



**PERSISTENCE**  
**PREPARATORY ACADEMY**

**2022-2023**  
**Scholar & Family Handbook**

## WELCOME

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Dear Persistence Prep Families,

It is with sincere gratitude that we welcome you to the 2022-2023 school year. The fact that you have made an active choice to enroll is not lost on us, and our team is deeply humbled that you have chosen to entrust us with your children.

Persistence Prep is founded on the unwavering belief that access to a high-quality education is a fundamental civil right; a right that has largely been denied to the children of our city for far too long. Our team is committed to changing that reality and is ready to work tirelessly to raise the bar for education in our city, and work with you to ensure ALL of our scholars reach their full potential.

We view our families as partners in this work and are looking forward to getting to know you better over the coming year and beyond. Please know that our door is always open to solve a challenge, to welcome you to an event, and to engage you in our academic program. Please ensure you take the time to read through this handbook and familiarize yourself with our vision, and the policies that support us in delivering a safe, structured, and joyful environment for your children.

As a family, please take the time to read through our entire handbook. The following pages clarify many of the essential details for families to participate fully in our community and will help you become familiar with the school procedures, policies, and practices. When you have finished reading the handbook, both parents and the scholar(s) should complete and detach the mandatory signature page, located at the end of this handbook. Please sign and date the signature page and return it to the Main Office or in your scholar's lifework folder.

We are very excited to welcome you, our Families, on the journey of preparing your future college graduates to take the world by storm!

With urgency and joy,

The Persistence Prep Staff

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# SCHOOL CALENDAR

## Persistence Preparatory Academy 2022-2023 Academic Calendar

July 2022						
Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
						1 2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

Instructional Days: 0

August 2022						
Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

Instructional Days: 0

**Key:**

Vacation/Holiday
New Staff Orientation
All Staff Summer Institute
Assessments
Days Day - No School
First Full Day for Students
Early Release Day
End of Trimester

September 2022						
Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

Instructional Days: 21

October 2022						
Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

Instructional Days: 20

**Important Dates:**

- Sept 1: First Day of School
- September 5: Labor Day- No School
- October 10: No School (Indigenous Peoples' Day)
- November 8: Election Day- No School (1/2 Day PD for Staff)
- November 11: Veteran's Day- No School
- November 23: Early Release Day (12:30pm) ; End of Trimester 1
- November 24-25: No School (Thanksgiving)
- December 9: Early Release Day- Family Conferences
- December 23-January 2: Winter Recess
- January 3: Scholars Return
- January 16: No School- MLK Day
- February 20-24: Mid-Winter Recess
- March 10: End of Trimester 2
- March 24: Half Day; Family Conferences
- April 3-7: Spring Recess
- April 19-20: NYS ELA Testing (Grades 3-5)
- April 27: Staff PD Day; No School
- May 3-4: NYS Math Testing (Grades 3-5)
- May 11: Staff PD Day; No School
- May 29: No School- Memorial Day
- June 19: No School- Juneteenth
- June 22: Last Day for Students/ End of Trimester 3
- June 23: Last Day for Staff

November 2022						
Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

Instructional Days: 18

December 2022						
Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

Instructional Days: 16

January 2023						
Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

Instructional Days: 20

February 2023						
Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28				

Instructional Days: 15

March 2023						
Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

Instructional Days: 23

April 2023						
Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

Instructional Days: 14

STAFF DAYS: 200  
SCHOLAR DAYS: 183

May 2023						
Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

Instructional Days: 21

June 2023						
Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

Instructional Days: 15

## SECTION 1: OUR FOUNDATIONS

### 1.1 Overview

Persistence Prep is born out of the Building Excellent Schools Fellowship, a national nonprofit committed to training leaders to found and lead high-quality charter schools. Through this Fellowship, our Head of School had the opportunity to learn from over fifty of the nation's strongest charter schools. Persistence Prep's design represents the combination of these national best practices with a deeper understanding of Buffalo, our assets, and our areas for growth. Persistence Prep was authorized by the SUNY Charter School Institute in June 2017, and was officially incorporated as a charter school in October 2017. We opened on August 22, 2018 with a Founding Class of 108 scholars in Kindergarten and First Grade, and will eventually grow into a full K-8 school serving 486 scholars and families.

