



**SYNERGY  
CHARTER ACADEMY**

**Parent/Student Handbook**

**2018 – 2019**

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## WELCOME

Welcome to the Synergy Academies Family! Synergy is committed to the goal of providing each student with every opportunity to develop his/her capabilities to the fullest extent possible. In order to make this happen, Synergy believes that all members of the school community have a responsibility to help all students succeed academically and in life skills. This Parent/Student Handbook outlines ways that parents, students, and school staff can help support all students in achieving the school's mission and vision. The school's Title I Parent Involvement Policy will serve as the school's Title I Parent Compact. The information in this handbook may be subject to change and parents will be notified of any changes.

Please read and discuss this handbook with your child as well as keep it for future reference. We look forward to working together to help your child succeed at Synergy!

## MISSION AND VISION

The Mission of Synergy Academies is to create and share solutions that eliminate the achievement gap. Synergy creates and shares solutions through the operation of urban public charter schools in South Los Angeles that implement a holistic approach to education, believe in collective accountability, and share best practices through professional collaboration.

Our Vision is to create model STEM schools that will empower students to be the next generation of problem solvers. At Synergy, we implement STEM using an integrated approach infusing a problem solving mindset throughout the curriculum in all subjects. We also have a specific focus on each of the following four subjects: Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math.

## VALUES

Synergy embraces the following values:

### **POWER**

- ❖ **Value Each Individual (this is the centerpiece of what we do)**
  - We believe in giving everyone an equal opportunity to learn and grow.
- ❖ **Teamwork**
  - We work as a team and support each other as a family.

### **PRIDE**

- ❖ **Integrity**
  - We are transparent, honest, and believe in the importance of building and maintaining trust.
- ❖ **Hard Work**
  - We have a strong work ethic, are good stewards of our resources, take initiative, hold each other accountable, and focus on continual improvement.

## **PURPOSE**

### **❖ Encouragement**

- We help each other be the best that we can be by listening, supporting, motivating, and communicating in a positive manner with each other.

### **❖ Accomplishment**

- We constantly measure our performance to achieve the best results possible in everything we do.

## **MOTTO**

Be your best. Do your best.

## **SCHOOL CULTURE**

Each day, we will start the day saying the Learner's Creed written by Ernestine Mitchell and the Synergy Creed written by Dr. Randy Palisoc, Co-Founder of Synergy Academies. The Learner's Creed serves as a student's belief statement in themselves.

### **The Learner's Creed by Ernestine Mitchell**

I believe in myself and my ability to do my best at all times.

I am responsible for my life and for all my actions.

I will listen, I will see,

I will speak, I will feel,

I will think, I will reason,

I will read, I will write . . .

I will do all of these things

With one purpose in mind . . .

To do my best and to not waste this day

For this day will not come again.

### **The Synergy Creed by Dr. Randy Palisoc**

At Synergy, we're all in this together  
because together we are better.

We bring out the best in each other  
and in ourselves  
every day in every way.

## SCHOLAR LESSONS

Scholar lessons are an important part of Synergy Academies' climate and culture. We believe that students not only need to be well rounded academically but also personally and socially. By incorporating the scholar lessons into our daily routines, we provide students with tools to help them make choices that will help them build better relationships with their peers and adults.

- Scholar Lesson #1 – Conduct yourselves as **ladies** and **gentlemen**.
- Scholar Lesson #2 – Sit and stand with **scholar postures**.
- Scholar Lesson #3 – Eye contact = Brain contact.
- Scholar Lesson #4 – When there is **teacher talk**, there is no **student talk**.
- Scholar Lesson #5 – Be a **good listener**.
- Scholar Lesson #6 – Stay focused.
- Scholar Lesson #7 – Make **requests**, not **demands**.
- Scholar Lesson #8 – Show great **appreciation**.
- Scholar Lesson #9 – Self-monitor.
- Scholar Lesson #10 – Do the right thing, **EVEN IF** no one is looking.
- Scholar Lesson #11 – Use common sense.
- Scholar Lesson #12 – Don't do as **little** as you can; do as **BEST** as you can.
- Scholar Lesson #13 – The way you **practice** is the way you **perform**.
- Scholar Lesson #14 – Do it **RIGHT** or do it **again**.
- Scholar Lesson #15 – Don't read to **finish**. Read to **UNDERSTAND**.
- Scholar Lesson #16 – Don't **pick** an answer. **DEFEND** your answer.
- Scholar Lesson #17 – Explain.
- Scholar Lesson #18 – Bring out the best in each other.
- Scholar Lesson #19 – **Recognize** the problem. Don't **become** the problem.
- Scholar Lesson #20 – Everything comes with a cost. Consider the costs of your actions.



## **SCHOOL SCHEDULE**

### **School Calendar**

**Each Synergy school will provide families with a school calendar at the beginning of each school year. Please note that all three Synergy school calendars might not always be the same.** School calendars are also available on Synergy's website at [WeAreSynergy.org](http://WeAreSynergy.org).

Family trips should be planned only during the school's scheduled vacation periods. See the Attendance Policies section. The school calendar may be subject to change, and we will notify you if any changes are made.

### **School Office Hours**

Synergy's school offices are usually opened from 7:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. throughout the school year except for school holidays. All Synergy offices will be closed for two weeks during winter break. The school's summer hours will vary.

### **Regular School Days**

Students are required to be at school during the school year on the following days and times:

Monday through Friday - 8:00 a.m. to 2:25 p.m.

### **Early Release Days**

All students will be dismissed at 1:15 p.m. on Early Release Days. Early Release Days usually take place during the week of Parent Conferences.

### **Minimum Day**

All students will be dismissed at 12:00 p.m. on Minimum Days. Minimum Days usually occur on special Staff Development days as well as on the last day of school.

## **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

The Board of Directors of Synergy Academies has adopted this policy in recognition of the following:

- Attendance patterns often have a direct link with student achievement.
- Frequent absences hurt academic performance.
- California State Law mandates that unless students have an excused absence as described below, they must be in school on time every day.

### **Why Attendance Is Important**

We believe that all parents/guardians want their children to do well in life, and in order to do well in life, your child needs to do well in school. Therefore, it is important that your child attend school every day for the entire school day, and not arrive to school late or leave school early. Students who are absent from school or who miss even a portion of the school day miss important instruction and assignments. Academic progress is dependent on regular attendance that is expected of all Synergy students.

## **First Day of School Procedures**

1. Students who are not in attendance on the first day of school will be contacted by phone to ensure their intent to enroll.
2. Students who have indicated their intent to enroll, but have not attended by the third day will receive a letter indicating the student may be disenrolled after the tenth day of school if the student has not attended school without valid excuse.
3. Students who have indicated their intent to enroll, but have not attended by the sixth day will receive a phone call reiterating the content of the letter.
4. If a student has not attended by the tenth day, and has not been in contact with the school or responded to the school's inquiries, the school will assume that the student has voluntarily disenrolled from the school, which means that the student may lose his/her space at Synergy.
5. The school will use the contact information provided by the parent/guardian in the student application and/or enrollment packet.
6. The district of residence will be notified of the student's failure to attend school and the student's disenrollment from the school.

## **Punctuality**

### **Students must arrive at least 10 minutes before the start of each school day.**

Tardiness is disruptive to the class and places a burden on the student who has to enter class after morning activities have begun. General supervision begins at 7:30 a.m. It is recommended that students do not arrive before these times. Breakfast is usually served from 7:30 a.m. to 7:50 a.m. Students should wake up in time to do the necessary preparation in the morning to get to school on time. When students arrive later than 30 minutes after the start of school, the State of California requires that the school records that as truancy on the school's record.

## **Reporting Absences**

Please call your child's school within the first 30 minutes of the school day to report an absence and/or send an email message or note explaining an absence when your child returns to school. Absences of three days or more for illness require a doctor's note (see Excused Absences).

## **Excused Absences**

Excused absences shall be limited to the following:

1. Student illness (a note from a healthcare professional is required after 3 consecutive days of absence due to illness and may be required after 3 or more **non-consecutive** days of absence due to illness throughout the school year in order to be considered an excused absence; see Policy on Student Illness)
2. Due to quarantine under the direction of a county or city health officer.
3. Student medical appointment (including medical, dental, optometrical, or chiropractic services).
4. For the purpose of attending the funeral services of a member of his or her immediate family, so long as the absence is not more than one day if the service is conducted in California and not more than three days if the service is conducted outside California. Members of the immediate family, as used in this section, means the mother, father, grandmother, grandfather, or a grandchild of the student or of the spouse of the student, and the spouse, son, son-in-law,

daughter, daughter-in-law, brother, or sister of the student, or any relative living in the immediate household of the student.

5. For the purpose of jury duty in the manner provided for by law.
6. Due to the illness or medical appointment during school hours of a child of whom the pupil is the custodial parent/guardian.
7. For justifiable personal reasons, including, but not limited to, an appearance in court, attendance at a funeral service, observance of a holiday or ceremony of his or her religion, attendance at religious retreats, attendance at an employment conference, or attendance at an educational conference on the legislative or judicial process offered by a nonprofit organization when the pupil's absence is requested in writing by the parent or guardian and approved by the principal or a designated representative pursuant to uniform standards established by the governing board. Attendance at religious retreats shall not exceed four hours per semester.
8. For the purpose of serving as a member of a precinct board for an election pursuant to Section 12302 of the Elections Code.
9. For the purpose of spending time with a member of the pupil's immediate family, who is an active duty member of the uniformed services, as defined in Section 49701, and has been called to duty for, is on leave from, or has immediately returned from, deployment to a combat zone or combat support position. Absences granted pursuant to this paragraph shall be granted for a period of time to be determined at the discretion of the Chief Executive Officer.
10. For the purpose of attending the pupil's naturalization ceremony to become a United States citizen.

**All other absences shall be considered unexcused including absences for family vacations and/or trips.**

### **Long-Term Excused Absences**

Learning works best when students are at school interacting with the teacher and their peers. Occasionally circumstances may require that a student be absent for an extended period of time. Parents/guardians of a student who is absent for an extended period due to an excused reason (see Excused Absences) should contact the School as soon as possible to inform us of the circumstances and the amount of time the student will be absent. Independent study may be available in certain circumstances. Class participation is an important part of the learning process and there may be some concepts and skills that the student will not be able to master without the guidance of a teacher. Upon the student's return, the school will determine what steps will be necessary to get the student back on track.

### **Make-Up Assignments**

A student who is absent from school due to one of the excused reasons (see Excused Absences) shall be allowed to complete all assignments and tests missed during the absence that can be reasonably provided and, upon satisfactory completion within a reasonable period of time, shall be given full credit. The teacher of the class from which a student is absent shall determine which tests and assignments shall be reasonably equivalent to, but not necessarily identical to, the tests and assignments that the student missed during the absence. At the middle school and high school levels, it is the student's responsibility to obtain the assignments/work from his/her teacher(s) and to arrange time to make-up any missed tests. At the elementary school level, the student

and/or the student's parent/guardian should contact the student's teacher to make-up any missed assignments and tests.

If the absences are unexcused, it is up to the discretion of the teacher whether he/she will allow the student to make-up any missed assignments or tests.

A student who knows in advance that he/she will be absent for three or more consecutive days may get his/her work by contacting the Office directly or by asking a fellow student who shares his/her schedule to bring work home. When asking for assignments, please bear in mind that it will take time for the teachers to get the assignments together. Therefore, when your son/daughter misses one day and it seems likely that he/she will be absent for additional days, contact the school immediately. If it is after school hours, please leave a message. Always have the following information ready:

- 1) The name and grade of your child.
- 2) The name of your child's first period teacher.
- 3) The number of days the child will miss.

Please arrange with the school for when to pick up your child's assignments.

### **Appointments**

Our experience has shown that the students who have perfect attendance and do not miss school often do better academically than students who miss school. Therefore, since we know that you want your child to be successful in school, we would appreciate your support in scheduling any dental, medical, or other appointments after school, on the weekends, or during school holidays and vacation time.

If you must schedule an appointment during the school day, then please try to either bring your child to school first and only take your child out of school at the time of the appointment, or if your appointment is in the morning, then please bring your child to school after the appointment so that your child does not miss the entire school day.

If you must pick your child up early for an appointment during the day, please let the Office know in the morning. When picking up students early, the parent/guardian or authorized adult must sign the student out in the Office. A staff member will arrange for your child to be brought to the Office. Parents/Guardians may not enter a classroom without approval from the Office.

### **Policy on Student Truancy**

"Truancy" is defined as follows:

*Any pupil subject to compulsory full-time education or to compulsory continuation education who is absent from school without valid excuse on three occasions or tardy for more than 30 minutes in a school day on three occasions in one school year is a truant and will be reported to a school administrator or to Synergy's CEO, Chief Achievement Officer, or designee.*

A student shall be identified as a truant when he/she:

1. Is absent without a valid excuse for three (3) or more school days (consecutive or non-consecutive) in one school year; or
2. Is tardy on three (3) or more occasions in one school year (A “tardy” for purposes of this policy is defined as being absent for more than any 30-minute period during the school day without a valid excuse); or
3. Any combination of the above.

Synergy will adhere to the following protocols for handling truanancies:

1. Each of the first two (2) unexcused absences and/or tardies will result in a call home to the parent/guardian by the Office staff.
  - a. At the middle school and high school, students with unexcused absences and/or tardies may immediately receive consequences such as lunch detention, after school detention, or Saturday school.
2. Upon reaching three (3) unexcused absences and/or tardies in a school year:
  - a. The parent/guardian shall receive a “Truancy Notification #1” letter by U.S. Mail or electronic mail, if provided, and in the home language indicated on the student’s records, which shall provide specific information related to the student’s unexcused absences and/or tardies, and the possible penalties for parents/guardians of habitually truant students.
  - b. At the middle school and high school, students with unexcused absences and/or tardies may immediately receive consequences such as lunch detention, after school detention, or Saturday school.
  - c. The Truancy Notification letter must be signed by the parent/guardian and returned to the school. If the parent/guardian refuses or fails to sign and return the letter, the parent/guardian and student may be required to attend a Synergy Attendance and Review Team (SART) meeting as described under 3bix below.
3. Upon reaching five (5) unexcused absences and/or tardies in a school year, the school staff will conduct a home visit and/or schedule an in-school meeting with the parent/guardian and student.

At the meeting, the school staff shall inform the parent/guardian of the following:

  - a. No further unexcused absences and/or tardies will be tolerated.
  - b. Upon any additional unexcused absences and/or tardies, the school Director/Principal or designee shall have the authority to order one or more of the following consequences:
    - i. Parent/guardian to attend school with the child for one day.
    - ii. Student retention.
    - iii. Lunch or after school detention program.
    - iv. Saturday school.
    - v. Required school counseling.
    - vi. Loss of field trip privileges.
    - vii. Loss of privilege of attending and/or participating in school-related events and activities such as, but not limited to, clubs, athletic activities, school dances, etc.
    - viii. Suspension, restriction, or delay of student’s driving privileges.
    - ix. Required remediation plan as set by the school administration.

- x. Required to attend a Student Success Team (SST) meeting.
  - xi. Required to attend a Synergy Attendance and Review Team (SART) meeting made up of at least three (3) members, including at least one (1) of the following school site staff: a teacher, Director/Principal, Asst. Director position, Dean, or Counselor; and at least one (1) of the following Synergy Headquarters (HQ) staff: CEO, CAO, COO, Director position, or Manager position.
  - xii. Notification to the District Attorney pursuant to Education Code Section 48260.6.
- c. The parent/guardian shall be required to sign a form acknowledging the above.
4. Upon reaching six (6) or more unexcused absences and/or tardies, the school may repeat steps 1-3, including conducting a home visit and/or scheduling an in-school meeting with the parent/guardian and student. During this time, Truancy Notification #2 will be sent home and parents/guardians will be required to contact the school to schedule a meeting.
  5. After your child has been absent for 5 days in a row (with the exception of the “First Day of School Procedures”), if there is not a legitimate reason for the absences and the office has not been able to get a hold of you to confirm the reason for the absences, the school will assume that you have voluntarily disenrolled your child from the school, which means that your child may lose his/her space at Synergy at the end of the fifth day. If your child is voluntarily disenrolled from Synergy, there is no guarantee that your child will be able to return to the school. In order to return to Synergy, you must submit a new application, your child will be placed on the wait list for his/her grade, if applicable, and your child will be re-enrolled depending on the availability of space and the number of students ahead of your child on the wait list based on a public random lottery. Therefore, it is imperative that you keep your contact information current and that you immediately notify the school of the absence and reason your child cannot attend. Note, upon disenrollment from Synergy, the school has a legal obligation to notify the child’s school district of residence.
  6. The school will use the contact information provided by the parent/guardian in the student’s enrollment packet and/or emergency card to contact the parent/guardian.

### **Policy on Student Illness**

Repeated absences due to student illness are of great concern to the school. Synergy is concerned for the child’s health and welfare, the child’s risk of falling behind in school, and the significant loss of state funding because of the child’s absence from school. Synergy wants to make sure that genuinely sick children get medical care when warranted.

Synergy’s policy for student illness is as follows:

1. All student illnesses for 1-3 consecutive days are counted as unexcused absences **unless** the school receives a phone call from the student’s parent/guardian verifying the illness, an email message from the student’s

parent/guardian verifying the illness, or a signed note from the student's parent/guardian verifying the illness.

2. All student illnesses for more than 3 consecutive days are counted as unexcused absences **unless** the school receives a signed note from a healthcare professional verifying the illness.
3. A signed note from a healthcare professional verifying illness may be required after 3 or more **non-consecutive** days of absence due to illness throughout the school year in order to be considered an excused absence
4. Any illness which results in a student missing more than three (3) consecutive school days shall be verified by a healthcare professional. Excessive patterns of **non-consecutive** absences due to illness throughout the school year may also be required to be verified by a healthcare professional.

*\*\*\*Nothing in this policy is intended to limit the authority of school administrators to administer consequences to students who are late to school or late to a class/period for less than 30 minutes, or who have other attendance issues not addressed in this policy.*

## **STUDENT DROP-OFF AND PICK-UP PROCEDURES**

### **Arrival**

Synergy Charter Academy's campus is scheduled to open at 7:30 a.m. on school days. Please make sure that your children enter the school grounds safely and remind them to remain in supervised areas.

At the elementary school campus, cars should approach the school's drop-off gate going northbound on Griffith Ave. Make sure your children exit from the right side of your car onto the sidewalk on the east side of the street. For the safety of all students, and in order to keep traffic moving, the only person who should exit your vehicle is the student. This information may be subject to change, and we will notify you if any changes are made.

### **Safe Driving Procedures**

Please park your car in a legal parking space on the street and walk onto your child's school campus if you need to speak with a staff member either before or after school.

Please do not double park in front of any dismissal areas nor drive into the parking lots or parking garages to drop-off or pick-up children. Do not drop off children on the opposite side of the street nor allow them to cross the street unsupervised. Also, please do not make u-turns in front of a school's drop-off and dismissal gates.

### **Parking Zones and Times**

Please be sure that you pay attention to the signs along the street that are posted by the City of Los Angeles that state the times when parking is permitted in front of and surrounding the schools.

### **No Stopping Zone**

In the designated no stopping zone, there is no stopping for any vehicle on school days from 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., except for school buses.

### **Passenger Loading Zone**

The Passenger Loading Zone is for passenger loading and unloading only from 6:30 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Two hour parking is allowed in the Passenger Loading Zone only between 9:00 a.m. and 1:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.

### **Dismissal**

Students will be dismissed from the Griffith Ave. gate.

If you are picking up your child on foot, you may meet your child at the dismissal gate on Griffith Ave. If you are picking up your child in a vehicle, drive only northbound on Griffith Avenue and pick up your child on the school side of the street (east side) only.

Do not park in the “No Parking” zone or you will be ticketed. Be courteous to other drivers and to our neighbors on both sides of the street. Do not leave your vehicle unattended, do not make u-turns mid-block, do not cut off other vehicles, and do not jaywalk your children across the street mid-block.

If your child will be walking home either by himself/herself or with another minor, you must sign a permission form at your child’s school office regarding this.

### **Emergencies**

**In case of an emergency during the school day, your child will only be released into the custody of those people who are identified on the emergency card (proof of identity may be required):**

Those NOT identified on the emergency card can only pick up a child if the parent or guardian has sent a handwritten and signed note to the school to the satisfaction of the school notifying the school of this person’s identity and proof of identification is provided. Synergy reserves the right to contact the parent for confirmation of his/her consent to the third-party pick-up.

Please note that Synergy has developed a comprehensive safety plan, which can be reviewed upon request at the main office.

