



# SCHOOL OF THE FUTURE FAMILY HANDBOOK 2007 - 08

## Our Vision

*Our philosophy is to promote critical thinking through deep inquiry and rigorous academics in a caring environment. The vision of the school is to help each child determine and reach his/her individual potential in all academic and social areas. Our students will graduate as life-long learners and socially conscious participants in their communities.*

## Our Mission

Our goal is for each child to graduate from the School of the Future with a sense of social and academic responsibility that will allow them to pursue their goals. We hold students accountable for being respectful, productive community members. Our curricula have been designed around our value of self-sufficiency and participation in cooperative learning. A commitment to student-centered learning is achieved by incorporating interdisciplinary curriculum, small class size, active learning projects, longer class time, heterogeneous classes, and use of technology. In addition to state graduation requirements, students must also produce exhibitions of their work as evidence of critical thinking and inquiry skills.

## Our Guiding Principles

*These principles are the foundation of all School of the Future policies, programs, and collaborative work.*

1. Staff, families, and students all choose to be here because we are committed to the vision of the school. Being a part of this community is intentional.
2. With the choice to be a part of this exceptional community comes the responsibility to make it work every day. Staff, families, and students commit to true partnerships that enable us to transform our vision statement into our daily reality.
3. We are committed to a success greater than just our own. We understand that every action, positive and negative, ripples beyond us to influence our entire community. We offer our strengths as support to others.
4. We believe that all students can be held to rigorous academic and community commitments while respecting individual differences. The diversity of our community enriches our learning.
5. We are a member of the Coalition of Essential Schools, whose principles inform all aspects of our practice. Fundamentally, we believe that students who learn to use their minds well make positive decisions for themselves and our world.

# COMMITMENTS FROM FAMILIES

*The following commitments are grounded in the understandings that:*

- 1) Students are more successful with family support;*
- 2) Schools are more effective when families are active partners;*
- 3) The behavior of the child is the family's responsibility;*
- 4) Being a part of SOF necessitates concern for the entire community, not just the individual child.*

## Commitment to Policies & Expectations

1. Learn the School of the Future policies, expectations and consequences. Help ensure that your child also learns them and encourage your child to fulfill his/her commitments to the SOF community.
2. Take responsibility for the behavior of your child, as it not only affects his/her own progress, but the welfare of the entire community as well. Encourage your child to take personal responsibility for his/her own contribution to the problem. If there is an issue, please reach out to your teachers, guidance counselors and Director to work with you and your child to address the problem effectively.

## Commitment to Attendance

3. Have a clear understanding of the School of the Future attendance and lateness policy. Proactively track your child's attendance and make plans accordingly. Honor the SOF/Department of Education school-year calendar. **Do not plan vacations or appointments that conflict with school.** In the case that your child must take an "excused absence" for an emergency or illness, please follow the attendance protocol in the "policy" section including notifying teachers early and making arrangements to be in touch with a classmate to keep up with the work.
4. Understand that our academic program is uniquely successful in that it is largely project-based and cooperative. This means that most of the real learning happens within the dynamic of the classroom. It cannot be experienced or equaled with make-up work. It is impossible for teachers to recreate the magic of this type of learning when students miss school. **Simply, students will be behind when they miss school and it is their responsibility to catch up** with missed work while staying up to date with current work. Students are responsible for connecting with several classmates so that if they are absent, they can ask someone to get extra handouts or borrow notes. Understand that your child's grades will suffer with increased absences and lateness. Extensive absences and lateness will affect promotion decisions.

## Commitment to Progress

5. Be aware of Progress Report Distribution Dates on the SOF Calendar and follow up with your child and the school to ensure that you receive each of them. Review them carefully with your child and be proactive about contacting teachers and designing extra support if necessary.

6. To help your child maintain the consistent effort required to thrive at SOF, find ways to stay informed about projects, assignments, and portfolio/ exhibition work. Expect students to put effort into their homework each night; have a sense of what quality work is for your child - "no homework" or homework done "in class" is rare and should be investigated further. Use planners, homework web sites, and other families as resources.

