



Community Handbook 2016-2017

Curiosity - Compassion - Community - Courage - Craftsmanship

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Introduction

Dear Families,

Welcome to Explore, we're thrilled your family is part of our Community!

Serving kindergarten and 1st grade this year and growing one grade per year until K-8, Explore! Community School provides a challenging education in a joyful and supportive environment. Daily, students engage in meaningful project-based learning that ensures they master core academic content while developing the character and social skills that will equip them to become innovative leaders. Led by an extraordinary group of loving and supportive teachers, Explorers demonstrate the highest levels of academic achievement, character growth, confidence, creativity, and care for themselves and their community. Every day at Explore, we embrace the diversity that surrounds us and grow together through curiosity, reflection, and collaboration to ensure our students are known, supported, healthy, happy, challenged, and fully prepared for college and beyond.

We know that caregivers are students' first and primary teachers and we look forward to learning with and from you as we develop. As a member of this community, you and your student will play an integral role in helping us achieve our mission and vision. In order to facilitate your participation and collaboration, this handbook is designed to provide you with as much information as possible about our beliefs, approach, and policies.

Of course, no document can address every question you may have and we encourage you to contact any of us if you have concerns or need further information. Thank you again for joining our community. It's going to be an awesome year!

Sincerely,

Jon Driskell

Principal

Explore! Community School

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Foundational Beliefs

The mission of Explore! Community school is to foster the independence, critical thinking and creativity of a diverse community of students so they are fully prepared to become confident, responsible and successful leaders. As we work towards this mission, we are guided by three foundational beliefs:

1. We believe in providing meaningful opportunities for students to engage in authentic learning experiences.

Daily, students engage in learning opportunities that reinforce Common Core standards and concepts while developing the creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and communication skills necessary for success in the 21st Century. This approach ensures learning is meaningful to students, challenges them to apply their learning through exciting project-based tasks that require expert thinking and complex communication, and allows seamless integration of art, music, technology and community service. At Explore, we encourage students to learn as readers, authors, mathematicians, scientists, and artists.

2. We believe in creating a culture of excellence, joy, and love.

At Explore, we understand that when students are held to high standards and create work in which they have pride and ownership they realize their true potential, unlocking the capacity for excellence in every area of their lives. We support learning that promotes craftsmanship by developing students' ability to study, reflect, and improve. Children are born with a love for learning and we will cultivate that love by providing a joyful educational experience that supports each student's unique passions and interest. We recognize that relationships form the foundation of community and are committed to seeking to understand others actions, thoughts, and backgrounds. Within our school community, we depend on one another.

3. We believe in collaborating with families and communities.

We recognize that caregivers are children's primary teachers and that students learn everywhere, all the time. Therefore, we work purposefully to engage families and empower them to participate meaningfully in their child's education. We work collaboratively, creatively, and relentlessly to dismantle barriers and obstacles to community success. We develop strong relationships with the community and among one another and will look to each other for support and inspiration. We acknowledge that the care for each individual by each individual is vital to a successful school environment. As such, we are committed to the education of the whole child academically, socially, and emotionally. We support a community where each individual voice is valued and nurtured. We believe in celebrating diversity as strength by actively seeking to learn and understand perspectives.

Core Values and Community Commitments

Springing from our foundational beliefs, our Core Values are what we strive to embody. The Community Commitments are the Core Values in action and serve as a guide for our daily conduct. All members of our community make the following commitments to ensure that we live out our core values and that every member of our community is empowered, challenged, inspired, and loved.

Core Value	Commitments
<p>Curiosity: <i>We encourage exploration and discovery in teaching and learning.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will wonder, dream, and ask questions. • We will discover our talents, passions, and potential. • We will ensure learning is always purposeful, interesting, and fun.
<p>Community: <i>We learn from each other and collaborate to make a positive impact on our school, families, and world.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will celebrate diversity as an essential strength of our community. • We will recognize and honor the qualities that make each of us unique. • We will take responsibility for our success and support the success of others. • We will keep others and ourselves safe.
<p>Compassion: <i>We are mindful of others and are kind and helpful to ensure we all experience success</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will act with kindness, speak with love, and listen with respect. • We will seek out opportunities to help one another. • We will take action to improve our school, community, and world.
<p>Courage: <i>We take action to do the right thing even when it's hard. We stand up for others, admit our mistakes, and ask for help when we need it.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will take risks in order to grow and improve. • We will do the right thing even when it's hard. • We will explore new places, ideas, and possibilities.
<p>Craftsmanship: <i>We will do whatever it takes to ensure we create work that is worthy of pride.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will seek out and implement feedback in order to improve. • We will create beautiful work. • We will revise and improve until we are proud.

Academics

Report Cards

Report cards will be completed at the end of each quarter to formally reflect Explorer's progress and consists of three components: A Reflection on Valuable Moments, The Developmental Mastery Checklist, and the Academic Report. Exploration Reports reporting student participation and progress during Explorations will be issued at three times per year, at the end of each Exploration Unit.

Reflection on Valuable Moments

At Explore! Community School we work to cultivate the academic and social and emotional growth of our students. The Reflection on Valuable Moments gives an overview of your child's demonstration of Explore Core Values.

Developmental Mastery Check List

In each report card your child will receive a developmentally appropriate checklist. This checklist will be relative to your child's specific age and will document developmental skills that are in progress and those that have been mastered.

The Academic Report

Students in grades K-2 are evaluated throughout the year on their progress towards national and state standards. Final report cards reflect student performance on grade-level standards and include narrative comments from the teacher.

For the 2016-2017 school year, Explore has scheduled two student-led conferences in order for each student, family, and teacher to reflect upon student progress and collaborate towards future success. These are set for the following dates:

- Monday, October 10, 2016
- Monday, March 27, 2017

Please note that students will not report for the regular school day on these dates, only to participate in their conferences.