### **Keep Emergency Cards Updated**

It is important for us to be able to reach you in case of illness or an emergency. At the beginning of each school year or at the time of enrollment, each family must fill out a new emergency card for each student. Emergency cards should be turned into the main office of your child’s school. Please update your emergency cards immediately at any time of the year if any of the following information changes:

Home address  
Home telephone number  
Work phone number



Cell phone number  
Doctor's phone number  
People who are authorized to be contacted in case of an emergency  
Telephone numbers of people to be contacted in case of an emergency  
People authorized to pick up your child from school

## **MEAL PROGRAM**

### **School Breakfast and Lunch Program**

Synergy's schools participate in the National School Lunch Program that provides nutritionally adequate meals for children based on the family's income.

Synergy Academies offers and operates a breakfast and lunch program at Synergy Charter Academy. Every family enrolled at a Synergy Academies school must fill out and turn in to the office of your child's school at the beginning of each school year either a National School Lunch Program application or an Alternative Income Form. After Synergy processes the form, parents will be informed if their child is eligible for free, reduced-priced, or regular-priced lunch.

Breakfast will be served at Synergy Charter Academy from 7:30 to 7:50 every morning.

**Families need to make the school aware of any food allergies that your child has.**

### **Snacks**

Students are welcome to bring a nutritious snack to school to eat during recess/break or at lunch. Synergy encourages nutrition as well as fitness and asks that you send healthy snacks only – e.g., fruit, nuts, granola bars, yogurt, carrots, celery sticks, and plain, unflavored water. We do not allow soda, juice, flavored beverages, chips, candy, gum, or other junk food.

## **DRESS CODE**

In order to focus students' attention on their schoolwork and to promote students' positive self-esteem, Synergy enforces a strict dress code. All students are required to meet dress code standards. Please do not wear to school clothing items that are not part of the approved Synergy dress code.

Synergy Charter Academy's (grades K-5) official school colors are: maroon and navy blue.

Students may wear hats outside for recess/break, lunch, and P.E. for protection from the sun. Hats may NOT be worn inside the classroom or inside the school building. Only Synergy hats or hats in a solid school color with no logos are allowed. Any hats worn at improper times will be confiscated.

**\*\*\*All students in Grades K-5 must appear in dress code as described below to school every day unless the school tells you otherwise.\*\*\***

### **Clothing:**

Navy blue pants or shorts (NO skinny pants, cargo pants, or jeans may be worn; shorts must not be rolled and must be mid-thigh length or longer; no short shorts), or “skorts” (NO skirts, dresses, jumpers, or mini-skirts); Synergy T-shirts or t-shirts in a solid maroon color with no logos; maroon polo shirts with or without the Synergy logo; jackets, sweaters, and sweatshirts must be a **solid** maroon with no logos (Synergy logos are okay), no stripes, and no designs; solid white or solid black shoes with rubber soles (preferably tennis shoes); and undergarments must not be visible through outerwear. NO handwriting of any kind is allowed on shoes, NO BOOTS; and socks can be solid white, maroon, or navy blue.

Students **CANNOT** wear jeans, skinny jeans/pants, tights, jeggings, pajama jeans, sweats, stretch pants, cargo pants, or corduroy pants, even if they are sold at a uniform store. **We will consider pants “skinny” if they are tight at the ankle. Administration has the final say in what is acceptable in school.** Pants/Skorts/Shorts may not be baggy or tight fitting (“skinny” type fit), may not be rolled at the waist, and the waist size must be the same as the student’s waist size.

State law requires that students wear shoes at all times. Open sandals, thongs, slippers, high heels, heeleys (shoes with wheels) or other types of footwear deemed to be safety hazards to the student (or to other students) are NOT appropriate for school and may NOT be worn to school.

Any hair barrettes, rubberbands for students’ ponytails, and any turtlenecks that students wear under their clothing must also match the school colors of maroon or navy blue.

Undergarments must not be visible through students’ outerwear. Undergarments should also not be noticeable outside of pants, shorts, skorts, or tops. Belts should be a solid color black, dark brown, or light brown. There should be no other objects or logos on the belts, such as shiny decorations, etc.

If any aspect of the dress code, including clothes, shoes, jewelry, cosmetics, or any type of body adornment, is not explicitly listed as acceptable in this document, then that item is not permitted to be worn when the student is at school or representing the school.

**PLEASE LABEL ALL ITEMS OF CLOTHING WITH YOUR CHILD’S NAME SO THAT THEY CAN BE RETURNED IF LOST.** A Lost and Found area can be found in your child’s school office. Please check with the school office as soon as your child loses an item. Unclaimed items left in the Lost and Found area may be donated or discarded.

### **Hair:**

Students are to come to school clean, neat and with hair combed in a style and/or color that is not distracting or disruptive to school activities. Hairstyles such as Mohawks, spiked hair, glitter in hair, shaved words or designs on the head, or hair dyed an unnatural color (such as green, orange, purple, etc.) are not acceptable at Synergy. Modest highlights/streaks in a shade similar to the student’s natural hair color, done tastefully, are acceptable. Administration has the final say in what is acceptable in school.

**Facial Hair:**

Students are not to have facial hair. This includes moustaches, goatees, soul-patches, and side-burns.

**Make-Up:**

Students are not to wear or bring make-up (including lip gloss), stick-on or artificial nails, or nail polish. Clear chapstick is permitted to relieve dry lips.

**Jewelry:**

Students are not to wear long, dangling earrings, hooped earrings, bracelets, rings, necklaces, or watches. The only jewelry that students can wear are small, round, earring studs in gold, silver, or diamond/clear crystal/cubic zirconia. Only one earring per ear is allowed. Facial, tongue, and body piercing are not allowed at school.

**Students are not to wear or bring gang attire, including but not limited to:**

- Hairnets
- Spiked, metal, hard plastic bracelets
- Gang insignias, or any clothing item that Administration deems affiliated with gangs
- Tagging is not allowed anywhere on campus or on students' bodies and belongings, including but not limited to folders, binders, notebooks, papers, clothing, or backpacks. Any item that has tagging on it or any items associated with tagging (e.g., sharpies, etching tools, razors) will be confiscated and students may face disciplinary action for having possession of tagging-related tools.
- Clothing or jewelry that promote substance abuse or other illegal/dangerous activities
- Tattoos (including temporary tattoos of any kind); permanent visible tattoos must be covered by a flesh-tone bandage while at school or while representing the school

**Out of Dress Code Notices**

Synergy believes that implementing a school-wide dress code contributes to a sense of unity and discipline. Parents may receive a phone call and/or may receive an Out of Dress Code Notice if a student is not adhering to the dress code policy. This notice must be returned to your child's school office with the parent's signature. Upon the second or more dress code infractions, the parents may be asked to meet with school administration. If this becomes a chronic problem, the school administration will work with the student and family to address the issue and ensure that the student is able to comply with the school's dress code.

Inappropriate items brought to school may be confiscated by school staff. If a student brings inappropriate clothing items, hair items, make-up, jewelry, or gang-related items to school, Synergy is not responsible for loss or theft of the items even after the items are confiscated by school staff. Each school reserves the right to determine when the item(s) may be picked up by the student, whether the parent/guardian must pick up the item(s), and whether the student or parent/guardian must wait for a specified period of time before picking up the item(s). Other consequences may also be implemented.

## **ACADEMIC INFORMATION**

### **Academic Grades**

Synergy Charter Academy elementary school students will not receive letter grades. Instead, elementary school students will receive the following academic achievement scores:

- 4 = Advanced (Exceeds Grade Level Standards) 😊😊 90% - 100%
- 3 = Proficient (Meets Grade Level Standards) 😊 75% - 89%
- 2 = Partially Proficient 😊 55% - 74%
- 1 = Not Proficient 😞😞 0% - 54%

### **Course Descriptions**

The educational program and courses offered by Synergy Charter Academy are described in the School's charter petition, which is posted on the School's website and available for review in the Office.

## **RETENTION POLICY**

At the elementary level, promotion to the next grade level depends on the grades earned. Students who do not make satisfactory progress each year are at risk of being retained. If a student is recommended for retention, the school will maintain documentation that it has informed the student's parents in writing such as on the student's report cards and/or verbally informed the parents during a meeting or parent conference that the student may be retained.

All retentions will be mandatory. This means that a student can be retained without parental consent.

The purpose of retention is to help a child develop a more solid academic foundation from which they can build upon.

Some goals of retention include:

- Strengthening a student's academic knowledge and skills
- Providing additional time and instruction for a student to meet grade-level standards
- Helping a student catch-up to master grade-level standards
- Developing a student's self-confidence in his/her academic abilities

There is no guarantee that a student will master grade-level standards after being retained. Some students are multiple years below grade-level, which makes it difficult to meet grade-level standards in just 1 or 2 years.

Every family has the right to appeal a mandatory retention recommendation. If an appeal is made, the burden shall be on the appealing party (the family) to show why the decision of the school should be overruled. The appeal must be submitted in writing within 7 calendar days of the date the retention recommendation was issued. The appeal must be submitted in person to an office staff member and the letter must be addressed to the Chief Executive Officer. The appeal must clearly state the grounds for

the appeal. Within 14 calendar days, the Chief Executive Officer or the CEO's designee will review the documentation provided with the appeal statement. The response to this appeal will be rendered to the family no more than 7 calendar days from the review date. The family may request to meet with the individual(s) reviewing their appeal, but the family must still submit their appeal in writing within the designated timeframe described above. The Chief Executive Officer's or the CEO's designee's decision will be final.

## **PARENT/STUDENT DIRECTORY INFORMATION**

If you are the parent of a pupil less than 18 years old, or if you are a student 18 years or older, you should know that the privacy of your child's [or your] school records is protected by a federal law – the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act – which became effective in February 1975. These laws cover nearly every type of written pupil record that is maintained by local schools. Pupil records maintained by Synergy Academies consist of any item of information directly related to an identifiable pupil, including but not limited to subjects taken, grades received, standardized test results, attendance records, and health records.

Such student information will not be made available to unauthorized persons without your written consent. Only certain designated authorities who need to have access to the records as part of their regular work assignments or legal duties, and who have a legitimate educational interest in the record, may see such records. You may, of course, designate in writing other specific individuals [such as a family legal advisor] to whom such records can be made available. Any individual you designate must be told that pupil record information may not be revealed to others. Your written consent notices will be filed with the pupil's record.

The law also allows a school to give limited factual information about a student – called directory information – to those who have a legitimate need to know, such as the School's Parent Ambassadors, other School support groups, governmental agencies and potential employers, as well as, for example, a newspaper reporter covering a School performance or athletic event. Directory information can also be disclosed to outside organizations without a parent's/guardian's [or adult student's] prior written consent. Outside organizations include, but are not limited to, companies that manufacture class rings or publish yearbooks. The School Director/Principal or a staff member designated by the Director/Principal will exercise his or her judgment and discretion in determining who has a legitimate need for directory information unless you request in writing that your information not be released.

Again, your right to privacy is protected. You may, if you wish, request in writing that the School Director/Principal not release any directory information, or you may indicate what information can be released and what you would like withheld from release.

Listed below are the only items of directory information ever released without a parent's/guardian's [or adult student's] prior written consent. If you would like the School to release none of this information, please write a note to the School that informs the School that you would like "No information to be released" and sign and date the note. If you would like only certain information withheld from release, please also put this

request in writing with your signature and date, and give it to the School office.

**Directory Information That May Be Released:**

1. Student's Name
2. Student's Address and Telephone Number
3. Parent's/Legal Guardian's Address and Telephone Number
4. Photograph
5. Grade Level
6. Participation in officially recognized activities and sports
7. Height and weight of members of athletic teams
8. Degrees, honors, and awards received

## **HOMWORK POLICY**

Synergy believes that homework is the responsibility of both students and parents. Parent supervision and encouragement are important in making sure your child completes his/her homework every day. Starting good work habits now will empower your child to excel academically through to college and beyond.

All homework should be complete, neat and turned in on time. Homework will be assigned five (5) days a week and students are required to read at least five (5) days a week for at least 20-30 minutes per day.

Parents are required to (a) supervise completion and return of homework, and (b) sign their children's homework sheet either daily or weekly, depending on their children's teachers' instructions.

**Ways to Assist and Monitor Homework:**

- Sit down with your child and give him/her your full attention. Turn off the television and do not allow interruptions during this special time.
- Establish a regular quiet place and time for homework to help your child develop good study habits.
- Check homework assignments each night and assure that students complete homework regularly, neatly, and return it to school on time. Do not just ask if your child finished his/her homework. You should actually look over your child's work to make sure he/she has finished his/her homework.
- Ask your child to tell you about the work as he/she shows you his/her school papers. Ask your child to point out his/her favorite kinds of schoolwork.
- Communicate with the teacher if your child is having difficulty understanding the assignments.
- Encourage your child to work independently on assignments and provide assistance as needed, allowing your child every opportunity to do his/her own work.
- Let your child choose a few samples of his/her schoolwork to display on a bulletin board or on the refrigerator, or to paste into a scrapbook.
- Going over schoolwork with your child demonstrates that you think school is important and that you value your child's efforts at school.

### **Missing Homework:**

Missing homework assignments are noted in the teacher's grade book. Each teacher has his/her own policy for whether they will accept late homework and if so, how much late homework will count for students' grades. If the homework is missing due to an excused absence, see the Attendance Policy for more information. This information may be subject to change, and we will notify you if any changes are made.

## **ASSESSMENTS**

### **Classroom Teachers' Assessments**

Teachers will evaluate their students in all content and skill areas on report cards issued three (3) times a year. These reports will be based on informal and formal assessments, observations, class activities, writing assignments, homework quality and completion, and class participation. This information may be subject to change, and we will notify you if any changes are made.

### **Standardized Testing**

Synergy administers all standardized testing required by the State of California for public schools. The results of these tests help guide individual and school-wide instruction. It is important that your child does his/her best on these tests because your child's test scores will remain on his/her school records until he/she graduates from high school.

### **ELPAC**

Each year, students who are new to the US, whose primary language is other than English or whose parents speak a language other than English at home are given the English Language Proficiency Assessments for California (ELPAC) to determine the level of their English proficiency and their status as English Learners. This initial identification test is required by the State and enables Synergy to provide appropriate English language instruction to students at all levels. The ELPAC test is given annually to all English Learners until they demonstrate the required level of proficiency in English. Your child's level of English proficiency (English Language Development or ELD Level) will be shared with you, if applicable.

### **CAASPP**

3<sup>rd</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grades and 11<sup>th</sup> grade students may be given assessments each year under California's student assessment system known as the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP). The CAASPP assessments may include the California Standards Test (CST) that measures their mastery of California grade level standards and/or the Smarter Balanced computer-based assessments that measure students' mastery of Common Core State Standards (CCSS). These tests are given every spring over a two- to six-week period around April/May. Spanish-speaking students who have been in the United States less than 12 months also take the Standards-based Test in Spanish (STS). Students in 5<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade may be given the CAST Science test at this same time. A parent meeting will be scheduled to explain individual and school test scores and to give parents information regarding how Synergy's test scores compare to neighboring schools, to LAUSD, and to the State. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, a parent's or guardian's written request to

Synergy officials to excuse his or her child from any or all parts of the state assessments shall be granted.

### **Parent Conferences**

Synergy's schools will hold parent conferences that take place two times during the school year. Parents must bring their child with them to the conferences. Synergy believes it is important for your child to be present so that he/she can understand how he/she is doing academically and socially. Parents will be given their child's report card during the parent conference. This information may be subject to change, and we will notify you if any changes are made.

## **PARENT VISITS AND CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS**

Classroom observations give parents/guardians a fuller picture of the class structure, variety of activities, and the relationship of the teacher and students. They also provide the opportunity to observe your child's interaction in the classroom as it may differ from what you experience on a more individual basis at home. Parents/guardians are welcome to request an observation period at any time. However, unscheduled observations may not be convenient for the teacher because of the activity or the schedule. The best way to plan an observation is to follow these procedures:

Schedule a date and time with the teacher by leaving a message for her/him in the office. If you have a particular purpose for visiting, share that with the teacher as a particular time of day may be more appropriate.

Note: On the day of your scheduled observation date, come to your child's school office first to sign in and get a visitor's badge. Observation times are limited to 20 minutes unless otherwise arranged with the school administration. During observations, teachers are not available for any one-on-one discussions or conferences. Also, please do not interrupt the class instruction nor speak with your child or other students during your observation time. Your teacher will be happy to discuss your observation at a scheduled meeting time.

## **STUDENT ACADEMIC AND BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTION**

### **Student Success Team**

Each Synergy school has an established Student Success Team (SST) that meets with the parents of students with academic or behavioral concerns that are not resolved by initial interventions in the classroom. This team, which may be composed of the student's classroom teacher, an administrator, and/or the parent, explores the concerns as well as develops and implements an action plan that targets the specific needs of the student. A follow-up meeting may be scheduled to assess whether the interventions proposed by the team have been successful.

### **After School Intervention and Summer School Programs**

Select students who need more intensive instructional support may be recommended by their classroom teachers or school administrators to participate in Synergy's After



School Intervention Program, Saturday School, and/or Summer School Program. Students who are recommended for these programs may be in jeopardy of not passing his/her grade level and might not be able to move on to the next grade level.

### **Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)**

In the case where Synergy determines that academic or behavioral issues suggest professional evaluation, the parent will be asked to sign an assessment plan that could include health screening, achievement testing, a psycho-educational evaluation, a speech and language assessment, or testing by an occupational therapist or vision therapist. Parents also have the right to request in writing that Synergy evaluate a student because of concerns regarding academic or behavior progress. Parents may ask their child's school office to assist them in writing their request, if needed. Students with identified disabilities may be determined to be eligible for special education services according to a written Individualized Education Program (IEP) signed by the parents. By law, students are entitled to receive these appropriate services in the least restrictive environment. Parents will be given brochures that outline special education procedures and parent/student rights. If you have any questions or suspect your child may have a disability, please contact Sommer Jones, Director of Special Education and Student Services, at 323-246-5036 for further information. A copy of Synergy's special education policy can be obtained at the School office.

### **Section 504 Plans**

Students with temporary or permanent physical and/or mental disabilities that affect their life functioning (such as walking, seeing, hearing, breathing, learning) are eligible for special accommodations under Section 504 that protect them from discrimination and safeguard their rights to equal access of educational programs. Pamphlets describing a student's right to access a Section 504 plan are available to all Synergy families. If you have any questions or suspect your child may have a disability, please contact Sommer Jones, Director of Special Education and Student Services, at 323-246-5036 for further information. A copy of Synergy's special education policy can be obtained at the School office.

## **DISCIPLINE POLICY**

Synergy believes that successful discipline requires consistent support and application of the procedures by both staff members and parents/guardians. Students at Synergy are expected to behave responsibly, to work and play safely, and to treat others with respect. Proper student behavior in school is an essential element of the total school program. Students are taught pro-social behaviors and character education. While the school's discipline program includes administering positive and negative consequences, the ultimate goal is to help students see the value of intrinsically wanting to be a good person and a good citizen, not just at school, but in all areas of their lives.

Synergy Charter Academy's behavioral management system includes a color-coded card system to keep track of students' daily behavior. All teachers at Synergy Charter Academy use the same colors in their behavior reports to indicate how a child is behaving at school. Each time a student does not follow the school-wide and/or classroom rules or does not adhere to the policies in this handbook, he/she may have

his/her behavior color changed by any school personnel and not just by his/her teacher. Parents/Guardians will be notified on either a daily or weekly basis regarding their child's behavior at school. Parents/Guardians must sign the behavior report either daily or weekly, depending on when they receive the report.

The following behavior colors are used at the elementary school:

- **Green = Excellent 😊**
  - This means the child behaved well at school either all of the time or most of the time. Please thank your child for behaving well at school when he/she gets a green behavior color.
- **Yellow = Warning 😐**
  - This means the child behaved well at school most of the time after receiving one or a few warnings and reminders. If your child has a yellow behavior color, please thank your child for stopping their inappropriate behavior(s) after receiving a warning and remind them to remember to follow the rules and behavior expectations at school.
- **Orange = Time Out 😞**
  - This means the child had a hard time following the school rules or behavior expectations and had to change his/her behavior color two times in one day. When a child receives an orange behavior color at school, he/she may receive an immediate consequence at school such as time out from recess/break, time out from an activity in the classroom, time out spent in the Office, or the loss of a privilege. When your child receives an orange behavior color, please remind your child to follow the school rules and behavior expectations, and please also help give a consequence to your child at home such as no television or video games for that day.
- **Red = Contact Parent 😡😡**
  - This means the child had a hard time following the school rules or behavior expectations and had to change his/her behavior color three or more times in one day or he/she engaged in an extreme negative behavior (such as hitting, cheating, lying, or stealing) that resulted in an automatic red behavior color. When a child receives a red behavior color at school, he/she may receive an immediate consequence at school such as time out from recess/break, time out from an activity in the classroom, time out spent in the Office, or loss of a privilege. The parent/guardian may also be contacted either via phone or in writing to discuss the behavior challenges the student had that day and/or to schedule a meeting with the teacher/administrator. When your child receives a red behavior color, please remind your child to follow the school rules and behavior expectations, and please also help give a consequence to your child at home such as no television or video games for that day.