### Commitment to Partnerships

7. If your child has struggled in the past in any area, please do not wait for the teachers to call you with updates. Remember, each teacher has fifty to two hundred students. Don't let issues deteriorate; reach out to us and check in regarding your child's progress.

8. Attend Curriculum Night and Parent-Teacher Conferences to stay connected with the staff and remain informed. Also, try to attend project celebrations, field trips, and school performances when possible to further support your school community.

9. Be an active partner in the School of the Future community. Share ideas and resources that will benefit the school. Our families maintain a unique perspective on the effect of our practice and we will grow stronger as a school with this input.

### Commitment to Personal Responsibility

10. Finally, help your child understand that the ultimate determinant of success rests with his/her own choices and that s/he has responsibilities to strengthen and add value to our community.

# COMMITMENTS FROM STUDENTS

*The following commitments are grounded in the understandings that:*

- 1) while staff and families can greatly support students, students themselves make choices that are the driving force behind their own education;*
- 2) students are active citizens in creating the quality of life of the school; their actions can either have positive or negative impacts on the SOF community;*
- 3) roadblocks are not permanent; there are always supportive adults, alternative approaches, and paths towards resolution to help students persevere.*

## Commitment to Policies and Expectations

1. Learn the School of the Future policies, expectations and consequences. Remember that your family chose to be a part of this exceptional community. It is a privilege and you must take your commitments to SOF seriously.
2. Understand that policies are not negotiable and are enforced equally. Treat **all** staff with respect and accept the consequences for your choices without blaming others or making excuses.

## Commitment to Attendance

3. Have a clear understanding of the School of the Future attendance and lateness policy. Keep track of your own attendance. In the case that you must take an **excused absence** for an emergency or illness, please follow the attendance procedures in the 'policy' section including notifying teachers early and making arrangements to keep up with missed work.
4. Understand that real learning happens within the classroom. When you are not present, missed class time cannot be experienced or equaled with make up work done without your classmates and teacher. It is impossible for teachers to recreate this type of rich, meaningful learning when you miss school. You will be behind when you miss school and it is your responsibility, not the teachers', to catch up with missed work while staying up to date with current work. Understand that your grades will suffer with increased absences and lateness. Extensive absences and lateness will affect promotion decisions.

## Commitment to Progress

5. Homework is crucial to your progress in each class. Do quality work every night. Use your planners to track and organize your assignments; use classmates and homework web sites as resources, so there should be NO excuses for missing assignments.
6. Being prepared and organized is a key to academic success. Come to every class with pens/pencils, required texts and notebooks, an independent reading book, and assignments. Keep organized notebooks to help you be productive in class and at home.

7. Take an active role in your education. Ask challenging questions, make connections, and collaborate during group work in order to take ownership of your own learning. Ask for help when you are struggling and commit to discovering new strengths and skills as you revise assignments.

### Commitment to Partnerships

8. Be an ally, not a perpetrator or a bystander in our community. Do not participate in bullying, physical fighting, or exclusion of any kind. Speak up if you witness others being mistreated and offer your academic strengths as support to others as well. Always ask yourself, am I making the situation better? If you answer is anything other than "absolutely!" you need to rethink your actions.

9. Do your share to honor our common resources and spaces. Respect the custodial staff as community partners by cleaning up after yourself. Leave rooms and hallways clean even when the trash is not yours. Respect **all** staff members in our community - school safety agents, cafeteria staff, custodians, elevator staff, extended-day staff - everyone at SOF plays a vital role in your education. Always be appreciative of their efforts.

### Commitment to Personal Responsibility

10. Finally, understand that every choice you make - big or small - determines not only your own academic success but also the welfare of your greater community. Remember that as much as it is your right, it is also a privilege for you to be a part of this community. You have the responsibility to care!