Homework

We believe that students learn everywhere, all the time, and that children in the primary grades need significant time at home for imagination, play, and quality time with family and friends. For 2016-2017, homework is limited to the following components:

- Each Monday, students will bring home a packet that contains math sheets designed to reinforce previously taught concepts. These will be collected on Friday. Students and families will have the freedom and responsibility to determine the best schedule for meeting the Friday due date.
- The Monday packet will also contain a reading log. Every day, Explorers will bring home two books. One will be at their independent reading level and should be read to a caregiver. They will be able to independently choose another book in which they are interested. This book should be read by a caregiver to the student. The completion of these tasks should be noted by a caregiver nightly on the reading log and returned to school with the books the next day.

Please Note: Homework is a beneficial component of education and the amount of homework assigned will increase as students progress through the grades. In addition to reinforcing and maintaining previously taught content, homework also helps students develop responsibility and organizational and time management skills.

Assessments

In addition to traditional classroom assessment measures, we will utilize a variety of additional tools to inform our instruction. These tools include:

- **Reading:** To understand Explorer's progress in reading, students will be given the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment at the beginning, middle, and end of the year. This assessment will provide a student's reading level that will be noted on report cards. We will also utilize the Kindergarten Inventory of Developmental Spelling and Marie Clay's Early Concepts of Print to ensure we have strong data to inform our instruction.
- **Math:** We will use the Developmental Number Assessment and Fact Interviews in combination with teacher-created observations and assessments to inform math instruction.
- **Measures of Academic Progress (MAP).** Similarly, the MAP assessment will be given at the beginning, middle, and end of the year. This assessment will provide us with a nationally normed reference point for the performance of our students in reading and math.

Promotion Policy

Explore has been designed to support the success of every student and we will work relentlessly to ensure students receive the instruction and support necessary to succeed at the following grade. However, based upon student’s individual academic and social and emotional progress, students may not be eligible for promotion to the next grade. This decision is made on an individual student basis in collaboration with families at the school’s discretion.

Student Supplies

The easiest way to manage supplies in primary classrooms while ensuring a positive classroom environment is to have shared supplies within the classroom. Explore provides a supply request form each year that grade level teachers create and revise.

All supplies will be kept at school and divided among and used by all students, therefore, families do not need to label supplies with their child’s name. For policies on toys and personal supplies, please see the **GENERAL POLICIES** section.

General Schedule

General Schedule	
7:30 - 8:00	Breakfast and Arrival
8:00 - 8:25	Community Meeting
8:25 - 8:40	Calendar Math
8:40 - 8:55	Read-Aloud
9:00 - 9:35	Guided Reading, Conferring, Choice Centers
9:40 - 10:00	Word Work
10:05 - 10:25	Recess
10:25 - 10:55	Writer’s Workshop
10:55 - 11:20	Lunch/Mindfulness
11:20 - 12:20	Math Workshop
12:25 - 12:55	Content Literacy
12:55 - 1:15	Problem Solving
1:15 - 1:55	Fitness and Adventure
1:55 - 2:05	Snack
2:10 - 2:40	Explorations

2:45 - 3:15	Intervention and Enrichment
3:15 - 3:25	Choice Centers
3:25 - 3:40	Closing Circle
3:40 - 3:45	Pack Up/Dismissal

Friday Schedule

Friday Schedule	
7:30 - 8:00	Breakfast and Arrival
8:00 - 8:25	Community Meeting
8:25 - 8:40	Calendar Math
8:40 - 8:55	Read-Aloud
9:00 - 9:35	Guided Reading, Conferring, Choice Centers
9:40 - 10:00	Word Work
10:05 - 10:30	Recess
10:35 - 11:00	Flex/Community/SEL Lessons
11:05- 11:35	Lunch/Mindfulness
11:35 - 12:35	Math Workshop
12:35 - 1:05	Explorations
1:05 - 1:20	Closing Circle
1:20 - 1:30	Pack Up/Dismissal/Transition to Enrichment

Friday Enrichment

School is dismissed at 1:30 each Friday in order to provide training and work time for our staff members. We recognize the logistical challenges this may present to families and partner with a variety of community partners to provide enrichment programming from 1:30 - 3:45 each Friday. So that as many Explorers as possible can participate in these activities, buses will depart Explore at 3:45 on Fridays.

It is important to note that these enrichment activities *are not facilitated by Explore staff members and are not part of Explore's instructional day or program*. Therefore, participation is a privilege that must be earned and caregivers must sign a waiver in order for Explorers to participate.

Attendance and Transportation

Attendance Policy

In order to achieve our ambitious mission, we must maximize our time with students in school every moment of every day. Regular attendance is mandatory. Families should not schedule vacations and non-emergency appointments during school time. Families should take advantage of the early dismissal on Friday, as well as holidays and school vacations, to schedule appointments and travel.

Absences

Absences will be "excused" for illness, verifiable family emergency, recognized religious holidays regularly observed by persons of the child's faith, or (in rare instances) other reasons requested in writing by the parent/guardian and considered legitimate by the principal or designee. Per MNPS policies, these absences can only be counted as excused if written verification from the legal guardian is received in the main office within 24 hours of the student's return to school. A doctor's note or other official documentation is required for any absence period of 2 or more consecutive days. Notes from the doctor must come on official letterhead.

To be counted as present, a student must remain in school until noon. If a student comes to school, and must go home before 12:00 p.m., due to illness, then the student's attendance status will be changed from "Present" to "Excused Absence." Additionally, if a student arrives to school after 12:00pm, they will be marked as "Absent" pending documentation from the family.

All other absences, including those related to trips or vacations taken outside of school wide breaks, are considered "unexcused."

In cases of chronic absence or truancy (over 10% of school days missed or 5 total unexcused absences), *the student's family must attend an attendance conference with Explore administration.* If unexcused absences continue, a student is at risk of retention and additional action including, but not limited to, referral to an Attendance Officer, issuance of legal notices, and juvenile court intervention.

If a student is absent the first five (5) days of school, or at least ten consecutive days during the school year, and there has been no successful contact between the family and the school to explain his or her absences, that student may lose his or her seat at Explore and may be considered un-enrolled from the school.

According to T.C.A § 49-6-3001, all students under 18 are expected to be in school. All students under the age of 18 will be expected to comply with these laws and the school will follow procedures set out in TCA § 49-6-3007 if the student does not comply with the law. In cases of truancy, the Principal (or her/his designee) will investigate the situation. Explore! Community School operates in compliance with TCA § 49-6-3007 requirements, which can include mandated reporting of truancy to appropriate state agencies.