### **School Climate and Discipline System**

Synergy Charter Academy recognizes that appropriate school behavior is critical to the academic success and creating an effective learning community. A strong discipline foundation policy should minimize the loss of student instruction time due to removal from classes caused by misbehavior.

Effective teaching and modeling of school appropriate behavior is the responsibility of

every adult at Synergy Charter Academy. Effective school discipline includes the establishment of high standards of behavior, time for students to learn appropriate behavior, and fair and appropriate consequences for failure to meet behavior standards. Students share in the responsibility to uphold and respect the high standards of school behavior that contribute to the ability of all to learn.

Effective discipline maximizes the amount of time student and staff spent on effective teaching and learning and minimizes the amount of student and staff attention directed toward behavior that disrupts the learning process.

Effective discipline also considers the age and development of the student in framing instruction of appropriate behavior and consequences for misbehavior. It is educational not punitive and includes building relationships and using restorative practices to reengage students in their learning community.

Synergy Charter Academy implements Restorative Justice practices in conjunction with School-wide Positive Behavior Intervention and Support which both promote trust and respect in relationships, setting the foundation for teaching and learning. The practices provide meaningful opportunities for students to develop self-discipline and positive behavior in a caring and supportive environment.

It is important to note that all school stakeholders have a vested interest in creating a positive and safe learning environment for all students and staff.

### **Student Responsibilities:**

- Take responsibility for their behavior and hold themselves to high standards
- Work to achieve at high levels
- Come to school every day, on time, ready to learn
- Follow school and classroom expectations and rules
- Participate as members of the learning community
- Treat teachers, administrators, staff, other students and themselves with respect
- Help teachers and other students understand their culture and learn about and be respectful of the cultures of others
- Comply with reasonable requests from school staff
- Model positive behavior
- Participate in problem solving for individual and school concerns

### **Family Responsibilities:**

- Take responsibility for the behavior of their student as determined by law, community practice and school expectations
- Participate in and support school activities
- Teach students to be respectful of others and reinforce school expectations
- Model positive, respectful and appropriate school behavior
- Teach students that behavior has consequences
- Encourage and praise their student's achievements
- Discuss feedback on progress with their student
- Communicate with school staff to ensure that staff know and understand their student better and are better able to teach them effectively
- Share information and insights with school staff to help them teach their child

### **School Responsibilities:**

- Develop a school wide behavior plan and share with staff, students and families
- Ensure that new teachers, administrators and other staff know and understand the school wide plan and regularly review the school plan with all staff
- Review outcomes and modify plan, with particular attention to whether the school is reducing the number of out of school suspensions
- Provide a process for addressing student concerns
- Implement a defined system for teaching the expectations at the beginning of the school year and periodically throughout the year
- Teach social skills to increase students' repertoire of appropriate responses
- Ensure that the school is welcoming to families of all cultures and backgrounds
- Communicate school expectations to families
- Inform families of both their student's positive behavior and of behavior-related concerns
- Communicate with families whose students have been victimized at school
- Ensure that teams of teachers and support staff provide interdisciplinary problem solving and to address identified needs

Students who do not adhere to the discipline policy and/or who violate school rules should expect consequences and/or interventions for their behavior, including but not limited to the following:

- Warnings
- Loss of privileges
- Notices to parents/guardians by telephone or letter
- Request for parent conference
- Individualized Behavior Contract
- Instruction in pro-social behaviors
- Detention
- Suspension (including in-school suspension)
- Expulsion

If a student's behavior does not improve, parents may be asked to participate in the Student Success Team (SST) process. The Student Success Team, including a school administrator and/or teacher, works with the parent(s) to develop appropriate accommodations, modifications, and/or intervention strategies.

### **School-Wide Rules: Overview**

**All Synergy students must follow these school-wide rules:**

- 1. Follow directions at all times.**
- 2. Keep your hands, feet, and objects to yourself.**
- 3. Use appropriate school language.**

### **Unacceptable Behaviors**

Certain behaviors are inappropriate and require the teacher or other staff member to redirect the student or to administer consequences to help the student, to effectively discipline the student, and to maintain a safe environment.

Examples of inappropriate behavior include but are not limited to:

- Not following directions
- Interrupting instruction with inappropriate comments or inappropriate behaviors
- Pushing
- Using profane language and/or gestures
- Throwing food and/or trash on the ground
- Defacing or damaging any school property
- Running in class or running in the hallways
- Hitting
- Tripping
- Kicking
- Spitting
- Chewing gum
- Play fighting
- Regularly speaking out of turn
- Throwing objects
- Trading or selling any kind of items on the school grounds, or bringing such items to school
- Play wrestling
- Lying
- Stealing
- Cheating
- Misusing books, materials, or equipment
- Using a cell phone on the school campus or during a school-related activity (unless prior permission from a school staff member has been given)
- Gang involvement: No gang activity or gang association(s) will be permitted at school or at school-sponsored activities. Gang symbols on notebooks, backpacks, etc., are not permitted.
- Tagging of any kind is prohibited.
- Students are not allowed to bring the following items to school: liquid paper or other liquid white-out product, permanent ink pens (having them on campus may cause a student to be held responsible for graffiti), valuable items, large amounts of cash, or any other object that might distract or disrupt school routine and/or instruction. Synergy is not responsible if items brought to school are lost or stolen.

Consequences for engaging in unacceptable behaviors may include redirection, class or recess/break time out, loss of recess or loss of lunch with peers, break separate from other students, detention during and/or after school, confiscation of item(s) not allowed on campus or on school-sponsored activities, oral or written reflection and/or apology, student-teacher conference, behavior notice/phone call to parent, parent conference, counselor intervention, positive behavior contract, suspension, and/or expulsion. By signing the Parent/Guardian Agreement at the end of the Parent/Student Handbook, parents/guardians acknowledge that detentions may be held during recess/breaks, lunch, or after school.

### **Office Referrals**

All staff members have the discretion to refer a student to the office for administrative intervention. Depending upon the specific circumstances surrounding the student's

behavior, a student may remain at the office for a short “time out” period, or may need to stay longer. The parent may be required to sign a note sent by a school administrator that describes the inappropriate or hurtful student behavior. The parent may also be asked to attend a meeting with school administration to discuss how to work together to help the student. In more serious cases, the parent or guardian may be notified to immediately pick up the student from the Office.

Serious infractions may result in immediate suspension and/or expulsion even if it is the first referral to the Office. Please see the Suspension and Expulsion Procedures for more information.

## **SUSPENSION AND EXPULSION PROCEDURES**

This Pupil Suspension and Expulsion Policy has been established in order to promote learning and protect the safety and well being of all students at the Charter School. In creating this Policy, the Charter School has reviewed Education Code Section 48900 et seq., which describes the noncharter schools’ list of offenses and procedures, to establish its list of offenses and procedures for suspensions and expulsions. The language that follows closely mirrors the language of Education Code Section 48900 et seq. The Charter School is committed to annual review of policies and procedures surrounding suspensions and expulsions and, as necessary, modification of the lists of offenses for which students are subject to suspension or expulsion consistent with material revision requirements if applicable to a particular change.

When the Policy is violated, it may be necessary to suspend or expel a student from regular classroom instruction. Charter School staff shall enforce disciplinary rules and procedures fairly and consistently among all students. This Policy and its Procedures will be printed and distributed as part of the Parent/Student Handbook and will clearly describe discipline expectations. Corporal punishment shall not be used as a disciplinary measure against any student. Corporal punishment includes the willful infliction of or willfully causing the infliction of physical pain on a student. For purposes of the Policy, corporal punishment does not include an employee’s use of force that is reasonable and necessary to protect the employee, students, staff or other persons or to prevent damage to school property.

The Charter School administration shall ensure that students and their parents/guardians are notified in writing upon enrollment of all discipline policies and procedures. The notice shall state that this Policy and Procedures are available on request at the Office.

Suspended or expelled students shall be excluded from all school and school-related activities unless otherwise agreed during the period of suspension or expulsion.

No student shall be involuntarily removed by the Charter School for any reason unless the parent or guardian of the student has been provided written notice of intent to remove the student no less than five schooldays before the effective date of the action. The written notice shall be in the native language of the student or the student’s parent or guardian or, if the student is a foster child or youth or a homeless child or youth, the

student's educational rights holder, and shall inform him or her of the right to initiate the procedures specified below for suspensions, before the effective date of the action. If the student's parent, guardian, or educational rights holder initiates the procedures specified below for suspensions, the student shall remain enrolled and shall not be removed until the Charter School issues a final decision. As used herein, "involuntarily removed" includes disenrolled, dismissed, transferred, or terminated, but does not include suspensions or expulsions pursuant to the suspension and expulsion procedures described below.

A. Grounds for Suspension and Expulsion of Students

A student may be suspended or expelled for prohibited misconduct if the act is related to school activity or school attendance occurring at any time including but not limited to: a) while on school grounds; b) while going to or coming from school; c) during the lunch period, whether on or off the school campus; d) during, going to, or coming from a school-sponsored activity.

B. Enumerated Offenses

1. Discretionary Suspension Offenses. Students may be suspended for any of the following acts when it is determined the pupil:

- a. Caused, attempted to cause, or threatened to cause physical injury to another person.
- b. Willfully used force or violence upon the person of another, except in self-defense.
- c. Unlawfully possessed, used, sold or otherwise furnished, or was under the influence of any controlled substance, as defined in Health and Safety Code Sections 11053-11058, alcoholic beverage, or intoxicant of any kind.
- d. Unlawfully offered, arranged, or negotiated to sell any controlled substance as defined in Health and Safety Code Sections 11053-11058, alcoholic beverage, or intoxicant of any kind, and then sold, delivered, or otherwise furnished to any person another liquid, substance, or material and represented same as a controlled substance, alcoholic beverage, or intoxicant.
- e. Committed or attempted to commit robbery or extortion.
- f. Caused or attempted to cause damage to school property or private property, which includes but is not limited to, electronic files and databases.
- g. Stole or attempted to steal school property or private property, which includes but is not limited to, electronic files and databases.
- h. Possessed or used tobacco or any products containing tobacco or nicotine products, including but not limited to cigars, cigarettes, miniature cigars,

clove cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, snuff, chew packets, betel, electronic cigarettes, vaping devices and related gels. This section does not prohibit the use of his or her own prescription products by a pupil.

- i. Committed an obscene act or engaged in habitual profanity or vulgarity.
- j. Unlawfully possessed or unlawfully offered, arranged, or negotiated to sell any drug paraphernalia, as defined in Health and Safety Code Section 11014.5.
- k. Knowingly received stolen school property or private property, which includes but is not limited to, electronic files and databases.
- l. Possessed an imitation firearm, i.e.: a replica of a firearm that is so substantially similar in physical properties to an existing firearm as to lead a reasonable person to conclude that the replica is a firearm.
- m. Committed or attempted to commit a sexual assault as defined in Penal Code Sections 261, 266c, 286, 288, 288a or 289, or committed a sexual battery as defined in Penal Code Section 243.4.
- n. Harassed, threatened, or intimidated a student who is a complaining witness or witness in a school disciplinary proceeding for the purpose of preventing that student from being a witness and/or retaliating against that student for being a witness.
- o. Unlawfully offered, arranged to sell, negotiated to sell, or sold the prescription drug Soma.
- p. Engaged in or attempted to engage in hazing. For the purposes of this subdivision, "hazing" means a method of initiation or preinitiation into a pupil organization or body, whether or not the organization or body is officially recognized by an educational institution, which is likely to cause serious bodily injury or personal degradation or disgrace resulting in physical or mental harm to a former, current, or prospective pupil. For purposes of this section, "hazing" does not include athletic events or school-sanctioned events.
- q. Made terroristic threats against school officials and/or school property, which includes but is not limited to, electronic files and databases. For purposes of this section, "terroristic threat" shall include any statement, whether written or oral, by a person who willfully threatens to commit a crime which will result in death, great bodily injury to another person, or property damage in excess of one thousand dollars (\$1,000), with the specific intent that the statement is to be taken as a threat, even if there is no intent of actually carrying it out, which, on its face and under the circumstances in which it is made, is so unequivocal, unconditional, immediate, and specific as to convey to the person threatened, a gravity of purpose and an immediate prospect of execution of the threat, and thereby causes that person reasonably to be in sustained fear for his or



her own safety or for his or her immediate family's safety, or for the protection of school property, which includes but is not limited to, electronic files and databases, or the personal property of the person threatened or his or her immediate family.

- r. Committed sexual harassment, as defined in Education Code Section 212.5. For the purposes of this section, the conduct described in Section 212.5 must be considered by a reasonable person of the same gender as the victim to be sufficiently severe or pervasive to have a negative impact upon the individual's academic performance or to create an intimidating, hostile, or offensive educational environment. This section shall apply to pupils in any of grades 4 to 12, inclusive.
- s. Caused, attempted to cause, threatened to cause, or participated in an act of hate violence, as defined in subdivision (e) of Section 233 of the Education Code. This section shall apply to pupils in any of grades 4 to 12, inclusive.
- t. Intentionally harassed, threatened or intimidated school personnel or volunteers and/or a student or group of students to the extent of having the actual and reasonably expected effect of materially disrupting class work, creating substantial disorder and invading the rights of either school personnel or volunteers and/or student(s) by creating an intimidating or hostile educational environment. This section shall apply to pupils in any of grades 4 to 12, inclusive.
- u. Engaged in an act of bullying, including, but not limited to, bullying committed by means of an electronic act.
  - i. "Bullying" means any severe or pervasive physical or verbal act or conduct, including communications made in writing or by means of an electronic act, and including one or more acts committed by a student or group of students which would be deemed hate violence or harassment, threats, or intimidation, which are directed toward one or more students that has or can be reasonably predicted to have the effect of one or more of the following:
    1. Placing a reasonable student (defined as a student, including, but is not limited to, a student with exceptional needs, who exercises average care, skill, and judgment in conduct for a person of his or her age, or for a person of his or her age with exceptional needs) or students in fear of harm to that student's or those students' person or property.
    2. Causing a reasonable student to experience a substantially detrimental effect on his or her physical or mental health.
    3. Causing a reasonable student to experience substantial interference with his or her academic performance.
    4. Causing a reasonable student to experience substantial interference with his or her ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by the Charter School.

- ii. “Electronic Act” means the creation and/or transmission originated on or off the schoolsite, by means of an electronic device, including, but not limited to, a telephone, wireless telephone, or other wireless communication device, computer, or pager, of a communication, including, but not limited to, any of the following:
  - 1. A message, text, sound, video or image.
  - 2. A post on a social network Internet Web site including, but not limited to:
    - a. Posting to or creating a burn page. A “burn page” means an Internet Web site created for the purpose of having one or more of the effects as listed in subparagraph (i) above.
    - b. Creating a credible impersonation of another actual pupil for the purpose of having one or more of the effects listed in subparagraph (i) above. “Credible impersonation” means to knowingly and without consent impersonate a pupil for the purpose of bullying the pupil and such that another pupil would reasonably believe, or has reasonably believed, that the pupil was or is the pupil who was impersonated.
    - c. Creating a false profile for the purpose of having one or more of the effects listed in subparagraph (i) above. “False profile” means a profile of a fictitious pupil or a profile using the likeness or attributes of an actual pupil other than the pupil who created the false profile.
- iii. An act of cyber sexual bullying.
  - 1. For purposes of this clause, “cyber sexual bullying” means the dissemination of, or the solicitation or incitement to disseminate, a photograph or other visual recording by a pupil to another pupil or to school personnel by means of an electronic act that has or can be reasonably predicted to have one or more of the effects described in subparagraph (i) above. A photograph or other visual recording, as described above, shall include the depiction of a nude, semi-nude, or sexually explicit photograph or other visual recording of a minor where the minor is identifiable from the photograph, visual recording, or other electronic act.
  - 2. For purposes of this clause, “cyber sexual bullying” does not include a depiction, portrayal, or image that has any serious literary, artistic, educational, political, or scientific value or that involves athletic events or school-sanctioned activities.
- iv. Notwithstanding subparagraphs (i) and (ii) above, an electronic act shall not constitute pervasive conduct solely on the basis that it has been transmitted on the Internet or is currently posted on the Internet.
- v. A pupil who aids or abets, as defined in Section 31 of the Penal Code, the infliction or attempted infliction of physical injury to another person may be subject to suspension, but not expulsion, except that a pupil who has been

adjudged by a juvenile court to have committed, as an aider and abettor, a crime of physical violence in which the victim suffered great bodily injury or serious bodily injury shall be subject to discipline pursuant to subdivision (1)(a)-(b).

- w. Possessed, sold, or otherwise furnished any knife unless, in the case of possession of any object of this type, the student had obtained written permission to possess the item from a certificated school employee, with the Director/Principal or designee's concurrence.
2. Non-Discretionary Suspension Offenses: Students must be suspended and recommended for expulsion for any of the following acts when it is determined the pupil:
- a. Possessed, sold, or otherwise furnished any firearm, explosive, or other dangerous object unless, in the case of possession of any object of this type, the student had obtained written permission to possess the item from a certificated school employee, with the Director/Principal or designee's concurrence.
3. Discretionary Expellable Offenses: Students may be recommended for expulsion for any of the following acts when it is determined the pupil:
- a. Caused, attempted to cause, or threatened to cause physical injury to another person.
  - b. Willfully used force or violence upon the person of another, except self-defense.
  - c. Unlawfully possessed, used, sold or otherwise furnished, or was under the influence of any controlled substance, as defined in Health and Safety Code Sections 11053-11058, alcoholic beverage, or intoxicant of any kind.
  - d. Unlawfully offered, arranged, or negotiated to sell any controlled substance as defined in Health and Safety Code Sections 11053-11058, alcoholic beverage or intoxicant of any kind, and then sold, delivered or otherwise furnished to any person another liquid substance or material and represented same as controlled substance, alcoholic beverage or intoxicant.
  - e. Committed or attempted to commit robbery or extortion.
  - f. Caused or attempted to cause damage to school property or private property, which includes but is not limited to, electronic files and databases.
  - g. Stole or attempted to steal school property or private property, which includes but is not limited to, electronic files and databases.

- h. Possessed or used tobacco or products containing tobacco or nicotine products, including but not limited to cigars, cigarettes, miniature cigars, clove cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, snuff, chew packets, betel, electronic cigarettes, vaping devices and related gels. This section does not prohibit the use of his or her own prescription products by a pupil.
- i. Committed an obscene act or engaged in habitual profanity or vulgarity.
- j. Unlawfully possessed or unlawfully offered, arranged, or negotiated to sell any drug paraphernalia, as defined in Health and Safety Code Section 11014.5.
- k. Knowingly received stolen school property or private property, which includes but is not limited to, electronic files and databases.
- l. Possessed an imitation firearm, i.e.: a replica of a firearm that is so substantially similar in physical properties to an existing firearm as to lead a reasonable person to conclude that the replica is a firearm.
- m. Committed or attempted to commit a sexual assault as defined in Penal Code Sections 261, 266c, 286, 288, 288a or 289, or committed a sexual battery as defined in Penal Code Section 243.4.
- n. Harassed, threatened, or intimidated a student who is a complaining witness or witness in a school disciplinary proceeding for the purpose of preventing that student from being a witness and/or retaliating against that student for being a witness.
- o. Unlawfully offered, arranged to sell, negotiated to sell, or sold the prescription drug Soma.
- p. Engaged in, or attempted to engage in hazing. For the purposes of this subdivision, "hazing" means a method of initiation or preinitiation into a pupil organization or body, whether or not the organization or body is officially recognized by an educational institution, which is likely to cause serious bodily injury or personal degradation or disgrace resulting in physical or mental harm to a former, current, or prospective pupil. For purposes of this section, "hazing" does not include athletic events or school-sanctioned events.
- q. Made terroristic threats against school officials and/or school property, which includes but is not limited to, electronic files and databases. For purposes of this section, "terroristic threat" shall include any statement, whether written or oral, by a person who willfully threatens to commit a crime which will result in death, great bodily injury to another person, or property damage in excess of one thousand dollars (\$1,000), with the specific intent that the statement is to be taken as a threat, even if there is no intent of actually carrying it out, which, on its face and under the circumstances in which it is made, is so unequivocal, unconditional, immediate, and specific as to convey to the person threatened, a gravity of

purpose and an immediate prospect of execution of the threat, and thereby causes that person reasonably to be in sustained fear for his or her own safety or for his or her immediate family's safety, or for the protection of school property, which includes but is not limited to, electronic files and databases, or the personal property of the person threatened or his or her immediate family.