# COMMITMENTS FROM STAFF

*The following commitments are grounded in the understandings that:*

- 1) We teach best when we know our students well;*
- 2) Fluid, frequent communication and collaboration strengthen our community;*
- 3) Staff choose School of the Future to guide students as they develop as thinkers and active, effective citizens;*
- 4) We are continuously striving to reflect and improve our practice.*

## Commitment to Policies, Expectations, and Attendance

1. Help implement the policies and expectations of SOF fairly for **all** students in the community.
2. Keep accurate data regarding student attendance and progress to help your team adequately address student needs.

## Commitment to Progress

3. Teach content with consideration for "The Habits of Mind" - Determining Significance; Making Connections; Finding and Evaluating Evidence; Considering Alternatives and Seeing Points of View.
4. Design a constructivist curriculum in which students create enduring understandings through a process of personal connections, shared discovery, meaningful projects, revision, skills practice, and real world application.
5. Provide a variety of learning experiences in order to meet the needs of diverse learners. Maintain a rigorous program for each student.
6. Support students in the portfolio and exhibition process.
7. Think critically about teaching and learning. Participate in professional development to develop practice.

## Commitment to Partnerships

8. Collaborate in teams, departments, and as a school to share best practices, create curriculum, and support students' academic and emotional needs. Contribute to school leadership committees to help influence the direction and tone of the school.
9. Maintain contact with families regarding the progress of their child.

## Commitment to Personal Responsibility

10. Help students see themselves as change agents in their own lives and in the world.

# SCHOOL OF THE FUTURE POLICIES

**\*\* As a member of the NYC Department of Education, School of the Future follows the Citywide Standards of Discipline and Intervention Measures that gives a more detailed description of the district's behavior expectations, policies, and consequences. \*\***

## 1. Attendance

- A.) According to the NYC Department of Education regulations, students must maintain a 90% attendance in order to be promoted. At SOF, we have higher expectations. **Students should be at school, everyday.** Please consult the DOE / SOF calendars when scheduling vacations and family events. Students who are absent more than 10% of the school year may be retained.
- B.) Students are expected to make up all missed work and keep up with current work if absent. Students serve as great resources for one another. So students must get the phone numbers of classmates in the beginning of the year; when students know that they will be absent, they should make arrangements with one of these classmates to find out what they missed, and get missed handouts. If they are absent unexpectedly, they should call a classmate that evening to find out what they missed.
- C.) Student who cut classes will be required to make up class time and work either before or after school. Students who repeatedly cut classes will serve "in-house" suspension where they will spend one day or more under direct supervision of our guidance staff.
- D.) Notes for excused absences - sudden, serious illness or family emergencies - should be submitted to Teresa Shepherd in the main office.

## 2. Lateness

- A.) Students will lose 1/2 (half) point from their final grade every time they arrive late for a class without a signed note from a staff member. \*\*\*\*
- B.) If students are late in the morning or from lunch, they will lose their out-lunch privilege for one day or more depending on frequency of latenesses. \*\*\*
- C.) **Student must be physically in advisory at 8:30am.** Students who arrive at or after 8:30am, must sign in the "late sheets" outside the office. If they do not sign in, they risk being marked absent for the day since their advisor - the attendance recordkeeper will not know that they have arrived at school. If attendance records need to be updated or revised, students must present evidence - classwork, notes, stamped planners - and not rely on teachers to backtrack and revise attendance.
- D.) If students enter class late, they should do so silently and get to work without disturbing the class.

## 3. Attire / Non-Instructional Items

As much as we respect student individuality, we are a community of learners and we expect students to dress for "work." Attire should not interfere with learning - i.e., distract fellow students, generate undue conflict.

**The following items are not permitted:**

- A.) Clothes bearing profanity, hate speech, sexual images or references.
- B.) Inappropriately short skirts or shorts
- C.) Bare midriffs

Students who violate the SOF dress code will be referred to the guidance counselors or directors. A second violation will result in a family meeting; and further disregard for the dress code may result in the student being asked to go home to change. \*\*\*

Walkmans, discmans, electronic games are not allowed during school hours with the exception of lunch in the cafeteria. \*\*\* Beepers and cellphones must be turned off during class time. If you need to reach your child in case of **emergency**, please call the main office (x250, 316, 317, 318).