Students are afforded rights under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act should their absences be related to a disabling condition.

Tardies

Students are expected to be inside the school before 8:00 a.m. Students arriving to school after 8:00 a.m., even if it is before the start of morning meeting, are marked tardy. Tardies may be excused if a written note with a valid reason is received. In the case of chronic tardies (over 10% of school days or 10 unexcused tardies), the student's family must attend an attendance conference with Explore administration. If unexcused tardies continue, a student is at risk of retention and additional action including, but not limited to, referral to an Attendance Officer, issuance of legal notices, and juvenile court intervention.

Early Dismissals

Unless a parent, a guardian, or a designated emergency contact has contacted the school in advance or provided a signed note to the school explaining the situation, and the school has granted permission, no student will be dismissed early from school. In addition, the parent, guardian, or designee must sign the student out with the Main Office before removing the student from school grounds. Students will not be dismissed unless the parent or guardian has physically come to the Main Office. Notification

regarding early dismissals should be made as far in advance as possible, but no later than 12:00 p.m. of the day of the early dismissal. To ensure an orderly dismissal process, students will not be dismissed after 3:00 p.m. Monday-Thursday or after 12:45 p.m. on Fridays. If students choose to stay for Friday enrichment they must stay for the entire enrichment period and will not be dismissed until 3:45.

Likewise, if a student needs to be sent home due to an illness or behavioral infraction, a parent/guardian or other individual authorized for pickup must come to the school, meet with the Principal or his/her designee, and remove the student from school. Students being sent home for behavioral infractions will not be dismissed unless the parent, guardian, or a designee has physically come to the school. In such situations, students are not permitted to return to school until an in-person meeting or telephone conference with administration has been completed.

Arrival

Explore! Community School opens its doors at 7:30 a.m. every day. Students are welcome to arrive any time between 7:30 and 7:59 a.m., but must be inside the school by 8:00 a.m. when the school day officially begins. Any student who arrives into the school after 8:00 a.m. will be counted as tardy and needs to be signed in by a parent or a guardian.

Breakfast begins promptly at 7:30 a.m. and serving ends in classrooms at 7:50 a.m. If students arrive into the school after 7:50 a.m., we will assume that they do not require breakfast. Explore operates with a small staff and without dedicated food service or janitorial workers. As the school transitions from arrival to academics, staff members are not available to serve and support breakfast. If a tardy student requires breakfast at Explore, the parent or guardian must sit with them at the front desk or in the reflection room until they are prepared to join their class.

If parents need to speak to a teacher or conduct any other classroom business, this should occur after the school day and by appointment with the teacher. Unless an appointment has been made with a specific staff member ahead of time, students and families must remain outside of the school building until 7:30 a.m. Following the first week of school, Explorers should be dropped off at the front door and *caregivers will not be permitted to accompany them to class.*

Dismissal

Students will be dismissed from school at 3:45 p.m. on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. Students will be dismissed at 1:30 p.m. on Friday. Parents/guardians who arrive before dismissal must wait outside until their teacher dismisses students. In order to ensure a safe, timely dismissal for all students, we are **unable to provide early dismissal for students in the last 45 minutes of school**. The last 45 minutes of the day contain critical learning for students and will not be interrupted.

Teachers will keep a list of each Explorer's dismissal method (bus, car, walk, after school program) in their classroom. If the student is to be dismissed in a manner departing from the routine, caregivers must contact the front desk by 2:45. The office manager will take a list of changes to each class at 3:00. *Requests to change dismissal methods made after 2:45 will not be permitted.*

To ensure the safety of our students, we will check the identification and the list of individuals approved to pick up students for everyone picking up a student.

Timely pick-up of students is critical so that our already hard-working and highly dedicated teachers do not have to stay after their normal working hours. Keep in mind that Explore teachers are salaried paid employees and do not earn over-time when they work beyond their regular schedule.

Bus Transportation

Participation in bus transportation is a privilege. All behavioral expectations outlined in the Explore Community Handbook apply on school bus transportation. Students who take the school bus are expected to act responsibly and respectfully at all times. All school expectations apply on the bus and certain additional rules will also apply during bus transportation.

Bus Rule Violation Consequences

- **One infraction** = Student receives a verbal warning from school leadership and school leadership makes a phone call home to the student's caregiver.
- **Two infractions** = School leadership makes a phone call home to the student's caregiver informing him/her that the student will be

- suspended from the bus in both the morning and afternoon the following day.
- **Three infractions** = School leadership makes a phone call home to the student's caregiver informing him/her that the student will be suspended from the bus in both the morning and afternoon for the next three (3) days.
 - **Four infractions**= School leadership makes a phone call home to the student's caregiver informing him/her that the student will be suspended from the bus in both the morning and afternoon for the next five (5) days.
 - **Five infractions**= School leadership makes a phone call home to the student's caregiver informing him/her that the student is permanently suspended from the bus, either for a semester or remainder of school year.

An administrator will meet the bus at school every day. No student will board or exit the bus before the administrator checks with the driver about behavior.

- If the school determines a child is not ready to ride the bus safely, a parent will be asked to come to the school building to pick up the child from school.
- More serious behavior (i.e. fighting) will be investigated and students will be treated exactly as if the incident happened on school grounds.

Infractions, if serious enough, can warrant immediate loss of bus privileges for the remainder of the school year. Families are strongly encouraged to reinforce the importance of proper bus behavior and the potential consequences for poor behavior choices. Should a student lose bus privileges, the student's caregiver is responsible for arranging alternative transportation for the student. Unless a student is suspended, the student will earn an "Unexcused absence" for failure to attend school as a result of lost bus privileges.

Caregivers should plan to arrive at the bus stops to meet their students at least five minutes before the scheduled arrival time. Bus drivers will have a copy of the list of individuals authorized to pick up every student and will check IDs before releasing students off the bus. *No student will be released off the bus without a caregiver or authorized representative present.*

If caregivers are consistently late to bus stops, this could also result in the loss of bus privileges. When a student's family is late to a bus stop more than two times in a quarter, meaning that the bus driver needed to bring the student back to school at the end of the route, then the student may lose bus privileges for the remainder of the quarter.