- r. Committed sexual harassment, as defined in Education Code Section 212.5. For the purposes of this section, the conduct described in Section 212.5 must be considered by a reasonable person of the same gender as the victim to be sufficiently severe or pervasive to have a negative impact upon the individual's academic performance or to create an intimidating, hostile, or offensive educational environment. This section shall apply to pupils in any of grades 4 to 12, inclusive.
- s. Caused, attempted to cause, threatened to cause or participated in an act of hate violence, as defined in subdivision (e) of Section 233 of the Education Code. This section shall apply to pupils in any of grades 4 to 12, inclusive.
- t. Intentionally harassed, threatened or intimidated school personnel or volunteers and/or a student or group of students to the extent of having the actual and reasonably expected effect of materially disrupting class work, creating substantial disorder and invading the rights of either school personnel or volunteers and/or student(s) by creating an intimidating or hostile educational environment. This section shall apply to pupils in any of grades 4 to 12, inclusive.
- u. Engaged in an act of bullying, including, but not limited to, bullying committed by means of an electronic act.
  - i. "Bullying" means any severe or pervasive physical or verbal act or conduct, including communications made in writing or by means of an electronic act, and including one or more acts committed by a student or group of students which would be deemed hate violence or harassment, threats, or intimidation, which are directed toward one or more students that has or can be reasonably predicted to have the effect of one or more of the following:
    1. Placing a reasonable student (defined as a student, including, but is not limited to, a student with exceptional needs, who exercises average care, skill, and judgment in conduct for a person of his or her age, or for a person of his or her age with exceptional needs) or students in fear of harm to that student's or those students' person or property.
    2. Causing a reasonable student to experience a substantially detrimental effect on his or her physical or mental health.
    3. Causing a reasonable student to experience substantial interference with his or her academic performance.
    4. Causing a reasonable student to experience substantial interference with his or her ability to participate in or benefit

from the services, activities, or privileges provided by the Charter School.

- ii. “Electronic Act” means the creation or transmission originated on or off the school site, by means of an electronic device, including, but not limited to, a telephone, wireless telephone, or other wireless communication device, computer, or pager, of a communication, including, but not limited to, any of the following:
  1. A message, text, sound, video or image.
  2. A post on a social network Internet Web site including, but not limited to:
    - a. Posting to or creating a burn page. A “burn page” means an Internet Web site created for the purpose of having one or more of the effects as listed in subparagraph (i) above.
    - b. Creating a credible impersonation of another actual pupil for the purpose of having one or more of the effects listed in subparagraph (i) above. “Credible impersonation” means to knowingly and without consent impersonate a pupil for the purpose of bullying the pupil and such that another pupil would reasonably believe, or has reasonably believed, that the pupil was or is the pupil who was impersonated.
    - c. Creating a false profile for the purpose of having one or more of the effects listed in subparagraph (i) above. “False profile” means a profile of a fictitious pupil or a profile using the likeness or attributes of an actual pupil other than the pupil who created the false profile.
- iii. An act of cyber sexual bullying.
  1. For purposes of this clause, “cyber sexual bullying” means the dissemination of, or the solicitation or incitement to disseminate, a photograph or other visual recording by a pupil to another pupil or to school personnel by means of an electronic act that has or can be reasonably predicted to have one or more of the effects described in subparagraph (i) above. A photograph or other visual recording, as described above, shall include the depiction of a nude, semi-nude, or sexually explicit photograph or other visual recording of a minor where the minor is identifiable from the photograph, visual recording, or other electronic act.
  2. For purposes of this clause, “cyber sexual bullying” does not include a depiction, portrayal, or image that has any serious literary, artistic, educational, political, or scientific value or that involves athletic events or school-sanctioned activities.
- iv. Notwithstanding subparagraphs (i) and (ii) above, an electronic act shall not constitute pervasive conduct solely on the basis that it has been transmitted on the Internet or is currently posted on the Internet.

- v. A pupil who aids or abets, as defined in Section 31 of the Penal Code, the infliction or attempted infliction of physical injury to another person may be subject to suspension, but not expulsion, except that a pupil who has been adjudged by a juvenile court to have committed, as an aider and abettor, a crime of physical violence in which the victim suffered great bodily injury or serious bodily injury shall be subject to discipline pursuant to subdivision (1)(a)-(b).
  - w. Possessed, sold, or otherwise furnished any knife unless, in the case of possession of any object of this type, the student had obtained written permission to possess the item from a certificated school employee, with the Director/Principal or designee's concurrence.
4. Non-Discretionary Expellable Offenses: Students must be recommended for expulsion for any of the following acts when it is determined pursuant to the procedures below that the pupil:
- a. Possessed, sold, or otherwise furnished any firearm, explosive or other dangerous object unless, in the case of possession of any object of this type, the student had obtained written permission to possess the item from a certificated school employee, with the Director/Principal or designee's concurrence.

If it is determined by an Administrative Panel during an expulsion hearing or the Board of Directors in an expulsion appeal that a student has brought a firearm or destructive device, as defined in Section 921 of Title 18 of the United States Code, on to campus or to have possessed a firearm or dangerous device on campus, the student shall be expelled for one year, pursuant to the Federal Gun Free Schools Act of 1994. In such instances, the pupil shall be provided due process rights of notice and a hearing as required in this policy.

The term "firearm" means (A) any weapon (including a starter gun) which will or is designed to or may readily be converted to expel a projectile by the action of an explosive; (B) the frame or receiver of any such weapon; (C) any firearm muffler or firearm silencer; or (D) any destructive device. Such term does not include an antique firearm.

The term "destructive device" means (A) any explosive, incendiary, or poison gas, including but not limited to: (i) bomb, (ii) grenade, (iii) rocket having a propellant charge of more than four ounces, (iv) missile having an explosive or incendiary charge of more than one-quarter ounce, (v) mine, or (vi) device similar to any of the devices described in the preceding clauses.

C. Suspension Procedure (for in-school and out-of-school suspensions)

Suspensions shall be initiated according to the following procedures:

1. Conference

Suspension shall be preceded, if possible, by a conference conducted by the Director/Principal or the Director/Principal's designee\* with the student

and his or her parent/guardian and, whenever practical, the teacher, supervisor or Charter School employee who referred the student to the Director/Principal or designee.

The conference may be omitted if the Director/Principal or designee determines that an emergency situation exists. An "emergency situation" involves a clear and present danger to the lives, safety or health of students or Charter School personnel. If a student is suspended without this conference, both the parent/guardian and student shall be notified of the student's right to return to school for the purpose of a conference.

At the conference, the pupil shall be informed of the reason for the disciplinary action and the evidence against him or her and shall be given the opportunity to present his or her version and evidence in his or her defense in accordance with Education Code Section 47605(b)(5)(J)(i).

This conference shall be held within two (2) school days unless the pupil waives this right or is physically unable to attend for any reason including, but not limited to, incarceration or hospitalization.

No penalties may be imposed on a pupil for failure of the pupil's parent or guardian to attend a conference with Charter School officials. Reinstatement of the suspended pupil shall not be contingent upon attendance by the pupil's parent or guardian at the conference.

*\*Designee as used in this Policy includes other administrators at the Charter School, such as the Assistant Director or Dean of Students.*

## 2. Notice to Parents/Guardians

At the time of the suspension, the Director/Principal or designee shall make a reasonable effort to contact the parent/guardian by telephone or in person when the parent comes to the school. Whenever a student is suspended, the parent/guardian shall be notified in writing of the suspension and the date of return following suspension. This notice shall state the specific offense committed by the student. In addition, the notice may also state the date and time when the student may return to school. If Charter School officials wish to ask the parent/guardian to confer regarding matters pertinent to the suspension, the notice may request that the parent/guardian respond to such requests without delay.

## 3. Suspension Time Limits/Recommendation for Expulsion

Suspensions, when not including a recommendation for expulsion, shall not exceed five (5) consecutive school days per suspension. Suspensions shall not exceed twenty (20) school days in one school year, unless for purposes of adjustment, a pupil enrolls in or is transferred to another regular school, an opportunity school or class, or a continuation education school or class, in which case the total number of school days for which



the pupil may be suspended shall not exceed thirty (30) school days in any school year.

Upon a recommendation of expulsion by the Director/Principal or Director/Principal's designee, the pupil and the pupil's parent/guardian or representative will be invited to a conference to determine if the suspension for the pupil should be extended pending an expulsion hearing. In such instances when the Charter School has determined a suspension period shall be extended, such extension shall be made only after a conference is held with the pupil or the pupil's parents, unless the pupil and the pupil's parents fail to attend the conference. This determination will be made by the Director/Principal or designee upon either of the following: 1) the pupil's presence will be disruptive to the education process; or 2) the pupil poses a threat or danger to others. Upon either determination, the pupil's suspension will be extended pending the results of an expulsion hearing. The student will have the opportunity, at the discretion of the Director/Principal and/or the classroom teacher(s), to complete instructional activities missed due to his or her suspension. Regardless, suspended students will be able to communicate with designated classroom teacher(s) or administrator(s) for any questions and for evaluation of work, and shall receive homework assignments during their suspension and be provided the opportunity to make up any missed exams.

#### D. Authority to Expel

As required by Education Code Section 47605(b)(5)(J)(ii), students recommended for expulsion are entitled to a hearing adjudicated by a neutral officer to determine whether the student should be expelled. The procedures herein provide for such a hearing and the notice of said hearing, as required by law.

A student may be expelled by a neutral and impartial Administrative Panel, to be assigned by the Board of Directors, as needed. The Administrative Panel shall consist of at least three members who are certificated and neither a teacher of the pupil nor a member of the Charter School's governing board. Each entity shall be presided over by a designated neutral hearing chairperson. The Administrative Panel may recommend expulsion of any student found to have committed an expellable offense.

A student and his or her parents may appeal an expulsion decision by the Administrative Panel to the Charter School's Board, which will make the final determination. Following the appeal hearing, the Board will make a final decision based on the information presented at the appeal hearing by the parent(s)/guardian(s) (or student aged 18 or over) and information from the original expulsion hearing.

#### E. Expulsion Procedures

Students recommended for expulsion are entitled to a hearing to determine whether the student should be expelled. If requested by the student, and unless postponed for good cause, the hearing shall be held within thirty (30) school days after the Director/Principal or designee determines that the student has committed an expellable offense.

The Administrative Panel will hold a hearing on the case, and will make a determination whether to expel. The hearing shall be held in closed session (complying with all pupil confidentiality rules under FERPA) unless the student makes a written request for a public hearing in open session no later than three (3) days prior to the date of the scheduled hearing.

Written notice of the hearing shall be forwarded by the Director/Principal or designee to the student and the student's parent/guardian at least ten (10) calendar days before the date of the hearing. Upon mailing the notice, it shall be deemed served upon the pupil. The notice shall include:

1. The date, time, and place of the expulsion hearing;
2. A statement of the specific facts, charge(s) and offense(s) upon which the proposed expulsion is based;
3. A copy of the Charter School's disciplinary rules which relate to the alleged violation;
4. Notification of the student's or parent/guardian's obligation to provide information about the student's status at the Charter School to any other school district or school to which the student seeks enrollment;
5. The opportunity for the student and/or the student's parent/guardian to appear in person or to employ and be represented by counsel or a non-attorney advisor;
6. The right to inspect and obtain copies of all documents to be used at the hearing;
7. The opportunity to confront and question all witnesses who testify at the hearing;
8. The opportunity to question all evidence presented and to present oral and documentary evidence on the student's behalf including witnesses;
9. A statement that the pupil's parent/guardian may request a postponement of the hearing for good cause;
10. A statement that the parent/guardian can request reasonable accommodations or language support if needed during the hearing.

F. Special Procedures for Expulsion Hearings Involving Sexual Assault or Battery Offenses

The Charter School may, upon a finding of good cause, determine that the disclosure of either the identity of the witness or the testimony of that witness at the hearing, or both, would subject the witness to an unreasonable risk of psychological or physical harm. Upon this determination, the testimony of the witness may be presented at the hearing in the form of sworn declarations that shall be examined only by the Charter School or the hearing officer. Copies of these sworn declarations, edited to delete the name and identity of the witness, shall be made available to the pupil.

1. The complaining witness in any sexual assault or battery case must be provided with a copy of the applicable disciplinary rules and advised of his/her right to (a) receive five-day notice of his/her scheduled testimony, (b) have up to two (2) adult support persons of his/her choosing present in the hearing at the time he/she testifies, which may include a parent, guardian, or legal counsel, and (c) elect to have the hearing closed while testifying.
2. The Administrative Panel must also provide the victim a room separate from the hearing room for the complaining witness' use prior to and during breaks in testimony.
3. At the discretion of the Administrative Panel, the complaining witness shall be allowed periods of relief from examination and cross-examination during which he or she may leave the hearing room.
4. The Administrative Panel may also arrange the seating within the hearing room to facilitate a less intimidating environment for the complaining witness.
5. The Panel may also limit time for taking the testimony of the complaining witness to the hours he/she is normally in school, if there is no good cause to take the testimony during other hours.
6. Prior to a complaining witness testifying, the support persons must be admonished that the hearing is confidential. Nothing in the law precludes the person presiding over the hearing from removing a support person whom the presiding person finds is disrupting the hearing. The Administrative Panel may permit any one of the support persons for the complaining witness to accompany him or her to the witness stand/area where the witness will be seated during the hearing.
7. If one or both of the support persons is also a witness, the Charter School must present evidence that the witness' presence is both desired by the witness and will be helpful to the Charter School. The Administrative Panel member presiding over the hearing shall permit the witness to stay unless it is established that there is a substantial risk that the testimony of the complaining witness would be influenced by the support person, in which case the presiding official shall admonish the support person or persons not to prompt, sway, or influence the witness in any way. Nothing

shall preclude the presiding officer from exercising his or her discretion to remove a person from the hearing whom he or she believes is prompting, swaying, or influencing the witness.

8. The testimony of the support person shall be presented before the testimony of the complaining witness and the complaining witness shall be excluded from the hearing during that testimony.
9. Especially for charges involving sexual assault or battery, if the hearing is to be conducted in public at the request of the pupil being expelled, the complaining witness shall have the right to have his/her testimony heard in a closed session when testifying at a public meeting would threaten serious psychological harm to the complaining witness and there are no alternative procedures to avoid the threatened harm. The alternative procedures may include videotaped depositions or contemporaneous examination in another place communicated to the hearing room by means of closed-circuit television.
10. Evidence of specific instances of a complaining witness' prior sexual conduct is presumed inadmissible and shall not be heard absent a determination by the person conducting the hearing that extraordinary circumstances exist requiring the evidence be heard. Before such a determination regarding extraordinary circumstance can be made, the witness shall be provided notice and an opportunity to present opposition to the introduction of the evidence. In the hearing on the admissibility of the evidence, the complaining witness shall be entitled to be represented by a parent, legal counsel, or other support person. Reputation or opinion evidence regarding the sexual behavior of the complaining witness is not admissible for any purpose.

#### G. Record of Hearing

A record of the hearing shall be made and may be maintained by any means, including electronic recording, as long as a reasonably accurate and complete written transcription of the proceedings can be made. A copy of the recording is available to the pupil, parent, or guardian within five (5) business days of a written request.

#### H. Presentation of Evidence

While technical rules of evidence do not apply to expulsion hearings, evidence may be admitted and used as proof only if it is the kind of evidence on which reasonable persons can rely in the conduct of serious affairs. , such as but not limited to testimony or documentary evidence of a similar nature as that used in other types of hearings or official proceedings. A determination by the Administrative Panel to expel must be supported by substantial evidence that the student committed an expellable offense.

Findings of fact shall be based solely on the evidence at the hearing. While hearsay evidence is admissible, no decision to expel shall be based solely on

hearsay. Sworn declarations may be admitted as testimony from witnesses of whom the Administrative Panel determines that disclosure of their identity or testimony at the hearing may subject them to an unreasonable risk of physical or psychological harm.

If, due to a written request by the expelled pupil, the hearing is held at a public meeting, and the charge is committing or attempting to commit a sexual assault or committing a sexual battery as defined in Education Code Section 48900, a complaining witness shall have the right to have his or her testimony heard in a session closed to the public.

The decision of the Administrative Panel shall be in the form of written findings of fact.

If the Administrative Panel decides not to expel, the pupil shall immediately be returned to his/her educational program.

I. Written Notice to Expel

The Director/Principal or designee, following a decision of the Administrative Panel to expel, shall, within seven (7) calendar days of the decision, send written notice of the decision to expel, including the Administrative Panel's adopted findings of fact, to the student or parent/guardian. This notice shall also include the following: (a) Notice of the specific offense(s) committed by the student; (b) Notice of appeal rights/procedures; and (c) Notice of the student's or parent/guardian's obligation to inform any new district in which the student seeks to enroll of the student's status with the Charter School.

The Director/Principal or designee shall send a copy of the written notice of the decision to expel to the authorizer. This notice shall include the following: (a) The student's name; and (b) The specific expellable offense committed by the student.

J. Disciplinary Records

The Charter School shall maintain records of all student suspensions and expulsions at the Charter School. Such records shall be made available to the authorizer upon request.

K. Right to Appeal

Parents/Guardians (or students age 18 and over) may appeal the expulsion decision of the Administrative Panel by making a written request and submitting it to the Board within fifteen (15) school days of the expulsion decision. The student will be considered suspended until a Board meeting is convened [within thirty (30) days] at which time the parent(s)/guardian(s) (or student aged 18 or over) must attend to present their appeal. Reasonable accommodations will be made, and language support offered, for students and parents/guardians who wish to appeal. Following the appeal hearing, the Board will make a final decision based on the information presented at the appeal hearing by the parent(s)/guardian(s)

(or student aged 18 or over) and information from the original expulsion hearing. The Director/Principal or designee will send written notice to the student or parent/guardian of the Board's decision within seven (7) calendar days of the appeal hearing. The Charter School Board's decision to uphold the administrative panel's decision to expel shall be final.

#### L. Expelled Pupils/Alternative Education

The Charter School shall work cooperatively with parents/guardians as requested by parents/guardians or by the school district of residence to assist with locating alternative placements during expulsion.

#### Rehabilitation Plans

Pupils who are expelled from Charter School shall be given a rehabilitation plan upon expulsion as developed by Charter School's governing board at the time of the expulsion order, which may include, but is not limited to, periodic review as well as assessment at the time of review for readmission. Terms of expulsion should be reasonable and fair with the weight of the expelling offense taken into consideration when determining the length of expulsion. Therefore, the rehabilitation plan should include a date not later than one (1) year from the date of expulsion when the pupil may apply to Charter School for readmission. Charter School shall inform parents in writing of its processes for reinstatement and applying for expungement of the expulsion record.

#### Readmission

Charter School's governing board shall adopt rules establishing a procedure for the filing and processing of requests for readmission and the process for the required review of all expelled pupils for readmission. Upon completion of the readmission process, Charter School's governing board shall readmit the pupil, unless Charter School's governing board makes a finding that the pupil has not met the conditions of the rehabilitation plan or continues to pose a danger to campus safety. A description of the procedure shall be made available to the pupil and the pupil's parent or guardian at the time the expulsion order is entered and the decision of the governing board or administrative panel, including any related findings, must be provided to the pupil and the pupil's parent/guardian within a reasonable time.

#### Reinstatement

Charter School's governing board shall adopt rules establishing a procedure for processing reinstatements, including the review of documents regarding the rehabilitation plan. Charter School is responsible for reinstating the student upon the conclusion of the expulsion period in a timely manner.

#### Students with Disabilities

Charter School shall establish and implement policies and procedures to ensure full compliance with federal and state laws and regulations regarding the discipline of students with disabilities. If a student is recommended for expulsion and the student

receives or is eligible for special education, Charter School shall identify and provide special education programs and services at an appropriate interim educational placement, pending the completion of the expulsion process, to be coordinated with the LAUSD Special Education Service Center.

In the case of a student who has an Individualized Education Program (“IEP”), or a student who has a 504 Plan, Charter School shall ensure that it follows the correct disciplinary procedures to comply with the mandates of state and federal laws, including IDEA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Plan of 1973. As set forth in the MOU regarding special education between the District and Charter School, an IEP team will meet to conduct a manifestation determination and to discuss alternative placement utilizing the District’s Special Education Policies and Procedures Manual. Prior to recommending expulsion for a student with a 504 Plan, Charter School’s administrator will convene a Link Determination meeting to ask the following two questions:

- A. Was the misconduct caused by, or directly and substantially related to the student’s disability?
- B. Was the misconduct a direct result of the Charter School’s failure to implement 504?