#### 4. Classroom Behavior

- A.) Students are expected to follow the teachers' instructions and be fully engaged in class. Students have the responsibility to refrain from behaviors that interrupts the lesson or distracts their classmates from learning.
- B.) Furthermore, it isn't enough to just sit quietly; students are expected to be actively involved in class.
- C.) Students are expected to treat their classmates with respect: no put downs or foul language will be tolerated.

#### 5. Hallway / Common Spaces

- A.) High school and Middle school classes are dismissed at different times. When students are loud in the hallway, it disrupts learning. When waiting for classes, students are expected to do so quietly. Students should take the opportunity to prepare for class - take out due assignments and planners, pen or pencil; put away anything not needed for class.
- B.) Staff members monitor the hallway and may intervene with any disruptive behavior.
- C.) Students must be supervised at all times. Students who arrive earlier than 8:30am should report to the cafeteria unless they have an appointment to meet with a teacher. Students must leave the building at dismissal (3:10pm and 1:10 on Thursdays) unless they are registered for the Extended-Day programs or have an appointment with a teacher. Student are NOT allowed to linger in any areas of the school unsupervised by adults.

#### 6. Acts of Violence

**Students are expected to report all conflicts and or vandalism to an adult staff member as soon as possible; hurtful acts such as name calling, using profanity, inappropriate physical contact, roughhousing, or violence of any kind will not be tolerated.** Students are also expected to abide by school expectations when engaging in communications, including electronic exchanges such as email, chats and instant / text messages, with other students outside of the building. Physical acts of violence will result in suspension. There are NO EXCEPTIONS made for roughhousing or "playfighting." \*\*\*

#### 7. Consequences & The Citywide Standards of Discipline and Intervention Measures

If students choose to break their commitments by violating any of SOF policies, SOF may employ any of the following interventions to help address the problem.

- \* Teacher Conference and/or Team Conference
- \* Meeting with Guidance Counselor or Director
- \* Family Conference with teacher, team and/or Director
- \* Loss of out-lunch privileges; detention; community work time
- \* Exclusion from field trips and/or special events
- \* Principal's Suspension; Superintendent's Suspension that may result in transfer or expulsion

#### 7. Cheating and Plagiarism Policy \*\*\*

- A.) School of the Future expects students to have Academic Integrity. This means that they may not:
  - 1. Copy someone else's homework, class work, test or project.
  - 2. Use someone else's words from the Internet or other research without correctly quoting and giving this person(s) credit.
  - 3. Refer to notes or study aides during exams without teacher permission.
  - 4. Look at teacher materials without permission.

B.) If a student cheats or plagiarizes in his/her work, s/he will fail that assignment and must redo the work in order to receive credit. Repeated infractions may result in more severe consequences.

#### 8. Sexual Harassment Policy

- A) The NYC Department of Education defines Sexual Harassment as "sexually suggestive comments, written messages, innuendoes, propositions or physical conduct of a sexual nature such as pinching, touching, or patting."
- B) Sexual Harassment cases are taken seriously. Depending on severity and frequency of the incident, disciplinary responses will range from a parent conference to police involvement and criminal charges.

#### 9. Weapons, Drug, and Alcohol Policy

- A.) According to the *NYC Department of Education Code of Conduct*, students who are found with alcohol, drugs, or weapons of any kind, will be automatically suspended and face possible criminal charges.
- B.) Students are not permitted to smoke inside or directly outside the school building.
- C.) This applies to students inside and in the vicinity of the building; before, during, after school hours.

#### 10. Promotion (Portfolios, Regents, and Exhibitions) Policy

##### **High School**

- A.) If students fail more than three classes, or do not meet attendance requirements, they will not be promoted.
- B.) In order to graduate from SOF, students must successfully complete all Exhibition requirements in addition to the academic requirements above.