School Closings

When Metro Nashville Public Schools (MNPS) close for inclement weather, so does Explore! Community School. Please monitor local television and radio stations for any closure announcement. Explore will also confirm such closings through postings on the school's Facebook page and Twitter account.

In the rare case that there is a school closing that differs from the district, Explore will inform caregivers via phone and through the school's Facebook page and Twitter account. Caregivers will also be notified of school re-opening information as soon as it is made available. (Examples of reasons why school may close: flooding, no power, safety or security issue in the building or community.)

School Safety

Closed Campus

Under no circumstances are students allowed to leave the school building without permission. A student with permission to leave may only leave under the escort and supervision of an authorized adult. Students should be aware that the school has several neighbors, and should be respectful and courteous of their needs. Once students have entered the school in the morning, they may not leave the building unless a school staff member or other authorized adult escorts them.

Visitor Policy

All visitors are required to report to the Front Desk upon entering the building. Any visitor, including parents, who do not report to the office or is found in the building without authorization, will be asked to leave immediately. Visitors must wear visitor badges at all times to indicate that they have checked-in at the main office. Parents are encouraged to visit the school and parent involvement is discussed in more detail later in this handbook.

School Searches

In order to maintain the security of all students, the School authorizes the Principal and his or her designee(s) to conduct searches of students and their belongings if the authorized school official has reasonable suspicion to believe that the search will result in evidence that the student violated the law or the School's Code of Conduct or otherwise constituted a threat to the health, safety, welfare, or morals of the school, other students, school personnel, or any other person lawfully on school property or attending a school function. In authorizing searches, the school acknowledges both state and federal constitutional rights, which are applicable to personal searches of students and searches of their possessions.

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

An authorized school official may search a student or the student's belongings based upon information received from a reliable informant. Individuals, other than the school's employees, will be considered reliable informants if they have previously supplied information that was accurate and verified, make an admission against their own interest, provide the same information that is received independently from other sources, or appear to be credible and the information they are communicating relates to an immediate threat to safety. School employees will be considered reliable informants unless they are known to have previously supplied information that they knew was not accurate.

Students may be subject to personal searches and searches of their possessions where reasonable individualized suspicion exists to conduct such search. Reasonable individualized suspicion to conduct a search of a student or a student's possessions and the scope of the particular search shall be based upon, among other things, the student's age, the prevalence and seriousness of the problem to which the search is directed, the urgency necessitating an immediate search, and the probative value and reliability of information used as justification for the search.

School Culture and Discipline

Responsive Classroom

Explore uses the Responsive Classroom (RC) approach to create a safe environment where children are able to take academic and social risks. The RC approach helps children understand the importance of kindness toward and acceptance of all people, to celebrate differences in people and cultures, and to learn important social skills such as empathy and problem solving. Drawing upon the work of many great educational theorists and practitioners, it operates on the following seven guiding principles:

1. The social and emotional curriculum is as important as the academic curriculum.
2. How children learn is as important as what they learn.
3. Great cognitive growth occurs through social interaction.
4. To be successful academically and socially, children need to learn a set of social and emotional skills that include cooperation, assertiveness, responsibility, empathy, and self-control.
5. Knowing the children we teach—individually, culturally, and developmentally—is as important as knowing the content we teach.
6. Knowing the families of the children we teach is as important as knowing the children we teach.
7. How we, the adults at school, work together is as important as our individual competence: Lasting change begins with the adult community.

The Responsive Classroom approach offers interconnected strategies to use in classrooms such as: starting each school day with Morning Meeting, where students work together on group activities and greet each other; creating clear and consistent approaches to discipline that foster social responsibility; and classroom organization and family communication strategies to involve families as partners in their children’s education.

Valuable Moments

The Valuable Moments chart is the way we will positively acknowledge our core values in action. These will represent the ways our community commitments come to life. The following is an example of a clip chart that will be used in each classroom. The idea is that our students will be recognized

each time they demonstrate a value throughout the day, moving from one value to another and back again without hierarchy.

Valuable Moments

Curiosity	Community	Compassion	Courage	Craftsmanship
				

Students’ demonstration of these values will be publicly recognized on a daily basis through the use of closing circle. During closing circle students will recognize the valuable moments of the day. The idea is that during closing circle students would nominate individuals who had been recognized throughout the day on the clip chart and the teacher would record these names. These Valuable Moments will hang for the next day outside of the classroom as further public recognition until the next day. Each day, a Valuable Moments Report will be sent home to caregivers to be signed and returned to school.

Internal Rewards

We do not reward students with prizes when they succeed unless the circumstances of a student’s behavior require additional support. We offer specific praise, encouragement, and we celebrate the varying forms of student achievement. Positive whole-group reinforcement furthers development of a supportive school/classroom community.

We believe that, if children only experience extrinsic rewards, they learn to work for those and do not connect their learning to their own goals and the outside world. We strive to help students make these connections, believing that the purpose of learning is to interact thoughtfully with the world.

Rules and Logical Consequences

Explore’s approach to discipline is derived from the RC model. Students are expected to know and follow teacher directions and school rules, resolve conflicts without physical contact, be respectful of adults and each other, use appropriate language, and respect the rights and property of others. The goal of Explore’s approach to behavior is to set a high standard for kind,

appropriate conduct and provide students with clear guidelines of acceptable behavior. Staff members will treat students respectfully in all situations. Students are expected to make appropriate choices that ensure safety and respect for themselves and others. Each class works on developing an understanding of community around the idea of mutual respect and encouragement.

Staff will demonstrate to students that they can make choices in social situations and their behavior has consequences. Explore expects students to become positive members of the school community and to uphold our expectations for appropriate behavior. Rules and logical consequences will be clearly communicated to students and those consequences will be administered calmly and fairly.