#### Gun Free Schools Act

Charter School shall comply with the federal Gun-Free Schools Act.

### **CELL PHONE & ELECTRONIC SIGNALING DEVICES**

New technologies are modifying the way in which information may be accessed, communicated and transferred. Those changes also alter instruction and student learning; however, personal electronic devices do not necessarily further instruction or educational purposes. Synergy will permit students to possess, but not use, cell phones and other electronic signaling devices (iPads, laptops, net books, cell phones, Smart Phones, mp3 players, cameras, video cameras, etc.) except outside of the school day. Students who possess these devices are to keep them turned off and out of view. All students are required to adhere to the following guidelines regarding cell phones and other electronic signaling devices:

Cell phones and other electronic signaling devices may be used:

- Off campus before or after school;
- As indicated in a student’s 504 or special education plan; or
- When a state of emergency has been declared (verbally or in writing) by the Director/Principal or designee.

Cell phones and other electronic signaling devices may not be used:

- During instructional classroom time, including assemblies, and any other school activity that takes place during the regularly scheduled school day on or off campus;
- During break or lunch; and/or
- On field trips or Synergy sponsored excursions.

Students are responsible for the care and maintenance of their electronic devices. The Student's device is his/her responsibility, including when on campus. At no time shall Synergy be responsible for preventing theft, loss or damage to cell phones or other electronic signaling devices brought onto campus.

- The Student is responsible for any cost incurred due to damage or theft of the electronic device.
- Electronic devices that are lost or stolen must be reported immediately to Synergy Administration. Synergy recommends that personal devices be labeled so they can be easily identified and/or that each student record the serial number and name of their devices. Under no circumstances should devices be left unattended. If a device is found, it should be taken to the Office.
- Pictures, video recordings, and audio recordings may not be created while on campus. The campus includes the classrooms, offices, restrooms, exterior of school, and any other area on campus.
- There will be no copying of software. If you are caught possessing "bootlegged" or illegal software, the software will be confiscated and there may be disciplinary consequences.

Possession of a cell phone or other electronic signaling device is a privilege, which may be forfeited by any student who fails to abide by the terms of this policy. All Synergy employees shall remove any cell phone or other electronic signaling device from possession of a student violating this policy. School employees may determine to only return confiscated devices to the student's parent/guardian. Under this circumstance, the student's parents/guardians will be contacted to pick up any confiscated devices. All other applicable student discipline policies shall continue to apply in response to a student failing to abide by the terms of this policy.

School officials may search the content of a cell phone or electronic signaling device if there are reasonable grounds for suspecting that the search will turn up evidence that the student has violated or is violating either the law or Synergy rules and regulations. Articulate facts at the inception of the search must support a school official's reasonable suspicion that a search of the cell phone or electronic signaling device is justified. The scope of the search shall be reasonably related to the objectives of the search and not excessively intrusive in light of the age and sex of the pupil and the nature of the infraction. In no case shall a Synergy official search a cell phone or electronic signaling device based on curiosity, rumor, or hunch.

## **SEARCH AND SEIZURE**

Synergy Academies' Board of Directors is fully committed to promoting a safe learning environment and, to the extent possible, preventing as well as eliminating the



possession and use of weapons, illegal drugs, and other controlled substances by students on school premises and at school activities. As necessary to protect the health, safety and welfare of students and staff, school officials may search students, their property, and/or school or district property under their control and may seize illegal, unsafe, or otherwise prohibited items.

Synergy's Board of Directors urges that employees exercise discretion and good judgment. When conducting a search or seizure, employees shall act in accordance with law, school policy, and administrative regulation.

### **Individual Searches**

School officials may search any individual student, his/her property, or school or district property under his/her control when there is a reasonable suspicion that the search will uncover evidence that he/she is violating the law, school policy, administrative regulation, or other rules of Synergy Academies. Reasonable suspicion shall be based on specific and articulable, objective facts that the search will produce evidence related to the alleged violation. The types of student property that may be searched by school officials include, but are not limited to, lockers, desks, purses, backpacks, student vehicles parked on school or district property, cellular phones, or other electronic communication devices.

### **Searches of Multiple Student Lockers/Desks**

All student lockers (if applicable) and desks are the property of Synergy (or loaned to Synergy by LAUSD). The acceptance and use of locker facilities on school campus by any student shall constitute consent by the student to the search of such locker facilities by authorized school personnel and/or law enforcement. The Director/Principal or designee may conduct a general inspection of school or district properties that are within the control of students, such as lockers and desks, on a regular, announced basis, with students standing by their assigned lockers or desks. Any items contained in a locker or desk shall be considered to be the property of the student to whom the locker or desk was assigned.

All families should be aware of the possibility of school officials conducting random searches of students, their belongings, and school or district properties under their control. Searches may include the use of metal detection devices and/or trained detection dogs. All searches shall be conducted according to applicable laws.

For a more detailed copy of the School's Search and Seizure Policy, please make a request for the policy at the Office.

## **FAMILY SUPPORT**

### **Synergy's Expectations of Parents**

Synergy believes in the power of a team approach to fostering active learning and high student achievement – an approach that not only encourages but requires the commitment of students, staff, and parents/guardians. Just as our school seeks out teachers who will engage students and demand of them their best efforts in attaining school-wide academic and behavioral goals, we also recognize the importance of parent support and participation. Our students need your guidance. Your adherence to

Synergy's policies is essential to our efforts to distinguish our charter school from schools with lower expectations of academic achievement and student behavior.

Synergy's schools do not have a set number of hours that parents are required to contribute, but we do require the following of all Synergy parents:

- Support the school's rules both at school and at home
- Attend all mandatory parent meetings and parent conferences
- Ask questions and express concerns to the school's administration when necessary
- Read all materials sent home by the school so you are well-informed
- Check over your child's homework and verify that it is complete every day
- Make sure your child gets sufficient sleep and eats healthy meals
- Make sure your child arrives to school on time every day

### **Opportunities for Parent Involvement and Communication**

Parents are invited to attend multiple workshops and meetings throughout the year that focus on relevant issues for each Synergy campus. Each school's Director/Principal holds meetings that discuss how parents can help their students succeed academically, workshops on the development of children at different ages, and updates on current events at the school. Each school also hosts the following activities for parents to attend: Coffee with the Principal events, Back to School events where parents can learn about the teachers' expectations for the school year, at least two parent conferences each school year where parents can meet with their child's teachers and better understand how their child is doing academically, and special assemblies and student performances.

### **Teacher Conferencing**

Parents have the right to request a conference with their child's teacher(s) or school administrators. Parents should contact the school to schedule a date and time convenient to all participants.

Synergy will also hold meetings to discuss the schools' Title I programs and services as well as the services being provided to English Language Learners. Synergy feels that communication with parents and parent empowerment are keys to our success as a school, so all parents are encouraged to attend these meetings and share their feedback.

### **Parental Information and Resource Centers (PIRCs)**

Parental Information and Resource Centers (PIRCs) are places where parents can go to obtain additional information and help in understanding how they can help their children succeed in school. The Los Angeles PIRC is called Families in Schools located at 1545 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 811, Los Angeles, CA 90017. (213) 484-2870. Website: <http://www.familiesinschools.org/>

### **School Operations Committee**

Each Synergy school has a School Operations Committee that consists of at least an administrator, teacher, support staff member, parent, and student (at the secondary school level) to help review and provide feedback on the school's policies, procedures,

charter petition, local education agency plan, school site plan, parent involvement policies, Title I Plan and Compact, ELD monitoring activities, budget, curriculum, instructional materials, instructional goals and implementation, technology plan, etc. The School Operations Committee serves as each school's "School Site Council" and provides recommendations on behalf of its school site to Synergy's Board.

### **ELAC (English Learner Advisory Committee) and DELAC (District English Learner Advisory Committee)**

Each Synergy School has a DELAC/ELAC. The DELAC/ELAC shall advise the School Operations Committee and Synergy's Board on programs for English Language Learners as well as help track the school's progress in meeting English Learner student needs.

## **STUDENT HEALTH**

### **Hygiene**

It is very important that your children maintain proper daily hygiene. This means that children should brush their teeth everyday and bathe on a regular basis. With older students, body odor may become an issue since children are very active and we live in a warm environment. Please do not hesitate to provide antiperspirant/deodorant when appropriate. When children come to school unclean, others notice. This can lead to teasing and avoidance by other students. Please do everything possible so that your child can have positive social relationships.

### **Sleep**

It is very important for your children to get the appropriate amount of sleep. They are growing and need to be well rested before they come to school. When a child is going through a growth spurt, he/she may require more sleep than normal. Children generally require anywhere from 8 to 12 hours of sleep nightly. Please try to establish a bedtime routine that enables your child to get the right amount of sleep. Your child's sleeping habits have a direct impact on his/her ability to focus and stay engaged in his/her classes.

### **Illness**

Please only keep your child at home if he/she is truly sick and not just because your child says that he/she is not feeling well. If your child remains at home due to an illness, please call the office and send a note with your child when he/she returns to school. After your child misses 2 to 3 days of school, you must bring your child to see a doctor to make sure your child's illness is not serious or contagious. After your child misses three or more days of school, he/she must bring a doctor's note when he/she returns to school. If your child complains of feeling sick at school, depending on the severity, you may be contacted to pick him/her up. In these cases, please make sure your child takes home materials necessary to keep up with homework.

A student returning to school with sutures, casts, crutches, brace(s), or a wheelchair must have a physician's written permission to attend school and must comply with any safety procedures required by the school administration. A student returning to school following a serious or prolonged illness, injury, surgery, or other hospitalization, must have written permission by the healthcare provider to attend school, including any

recommendations regarding physical activity.

An excuse from physical education may be granted to a student who is unable to participate in a regular or modified curriculum for a temporary period of time due to illness or injury. A parent's written request for an excuse will be accepted for up to 3 days; thereafter, a written request is needed from the student's health care provider. A current emergency information card must be on file at the school so that parents/guardians can be notified promptly in case of an accident or illness involving their child.

### **Immunizations**

New students will not be enrolled unless a written immunization record provided by a physician or the health department is presented at the time of enrollment and immunizations are up to date. The immunization status of all students will be reviewed periodically. Those students who do not meet the state guidelines must be excluded from school until all the requirements are met. Students who have been exposed to a communicable disease for which they have not been immunized may be excluded from school at the discretion of the school. Please check with a doctor to make sure that your children are up to date with all their vaccinations. Information about immunizations required for school entry in California can be found online at <http://shotsforschool.org/>. All students entering, advancing, or transferring into 7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grades will need proof of an adolescent whooping cough booster immunization (called "Tdap") for school in the fall.

**All students are required to have the DTap vaccination before they can enter school.**

### **Tuberculosis Clearance**

Parents and adult community members who regularly volunteer in the classroom, in food service, or have contact with children on the campus must provide evidence of a recent TB clearance (within 60 days of submitting the result), which will remain in the school's files for up to four years, upon which a new TB clearance test will be required in order to continue volunteering at the school. See the Volunteer and Visitor/Guest Policy for additional information about this.

### **Physical Examinations**

A physical examination that meets Child Health and Disability Prevention (CHDP) guidelines is required of incoming new students who did not attend an LAUSD school. A CHDP or equivalent examination may be done by a private physician, by a health department clinic, or in some instances, by the LAUSD CHDP staff. Testing of speech, hearing, vision, and a blood test to determine lead levels should be included in this exam.

### **Dental Examinations**

A child's oral health is very important to their overall health and ability to learn, so all children in grades K-12 should obtain a dental exam at least once a year. In California, all new kindergarten students and all new first grade students who have never attended kindergarten are required to obtain a dental check-up within 12 months before the child enters school. The assessment must be performed by a licensed dentist or other licensed or registered dental health professional. If applicable, please have the dentist complete an Oral Health Assessment Form and return it to the school with your enrollment papers. Oral Health Assessment Forms are available in the school office.

### **Vision Examinations**

We recommend that all new entering Synergy students in all grades submit a recent vision examination report by an optometrist (not your child's regular physician) within one year from the date of enrollment. By the time a child is five years old, parents should start taking their child every year to obtain a vision exam by an optometrist even if your child does not need glasses. Students' vision can change from year to year, and optometrists also check for eye diseases. Students who require glasses must bring their glasses with them and wear their glasses at school every day. Parents are responsible for making sure that their child has glasses, that their child wears his/her glasses when needed, that their child brings his/her glasses to school every day, and that their child knows how to take care of his/her glasses.

### **Chronic Conditions**

For your child's safety, the school must be aware of any special needs your child may have, such as asthma, allergies, or any other persistent medical conditions. You are required to notify the office and your child's teacher of any acute or chronic condition. Also, please include this information on your child's emergency card.

### **Health and Medical Accommodations**

The school office and designated administrator must be notified if a student with a medical or health condition requires accommodations at school in order to participate in the education program. The school administrator or designee will arrange to meet with the parent and necessary school staff to develop a Section 504 accommodation plan for the student's medical condition. Students with diabetes, severe asthma, and severe allergies should have an accommodation plan at the school.

### **Communicable Diseases**

Communicable disease inspections may be conducted periodically. If, during the course of the school year, your child develops any contagious disease or condition, notify the school office immediately so that precautions may be taken and appropriate notifications sent home. A student suspected of having a communicable disease may be excluded from school until guidelines for readmission are met.

### **Lice**

Outbreaks of lice in Los Angeles are very common. The school follows the suggested preventative routines outlined by the Los Angeles County Health Department. These routines include periodic head checks. If you discover that anyone in your family has lice, please notify the school immediately. Synergy staff will check students at school. A child with lice eggs and/or lice in his/her hair will be sent home to prevent the spread to other children. An affected child may only return to class when he/she has been effectively treated and the office inspects the child or the family presents a doctor's clearance. Lice can spread from one person to another — school to school — regardless of good personal hygiene. Please consult a doctor for the best way to minimize the spread.

### **Medications at School**

All prescription and over-the-counter medication must be submitted to the office. They must be clearly marked with the child's first and last name. No more than a one-week supply of medication may be brought to the school at any time except under special

circumstances approved by a school administrator. The school is not liable for any medication not picked up after school or after the one-week supply has been exhausted. In addition to a home supply, parents/guardians may request a second labeled bottle from their pharmacy for school use. Students may not carry around their own medication(s) unless it is a prescription inhaled asthma medication or auto-injectable epinephrine and authorized in writing by their parent/guardian and specially arranged by a doctor's note. Students who require administration of prescription medication(s) at school must have a current doctor's note on file in the school office and a signed, completed "Request for Medication to be Taken During School Hours" form (available in the office). Students who require regular or occasional over-the-counter medication (e.g., Tylenol) must also have a signed, completed "Request for Medication to be Taken During School Hours" form on file in the Office. Students found carrying any medication (unless consistent with the above requirements) will have the medication confiscated and a parent/guardian will have to retrieve the medication from the school office. Students are never permitted to share medication (even over-the-counter) and the office/school staff are not allowed to administer any medication (including over-the-counter) without express written parent/guardian consent. Except in an emergency, it is preferable to arrange a schedule so that a parent or legal guardian can administer a student's medication.

### **Treatment of School-Related Injuries**

It is the policy of the school to treat minor injuries (scrapes, paper cuts, bumps, etc.) with ice packs and band-aids as needed. Parents will be notified about minor injuries at the discretion of the administration unless the student has written documentation to the contrary lodged with the School. When confronted with more serious injuries/illnesses, school staff will contact parent, and, if required, transport the student to the nearest hospital emergency room. It is important that parents/guardians regularly update their child's emergency cards with their child's medical insurance information, doctor's name and phone number, and any medications the child is taking and/or to which the child is allergic.

## **HOME/SCHOOL COMMUNICATION**

It is very important that the communication between your home and the school is a continuous process. To stay informed of all meetings, events, activities, schedules and revised policies, please read all fliers and newsletters sent home with your child or through the mail. Please make sure your home, work, and cell phone numbers are current so that the office can contact you during the day. Sometimes your child's school will use a special phone system to send a phone message to multiple families at the same time.

### **Weekly Newsletters**

Every week on a designated day, Synergy Charter Academy students will bring home important information from their school via the school newsletter and/or other important documents. Parents must read all the information in the newsletter and in any documents that are sent home, complete any paperwork that was sent home, and return any paperwork that needs to be returned to their child's school. Please keep any paperwork that does not need to be returned to school. Sometimes your child's school will also send home important notes and other information on other days during the

week, so parents should ask their child every day if there is a note for the parent as well as check their child's backpack and folders every day for any notes from the school.

At the elementary school, students will bring home information in a special envelope. The envelopes are reusable and must last the entire school year, so please return the envelope with your child back to your child's school each week.

## **GENERAL SCHOOL POLICIES**

### **Parent Behavior on Campus and at School Sponsored Events and Activities**

Throughout the school year, students will be participating in a variety of school events and activities, and their parents may be invited to come and see their children perform. While on campus or at a school sponsored event, parents and family members are expected to be respectful of one another and of Synergy staff members, volunteers and students. If a parent and/or family member should become rude, unwilling to cooperate, or disrespectful to another family, staff member, student, and/or other person present at the event, they will be asked to leave the event or activity. This applies to, and is not limited to, school sponsored events and activities during and after school hours (on and off school campus) as well as while dropping off and picking up students from school or any other school activity.

### **Field Trips**

Field trips provide an opportunity for first-hand experiences that complement classroom learning. In order to participate on a field trip, all students must have a completed permission slip with a parent signature. Trip slips will be sent home before the trip and must be filled out by a parent or legal guardian. Volunteer chaperones must be approved by the school Director/Principal before the trip, be 21 years of age or older, and may not bring other children or other people on the trip. If the chaperones will be helping to serve food during the trip, they must have a recent (taken within 60 days of when it was submitted) clear TB test on file in the school office, which may need to be updated annually. A student may be excluded from a field trip because of disrespectful or unsafe behavior or as a consequence of failing to follow school rules or failing to meet certain school standards.

### **Facilities and School Property**

Synergy's schools lease facilities from the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD). Students are to treat LAUSD's property as if it were the school's property. Therefore, parents will have to pay for any willful damage their child does to LAUSD's property. Also, parents will have to pay for any willful damage their child does to Synergy's property, including but not limited to furniture and equipment.

### **Textbooks/School Materials**

Students will be issued books and materials necessary for classroom instruction. These books and materials become the responsibility of the student. Willfully damaged or lost books and/or materials must be replaced or paid for by the parents.

### **Technology**

Computers and other technology are in the school for educational purposes. Computer

hardware and software are for the benefit of all students. In order to use school computers and/or the Internet, both students and parents must sign and return the Student Use of Technology and Internet Safety Policy AND Acceptable Use Agreement. Internet access is a privilege. All students having access to the school's technology and Internet must obey school rules for technology and Internet use. Any behavior that is not acceptable may result in the loss of this privilege and/or disciplinary action.

Students are responsible for handling the school computers and other school technology and equipment very carefully. Parents will be responsible for paying for any computers, technology, and/or equipment that are willfully damaged or lost by their child. These fees may include service fees to repair the equipment. Other consequences may include no longer allowing the student access to the school's technology.

Synergy's technology rules include but are not limited to the following:

- Handle the computers and equipment with care and as directed by the teacher and/or school staff members.
- Be respectful of the rights, the ideas, the information, and the privacy of others.
- Neither send nor receive information that is not related to schoolwork, or that can be hurtful or harmful to others.
- Report to teachers/school staff any sites or persons that demonstrate inappropriate use of on-line service.

### **No Pets on Campus**

The only animals allowed on campus are those approved by a school administrator. Please leave students' pets at home.

### **Lost and Found**

Items found on the campus should be taken to the Lost and Found in the Main Office of each school. **ALL ITEMS BROUGHT TO SCHOOL, ESPECIALLY SWEATSHIRTS AND SWEATERS, SHOULD BE CLEARLY LABELED WITH THE CHILD'S NAME SO THAT THEY CAN BE RETURNED TO THE OWNER.** The Lost and Found may be cleaned out every month. Items not claimed may be donated or discarded.

### **Non-School Related Property**

Personal property not related to the school's programs may not be brought to school. For example, students are **not** to bring items such as card collections (playing or trading cards), marbles, toys, balls, etc. Also, no bicycles, scooters, skateboards, shoe skates, etc., may be ridden on school grounds. If you are not sure what is allowed, please ask. For their own safety, all students who ride bicycles, scooters, skateboards, etc., should wear helmets and safety gear. Skateboards, scooters, and bicycles must be left in a designated area. Please check with the school office for the designated area.