##### **Middle School**

- A.) In order to pass to the next grade without a summer school requirement, students must:
  - 1) Pass Math, Science, and Humanities with a grade of 65 or higher.
  - 2) Have greater than 90% attendance for the year. Students who do not meet these requirements will either have to finish credits in summer school or repeat the academic year.
- B.) In order to 'Step Up' to High School, 8th graders must complete an independent service project as well as Portfolio Roundtable presentation in addition to the above requirements.
- C.) 8th graders who have to go to summer school to complete credits or who do not complete Portfolio Roundtables cannot participate in the 'Stepping Up' Ceremony.

# DAILY LIFE AT SCHOOL OF THE FUTURE

## Locker Use

- A) All students will be issued a locker in the beginning of the year. Students must either bring in their own combination lock or purchase one from school for \$5. Students must also lock their belongings in lockers during gym class. If student belongings are lost or stolen when they have been in unlocked lockers, the school will not be able to investigate or assist students.
- B) Students may only use their lockers before school, during lunch, or after school. Student may not use their lockers in between classes without **written** teacher permission.
- C) Locker use and access to the locker room is a privilege. Students who violate their commitments will lose this privilege.

## Elevator Use

- A.) Due to budget cuts and the loss of our elevator operator, **students will not have access to elevators during the school day.** We have scheduled classes so that most students have classes on adjacent or nearby floors. Students who arrive **before 8:15am** may use the back elevator to get to breakfast in the cafeteria. Students with medical and physical needs may receive an elevator pass to ride the front elevator.

## Lunch / Out-Lunch

- A.) Breakfast and lunch are served in the cafeteria daily. Student who qualify for free or reduced lunch will be given lunch tickets shortly.
- B.) **Out-lunch is a privilege that student must earn.** Only students who return all required forms and permissions will be given out lunch passes upon approval by their team of teachers.
- C.) If students are late in the morning or after lunch, they will lose their out lunch privileges for one or more days. \*\*\*
- D.) Students may also lose their out-lunch privileges if they violate their Commitments.
- E.) Food is NOT permitted anywhere in the building except in the cafeteria. If you are bringing in lunch because you are working with a teacher, you **MUST** have a note from the teacher to show the school safety agents. \*\*\*

## Getting in Touch with your Child

- A) Please make personal arrangements for getting in touch with your child. Unless it is an emergency, the office staff cannot take messages for students and will not interrupt class to contact your child.
- B) Students' cell phones may only be turned on during lunch and before or after school. Cell phone or electronic devices that disrupt class may be confiscated by teachers/staff. Repeated infractions may result in parent/guardian having to come pick up the item or the item being kept at home.

## Extended Day Program

- A) Our Extended Day program runs every day from 3:10 until 6:00pm, and on Thursdays from 1:10 to 6:00. Snack is served in the cafeteria. Student who chose to leave the building for snack **must be back by 3:20pm** (or 1:20 on Thursdays) Student who return after these times may not be allowed to enter.
- B) Students can register for the program at the beginning of each semester.
- C) Only students registered for the Extended Day Program or with permission from a teacher can stay in the building after school.

## **Commitments from Families**

*We fully commit to the School of the Future Community in the following ways:*

### **Commitment to SOF Guiding Principles & Vision**

\* We believe in the Vision and Guiding Principles of School of the Future. As members of this community we will work to fulfill this vision.

\* We are dedicated to the academic success and overall well being of all students in the School of the Future Community in addition to our own.

### **Commitment to Policies and Attendance Requirements**

\* We understand that our child must follow the School of the Future policies to contribute to his/her individual success as well as that of the greater community. We are responsible for the behavior of our child and will collaborate with school staff and our child to effectively address any concerns.

\* We understand that the project based and collaborative nature of the curriculum makes missing school time very difficult for our child. So, we will not schedule appointments or plan vacations that conflict with school. We are aware of the attendance and notification requirements and will make careful decisions when allowing our child to miss school.

### **Commitment to Progress**

\* We will ensure that we receive each Progress Report and will review them carefully with our child.

\* We will do our best to stay informed about daily assignments, projects and portfolio/exhibition work. We will help our child maintain the consistent effort required to thrive at SOF.