There are three types of logical consequences that students may be given depending on the behavior and how the student will best learn from the situation:

1. **"You Break It, You Fix It."** - Children take responsibility for fixing, as best they can, any problem or mess they created.
2. **Loss of Privilege** - When a student or group of students breaches the trust of the rules, a logical consequence is for the teacher to take away the privilege until the student shows readiness to handle the privilege, usually a class period or a day. What's taken away must be directly related to the misbehavior, and the teacher must make sure that the child truly understands and can live up to expectations. Students will have the opportunity to practice positive behavior choices to ensure future success.
3. **Safe Space** - This type of logical consequence is used when a teacher believes that a child needs a way to calm down and recover self-control. The consequence is that the child moves to a pre-established place in the classroom, takes time to regroup, and then rejoins the class once he or she has calmed down.

Reflection Room

Maintaining a peaceful and productive learning environment for all students is essential for the realization of Explore's mission and vision. If students demonstrate behavior that significantly disrupts the learning of others or is aggressive towards other students or staff, they will be immediately removed from the classroom. Examples of such behavior include, but are not limited to:

- Repeated defiance of teacher requests
- Unkind words to staff or other students (including cursing)
- Destroying materials or knocking over furniture in anger
- Threats
- Hitting, shoving, kicking, spitting, and other aggressive acts
- Repeated yelling or calling out that disrupts instruction

In such situations, the Behavior Associate or a member of Explore's administration will escort the student to the Reflection Room. In the Reflection Room, Explorers are provided structured activities to assist them in regaining control of their emotions and actions. These activities include five minutes of silent, mindful reflection on their actions and the impact on others, consultation with staff on why the actions occurred, and the completion of academic work to demonstrate their readiness to return to the classroom. Upon completion of these activities, the Explorer's teacher will be notified that they are prepared to return and will escort the student back to the classroom. Every visit to the Reflection Room will be documented with a note sent home that identifies the reason for the visit and its duration.

If students demonstrate behavior that is aggressive towards other students or staff or if they have been repeatedly removed from the classroom, they will not be permitted to return to class that day. For the remainder of the day they will remain in the Reflection Room completing academic work, reflecting upon their actions, and identifying strategies to prevent future occurrences. If students continue to demonstrate defiant and/or aggressive behavior in the Reflection Room their caregiver will be notified that they must be picked up from school as soon as possible. If caregivers are unable to arrange for the student to be picked up they will be required to meet with administration prior to the Explorer's return to school.

Enrichment and Field Trips

If Explorers consistently demonstrate challenges meeting Explore's behavior expectations, they will lose the privilege of participating in Friday Enrichment and upcoming field trips. If an Explorer has been aggressive, destructive, or spends over one hour in the Reflection Room in any given week, he or she will not be able to attend Friday Enrichment and must be picked up by a caregiver at 1:30 that Friday. Students who consistently demonstrate such behaviors (at least three weeks in which they have spent over one hour in the Reflection Room) must regain Enrichment and Field Trip privileges by remaining in the

classroom for one entire week. If students have not earned this privilege then a caregiver must accompany them on any field trip.

Suspension and Expulsion Policies and Procedures

Explore emphasizes character development and respect for others. It is hoped that this will minimize the need to suspend or expel students. However, an administrator may suspend or expel a student under circumstances when the health and well being of the student or others is threatened or if the seriousness of the behavior requires time away from school. Students may be suspended from school for a specified number of days or expelled from the school for the remainder of the year. Expelled students may re-apply to attend Explore the following year but will receive no admission preference.

The decision to suspend or expel a student will be made by the principal, with or without the recommendation of the student's teacher or another school employee. The school's board of directors must approve all expulsions. The principal will determine the number of days for suspensions based on the severity of the infraction, the age of the student, previous infractions, and district policies. When a student is suspended, a parent is required to pick the child up from school. When a child is suspended, a letter is sent home to the parent/guardian and a meeting with a school administrator is scheduled.

Expulsion is defined as the exclusion from Explore! Community School on a permanent basis. Tennessee law provides the Principal with the authority to expel students without Board involvement for the following behaviors (typically known as "Zero Tolerance" offenses):

- **Drugs (17-10ZT)** – Possession, use or distribution of illegal drugs; unlawful use, cultivation, manufacture, distribution, sale, solicitation, purchase, possession, transportation, or importation of any controlled drug (e.g. Demerol, Morphine) or narcotic substance.
- **Handgun (18-10ZT)** – Possession of a handgun; the weapon involved was a handgun or a pistol.
- **Rifle/Shotgun (19-10ZT)** – Possession of a rifle or shotgun; the weapon involved was a shotgun or rifle.
- **Explosive (20-10ZT)** – Possession of explosive, incendiary device, any destructive device which includes; any explosive, incendiary (e.g., bomb, grenade, rocket/missile, mine) or poison gas.

- **Assault of Staff (32-10ZT)** – Intentionally, knowingly or recklessly causing bodily injury to a staff person, or causing physical contact with another that was extremely offensive or provocative.
- **Aggravated Assault of Staff (35-10ZT)** – This is considered assault of staff. Intentionally or knowingly causing serious bodily injury to the staff person.

The Principal reserves the right to request that the Board of Directors hold an expulsion hearing and consider the student for expulsion for a specific, severe behavioral infraction or for repeated disregard of school policies and procedures. Specifically, regarding the latter, a parent meeting will be required once a student has been suspended for four incidents. A contract will be made between the student and school if he/she has been suspended for six incidents. A student's breach of this contract may lead to the recommendation of an expulsion hearing. Whenever an expulsion hearing is recommended, the below procedural safeguards will be in effect:

The student shall receive written notice of the following:

- Charges and a statement of the evidence;
- Date, time and place of a hearing;
- Notice of the right at the hearing to:
 - Be represented by their parents, legal or other representative (at the student's/parent's own expense).
 - Present evidence.
 - Confront and cross-examine witnesses.

The school will record (by tape or other appropriate means) the hearing and a copy of such will be made available to the student upon request.

Notices and proceedings will be translated into the student's/parent's primary language if necessary for their understanding of the proceedings.

A student and/or parent, upon request, will have the right to review the student's records in accordance with the TN Records Regulations or other applicable law.

All decisions by the Board of Directors regarding expulsion of a student will be issued to him or her in writing. In addition to the above stated policies, any breaches of Federal, TN State or Nashville City laws may be handled in cooperation with the local police department.