### 1.2 Mission & Vision

**Mission:** Through rigorous academics, high-quality instruction and leadership development, Persistence Preparatory Academy Charter School ensures all K-8 scholars are firmly on the path to a four-year college and to create positive change within their communities.

**Vision:** Persistence Prep is built on the unwavering expectation that all children can, and will, achieve at high academic levels when presented with a challenging, engaging, and supportive school community.

It is our absolute conviction that each of our scholars are not only academically and socially prepared for higher education, but will also be a strong leader in the community.

### 1.3 Core Beliefs

- High-quality teaching is the key driver of academic achievement
- College preparation begins in Kindergarten
- Scholars thrive in a structured, supportive, joyful school environment
- All learners can thrive when presented with proactive and targeted supports
- Families are vital partners in ensuring scholar achievement

### 1.4 Commitment to Diversity

Persistence Prep Charter School welcomes scholars, families and staff from all cultures and backgrounds and will strive to represent a community rich in a variety of racial, ethnic, cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. Throughout its programs, our school will affirm, respect, and celebrate the individuality of members of the community as well as their common goals.

We believe that our separate heritages, beliefs and choices of expression help to define us as individuals, and that our commitment to learning about each other and the larger world unites us as a community. The goal of Persistence Prep Charter School is to instill within its scholars a strong sense of identity and personal pride, a willingness to see the

common threads that run through all our lives, and a high regard for the value and breadth of our differences.

### **1.5 Communication Overview**

Persistence Prep's goal is to promote open lines of communication. We strive to keep communication flowing smoothly. If you are looking for information about an upcoming meeting, community activity, school performance, etc. check these sources:

- Calendar and monthly newsletter, which can be found in your scholar's navy PPA folder
- The Persistence Prep School Website ([www.persistenceprep.org](http://www.persistenceprep.org)), PPACS Facebook Page ([www.facebook.com/persistenceprep](http://www.facebook.com/persistenceprep))
- School emails, text, and calls
- Teacher communication to parents through the app SchoolRunner

### **1.6 Board of Trustees**

A Board of Trustees who reports to the school's chartering entity, the State University of New York, Charter School Institute (CSI), governs Persistence Prep Charter School. The Board's responsibilities include appointing the Head of School who is responsible for the day--to--day operations of the school, and establishing school policies. The calendar for board meetings can be found on the Persistence Prep website.

### **1.7 Accountability**

The State University of New York reviews the school annually. Persistence Prep's charter is renewed every 5 years and the school must go through a rigorous review process. The Board of Trustees reviews the Head of School annually and staff is also evaluated annually.

### **1.8 Staff Qualifications**

As part of the Federal No Child Left Behind Act, families and guardians of Persistence Prep Charter School scholars are entitled to ask for information about the qualifications of their children's classroom teachers. This information includes state certification status and educational background. Requests may be made in writing and sent to the school office.



## SECTION 2: SCHOOL POLICIES & PROCEDURES

### 2.1 Uniform Policy

- Navy blue/ gray polo, college t-shirt, crewneck, fleece, or cardigan with Persistence Prep logo.
- No jackets, scarves, gloves, etc. are permitted to be worn during the school day except where mandated by legitimate religious requirements or with a doctor's note.
- No hoodies will be permitted over uniform shirts.

### Pants, Skirts & Jumpers

- Navy blue, black, khaki or jeans (pants, shorts, or skirts) must be worn.
- Skirts must be appropriate length, reaching the knees at a minimum.
- Scholars may choose to wear a khaki or navy jumper, of appropriate length, over their polo shirt.

### Socks & Shoes

- Flip Flops, sandals, heels, and slides are not permitted. Crocs can be worn during the school day, but scholars must have a change of sneakers for PE.
- Scholars must wear closed-toe shoes or sneakers; all shoes with laces must be neatly and tightly tied (Velcro shoes are highly encouraged for scholars who cannot yet tie their shoes).
- Snow shoes are not permitted to be worn during the day. In the winter months, scholars can wear boots to school and change their shoes upon arrival and dismissal.

### Jewelry

- Earrings may only be worn in ears.
- Necklaces may be worn but must be always tucked into shirts.
- Scholars are permitted to wear a watch on their wrist.

### Physical Education

- Scholars in grades K-5 will remain in their traditional uniform for PE.
- All scholars are required to wear sneakers.