### **Commitment to Partnership**

\* When our child is struggling in any class we will get in touch with the staff instead of waiting for an update from the school.

\* We will do our best to attend Curriculum Night and Parent Teacher Conferences in order to stay informed about our child's progress and build positive relationships with the staff.

\* We will be active partners in the School of the Future Community by sharing ideas and resources that benefit the school.

### **Commitment to Personal Responsibility**

\* We will help our child understand that his/her success rests with his/her own choices and that s/he also has responsibilities to strengthen and add value to the SOF community.

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x \_\_\_\_\_ (Name and Grade of Student)

x \_\_\_\_\_ (Signature of Family Member)

x \_\_\_\_\_ (Signature of Family Member)

## Commitments from Students

*I fully commit to the School of the Future Community in the following ways:*

### Commitment to SOF Guiding Principles and Vision

\* I believe in the Vision and Guiding Principles of School of the Future. As a member of this community I will work to fulfill this vision.

\* I care about both my own success and the success of the others in my community.

### Commitment to Policies and Attendance Requirements

\* I understand that I must follow the School of the Future policies and will accept the consequences for my own choices.

\* I understand that the project based and collaborative nature of the curriculum makes missing school time very difficult for me. I am aware of the attendance requirements and will make careful decisions when deciding to miss school. If I am absent, I will take full responsibility for making up missed work and staying up to date with current work.

### Commitment to Progress

\* I understand that homework is crucial to my progress in each class and will complete quality work each night.

\* I will make sure to be organized and prepared in each class. I will come to every class with pens/pencils, required texts and notebooks, an independent reading book, my planner, and assignments. I will use my planner to help me stay organized.

\* I will take a leading role in my education by asking for help when I am struggling, being an active learner in class, and creating a personal challenge in every learning experience.

### Commitment to Partnerships

\* I will be an ally in our community. I will not bully, tease, exclude others, or physically fight. I will speak up if I witness others being mistreated and I will offer my strengths to others through tutoring and collaboration. If I have a problem with another student I will try to find a peaceful solution. When asked if I did enough to help make a situation better, I will be able to honestly answer, yes.

\* I will take care of our shared spaces; I will help leave rooms and hallways clean even when the trash is not mine.

### Commitment to Personal Responsibility

\* I understand that I make choices that determine both my own success and the success of my greater community.

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x \_\_\_\_\_ (My name & grade)

x \_\_\_\_\_ (My Signature & date)

## Commitments from Staff

*I fully commit to the School of the Future Community in the following ways:*

### Commitment to SOF Guiding Principles and Vision

\* I believe in the Vision and Guiding Principles of School of the Future. As a member of this community I will work to fulfill this vision.

\* I choose to support all students as they develop as thinkers, activists, and community members.

### Commitment to Policies, Expectations, and Attendance

1. I will help implement the policies and expectations of SOF fairly for **all** students in the community.

2. I will keep accurate data regarding student attendance and progress to help adequately address students' needs.

### Commitment to Progress

3. I will teach content by focusing on 'The Habits of Mind': Determining Significance; Making Connections; Finding and Evaluating Evidence; Considering Alternatives and Seeing Points of View.

4. I will design a Constructivist Curriculum in which students create enduring understandings through a process of personal connections, shared discovery, meaningful projects, revision, skills practice, and real world application.

5. I will provide a variety of learning experiences in order to meet the needs of diverse learners. I will maintain a rigorous program for each student.

6. I will help support students in the portfolio and exhibition process.

7. I will think critically about teaching and learning. And I will participate in professional development to further develop practice.

### Commitment to Partnerships

8. I will collaborate in teams, departments, and as a school to share best practices, create curriculum, and support students' academic and emotional needs. I will contribute to school leadership committees to help influence the direction and tone of the school.

9. I will maintain contact with families regarding the progress of their child.

### Commitment to Personal Responsibility

10. I will help students see themselves as change agents in their own lives and in the world.

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x \_\_\_\_\_ (Print Name)  
x \_\_\_\_\_ (Signature & Date)