Procedural Safeguards for Students with Special Needs or Disabilities

Federal and state law provide certain procedural rights and protections relating to discipline of students who have been identified under such laws as having special needs based upon a disability. A copy of the Notice of Procedural Safeguards can be found in the Main Office.

Explore! Community School officials may suspend students with disabilities and cease educational services for a total of up to 10 consecutive or 10 cumulative school days in one school year without providing special education procedural safeguards. Detentions do not count toward the 10-day limit. The Principal has discretionary flexibility in regards to the amount of days of suspensions given to each special education student with disabilities. Students with disabilities can be suspended in excess of 10 school days in certain circumstances. When campus officials anticipate a referral for expulsion, the following apply:

Provide written notice to the parent/guardian or surrogate parent of the intervention or consequence being considered and the date of an Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting, which must be held within 10 days of the date of the decision to discipline the student.

The IEP team must:

- Determine whether the misconduct is related to the student's disability by reviewing evaluation and diagnostic results, information from the parent/guardian, observations of the student, and the student's IEP and placement. The behavior is not a manifestation of the student's disability if:
 - The student was given appropriate special education supplementary aids and intervention strategies; and
 - The disability does not impair the ability to control behavior.
 - A modification can be made so that the behavior plan is consistent with the IEP.
- Determine the appropriateness of an interim alternative educational setting, and as indicated, include in the IEP those services and modifications that will enable the student to continue to participate in the general curriculum and address the behavior so it will not recur.

Special education students with disabilities may be referred for an expulsion hearing if they are in violation of any Zero Tolerance offense. All students will be ensured a due process expulsion hearing.

COMMUNICATION AND FAMILY PARTICIPATION

Phone Use

Although Explore aims to have as much communication as possible with its families, it would take an incredible amount of staffing and resources to provide message services, and we cannot guarantee that messages will actually reach students or teachers during the instructional day. Teachers will receive messages after 3:45 p.m. Students may not receive incoming phone calls during the school day unless it is an emergency that requires immediate attention. If it is an emergency, please call the main office number and leave the message with the Office Manager. Students are prohibited from using school telephones. In the event of an emergency, students may be allowed to use school telephones, but only at the discretion of school staff members.

Teacher Contact

Parents are encouraged to communicate with their child's teacher. Teachers are available for phone calls before and after school. Messages may be left for teachers with the Office Manager during the school day or on each teacher's class voicemail after the school day. Please leave your name and your child's name, a phone number and time you may be reached, and a brief message regarding the reason for the call. Teachers will return a parent's call within 48 hours. Please remember that messages will not be received until after the instructional day ends. Teachers are also available through their Explore email address.

Parents should contact their child's teacher directly with questions about academic progress as well as behavior.

Parents can contact the main office directly for any of the following issues:

- Information about your student's records (ex. updating contact information etc.)
- Visits or volunteering
- Attendance issues
- Calendar and schedules
- Food

Teachers will list their contact information, including phone numbers and email addresses in the introductory letter to students' families during the first week of school.

For safety reasons, we must be able to reliably get in touch with student's caregivers. It is caregivers' responsibility to promptly update the school with any phone and/or address changes.

Family Nights, Breakfasts, and Weekend Events

Explore will host a variety of family nights, breakfasts, and weekend events throughout the school year. All families will receive detailed information about these events at least two weeks prior. Events will include:

- Exhibitions of Learning
- Reading Night
- Math Night
- Field Day
- Gratitude Breakfast
- Curriculum Summit

Meeting with Teachers

If you would like to meet with your child's teacher outside of the regularly scheduled conference, you must make an appointment. An appointment can be made by calling the school and speaking with or leaving a message for the teacher directly, as well as by emailing the teacher. Caregivers should not expect to meet with a teacher without a prior appointment. Because our teachers are teaching from 8:00 a.m. to 3:45 p.m., meetings should take place before or after school.

Volunteer on Campus

We encourage families to volunteer time on campus. To ensure that we make best use of parent time and efforts - and that we limit disruption to our instructional program - all classroom volunteers must abide by the set of guidelines below.

- ***Schedule your volunteer time in advance.*** School leaders and teachers are responsible for preparing and also delegating work to family volunteers. In order for school staff to prepare for a

volunteer's time and productivity on campus, all family volunteers must be scheduled in advance by connecting with your child's teacher. Please make sure to check in with the Main Office when you arrive for your scheduled volunteer time so that you can receive a Visitor's pass. Visitors are expected to wear their visitor's pass throughout the entire duration of their visit to Explore.

- Limit talking to, engaging with, or disciplining students – including your own – in classrooms. Students are expected to remain focused on their learning while in school. Volunteers should allow the teacher to lead all aspects of the instructional program, and not discipline students, including their own.

Family Advisory Council

The Family Advisory Council is a committed, action-oriented group of families with a focus on strengthening the school program through school events, fundraisers, community outreach, and other initiatives. It is open to any parent, guardian or adult family member who wants to work collaboratively with other parents and school staff and make measurable additions to the school program.

General Policies

Dress Code

At Explore, we believe in encouraging students to celebrate uniqueness and self-expression. We do not have a uniform policy and students are welcome to wear the clothes in which they are most comfortable, within the following guidelines:

- Students should wear clothes that allow them to run, play, and get dirty.
- Tops must cover the student's midsection and shoulders.
- Any graphics or text must be child-appropriate.
- Bottoms must be of acceptable length (fingertip length or 2" above the knee).
- Shorts must be worn under skirts and dresses.
- If sandals are worn, they must have a back strap (no flip flops).
- Shoes with high heels are not permitted.
- At all times undergarments must be concealed by clothing.
- Accessories such as necklaces and bracelets must be safe for running and playing and must not distract from instruction.
- Hats or other head coverings except those required by students' religious requirements are not permitted inside the school building.
- Perfume, cologne, or other scented cosmetics or lotions are not permitted.

Extra Clothing

All students must bring an extra set of clothes in the event of a bathroom accident or spill. These should be brought on the first day of school and will be stored at the school site. Please place these clothes in a gallon-sized plastic sealable bag labeled with your child's name.