### **Personal Items**

Synergy is not responsible for loss of a student's personal items such as cell phones, iPods, iPads, glasses, watches, jewelry, clothing, backpacks, etc. If a student brings personal items to school, they are responsible for potential loss of items.



## **Birthdays**

If you would like to celebrate your child's birthday at school, please coordinate this with your child's teacher and follow these guidelines: Students' birthdays can only be celebrated during the last 15 minutes of the school day. Families can only bring pre-made cupcakes or cookies that they purchased from a store, which includes an ingredient list. For food safety reasons, families cannot bring food that was made at home. Please do not bring cake, punch, candy, goodie bags, prizes, piñatas, decorations, etc., to celebrate your child's birthday at school since this disrupts important classroom instruction. Also, please do not pass out invitations for private parties during school hours.

## **Transferring/Withdrawing from School**

Any student transferring out of or withdrawing from a Synergy Academies school for any reason must complete the "Notification of Withdrawal Form," which can be obtained from the Office. Additionally, should a parent or guardian inform the school's Director/Principal or other school personnel over the phone or in writing that their child will no longer be attending the school, Synergy administration will complete the "Notification of Withdrawal Form" on behalf of the family. Once a Notification of Withdrawal Form has been completed by a parent/guardian or by school personnel based on a parent's/guardian's verbal or written notification, the student will be disenrolled from the school and the student's seat will be filled by the next student on the wait list. Should that family change their mind and wish for their child to return to Synergy, they must fill out a new application and will be placed at the end of the wait list. Also, see Attendance Policy.

## **Public Displays of Affection**

Public displays of affection are defined as dating-like behaviors and anything determined to be inappropriate behaviors by school staff members. Inappropriate behavior includes, but is not limited to, sharing chairs or sitting on someone else's lap (regardless of the gender), kissing, hugging, fondling, etc. If a teacher or other Synergy staff member asks a student to stop the behavior, the student must do so. Failure to stop the behavior when asked is equivalent to defiance and subject to disciplinary action.

## **Distribution of Publications**

Publications, advertisements, or other written materials may not be distributed on campus without prior administrative approval and must adhere to the Student Freedom of Speech/Expression: Publication Code Policy, included in this Handbook.

## **Closed Campus**

Synergy's campuses are closed campuses. Students are not permitted to leave school grounds during their scheduled school hours (which include lunch and breaks) unless they are on a school-related off-campus activity. Students are permitted to leave school grounds at the conclusion of their last scheduled class unless they are required to serve after school detention, attend the school's after school intervention program, or participate in any other after school program on campus.

## **Hall Pass**

Every student must have a hall pass when outside of a classroom during regular school hours. The number of times a student is allowed to leave the class is determined by the teacher.

### **Restroom**

Students should use the restroom before school, during breaks, during lunch, during P.E./recess, and after school. During class, students will only be allowed to use the restrooms during times of emergency. If a student has a medical reason and needs to go to restroom more often, a letter from a physician is required. Any student out of class without a pass may receive a disciplinary action.

### **Off-Limit Areas**

Students are not to visit off limit areas during school hours. Areas that are off limits at all times during the school day are:

- The parking lots/parking garage
- Public streets adjacent to campus
- Sidewalks along the perimeter of the school
- Other school's property (since Synergy's schools share a campus with one or more other schools)

### **Trespassing**

Students are not to trespass on a Synergy campus when school is not in session or when they are suspended/expelled. Students are not to be on or near any other school campus as it is considered trespassing.

## **STUDENT FREEDOM OF SPEECH/EXPRESSION: PUBLICATION CODE POLICY**

The Board of Directors respects students' rights to express ideas and opinions, take stands, and support causes, whether controversial or not, through their speech, their writing, their clothing, and the printed materials they choose to post or distribute.

Student freedom of expression shall be limited only as allowed by law in order to maintain an orderly school environment and to protect the rights, health, and safety of all members of the school community. Expression shall be prohibited which is obscene, libelous, or slanderous. Also prohibited shall be material that so incites pupils as to create a clear and present danger of the commission of unlawful acts on school premises or the violation of lawful school regulations, or the substantial disruption of the orderly operation of the school.

### **Distribution of Circulars, Newspapers, and Other Printed Matter**

Students shall be allowed to distribute circulars, leaflets, newspapers, and pictorial or other printed matter, and to circulate petitions, subject to the following specific limitations:

1. Leaflets, pictorial and other printed matter to be distributed shall be submitted to the Director/Principal or designee at least one school day prior to distribution.
2. Distribution, free or for a fee, may take place at any time except during instructional time and providing there is no substantial disruption in the school

programs (as determined by the Director/Principal).

3. The manner of distribution shall be such that coercion is not used to induce students to accept the printed matter or to sign petitions.
4. The solicitation of signatures must not take place in instructional classes or school offices, nor be substantially disruptive to the school program (as determined by the Director/Principal).
5. Pupil editors of official school publications shall be responsible for assigning and editing the news, editorial, and feature content of their publications subject to the limitations of this section. However, it shall be the responsibility of a journalism adviser or advisers of pupil publications within each school to supervise the production of the pupil staff, to maintain professional standards of English and journalism, and to maintain the provisions of this section.
6. There shall be no prior restraint of material prepared for official school publications except insofar as it violates this policy. School officials shall have the burden of showing justification without undue delay prior to a limitation of pupil expression under this section.

#### **Buttons, Badges, and Other Insignia of Symbolic Expression**

Students shall be permitted to wear buttons, badges, armbands, and other insignia as a form of expression, subject to the prohibitions enumerated in this Policy.

#### **Use of Bulletin Boards**

Students will be provided with bulletin boards, upon request, for use in posting student materials on campus locations convenient to student use. Where feasible, the location and quantity of such bulletin boards shall be by mutual agreement of student government representatives and the local school administration. Posted material must be in compliance with other sections of this Policy, particularly regarding the distribution of materials and prohibited speech.

#### **Organized Demonstrations**

Students have the right to lawful organized on-campus demonstrations, subject to the provisions of this Policy and applicable law. Demonstrations that incite pupils to create a clear and present danger of the commission of unlawful acts on school premises or the violation of lawful school regulations, or demonstrations that substantially disrupt of the orderly operation of the school are prohibited.

No organized demonstrations by school groups may take place during school hours off the school campus unless sanctioned by school authorities and supervised by a designated school authority. No individual student may demonstrate in the name of the school or as an official school group at any time unless authorized by the school to participate in the activity.

#### **Enforcement**

1. The Director/Principal or designee shall review material submitted in a reasonable amount of time and shall allow the approved material to be distributed according to the time and manner established by this Policy.

2. Any student may appeal the decision of the Director/Principal or designee to the Board who shall render a decision within a reasonable period of time after receipt of the appeal. The appeal by the student must be made within five (5) school days from the time the unsatisfactory decision was rendered.
3. Students who are considering actions in the areas covered by this Policy should be informed of the possible consequences of their action under each specific circumstance.

## **VOLUNTEER AND VISITOR/GUEST POLICY**

Synergy Academies (“Synergy”) welcomes and encourages the support of volunteers. With their assistance, Synergy is able to offer a greater number of programs and services than we would be able to otherwise. As a public school, Synergy also must have strict standards and safeguards in place to protect our students from inappropriate visitors. This policy describes Synergy’s process for volunteer and visitor/guest intake and screening. To ensure the safety of students and staff as well as to minimize interruption of the instructional program, Synergy has established the following procedures, to facilitate volunteering and visitations during regular school days:

### **Visitor/Guest Policy**

A visitor or guest is anyone who visits a Synergy school less than five (5) times per year and interacts with Synergy students in limited ways. A **guest** includes but is not limited to the following:

- Guest speaker for a special event, such as an assembly, Career Day, Science Fair judges, etc.
- Parent volunteer who helps to chaperone field trips\*
- An educator who is observing Synergy teachers in action for fewer than five (5) times per year
- Other one-time visitors who are authorized by Synergy administration

Visitors/Guests must ALWAYS be accompanied by a Synergy staff member. They may not walk the halls without being escorted and are not to be left unaccompanied with any Synergy students. This rule applies regardless of the guest’s background. Synergy Academies does not require our guests to have a background check and therefore they may not be left unsupervised with Synergy students.

Visitors/Guests do not need to be tested for TB since their contact with Synergy students is limited during the year.

*\*Please note: parent volunteers are not allowed to serve lunches on field trips unless they have a clear TB risk assessment examination on file with the school office. . If TB risk factors are identified, a physician must conduct an examination to determine whether the volunteer is free of infectious TB. A parent volunteer may submit a clear TB risk assessment examination as long as it was taken within 60 days of when it was submitted. The TB risk assessment examination remains valid for four (4) years after*

*the date of testing. Food handlers may be required to have annual TB exams.*

## **Registration of Visitors & Guests**

### Procedures for Visitors/Guests to School Premises

1. Any person who is not a Synergy student, Board member, or employee shall report his or her presence and the reason for visiting Synergy to the Director/Principal or designee immediately upon entering any School premises.
2. The Director/Principal or designee shall provide identification to be used by all visitors and guests at all times while on School premises. The visitor/guest shall make this identification visible at all times.
3. All visitors/guests registering with the Director/Principal or designee will provide the Director/Principal or designee with his or her name, address, age (if under 21), his or her purpose for entering the School premises, and proof of identity.
4. If the visitor is a government officer/official (including but not limited to local law enforcement officers, immigration enforcement officers, social workers, district attorneys, or U.S. attorneys) the officer/official will also be asked to produce any documentation that authorizes school access. A copy of the documentation provided by the officer and notes from the encounter may be maintained by Synergy. The Parents or Guardians of a student will be immediately contacted prior to permitting a student to be interviewed or searched by an immigration officer/official. The Synergy Governing Board and Bureau of Children's Justice in the California Department of Justice, at [BCJ@doj.ca.gov](mailto:BCJ@doj.ca.gov), will be timely informed regarding any attempt by a law-enforcement officer to access a school site or a student for immigration-enforcement purposes, as recommended by the Attorney General.
5. All visitors must have a specific appointment with a School employee. The Director/Principal or School employee will meet with visitors without an appointment only if the employee is available to meet or else the visitor may need to make an appointment and return on his/her appointment time. This includes Parent/Guardian appointments to observe their child's classroom. We ask that our visitors and guests request such appointments at least 48 hours in advance, where possible.
6. For the protection and safety of our students and staff, all visitors, including parents/guardians, must sign in and sign out of the school office.
7. The Director/Principal or designee may deny or revoke a visitor's registration if the Director/Principal or designee has reasonable basis for concluding that the visitor's presence on School premises would likely interfere or is interfering with the peaceful conduct of School activities; will or is likely to disrupt the School, its students, its teachers, or its other employees or volunteers; or will or is likely to

result in damage to property or will result in the distribution or use of unlawful or controlled substances.

8. School employees and volunteers should at all times watch for strangers on the School premises. Employees or volunteers who encounter a visitor not displaying the appropriate identification should escort the visitor back to the office to register with the office and to obtain visitor identification to be worn while on campus. If the employee or volunteer is unable to escort the visitor back to the office, he/she should instruct the visitor to register with the office and then the employee should immediately call the office to notify the office staff to send an employee to escort the visitor back to the office. Employees and volunteers should immediately inform the Director/Principal or designee of any visitor who refuses to comply with registration requirements.
9. Any possession of unauthorized dangerous instruments, weapons, or devices on school grounds shall be reported immediately to the Director/Principal or designee and may be reported to the local law enforcement agency.
10. Any person who fails to register within a reasonable time after entering the School premises, who fails to leave upon the request of the Director/Principal or designee, or who returns after leaving pursuant to such a request has committed an unlawful act and may be prosecuted according to law.

### **Volunteer Policy**

A volunteer is anyone who visits a Synergy school five (5) or more times during the school year and who has ongoing interactions with Synergy students. A **volunteer** includes but is not limited to the following:

- A classroom volunteer who helps out in the classroom on multiple occasions
- A volunteer instructor who teaches activities after the school day
- A volunteer who performs non-teaching responsibilities around the campus

### **Volunteer Application**

All individual volunteers must apply to volunteer on a Synergy campus, and must have an Internal Supporter who will oversee and supervise the volunteer's interaction with the students. The application must also be signed off on by a School administrator.

### **TB Clearance**

All volunteers **MUST** have a clear TB risk assessment within sixty (60) days prior to starting their volunteer assignment at Synergy if they will be volunteering while students are on campus. All volunteers must pay for the cost of their own TB tests. TB clearances can either be provided by the volunteer's own health insurance (if applicable) or at a county health clinic. Proof of the TB clearance must be kept on file in the school office and are valid for 4 years from the date of testing, with the exception of food handlers, which may be required to have annual TB exams.

### Livescan and Background Checks

Individual volunteers who are from outside organizations, including alumni, and are not parents or family members are required to have a clear Livescan criminal background check (including both DOJ and FBI) prior to starting to volunteer at a Synergy school. If a volunteer is scheduled to volunteer at Synergy for more than 25 hours in a school year, Synergy will pay the cost of his/her Livescan background check. Parent and family members volunteering must be checked against the California Megan's Law online database for sex offender clearance at <http://www.meganslaw.ca.gov/>.

### Waiver of Liability

All volunteers will be required to submit a waiver of liability, assumption of risk and medical treatment authorization form.

### Mandated Reporter Training

Depending on the assignment, a volunteer may be required to complete California's online Mandated Reporter Training and submit evidence of completion to the HR and Operations Office. This determination will be made by the school site Director. All volunteers should report any suspicions of child abuse or neglect to the school site Director regardless of whether or not they have received Mandated Reporter training.

### Orientation/Training

Depending on the nature and length of the assignment, a volunteer may be asked to participate in an orientation and to receive additional training prior to the first day of an assignment. The orientation may be offered to provide the volunteer with an understanding of the culture, expectations of volunteers, policies and procedures that will guide the volunteer's time at the school site. Additional training may also be required to ensure that the volunteer is equipped with the knowledge and resources necessary to complete the assignment.

### Questions?

Any questions about this volunteer policy can be directed to the HR and Operations Office at (323) 235-7960.

## **General Overview of Volunteer Application/Intake Process**

<b>Parent/Family Member</b>	<b>Student in grade 6-12</b>	<b>Alumni</b>	<b>Outside Organization</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Volunteer Application</li><li>• Volunteer/Guest Confidentiality Agreement</li><li>• Injury Waiver Form</li><li>• Clear TB Test</li><li>• Megan's Law Website clearance</li><li>• Training: to be determined by Administration</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Volunteer Application</li><li>• Volunteer/Guest Confidentiality Agreement</li><li>• Injury Waiver Form</li><li>• Training: to be determined by Administration</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Volunteer Application</li><li>• Volunteer/Guest Confidentiality Agreement</li><li>• Injury Waiver Form</li><li>• Clear TB Test</li><li>• Livescan</li><li>• Training: to be determined by Administration</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Volunteer Application</li><li>• Volunteer/Guest Confidentiality Agreement</li><li>• Injury Waiver Form</li><li>• Clear TB Test</li><li>• Livescan</li><li>• Training: to be determined by Administration</li></ul>

## **ACCOUNTABILITY OF STAFF**

### **Parents' Right to Know**

Federal guidelines mandate that schools inform parents of their right to ask about the qualifications and credentials of teachers who instruct students in core classes. Parents are also entitled to know the qualifications of paraprofessionals (instructional aides) who are working in the classroom. Schools are required to provide parents with certain information regarding the professional qualifications of the students' teachers and paraprofessionals, as appropriate.

### **Parent Concerns About Staff or Program**

- Questions regarding Synergy's curriculum, school rules, or the professional conduct of any Synergy employee can be addressed by making an appointment with a School Director/Principal.
- Any concerns you may have regarding a School Director/Principal can be addressed by making an appointment with the Chief Achievement Officer or the CAO's designee.
- Any concerns you may have regarding a Central Office Staff Member can be addressed by making an appointment with the Chief Executive Officer or the CEO's designee.
- Any concerns you may have regarding the Chief Executive Officer can be addressed by making an appointment with a Synergy Board Member.

### **Procedure for Resolving Parent/Guardian Conflicts**

Synergy recognizes its responsibility for ensuring compliance with applicable state and federal laws and regulations governing educational programs. Parents/guardians understand that Synergy has its own Board of Directors that is separate from the Los Angeles Unified School District's (LAUSD) Board of Education. Parents/guardians also understand that LAUSD will not intervene or become involved with any internal disputes unless it has reason to believe that such disputes involve the violation of the school's charter or any applicable laws. In all other cases, LAUSD will refer such complaints to the charter school's administration or Board of Directors. Therefore, parents/guardians agree to follow the procedures below to resolve conflicts in a timely manner:

1. The parent/guardian will make an appointment and meet with the Director/Principal.
2. If the conflict is not resolved, the parent/guardian will meet with the Chief Executive Officer or the Chief Achievement Officer.
3. If the previous two steps fail to arrive at a resolution, the parent/guardian may submit their concern in writing to the Board of Directors (the parent/guardian may receive assistance with writing, if desired). The parent/guardian must also attend the board meeting during which the Board of Directors will review the parent's/guardian's written complaint. The parent/guardian can prepare a 2-minute oral presentation to present to the Board of Directors during this board meeting. The Board of Directors will discuss the issue and render a decision. All decisions made by the Board of Directors are final.

For a more comprehensive description of Synergy's complaint procedures, a copy of the School's Uniform Complaint Policy can be obtained at the School office.



## **TITLE IX, HARASSMENT, INTIMIDATION, DISCRIMINATION & BULLYING POLICY**

Synergy Academies believes all students have the right to a safe and civil learning environment. Discrimination, sexual harassment, harassment, intimidation, and bullying are all disruptive behaviors, which interfere with students' ability to learn, negatively affect student engagement, diminish school safety, and contribute to a hostile school environment. As such, the Charter School prohibits any acts of discrimination, sexual harassment, harassment, intimidation, and bullying altogether. This policy is inclusive of instances that occur on any area of the school campus, at school-sponsored events and activities, regardless of location, through school-owned technology, and through other electronic means.

As used in this policy, "discrimination, sexual harassment, harassment, intimidation, and bullying" describe intentional conduct, including verbal, physical, written communication, or cyberbullying, including cyber sexual bullying, that is based on the actual or perceived characteristics of disability, pregnancy, gender, gender identity, gender expression, nationality, ancestry, race or ethnicity, immigration status, religion, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, childbirth or related medical conditions, marital status, age, or association with a person or group with one or more of these actual or perceived characteristics. In addition, bullying encompasses any conduct described in the definitions set forth in this policy.

To the extent possible, the Charter School will make reasonable efforts to prevent students from being discriminated against, harassed, intimidated and/or bullied, and will take action to investigate, respond, and address any reports of such behaviors in a timely manner. Charter School staff who witness acts of misconduct prohibited by this policy will take immediate steps to intervene when safe to do so.

Moreover, the Charter School will not condone or tolerate misconduct prohibited by this policy by any employee, independent contractor or other person with which the Charter School does business, or any other individual, student, or volunteer. This policy applies to all employee, student, or volunteer actions and relationships, regardless of position or gender. The Charter School will promptly and thoroughly investigate any complaint of such misconduct prohibited by this policy and take appropriate corrective action, if warranted.

### **Title IX, Harassment, Intimidation, Discrimination and Bullying Coordinator ("Coordinator"):**

Rhonda Deomampo, Chief Executive Officer  
Synergy Academies  
P.O. Box 78999  
Los Angeles, CA 90016  
323-235-7960  
rdeomampo@wearesynergy.org

### **Definitions**

#### **Prohibited Unlawful Harassment**

- Verbal conduct such as epithets, derogatory jokes or comments or slurs

- Physical conduct including assault, unwanted touching, intentionally blocking normal movement or interfering with work or school because of sex, race or any other protected basis
- Retaliation for reporting or threatening to report harassment
- Deferential or preferential treatment based on any of the protected classes above

### **Prohibited Unlawful Harassment Under Title IX**

Title IX (20 U.S.C. § 1681 *et. seq*; 34 C.F.R. § 106.1 *et. seq*) and California state law prohibit harassment on the basis of sex. In accordance with these existing laws, discrimination on the basis of sex in education institutions is prohibited. All persons, regardless of sex, are afforded equal rights and opportunities and freedom from unlawful discrimination in education programs or activities conducted by the Charter School.

The Charter School is committed to provide a workplace and educational environment free of sexual harassment and considers such harassment to be a major offense, which may result in disciplinary action.