### Friday Attire

- Persistence Prep will allow for scholars to wear clothing of their choice on Fridays.
- Clothes must be of appropriate nature for school.
- Scholars must wear closed-toe shoes or sneakers; all shoes with laces must be neatly and tightly tied (Velcro shoes are highly encouraged for scholars who cannot yet tie their shoes).

## 2.2 Hours of Operation

The length of the instructional school day is 9:30 a.m. to 4:20 p.m. for all scholars. All scholars are expected to arrive at school on time. Doors open at 9:25am to greet scholars. Breakfast service begins at 9:30am, Morning Meeting begins promptly at 9:50 a.m. Scholars arriving after 9:50 am are considered late and are expected to be signed in at the main office by their parent/guardian/guardian.

## 2.3 Morning Arrival

Morning arrival (busses, cars and walkers) begins at 9:25am. Before school programming will be provided daily beginning at 7:45. Scholars using morning care must be dropped off and signed in at the back door on Moselle. Breakfast is available from 9:30 to 10:00 am. Please Note: Scholars who arrive close to 9:50 am may not have enough time to finish their breakfast, since activities start promptly at 9:50 am. Therefore, if parents and guardians want their child to receive breakfast, the scholar must arrive at school no later than 9:50 am to have enough time to eat without feeling rushed.

Scholars arriving via bus or car will be greeted by a staff member and escorted into the morning greeting line. Families arriving via car will stay in their individual cars, and will move through the drop-off line. All car families are reminded to have their scholar placard clearly displayed on their dashboard.

It is critical that your child arrive to school by 9:50 a.m. Each day of school begins with Morning Meeting. Morning Meeting is an essential part of the day and an integral part of the Persistence Prep program. It helps to create a positive climate for learning, reinforces academic and social skills and builds community – all essential components for academic success. Children who arrive late to school miss this very important beginning of the day.

## 2.4 Tardiness

Scholars arriving after 9:50 am must be escorted to the main office by a parent/guardian or guardian. **Three (3) tardies will be counted as a full absence.** Tardies caused by school-provided bus transportation will not be counted against a scholar.

It is incredibly important to be at school on time. We want to support you to ensure your child receives an excellent education.

Tardiness Consequences

- **Six Tardies in a Trimester:** If a scholar is late six times in a trimester, it is considered a serious issue. At this point, the School Counselor will call the parent/guardian. The problem will be discussed and an “on time” plan will be developed.
- **Twelve Tardies in a Trimester:** Upon the twelfth tardy, families must meet with the Head of School to develop a more intensive “on time” plan.

## 2.5 Afternoon Dismissal

Dismissal for car riders or walkers takes place at 4:20pm. Parents/Guardians picking up at dismissal in a car should queue up in the pick up line and stay in the car. Scholars will be walked to the appropriate car by a teacher. In order to have a scholar released to them, families must have their individual scholar placard clearly visible on the dashboard. Placards will be distributed at Family Orientation. Scholars being picked up by a parent or guardian must be picked up by 5:00pm.

Parent/guardian/guardians who are walking their scholar home will wait in the designated walker area for their scholar.

Bus transportation home will be provided by Buffalo Public Schools at 4:30pm. Route times and information will be provided by the district in early August.

If a child is to go home with a friend, a written, signed note from a parent/guardian is required. Our Office Manager will call and verify all notes of this nature. An up to date list of adults that may pick up your child must be provided to the office.

## 2.6 Early Departure

We encourage families to schedule dental, doctor, and other appointments outside of the school hours. If families must pick up their children early, they must notify the office through written notice, or through an email or call to our Office Manager. Scholars must be accompanied by a parent/guardian/guardian or other authorized adult and must sign out in the office prior to departure. **The school will record dismissals before 12:30 PM as half-day absences.** The school will record dismissals after 12:30 PM but before 3:55 PM as present but dismissed early. In general, scholars must be present for at least ½ of the allotted instructional time on a given day in order to be considered present.