Electronic Devices

Students are not permitted to have electronic devices in school. Electronic devices include games (Nintendo DS, etc.), CD-players, portable music devices (iPods), and cell phones. None of these devices are needed and often represent a distraction from successful academics and a serious atmosphere. In addition, these items can cause conflict and lead to grief

when lost or stolen. While Explore obviously strives to prevent theft of any item, the school will not spend extra energy tracking down electronic devices that should not be at school. In the event that a student disobeys this rule and is seen with an electronic device or uses a prohibited electronic device in school, a staff member will confiscate it. It will be returned only after a parent/guardian has come to school to pick it up. Repeated violations of this policy may result in indefinite confiscation irrespective of any costs or fees students and/or their families may incur as a result.

Toys

Students are not permitted to bring toys to school, unless they are instructed to do so by their teacher. Teachers will correspond with parents via written communication appropriate times when students are allowed to bring toys to school.

Food Procedures

Explore participates in the Community Eligibility Provision of the National School Breakfast and Lunch Program, which enables us to provide free breakfasts, lunches, and snacks to all students. At the beginning of the school year, each family will receive a letter describing eligibility and an application to participate in the program. *As a part of the enrollment process, families are REQUIRED to complete and return this form.*

Families of students who order the school's lunch and have particular dietary restrictions should alert the Office Manager prior to the beginning of school, so that school staff is able to describe reasonable accommodations to the student or, if necessary, the family can choose to make alternate arrangements.

Breakfast and Lunch

At the end of each month, students may register for the school breakfast and lunch program for the subsequent month. Students who register for the program will receive breakfast and lunch every day. Students may not choose to receive meals for only specific days or weeks during the month. Instead, students who register for the program at the beginning of each month are agreeing to receive meals for the entire duration of the month. Please be aware that the reimbursements we receive for the CEP do not fully

cover our food expenses and help us minimize costs by providing accurate counts of meals needed.

Students may either receive meals from the school or bring their own food from home. The school does not have its own cafeteria or kitchen, so Revolution Foods will bring in hot meals each day. Since school meals are prepared off-site, the school must have an accurate number of meals that students wish to order. Families will be given a menu of meals at the beginning of each month and will be asked to opt in or opt out for the entirety of the month.

Food from Home

It is important that students have healthy, balanced meals and for us to maintain the safety of all of our students. As such, families who decide to provide lunch from home must comply with the following guidelines. If your student is out of compliance with these requirements, inappropriate food items will be confiscated and returned home.

Prohibited foods for packed breakfasts, lunches, and snacks:

- **ALL FOOD CONTAINING NUTS!**
- Soda of any kind (even diet)
- Full sugar juices (including Gatorade or other sports drinks)
- Candy of any kind
- Cookies or cakes of any kind

Suggested items for a nutritiously packed lunch:

- Water or 100% fruit juice
- A sandwich, soup or other main dish (Students will NOT have access to a microwave, therefore, please do not send meals that must be heated)
- Crackers or 100 calorie pack snack
- Pretzels
- Fruit and/or vegetables

Birthdays

Students are permitted to bring store-bought treats to be shared with classmates when the teacher is notified at least 24 hours in advance. Families can notify the teacher by writing a note to the teacher or leaving a

message with the Main Office. We recommend families bring cupcakes or cookies that are already prepared in individual servings. Treats will be shared at the end of lunch. Birthday treats should be easy and quick to serve. Large productions like pizza parties, for example, are not permitted for birthdays. **REMEMBER, NUTS AND ITEMS CONTAINING NUTS ARE NEVER PERMITTED AT EXPLORE! COMMUNITY SCHOOL!**

Please do NOT bring ice cream, as this is difficult to serve and clean. Individual goodie bags are permitted as long as every student in the student's class receives one. Likewise, we will notify you if any of your child's classmates have allergies and will make sure all snacks are safe for every child.

Parents are **not** required to send birthday treats to school. Unless directed otherwise by caregivers, the Explore community will sing "Happy Birthday" regardless of whether families have sent anything to school. Invitations for individual birthday parties are not to be distributed at school unless there is an invitation included for every child in the student's class.

Other Celebrations

We know holidays can be exciting times of year for children. The many celebrations that take place at Explore center on school traditions, academics, or multi-cultural celebrations. These include things such as the 100th Day of School, field trips, Field Day, Holidays Around the World and others. Teachers will communicate guidelines and additional information about other celebrations.

Gifts for School Staff

We truly appreciate the generosity of our school's families. We know that some families show their appreciation for the hard work of school staff by giving gifts. Instead of purchasing store-bought items, we strongly encourage families to make homemade gifts and cards for teachers.

RECORDS AND HEALTH POLICIES

Student Records

Under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), parents have certain rights with respect to their children's education records. These rights transfer to the student when he or she reaches the age of 18 or attends a school beyond the high school level.

Definition of Student Records

"Student Records" shall mean any written or recorded information concerning a student by which a student may be individually identified and which Explore! Community School maintains. They may include, but are not limited to, the following; basic identifying information, academic transcript, attendance records, health records, performance scores on standardized assessments, disciplinary records, records from previous schools. Recorded information maintained by a staff member for his or her exclusive use, or his or her substitute, shall not be considered a part of the student records.

Inspection of Student Records

Parents shall have the right to inspect, challenge and copy student records of that parent's child until one of the following events occurs:

- The student attains 21 years of age; or
- The student attains 18 years of age and declares himself or herself financially independent of his or her parents.

Student records shall be made available to parents and eligible students within fifteen (15) school days of the time a written request for review is submitted to the Office Manager.

Right to Control Access of Student Records

School officials shall release student records to the official records custodian of another school in which the student has enrolled or intends to enroll upon the written request of such official or student, provided that the parent receives prior written notice of the nature and substance of the information to be transferred. Parents may, upon written request, inspect copy and

challenge such information. Once parents have been notified of their right to inspect, copy and challenge information to be transferred to another school and the parents do not respond within ten (10) school days, the records shall be forwarded to the requesting school.

Access to Records Without Parent Consent

School staff members who have a current and legitimate educational interest in the student records shall have access as needed for professional purposes to both the student's permanent and temporary records.

