooks, and other instructional materials. The Department Head brings the needs to the Instructional Leadership Team to discuss and create a plan of resolution. The Managing Director then collaborates on the proposal with the Administrative team. The Managing Director makes final decisions based on budgetary restraints.

(8) Procedures for Learning about the Course of Study. Parents are provided their child's course of study, including textbooks and the source of any supplementary instructional materials in a variety of ways: in our Student Handbook, at Open House, at Back to School night, through teacher communications via Canvas, the School Website, and Google Drive resources.
(9) Parents may inspect and review all textbooks and supplementary instructional materials that will be used in their child's classroom at Open House, Back to School Night, and by making an appointment with their child's teacher to be held during the teacher's plan period between the hours of 7:30 am and 3:30 pm.
(10) Process for Library Check Out and Notification. The school library assistant assists students in checking out a text for two weeks. Students are notified when the material is to be returned by email. Parents are notified if the book is overdue and informed of any fees associated with the checked out material.

P. Process for Parent Challenges to Textbooks and Supplementary Instructional Materials.

(1) The School reserves the right to create an advisory committee to investigate and evaluate challenges from parents, teachers, and members of the public to textbooks and supplementary instructional materials on the grounds that they are educationally unsuitable, pervasively vulgar, or inappropriate to the age, maturity, or grade level of the students. To the extent the School establishes such an advisory committee, information about that advisory committee will be communicated to parents, teachers, and the community.
(2) In the event the School has not established such an advisory committee, parents may submit challenges to textbooks and supplementary instructional materials for the following reasons only: the textbook and/or supplementary materials are educationally unsuitable, pervasively vulgar, or inappropriate to the age, maturity, or grade level of the students. There are no other grounds for challenges to textbooks or supplementary materials under this provision.
(3) To submit a challenge to a particular textbook and/or supplementary material, the parent shall submit in writing a detailed description of their challenge to the School. Such challenge must clearly identify the textbook and/or supplementary material they are challenging, and what precise material they contend is educationally unsuitable, pervasively vulgar, or inappropriate to the student's age, maturity, or grade level. The parent should also provide suggestions for alternatives to such textbooks and/or supplementary materials that they are challenging. Challenges must be sent to the School via email at contact@alaschoolsnc.org or sent via mail or hand delivered to the School's address and designate on the outside of the letter: Textbook and/or Supplementary Material Challenge.
(4) The Managing Director, or their designee, shall review such challenge and respond to the challenge within ten (10) business days.
(5) If the decision does not resolve the matter, the parent may file a written appeal to the Managing Director, if they were not involved in the initial review of the challenge. The Managing Director shall review and respond to the challenge within five (5) business days.
(6) If the Managing Director is not able to resolve the matter, the parent may file a written appeal on the record with the School's Board of Directors within five (5) business days. There are no hearings on appeal, and decisions will be based solely on the written challenge provided by the parent and information provided by the School. The appeal must comply with section (1) above. The Board will designate a Board Panel to review the challenge and communicate its decision to remove or retain the challenged material within twenty (20) business days. The Board Panel's decision is final.
(7) The Board always has sole authority and discretion to determine whether a challenge has merit and whether challenged material should be retained or removed. There is no appeal from a decision of the Board Panel.
(8) Timelines set forth herein may be extended for good cause.

Compliance

Non-Discrimination

Equal Education Opportunities

Ascend Leadership Academy (ALA) provides equal education opportunities for all students and does not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, color, national origin, ethnic origin, sex, gender, gender identity, natural hair style, cultural or economic background, or disability. Furthermore, no student, on the basis of sex, gender, gender identity, marital status, pregnancy, or parenthood, will be excluded from participating in, denied the benefits of, or subjected to discrimination under any educational program or activity conducted by the school. The school will treat its students without discrimination with regard to course offerings, athletics, counseling, employment assistance, and extracurricular activities. The School adheres to the legal obligations and requirements under all state and federal laws, including, without limitation, the Americans with Disabilities Act and Amendments, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Individuals with Disabilities Act Amendments of 1997, including identification, evaluation, and provision of an appropriate education. Please see Attachments D for Title IX Policies and Grievance Process and Attachment E for Non-Title IX Bullying and Harassment Policies and Grievance Process.

Any individual who believes that he or she has been discriminated against, harassed, or bullied is strongly encouraged to file a complaint orally or, preferably, in writing to any of the following individuals:

- The principal or assistant principal;
- For Title IX harassment and discrimination, contact the Title IX Coordinator and review the Title IX policy;
- For non-Title IX harassment and discrimination, including bullying, Title VI, and disability discrimination, contact Ms. Cierra Dixon and review the non-Title IX policy found here as well as the Title VI policy found below.