Sexual harassment consists of sexual advances, request for sexual favors and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when: (a) Submission to the conduct is explicitly or implicitly made a term or a condition of an individual's employment, academic status, or progress; (b) submission to, or rejection of, the conduct by the individual is used as the basis of employment or academic decisions affecting the individual; (c) the conduct has the purpose or effect of having a negative impact upon the individual's work or academic performance, or of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work or educational environment; and/or (d) submission to, or rejection of, the conduct by the individual is used as the basis for any decision affecting the individual regarding benefits and services, honors, programs, or activities available at or through the educational institution.

It is also unlawful to retaliate in any way against an individual who has articulated a good faith concern about sexual harassment against him/her or against another individual.

Sexual harassment may include, but is not limited to:

- Physical assaults of a sexual nature, such as:
  - Rape, sexual battery, molestation or attempts to commit these assaults and
  - Intentional physical conduct that is sexual in nature, such as touching, pinching, patting, grabbing, brushing against another's body, or poking another's body
- Unwanted sexual advances, propositions or other sexual comments, such as:
  - Sexually oriented gestures, notices, remarks, jokes, or comments about a person's sexuality or sexual experience
  - Preferential treatment or promises of preferential treatment to an individual for submitting to sexual conduct, including soliciting or attempting to solicit any individual to engage in sexual activity for compensation or reward or deferential treatment for rejecting sexual conduct

- Subjecting or threats of subjecting an employee or student to unwelcome sexual attention or conduct or intentionally making performance of the employee's job or the student's academic performance more difficult because of the employee's or the student's sex
- Sexual or discriminatory displays or publications anywhere in the workplace or educational environment, such as:
  - Displaying pictures, cartoons, posters, calendars, graffiti, objections, promotional materials, reading materials, or other materials that are sexually suggestive, sexually demeaning or pornographic or bringing or possessing any such material to read, display or view at work or the educational environment
  - Reading publicly or otherwise publicizing in the work or educational environment materials that are in any way sexually revealing, sexually suggestive, sexually demeaning or pornographic, and
  - Displaying signs or other materials purporting to segregate an individual by sex in an area of the workplace or educational environment (other than restrooms or similar rooms)

The illustrations of harassment and sexual harassment above are not to be construed as an all-inclusive list of prohibited acts under this Policy

### **Prohibited Bullying**

**Bullying** is defined as any severe or pervasive physical or verbal act or conduct, including communications made in writing or by means of an electronic act. Bullying includes one or more acts committed by a student or group of students that may constitute as sexual harassment, hate violence, or creates an intimidating and/or hostile educational environment, directed toward one or more students that has or can be reasonably predicted to have the effect of one or more of the following:

- A. Placing a reasonable pupil<sup>1</sup> or pupils in fear of harm to that pupil's or those pupils' person or property.
- B. Causing a reasonable pupil to experience a substantially detrimental effect on his or her physical or mental health.
- C. Causing a reasonable pupil to experience a substantial interference with his or her academic performance.
- D. Causing a reasonable pupil to experience a substantial interference with his or her ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by the Charter School.

**Cyberbullying** is an electronic act that includes the transmission of harassing communication, direct threats, or other harmful texts, sounds, or images on the Internet,

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<sup>1</sup> "Reasonable pupil" is defined as a pupil, including, but not limited to, an exceptional needs pupil, who exercises care, skill and judgment in conduct for a person of his or her age, or for a person of his or her age with his or her exceptional needs.

social media, or other technologies using a telephone, computer, or any wireless communication device. Cyberbullying also includes breaking into another person's electronic account and assuming that person's identity in order to damage that person's reputation.

**Electronic act** means the creation and transmission originated on or off the school site, by means of an electronic device, including, but not limited to, a telephone, wireless telephone or other wireless communication device, computer or pager, of a communication, including, but not limited to any of the following:

1. A message, text, sound, video, or image.
2. A post on a social network Internet Web site including, but not limited to:
  - a. Posting to or creating a burn page. A "burn page" means an Internet Web site created for the purpose of having one or more of the effects as listed in the definition of "bullying," above
  - b. Creating a credible impersonation of another actual pupil for the purpose of having one or more of the effects listed in the definition of "bullying," above. "Credible impersonation" means to knowingly and without consent impersonate a pupil for the purpose of bullying the pupil and such that another pupil would reasonably believe, or has reasonably believed, that the pupil was or is the pupil who was impersonated
  - c. Creating a false profile for the purpose of having one or more of the effects listed in the definition of "bullying," above. "False profile" means a profile of a fictitious pupil or a profile using the likeness or attributes of an actual pupil other than the pupil who created the false profile.
3. An act of "Cyber sexual bullying" including, but not limited to:
  - a. The dissemination of, or the solicitation or incitement to disseminate, a photograph or other visual recording by a pupil to another pupil or to school personnel by means of an electronic act that has or can be reasonably predicted to have one or more of the effects described in definition of "bullying," above. A photograph or other visual recording, as described above, shall include the depiction of a nude, semi-nude, or sexually explicit photograph or other visual recording of a minor where the minor is identifiable from the photograph, visual recording, or other electronic act.
  - b. "Cyber sexual bullying" does not include a depiction, portrayal, or image that has any serious literary, artistic, educational, political, or scientific value or that involves athletic events or school-sanctioned activities.
4. Notwithstanding the definitions of "bullying" and "electronic act" above, an electronic act shall not constitute pervasive conduct solely on the basis that it has been transmitted on the Internet or is currently posted on the Internet.

### **Grievance Procedures:**

#### **Reporting**

All staff are expected to provide appropriate supervision to enforce standards of conduct and, if they observe or become aware of misconduct prohibited by this policy, to intervene as soon as it is safe to do so, call for assistance, and report such incidents. The Board requires staff to follow the procedures in this policy for reporting alleged acts of misconduct prohibited by this policy.

Any employee or student who believes they have been subject to misconduct prohibited by this policy or has witnessed such prohibited misconduct is encouraged to immediately report such misconduct to the coordinator:

Rhonda Deomampo, Chief Executive Officer

Synergy Academies

P.O. Box 78999

Los Angeles, CA 90016

323-235-7960

rdeomampo@wearesynergy.org

Complaints regarding such misconduct may also be made to the U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights.

While submission of a written report is not required, the reporting party is encouraged to submit a written report to the Coordinator. However, oral reports shall also be considered official reports. Reports may be made anonymously, but formal disciplinary action cannot be based solely on an anonymous report.

Students are expected to report all incidents of misconduct prohibited by this policy, or other verbal or physical abuses. Any student who feels she/he is a target of such behavior should immediately contact a teacher, counselor, the Principal, Coordinator, a staff person or a family member so that she/he can get assistance in resolving the issue consistent in a manner that is consistent with this policy.

The Charter School acknowledges and respects every individual's rights to privacy. All reports shall be investigated in a manner that protects the confidentiality of the parties and the integrity of the process. This includes keeping the identity of the reporter confidential, as appropriate, except to the extent necessary to carry out the investigation and/or to resolve the issue, as determined by the Coordinator or administrative designee on a case-by-case basis.

The Charter School prohibits any form of retaliation against any reporter in the reporting process, including but not limited to a reporter's filing of a complaint or the reporting of instances of misconduct prohibited by this policy. Such participation shall not in any way affect the status, grades or work assignments of the reporter.

All supervisors of staff will receive sexual harassment training within six (6) months of their assumption of a supervisory position and will receive further training once every two (2) years thereafter. All staff will receive sexual harassment training and/or instruction concerning sexual harassment in the workplace as required by law.

### **Investigation**

Upon receipt of a report of misconduct prohibited by this policy from a student, staff member, parent, volunteer, visitor or affiliate of the Charter School, the Coordinator or designee will promptly initiate an investigation. Complaints shall be investigated and resolved within thirty (30) school days, unless circumstances reasonably require additional time.

At the conclusion of the investigation, the Coordinator or designee will notify the complainant, and, to the extent possible with respect to confidentiality laws, provide the

complainant with information about the outcome of the investigation, including any actions necessary to resolve the incident/situation. However, in no case may the Coordinator or designee reveal confidential information related to other students or employees, including the type and extent of discipline issued against such students or employees.

All records related to any investigation of complaints under this policy are maintained in a secure location.

### **Consequences**

Students or employees who engage in misconduct prohibited by this policy will be subject to disciplinary action.

### **Uniform Complaint Procedures**

When harassment or bullying is based upon one of the protected characteristics set forth in this Policy, a complainant may also fill out a Uniform Complaint Procedures (“UCP”) complaint form at any time during the process, consistent with the procedures laid out in this Handbook.

### **Appeal**

Should the Complainant find the Coordinator’s resolution unsatisfactory, he/she may, within five (5) school days of the date of resolution, file an appeal with the Designated Appeals Committee. In such cases, at least three (3) certificated Charter School employees who are unfamiliar with the case and who have been previously designated and trained for this purpose shall be assembled to conduct a confidential review of the Complainant’s appeal and render a final disposition.

## **SYNERGY’S COMPLIANCE WITH FEDERAL AND STATE LAW**

### **Non-Discrimination Statement**

Synergy shall be non-sectarian in its programs, admissions policies, employment practices, and all other operations and shall not charge tuition. [Ref. Education Code Section 47605(d)(1)]

Synergy shall not discriminate on the basis of actual or perceived race, ethnicity, nationality, national origin, immigration status or citizenship, religion, religious affiliation, gender, gender identify, gender expression, sexual orientation, perceived sexual orientation, home language, or disability or any other characteristic that is contained in the definition of hate crimes in the California Penal Code.

Synergy adheres to all provisions of federal law related to students with disabilities, including, but not limited to, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (“ADA”), and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (“IDEIA”).

Synergy is committed to providing a work and educational atmosphere that is free of unlawful harassment under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (sex); Titles IV, VI, and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (race, color, or national origin); The Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967; The Age Discrimination Act of 1975; the

IDEIA; and Section 504 and Title II of the ADA (mental or physical disability). Synergy also prohibits sexual harassment, including cyber sexual bullying, and harassment based upon pregnancy, childbirth or related medical conditions, race, religion, religious affiliation, creed, color, immigration status or citizenship, gender, gender identity, gender expression, national origin or ancestry, physical or mental disability, medical condition, marital status, age, sexual orientation, or any other basis protected by federal, state, local law, ordinance or regulation. Synergy does not condone or tolerate harassment of any type, including discrimination, intimidation, or bullying, including cyber sexual bullying, by any employee, independent contractor or other person with which Synergy does business, or any other individual, student, or volunteer. This applies to all employees, students, or volunteers and relationships, regardless of position or gender. Synergy will promptly and thoroughly investigate any complaint of harassment and take appropriate corrective action, if warranted. Inquiries, complaints, or grievances regarding harassment as described in this section, above, should be directed to the Synergy Uniform Complaint Procedures (“UCP”) Compliance Officer:

Rhonda Deomampo, Chief Executive Officer

Synergy Academies

P.O. Box 78999

Los Angeles, CA 90016

323-835-5144

### **Sexual Harassment**

It is the policy of Synergy to maintain a learning and working environment that is free from sexual harassment. Sexual harassment, of or by employees or students, is a form of sex discrimination in that it constitutes differential treatment on the basis of sex. For that reason, it is a violation of state and federal laws and a violation of LAUSD and Synergy policy.

The District considers sexual harassment to be a major offense that can result in disciplinary action to the offending employee/student and will result in the appropriate consequences, which may include suspension or expulsion of the offending student. Suspension or expulsion as a disciplinary consequence for sexual harassment shall not apply to students enrolled in kindergarten and grades one through three, inclusive.

Any student or employee of Synergy who believes that she or he has been a victim of sexual harassment shall bring the complaint to the attention of the school administration. Synergy prohibits retaliatory behavior against anyone who files a sexual harassment complaint or any participant in the complaint investigation process. Any such complainant is further advised that civil law remedies may also be available to them. Complaints will be promptly investigated in a way that respects the privacy of the parties concerned. A more detailed description of the nature of sexual harassment offenses is included in the California Education Code Section 212.5 Sexual Harassment bulletin.

### **Mandated Reporting of Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect**

#### **Reporting Requirements**

Any school employee who reasonably suspects that child abuse or neglect has occurred or is occurring is required by law to file a child abuse report. These reports are filed with the appropriate child protective services agency such as the local police, sheriff's department, or the Department of Children and Family Services.

### Abuse of Pupil at a School Site

The appropriate local law enforcement agency shall investigate complaints filed by parents or guardians of pupils against a school employee or other person that commits an alleged act of child abuse involving any current or former students. If the report is substantiated, the agency will inform the Synergy Board of Directors.

### **Homeless Students**

The term “homeless children and youth” means individuals who lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence due to economic hardship. It includes children and youths who (42 USC 11434(a)):

1. 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;
2. Have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as regular sleeping accommodations for human beings;
3. Are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and
4. Migratory children and unaccompanied youth (youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian) may be considered homeless if they meet the above definition of “homeless.”

Homeless status is determined in cooperation with the parent or guardian. In the case of unaccompanied youth, status is determined by the School Liaison.

**School Liaison:** The Director/Principal or designee designates the following staff person as the School Liaison for homeless students ((42 USC 11432(g)(1)(J) & (e)(3)(C).):

Katy Aquino, Assistant Director of Student and Family Services  
900 E. 33<sup>rd</sup> Street, Los Angeles, CA 90011  
(323)235-7960

The School Liaison shall ensure that (42 U.S.C. 11432(g)):

1. Homeless students are identified by school personnel and through coordination activities with other entities and agencies.
2. Homeless students enroll in, and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed at Synergy.
3. Homeless students and families receive educational services for which they are eligible, including services through Head Start programs (including Early Head Start programs) under the Head Start Act, early intervention services under part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, any other preschool programs administered by Synergy, if any, and referrals to health care services, dental services, mental health services and substance abuse services, housing services, and other appropriate services.



4. Parents/guardians are informed of the educational and related opportunities available to their children and are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children.
5. Public notice of the educational rights of homeless children is disseminated at places frequented by parents or guardians of such youths, and unaccompanied youths, including schools, shelters, public libraries, and soup kitchens, and in a manner and form understandable to the parents and guardians of homeless youth and unaccompanied youth.
6. Enrollment/admissions disputes are mediated in accordance with law, Synergy charter, and Board policy.
7. Parents/guardians and any unaccompanied youth are fully informed of all transportation services, as applicable.
8. School personnel providing services receive professional development and other support.
9. The School Liaison collaborates with State coordinators and community and school personnel responsible for the provision of education and related services to homeless children and youths.
10. Unaccompanied youth are enrolled in school; have opportunities to meet the same challenging State academic standards as the State establishes for other children and youth; and are informed of their status as independent students under section 480 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 and that the youths may obtain assistance from the School Liaison to receive verification of such status for the purposes of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid described in section 483 of the Act.

For any homeless student who enrolls at Synergy, a copy of Synergy's complete policy shall be provided at the time of enrollment and at least twice annually.

## **NOTIFICATION OF RIGHTS UNDER FERPA**

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act ("FERPA") affords parents and students who are 18 years of age or older ("eligible students") certain rights with respect to the student's education records. These rights are:

1. The right to inspect and review the student's education records within 30 days of the day School receives a request for access. Please note that the California Education Code permits access within five (5) business days of the request.

Parents or eligible students should submit to the Synergy Academies Director/Principal or designee a written request that identifies the record(s) they wish to inspect.

The School official will make arrangements for access and notify the parent or eligible student of the time and place where the records may be inspected. A student's education records will be available for review during the regular business hours of the school day. Parents or eligible students may receive a copy of any information in the student's education records at a cost of 15 cents per page.

2. The right to request the amendment of the student's education records that the parent or eligible student believes are inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the student's privacy rights under FERPA.

Parents or eligible students who wish to ask Synergy Academies to amend a record should put their request in writing to the Director/Principal or designee, clearly identifying the part of the record they want changed, and specifying why it should be changed. If the School decides not to amend the record as requested by the parent or eligible student, Synergy Academies will notify the parent or eligible student of the decision and advise them of their right to a hearing regarding the request for amendment. Additional information regarding the hearing procedures will be provided to the parent or eligible student when notified of the right to a hearing.

3. The right to provide written consent before the Synergy Academies discloses personally identifiable information (PII) from the student's education records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent.

One exception, which permits disclosure without consent, is disclosure to School officials with legitimate educational interests. A School official is a person employed by the school as an administrator, supervisor, instructor, or support staff member (including health or medical staff and law enforcement unit personnel) or a person serving on the Synergy Academies Board of Directors. A School official also may include a volunteer or contractor outside of the Synergy Academies who performs an institutional service or function for which Synergy Academies would otherwise use its own employees and who is under the direct control of Synergy Academies with respect to the use and maintenance of PII from education records, such as an attorney, auditor, medical consultant, or therapist; a parent or student volunteering to serve on an official committee, such as a disciplinary or grievance committee; or a parent, student, or other volunteer assisting another School official in performing his or her tasks. A School official has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record in order to fulfill his or her professional responsibility.

Upon request, Synergy Academies discloses education records without consent to officials of another school district in which a student seeks or intends to enroll, or is already enrolled if the disclosure is for purposes of the student's enrollment or transfer.

Note that Synergy will not release information to third parties for immigration-enforcement purposes, except as required by law or court order.

4. The right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning

alleged failures by Synergy Academies to comply with the requirements of FERPA. The name and address of the Office that administers FERPA are:

Family Policy Compliance Office  
U.S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20202-5920

5. FERPA permits the disclosure of PII from students' education records, without consent of the parent or eligible student, if the disclosure meets certain conditions found in §99.31 of the FERPA regulations. Except for disclosures to School officials, disclosures related to some judicial orders or lawfully issued subpoenas, disclosures of directory information, and disclosures to the parent or eligible student, §99.32 of the FERPA regulations requires Synergy Academies to record the disclosure. Parents and eligible students have a right to inspect and review the record of disclosures. A school may disclose PII from the education records of a student without obtaining prior written consent of the parents or the eligible student –

- To other School officials, including teachers, within the educational agency or institution whom the School has determined to have legitimate educational interests. This includes contractors, consultants, volunteers, or other parties to whom the School has outsourced institutional services or functions, provided that the conditions listed in §99.31(a)(1)(i)(B)(1) - (a)(1)(i)(B)(2) are met. (§99.31(a)(1)).
- To officials of another school, school system, or institution of postsecondary education where the student seeks or intends to enroll, or where the student is already enrolled if the disclosure is for purposes related to the student's enrollment or transfer, subject to the requirements of §99.34. (§99.31(a)(2)).
- To authorized representatives of the U. S. Comptroller General, the U. S. Attorney General, the U.S. Secretary of Education, or State and local educational authorities, such as the State educational agency in the parent or eligible student's State (SEA). Disclosures under this provision may be made, subject to the requirements of §99.35, in connection with an audit or evaluation of Federal- or State-supported education programs, or for the enforcement of or compliance with Federal legal requirements that relate to those programs. These entities may make further disclosures of PII to outside entities that are designated by them as their authorized representatives to conduct any audit, evaluation, or enforcement or compliance activity on their behalf. (§§99.31(a)(3) and 99.35).
- In connection with financial aid for which the student has applied or which the student has received, if the information is necessary to determine eligibility for the aid, determine the amount of the aid, determine the conditions of the aid, or enforce the terms and conditions of the aid. (§99.31(a)(4)).
- To State and local officials or authorities to whom information is specifically allowed to be reported or disclosed by a State statute that concerns the juvenile justice system and the system's ability to effectively

serve, prior to adjudication, the student whose records were released, subject to §99.38. (§99.31(a)(5)).

- To organizations conducting studies for, or on behalf of, the School, in order to: (a) develop, validate, or administer predictive tests; (b) administer student aid programs; or (c) improve instruction. (§99.31(a)(6)).
- To accrediting organizations to carry out their accrediting functions. (§99.31(a)(7)).
- To parents of an eligible student if the student is a dependent for IRS tax purposes. (§99.31(a)(8)).
- To comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena. (§99.31(a)(9)).
- To appropriate officials in connection with a health or safety emergency, subject to §99.36. (§99.31(a)(10)).
- Information Synergy Academies has designated as “directory information” under §99.37. (§99.31(a)(11)).
- To an agency caseworker or other representative of a State or local child welfare agency or tribal organization who is authorized to access a student’s case plan when such agency or organization is legally responsible, in accordance with State or tribal law, for the care and protection of the student in foster care placement. (20 U.S.C. § 1232g(b)(1)(L)).
- To the Secretary of Agriculture or authorized representatives of the Food and Nutrition Service for purposes of conducting program monitoring, evaluations, and performance measurements of programs authorized under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act or the Child Nutrition Act of 1966, under certain conditions. (20 U.S.C. § 1232g(b)(1)(K)).