School officials shall release student records without parent permission pursuant to a valid court order or subpoena presented by local, state or federal officials. However, the school officials shall notify the parents in writing regarding the judicial order and the information so provided.

Student records may be made available to researchers for statistical purposes, provided that: a) Permission has been received from the State Superintendent of Education; and b) No student or parent shall be personally identified from the information released.

Information may be released without parental consent in connection with an emergency to appropriate persons if the knowledge of such information is necessary to protect the health or safety of the student or other persons.

If a student is 18 years of age and the student is financially independent of parents, the student may request the parents be denied access to his or her records. A student who desires to declare himself or herself financially independent of his or her parents shall submit a request in writing to the school's records custodian.

Challenge Procedures

A parent shall have the right to challenge the accuracy, relevance or propriety of any entry in the student records of his or her child, exclusive of grades. A request to challenge the contents of a student record shall be made in writing to the school by the parents and shall state in specific terms what entries in their child's record are being challenged. The Principal shall conduct an informal conference with the parents within fifteen (15) school days of the receipt of the written challenge.

Maintenance of School Records

Student permanent records and the information contained therein shall be maintained for a period of sixty (60) years after the student has transferred, graduated or permanently withdrawn from school. Student temporary records shall be maintained until August 1st of the year the student transfers, graduates or permanently withdraws from school. The records of special education students shall be maintained for a period of three (3) years. Information maintained by staff members for their exclusive use shall be destroyed by the staff member maintaining the information no later than the student's transfer, graduation or permanent withdrawal from the school. The Principal shall be responsible for having all student records verified and to eliminate or correct all out-of-date, misleading, inaccurate, unnecessary or irrelevant information on all students' files.

Mandated Reporter Policy

According to TCA 37-1-403(i)(1), all school personnel are mandated reporters of suspected abuse and/or neglect. Mandated reporters are required to report suspected child maltreatment immediately when they have reason to believe that harm has come to a child that "reasonably appears to have been caused by brutality, abuse or neglect." Under this law, failure to report such abuse is a Class A Misdemeanor.

Once any staff member becomes aware that a student may be the victim of abuse or neglect, they must:

- Call the DCS central intake hotline at (877) 54-ABUSE (552-2873)
- Notify the principal
- Complete an Explore! Community School incident report.

When calling the hotline, the staff member must have the following information (or as much as is known): the name, birth date, and address of the alleged victim; the name, address, age or birth date, and relationship of the alleged perpetrator; what type of injury or harm was allegedly done to the victim; and a description of the incident (time/date, place in which it occurred, and indication of intention to harm). The staff member should also have the names and ages of other children in the household, information as to whether or not English is fluently spoken by the parents and the work phone number of the alleged perpetrator.

While these steps are taking place, the Principal will assist both the faculty member and student in understanding the ramifications of the call. The Principal will debrief the student and, when appropriate, will contact the parent(s)/guardian.

No one in the workplace, even a supervisor, is permitted to suppress, change, or edit a report of abuse. A mandated reporter who willfully fails to report suspected incidents of child abuse or neglect is subject to license suspension or revocation, and commits a misdemeanor. Falsely reporting information to the hotline is also a misdemeanor.

Health Policies

Health and safety are a top priority at Explore. Before a student can enroll in the school, the school must have on file the following forms:

- **Medical Requirements Checklist.** This form contains records showing that the student has: 1) up-to-date immunizations; and 2) permission to receive screening for vision, hearing, and scoliosis.
- **Health Information Form.** This form provides important information about a student's emergency contacts, health care providers, and insurance. Most importantly, it gives the school permission to initiate emergency medical treatment in the event that a parent or guardian cannot be reached.
- **Authorization To Dispense Medication Form.** If a student requires medication while in school, the school must have on file an Authorization to Dispense Medication form, completed by the student's physician. No student is allowed to bring medication to the school without the school's full knowledge. Students who have provided the school with medication dispensation authorization forms should bring the medication (other than Tylenol and ibuprofen, which the school will stock in the main office) to the school on the first day, or contact to the school to make other arrangements. All medication must be presented in its original container from the pharmacy and must be brought in by a parent or accompanied by a note from the parent.

The medication dispensation authorization form requirement applies to all medication, including Tylenol and ibuprofen. If a student needs to take Tylenol or ibuprofen during the school day, he/she must have on file the authorization signed by his or her physician and a parent or guardian,

giving the school permission to administer the medication during the school year. The medication dispensation authorization form requirement also applies to asthma inhalers, which students should keep in their backpacks. If a student needs to use his/her asthma inhaler during the school day, he/she should go to the main office to self-administer the inhaler.

Concerns and Contact

Both the school and the Board of Directors work in conjunction with one another to hear and resolve any complaints. If a problem arises, both the school and the Board encourage the complainant to address the problem directly with the staff member(s). If you are dissatisfied with the proposed resolution by the appropriate faculty or staff member, the complaint should be delivered in writing to the Principal. The Principal will also request a written report from the appropriate faculty or staff member. After reviewing the written statements by the staff member and the complainant and undertaking any additional investigation deemed necessary by the situation, the Principal will present an appellate decision to the complainant.

If the situation has still not been resolved, the Board encourages attendance at the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Board of Directors. The Board will not hear complaints that have not first followed these procedures.

We welcome you to contact us at any time. Please use the information below to contact us at your convenience.

Explore! Community School
217 S. 10th St.
Nashville, TN 37206
615-784-8222
www.explore.school

Acknowledgement of Explore Policies and Procedures

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of the Explore! Community School Community Handbook. I understand that it contains important information on policies and procedures. I realize this handbook is not intended to cover every situation that may arise but is simply a general guide to refer to.

I understand that it is my responsibility to familiarize myself with the information and that I agree with the policies and rules of the school.

I further understand and acknowledge that Explore may change, add, or delete any policies or provisions in this handbook as it sees fit in its sole judgment and discretion.

I acknowledge and understand that this Community Handbook supersedes and replaces any and all prior handbooks or materials previously distributed.

Student's Name _____

Parent's Printed Name _____

Parent's Signature _____ Date _____