Gender Equity Policy (Title IX)

The School certifies compliance with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, as amended, 20 U.S.C. 1681 et seq. (Title IX), and its implementing regulation, at 34 C.F.R. Part 106, which prohibits discrimination based on sex. The School, as a recipient of federal financial assistance from the United States Department of Education, is subject to Title IX and does not discriminate based on gender in employment or any educational program or activity it operates.

For complaints or grievances regarding discrimination based on gender, please refer to the Non-Discrimination section of this handbook.

Compliance with Other Laws

Ascend Leadership Academy (ALA) shall comply with all applicable federal laws and regulations, including but not limited to such laws and regulations governing employment, environment, disabilities, civil rights, children with special needs, transportation, and student records. The School shall comply with all applicable federal, state, or local health and safety laws and regulations. Neither the State Board of Education nor the local board of education assumes the duty to oversee the operations of the School except as may otherwise be required to monitor the charter School for compliance with applicable laws and regulations.

Access to Education, Student Privacy, and Immigration Enforcement

School personnel must not allow any third party access to a school site without permission from the site administrator. The site administrator shall not permit third-party access to the school site that would disrupt the learning environment. School personnel must contact Administration immediately if approached by immigration law enforcement agents or third parties requesting access to students. Personnel must also attempt to contact the parents or guardians of any students involved. Administration must process requests by immigration law enforcement agents to **enter a school site or obtain student data** as follows:

1. Request identification from the officers or agents and photocopy it.

2. Request a judicial warrant and photocopy it.
    a. If no warrant is presented, request the grounds for access, make notes, and contact legal counsel for the School.
3. Request and retain notes of the names of the students and the reasons for the request.
    a. If school site personnel have not yet contacted the students' parents or guardians, do so.
    b. Do not attempt to provide your information or conjecture about the students, such as their schedule, for example, without legal counsel present.
4. Provide the agents with a copy of this Policy and Resolution No. __
5. Contact legal counsel for the School.
6. Request the agents' contact information.

McKinney-Vento

The McKinney-Vento Education of Homeless Children and Youth Assistance Act is the primary legislation dealing with the education of children and youth experiencing homelessness. The Act is also known as Title X, Part C of the Every Students Succeeds Act.

The term "homeless children and youths" is defined by the McKinney-Vento Act as

(A) means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence (within the meaning of section 103(a)(1)); and

(B) includes--

(i) children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; or are abandoned in hospitals;*

(ii) children and youths who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings (within the meaning of section 103(a)(2)(C));

(iii) children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and

(iv) migratory children (as such term is defined in section 1309 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965) who qualify as homeless for the purposes of this subtitle because the children are living in circumstances described in clauses (i) through (iii).

Children and youth experiencing homelessness have the right to:

- Receive a free, appropriate public education.
- Enroll in school immediately, even if lacking documents normally required for enrollment, or having missed application or enrollment deadlines during any period of homelessness.
- Enroll in school and attend classes while the school gathers needed documents.
- Enroll in the local attendance area school or continue attending their school of origin (the school they attended when permanently housed or the school in which they were last enrolled), if that is the parent's, guardian's, or unaccompanied youth's preference. If the school district believes the school selected is not in the student's best interest, then the district must provide the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth with a written explanation of its position and inform him/her of the right to appeal its decision.
- Receive transportation to and from the school of origin, if requested by the parent, guardian, or local liaison on behalf of an unaccompanied youth.
- Receive educational services comparable to those provided to other students, according to the student's needs.

These rights are established under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. To qualify for these rights, children and youth must be considered homeless according to the McKinney-Vento definition (see above).

Parent Resources regarding the NC Homeless Education Program (NCHEP) can be found here.

Student Resources regarding the rights of Children experiencing homelessness can be found here.

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NCHEP is dedicated to ensuring that all children and youth experiencing homelessness have access to the public education to which they are entitled under the federal McKinney-Vento Education of Homeless Children and Youth Assistance Act. NCHEP works towards this goal by ensuring that North Carolina's state policies are in compliance with federal law, by providing technical assistance to North Carolina's local homeless education liaisons, and by providing informational and awareness materials to educators and other interested community members throughout North Carolina.

The McKinney-Vento Dispute Resolution Policy is available in Attachment A.

School McKinney-Vento Liaison: Brianna Taylor–btaylor@alaschoolsnc.org