## **SCHOOL BOOKS AND MATERIALS ACCOUNTABILITY**

Synergy spends hundreds of dollars per student to purchase textbooks, Reading Counts books, and other materials (such as workbooks, art supplies, computers, etc.). A single textbook costs approximately \$85.00, depending on the subject. When students willfully damage, lose or refuse to return textbooks or other school materials, this costs the school thousands of dollars that could be spent on new materials instead of replacing lost and worn materials. For this reason, by signing the Parent/Guardian agreement form in this Handbook, each family is acknowledging the responsibility to pay for school books or materials that are willfully damaged or lost.

This agreement states the following:

- You are responsible to pay for any school property that has been willfully cut, defaced, or otherwise injured, or that is loaned to a pupil and willfully not returned upon demand of a Synergy employee, including at the end of the semester or school year.
- You are responsible to pay for any willful damage to a school book or other school materials or property up to the replacement cost if the item is beyond repair.
- You are responsible to return school books and other school materials if the

student transfers out of Synergy to attend another school and/or at the end of the semester or school year, as required for each class. Synergy will notify parents/guardians of the failure to return school property and/or willful damage done to such property, including books or other school materials.

- After notifying the pupil's parent or guardian of the pupil's alleged misconduct and affording the pupil his or her due process rights, Synergy will withhold the grades/report cards, diploma, and/or transcripts of the pupil responsible for the damage or refusal to return property until the item(s) have been paid for.
- If the student and parent/guardian are unable to pay for the damages, or unable to return the property, Synergy will provide a program of voluntary work for the minor in lieu of the payment of monetary damages. Upon completion of the voluntary work, the grades/report cards, diploma, and/or transcripts of the pupil shall be released.
- You are responsible to notify the office as soon as you have lost a school book or materials so that a new one can be issued. New books, however, may not be issued until the old one is paid for.

## **POLICY ON STUDENT FEES**

The Board of Directors of Synergy Academies recognizes that every California public school student is entitled to a free public education. Therefore, Synergy Academies has adopted the following policy regarding charging students fees for participating in educational activities that are a fundamental part of the curricular and extracurricular program. Nothing in this policy limits a parent or student's right to voluntarily contribute time or things of value to our schools. This policy also implements a procedure whereby an individual or organization may file a complaint regarding student fees.

### **The Free School Guarantee**

In accordance with Education Code Section 49011, "a pupil enrolled in a public school shall not be required to pay a pupil fee for participation in an educational activity." That includes any fee, deposit, or other charge imposed on pupils, or a pupil's parents or guardians for any of the following:

- Registering for or participating in a class or extracurricular activity, whether required or elective and without regard to whether the activity is credit-bearing
- A security deposit or other payment required to obtain a lock, locker, book, class apparatus, musical instrument, uniform, or other materials or equipment
- A purchase of any supplies, materials, equipment, or uniforms associated with an educational activity

Education Code section 49010(a) defines "educational activity" as an activity offered by a charter school that constitutes "an integral fundamental part of elementary and secondary education, including, but not limited to, curricular and extracurricular activities." That does not include, and therefore a fee may be charged, for non-educational services that a charter school elects to provide such as bus transportation, health services, or nutrition services.

### **Additional Assurances**

With regard to charging fees, Synergy Academies also adopts the following policies:

- No pupil or parent/guardian will be required to request a fee waiver.
- No pupil or parent/guardian will be offered a two-tier educational activity with a minimal opportunity for free and a second, higher opportunity for a fee.
- No pupil will be offered or denied the opportunity to participate in educational activities based on whether his or her parent/guardian contributed money, good, or services to the school.

**Voluntary Contributions**

While not required, pupils, parents, and guardians are still encouraged to make voluntary contributions or donations of time, money, or property and to participate in fund raising activities. Pupils may be encouraged to participate in fundraising activities through prizes or other recognition for voluntary participation.

**Uniform Complaint Procedures**

When a complainant alleges that Synergy Academies has violated the policy on student fees stated above, a complainant may also fill out a Uniform Complaint Procedures (“UCP”) complaint form at any time during the process, consistent with the procedures laid out in this Handbook.

**Annual Notice to Parents/Guardians**

Notice of this fee policy and the related complaint procedures will be sent annually to the parents or guardians of Synergy Academies students in the same manner as other annual notices that are required by law or the charter agreement.

**UNIFORM COMPLAINT POLICY AND PROCEDURES**

**SCOPE**

Synergy Academies’ (Synergy) policy is to comply with applicable federal and state laws and regulations. Synergy is the local agency primarily responsible for compliance with federal and state laws and regulations governing educational programs. Pursuant to this policy, persons responsible for conducting investigations shall be knowledgeable about the laws and programs which they are assigned to investigate. This complaint procedure is adopted to provide a uniform system of complaint processing for the following types of complaints:

- (1) Complaints of unlawful discrimination, harassment, intimidation or bullying against any protected group, including actual or perceived discrimination, on the basis of the actual or perceived characteristics of age, sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, gender expression, genetic information, ethnic group identification, immigration status, race or ethnicity, ancestry, nationality, national origin, religion, color, mental disability, physical disability, medical condition, marital status, or on the basis of a person’s association with a person or group with one or more of these actual or perceived characteristics in any Synergy program or activity; and

- (2) Complaints of violations of state or federal law and regulations governing the following programs, including but not limited to: Adult Education Programs, After School Education and Safety Programs, Agricultural Vocational Education Programs, American Indian Education Centers and Early Child Education Program Assessments, Consolidated Categorical Aid Programs, Career Technical and Technical Education and Career Technical and Technical Training Programs, Child Care and Development Programs, Child Nutrition Programs, Foster and Homeless Youth Services, Migrant Education Programs, Every Student Succeeds Act / No Child Left Behind Act (2001) Programs (Titles I-VII), including improving academic achievement, compensatory education, limited English proficiency, and migrant education, Regional Occupational Centers and Programs, Special Education Programs, State Preschool, Bilingual Education, Economic Impact Aid, and Tobacco-Use Prevention Education.
- (3) A complaint may also be filed alleging that a pupil enrolled in a public school was required to pay a pupil fee for participation in an educational activity as those terms are defined below.
- a. "Educational activity" means an activity offered by a school, school district, charter school or county office of education that constitutes an integral fundamental part of elementary and secondary education, including, but not limited to, curricular and extracurricular activities.
  - b. "Pupil fee" means a fee, deposit or other charge imposed on pupils, or a pupil's parents or guardians, in violation of Section 49011 of the Education Code and Section 5 of Article IX of the California Constitution, which require educational activities to be provided free of charge to all pupils without regard to their families' ability or willingness to pay fees or request special waivers, as provided for in *Hartzell v. Connell* (1984) 35 Cal.3d 899. A pupil fee includes, but is not limited to, all of the following:
    - i. A fee charged to a pupil as a condition for registering for school or classes, or as a condition for participation in a class or an extracurricular activity, regardless of whether the class or activity is elective or compulsory, or is for credit.
    - ii. A security deposit, or other payment, that a pupil is required to make to obtain a lock, locker, book, class apparatus, musical instrument, uniform or other materials or equipment.
    - iii. A purchase that a pupil is required to make to obtain materials, supplies, equipment or uniforms associated with an educational activity.
  - c. A pupil fees complaint may be filed anonymously if the complaint provides evidence or information leading to evidence to support an allegation of noncompliance with laws relating to pupil fees.
  - d. If Synergy finds merit in a pupil fees complaint Synergy shall provide a remedy to all affected pupils, parents, and guardians that, where

applicable, includes reasonable efforts by Synergy to ensure full reimbursement to all affected pupils, parents, and guardians, subject to procedures established through regulations adopted by the state board.

- e. Nothing in this section shall be interpreted to prohibit solicitation of voluntary donations of funds or property, voluntary participation in fundraising activities, or school districts, school, and other entities from providing pupils prizes or other recognition for voluntarily participating in fundraising activities.
- (4) Complaints of noncompliance with the requirements governing the Local Control Funding Formula or Sections 47606.5 and 47607.3 of the Education Code, as applicable.
- (5) Complaints of noncompliance with the requirements of Education Code Section 222 regarding the rights of lactating pupils on a school campus. If Synergy finds merit in a complaint, or if the Superintendent designee finds merit in an appeal, Synergy shall provide a remedy to the affected pupil.

Synergy acknowledges and respects every individual's rights to privacy. Unlawful discrimination, harassment, intimidation or bullying complaints shall be investigated in a manner that protects (to the greatest extent reasonably possible) the confidentiality of the parties and the integrity of the process. Synergy cannot guarantee anonymity of the complainant. This includes keeping the identity of the complainant confidential. However, Synergy will attempt to do so as appropriate. Synergy may find it necessary to disclose information regarding the complaint/complainant to the extent necessary to carry out the investigation or proceedings, as determined by the Chief Executive Officer ("CEO") or designee on a case-by-case basis.

Synergy prohibits any form of retaliation against any complainant in the complaint process, including but not limited to a complainant's filing of a complaint or the reporting of instances of unlawful discrimination, harassment, intimidation or bullying. Such participation shall not in any way affect the status, grades, or work assignments of the complainant.

#### **COMPLIANCE OFFICERS**

The Board of Directors designates the following compliance officer(s) to receive and investigate complaints and to ensure Synergy's compliance with law:

Rhonda Deomampo, Chief Executive Officer  
Synergy Academies  
P.O. Box 78999  
Los Angeles, CA 90016  
323-835-5144

The CEO or designee shall ensure that employees designated to investigate complaints are knowledgeable about the laws and programs for which they are responsible. Designated employees may have access to legal counsel as determined by the CEO or designee.



Should a complaint be filed against the CEO, the compliance officer for that case shall be the Chair or Vice Chair of Synergy Board of Directors.

### **NOTIFICATIONS**

The CEO or designee shall annually provide written notification of Synergy's uniform complaint procedures to students, employees, parents and/or guardians, advisory committees, private school officials, and other interested parties (e.g., Adult Education).

The annual notice shall be in English, and when necessary, in the primary language, pursuant to section 48985 of the Education Code if fifteen (15) percent or more of the pupils enrolled in Synergy speak a single primary language other than English.

The CEO or designee shall make available copies of Synergy's uniform complaint procedures free of charge.

The annual notice shall include the following:

- (a) A statement that Synergy is primarily responsible for compliance with federal and state laws and regulations.
- (b) A statement that a pupil enrolled in a public school shall not be required to pay a pupil fee for participation in an educational activity.
- (c) A statement identifying the responsible staff member, position, or unit designated to receive complaints.
- (d) A statement that the complainant has a right to appeal Synergy's decision to the CDE by filing a written appeal within 15 days of receiving Synergy's decision.
- (e) A statement advising the complainant of any civil law remedies that may be available under state or federal discrimination, harassment, intimidation or bullying laws, if applicable, and of the appeal pursuant to Education Code § 262.3.
- (f) A statement that copies of the local educational agency complaint procedures shall be available free of charge.

### **PROCEDURES**

The following procedures shall be used to address all complaints which allege that Synergy has violated federal or state laws or regulations governing educational programs. Compliance officers shall maintain a record of each complaint and subsequent related actions.

All parties involved in allegations shall be notified when a complaint is filed, when a complaint meeting or hearing is scheduled, and when a decision or ruling is made.

- **Step 1: Filing of Complaint**

Any individual, public agency, or organization may file a written complaint of alleged noncompliance by Synergy.

A complaint alleging unlawful discrimination, harassment, intimidation or bullying shall be initiated no later than six (6) months from the date when the alleged unlawful discrimination, harassment, intimidation or bullying occurred, or six (6) months from the date when the complainant first obtained knowledge of the facts of the alleged unlawful discrimination, harassment, intimidation or bullying. A complaint may be filed by a person who alleges that he/she personally suffered unlawful discrimination, harassment, intimidation or bullying or by a person who believes that an individual or any specific class of individuals has been subjected to unlawful discrimination, harassment, intimidation or bullying.

Pupil fee complaints shall be filed not later than one (1) year from the date the alleged violation occurred.

The complaint shall be presented to the compliance officer who shall maintain a log of complaints received, providing each with a code number and date stamp.

If a complainant is unable to put a complaint in writing due to conditions such as a disability or illiteracy, Synergy staff shall assist him/her in the filing of the complaint.

- **Step 2: Mediation**

Within three (3) days of receiving the complaint, the compliance officer may informally discuss with the complainant the possibility of using mediation. If the complainant agrees to mediation, the compliance officer shall make arrangements for this process.

Before initiating the mediation of an unlawful discrimination, harassment, intimidation or bullying complaint, the compliance officer shall ensure that all parties agree to make the mediator a party to related confidential information.

If the mediation process does not resolve the problem within the parameters of law, the compliance officer shall proceed with his/her investigation of the complaint.

The use of mediation shall not extend Synergy's timelines for investigating and resolving the complaint unless the complainant agrees in writing to such an extension of time.

- **Step 3: Investigation of Complaint**

The compliance officer is encouraged to hold an investigative meeting within five (5) days of receiving the complaint or an unsuccessful attempt to mediate the complaint. This meeting shall provide an opportunity for the complainant and/or his/her representative to repeat the complaint orally.

The complainant and/or his/her representative shall have an opportunity to present the complaint and evidence or information leading to evidence to support the allegations in the complaint.

A complainant's refusal to provide Synergy's investigator with documents or other evidence related to the allegations in the complaint, or his/her failure or refusal to cooperate in the investigation or his/her engagement in any other obstruction of the investigation, may result in the dismissal of the complaint because of a lack of evidence to support the allegation.

Synergy's refusal to provide the investigator with access to records and/or other information related to the allegation in the complaint, or its failure or refusal to cooperate in the investigation or its engagement in any other obstruction of the investigation, may result in a finding, based on evidence collected, that a violation has occurred and may result in the imposition of a remedy in favor of the complainant.

- **Step 4: Response**

Unless extended by written agreement with the complainant, the compliance officer shall prepare and send to the complainant a written report of Synergy's investigation and decision, as described in Step #5 below, within sixty (60) days of Synergy's receipt of the complaint.

- **Step 5: Final Written Decision**

Synergy's decision shall be in writing and sent to the complainant. Synergy's decision shall be written in English and in the language of the complainant whenever feasible or as required by law.

The decision shall include:

1. The findings of fact based on evidence gathered.
2. The conclusion(s) of law.
3. Disposition of the complaint.
4. Rationale for such disposition.
5. Corrective actions, if any are warranted.
6. Notice of the complainant's right to appeal Synergy's decision within fifteen (15) days to the CDE and procedures to be followed for initiating such an appeal.
7. For unlawful discrimination, harassment, intimidation or bullying complaints arising under state law, notice that the complainant must wait

until sixty (60) days have elapsed from the filing of an appeal with the CDE before pursuing civil law remedies.

8. For unlawful discrimination, harassment, intimidation or bullying complaints arising under federal law such complaint may be made at any time to the U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights.

If an employee is disciplined as a result of the complaint, the decision shall simply state that effective action was taken and that the employee was informed of the Charter School's expectations. The report shall not give any further information as to the nature of the disciplinary action.

### **APPEALS TO THE CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION ("CDE")**

If dissatisfied with Synergy's decision, the complainant may appeal in writing to the CDE within fifteen (15) days of receiving Synergy's decision. When appealing to the CDE, the complainant must specify the basis for the appeal of the decision and whether the facts are incorrect and/or the law has been misapplied. The appeal shall be accompanied by a copy of the locally filed complaint and a copy of Synergy's decision.

Upon notification by the CDE that the complainant has appealed Synergy's decision, the CEO or designee shall forward the following documents to the CDE:

1. A copy of the original complaint.
2. A copy of the decision.
3. A summary of the nature and extent of the investigation conducted by Synergy, if not covered by the decision.
4. A copy of the investigation file, including but not limited to all notes, interviews, and documents submitted by all parties and gathered by the investigator.
5. A report of any action taken to resolve the complaint.
6. A copy of Synergy's complaint procedures.
7. Other relevant information requested by the CDE.

The CDE may directly intervene in the complaint without waiting for action by Synergy when one of the conditions listed in Title 5, California Code of Regulations, Section 4650 exists, including cases in which Synergy has not taken action within sixty (60) days of the date the complaint was filed with Synergy.

### **CIVIL LAW REMEDIES**

A complainant may pursue available civil law remedies outside of Synergy's complaint procedures. Complainants may seek assistance from mediation centers or public/private interest attorneys. Civil law remedies that may be imposed by a court include, but are not limited to, injunctions and restraining orders. For unlawful

discrimination, harassment, intimidation or bullying complaints arising under state law, however, a complainant must wait until sixty (60) days have elapsed from the filing of an appeal with the CDE before pursuing civil law remedies. The moratorium does not apply to injunctive relief and is applicable only if Synergy has appropriately, and in a timely manner, apprised the complainant of his/her right to file a complaint in accordance with 5 CCR 4622.



# SYNERGY ACADEMIES

## UNIFORM COMPLAINT PROCEDURE FORM

Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_ First Name/MI: \_\_\_\_\_

Student Name (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address/Apt. #: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

School/Office of Alleged Violation: \_\_\_\_\_

**For allegation(s) of noncompliance, please check the program or activity referred to in your complaint, if applicable:**

- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Adult Education            | <input type="checkbox"/> After School Education and Safety | <input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural Vocational Education |
| <input type="checkbox"/> American Indian Education  | <input type="checkbox"/> Consolidated Categorical Aid      | <input type="checkbox"/> Career/Technical Education        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Child Development Programs | <input type="checkbox"/> Child Nutrition                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Foster/Homeless Youth             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Migrant Education          | <input type="checkbox"/> No Child Left Behind Programs     | <input type="checkbox"/> Regional Occupational Programs    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Special Education          | <input type="checkbox"/> Every Student Succeeds Act Prog.  | <input type="checkbox"/> Tobacco-Use Prevention Education  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pupil Fees                 | <input type="checkbox"/> State Preschool                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Lactating Pupils                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bilingual Education        | <input type="checkbox"/> Local Control Funding Formula     | <input type="checkbox"/> Economic Impact Aid               |

**For allegation(s) of unlawful discrimination/harassment, intimidation or bullying please check the basis of the unlawful discrimination/harassment, intimidation or bullying described in your complaint, if applicable:**

- |  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Age                             | <input type="checkbox"/> Gender / Gender Expression / Gender Identity | <input type="checkbox"/> Sex (Actual or Perceived)   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ancestry                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Genetic Information                          | <input type="checkbox"/> Sexual Orientation (Actual or Perceived)  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Color                           | <input type="checkbox"/> Nationality / National Origin                | <input type="checkbox"/> Immigration Status  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Disability (Mental or Physical) | <input type="checkbox"/> Race or Ethnicity                            | <input type="checkbox"/> Marital Status  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ethnic Group Identification     | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Based on association with a person or group with one or more of these actual or perceived characteristics |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Medical Condition               |   |  |

1. Please give facts about the complaint. Provide details such as the names of those involved, dates, whether witnesses were present, etc., that may be helpful to the complaint investigator. Attach

additional sheets if needed.

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2. Have you discussed your complaint or brought your complaint to any Synergy personnel? If you have, to whom did you take the complaint, and what was the result? Attach additional sheets if needed.

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3. Please provide copies of any written documents that may be relevant or supportive of your complaint.

**I have attached supporting documents:**  Yes  No

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

Mail complaint and any relevant documents to:

Rhonda Deomampo, Chief Executive Officer  
Synergy Academies  
P.O. Box 78999  
Los Angeles, CA 90016  
323-835-5144

**SYNERGY CHARTER ACADEMY  
PARENT/GUARDIAN AGREEMENT  
2018-2019 SCHOOL YEAR**

**\*\*Please sign, remove from book/packet, and return to the school office.\*\***

*\*\*\*If you have children at different Synergy schools, please return one form to each school office because each school's Parent/Student Handbook is different.\*\*\**

I hereby acknowledge that I have received the Synergy Charter Academy 2018-2019 Parent/Student Handbook. I have/will thoroughly read and understand the contents of the Parent/Student Handbook. I have discussed/will discuss the contents of the Parent/Student Handbook with my child(ren). I pledge to comply with the rules and regulations set forth by the Parent/Student Handbook. If I have any questions or concerns, I will speak with my child(ren)'s school administrator.

Please PRINT the name(s), birth date(s), and grade(s) of your child(ren) who attend a Synergy Academies school.

STUDENT'S NAME(S):

First Name	Last Name	Birth Date	Grade
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First Name	Last Name	Birth Date	Grade
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First Name	Last Name	Birth Date	Grade
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\_\_\_\_\_  
**Name of Parent/Guardian**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Parent/Guardian**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**