## 2.7 Attendance Expectations & Consequences

In order for our academic program to be successful, it is absolutely essential that scholars be present in school on a consistent basis. The attendance policy at Persistence Prep has been formed in order to ensure that this remains the case. Attendance will be considered as a component of retention decisions. The school reserves the right to make exceptions to this policy in the instance of an extended absence due to medical or other reasons. Additionally, if a scholar accrues an excessive number of absences, the Director of Scholar Supports will contact a Truancy Officer to assist in resolving the situation.

Parents and guardians are expected to call the school as early as possible but no later than 10:00 A.M. if their child will not be attending school for any reason. Earlier, written permission is both welcome and appreciated. Calls should be made as far in advance as possible and can be left on the school's main voicemail. In phone calls, voice mails, and notes, please indicate your child's name, your relationship to the child, and the reason for and date(s) of the child's absence. If a scholar is not at school and the school has not been notified that he or she will be absent, Vista College Prep staff will make reasonable efforts to contact the scholar's parent/guardian by telephone, writing, or in person.

**Excused and Unexcused Absences:** We strongly believe that strong attendance is a must for

your child's success at PPA. We will only count the following absences from school as excused:

- A doctor's note, explaining the nature of an illness. Please note: all routine doctor and dentist appointments should be conducted outside of school hours.
- A death in the immediate family.
- Religious holiday.
- Court-mandated appearances with proper documentation.

All other absences will be considered unexcused. Scholars will not be excused for family vacations or any other engagement. If a scholar is absent from school due to suspensions, he/she will be entitled to 2 hours of alternative instruction for each day of the suspension.

**Attendance Consequences:** In order to help ensure that scholars do not exceed 15 absences, Persistence Prep has certain support policies in place. They are detailed below:

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

**Three Absences in a Trimester:** If a scholar is absent three days of school in one trimester, it raises serious concerns. The Dean of Culture or School Counselor will contact the parent/guardian and an attendance plan will be created.

**Five Absences in a Trimester:** If a scholar is absent five days of school in one trimester, it raises serious concerns. Both scholar and parent, if cited for truancy, may be required to appear in court to explain the truancy. The parent/guardian will be asked to meet with the child's teachers immediately. At this meeting, both the family and the school will discuss the problem and its impact on the scholar's education and a more intensive attendance plan will be developed.

**Ten Absences in a Year:** At this point, parent/guardian will meet with the Head of School and school Counselor to discuss the impact on the scholar's education, and the potential solutions that can prevent absences in the future. The possibility of grade level retention is also discussed.

**Fifteen Absences in a Year:** If a student is absent fifteen or more times in a year, the student may be considered truant. When this occurs, the student is at risk of not being promoted to the next grade. Students missing 15 or more days in a year will be required to attend Summer School to recover any lost instructional time. The school leader reserves the right to retain any student who misses 15 or more days of school. In addition, a report may be filed with the New York State Office of Children and Family Services.

Please be aware of the following specific policies pertaining to excessive absences:

- As discussed above, excused absences are defined only as those that are accompanied by a doctor's note verifying the dates of absence were due to illness, due to a religious observance, a death in the family, or a court-mandated appearance with proper documentation. Under certain circumstances, Persistence Prep will also consider scholars' IEPs, accommodation plans and individualized health care plans in determining whether an absence is "excused."
- Excessive total absences (including excused absences and tardies) are a factor in retention at all grade levels. Should a scholar miss more than 15 total days (including excused

and/or unexcused) in one year, it will be at the Head of School's discretion to determine if retention is appropriate for the current grade.

- Scholars will be held accountable for work missed due to suspension, vacation, or absences.
- Scholars who are absent from school cannot attend or participate in any other school-sponsored activities occurring on the day of the absence, unless advance permission has been given by the school.
- If a scholar is absent for the first five days of school, or at least 10 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 scholar will lose his or her seat at Persistence Prep and will be considered un-enrolled from the school.

School-age minors, age six to 17, must attend school regularly. The compulsory education law is designed to require school attendance and ensure that no child is denied the opportunity to receive an education. New York State compulsory education law requires that each child from six to 17 years of age, mentally and physically fit, will be in regular attendance for the entire academic year. Persistence Prep operates in compliance with all New York Department of Education attendance and truancy requirements, which can include mandated reporting of truancy to appropriate state agencies. Persistence Prep keeps accurate records of attendance and will make the records available for inspection as needed.

## **2.8 Emergency Situations**

Families/guardians are responsible for completing all information requested on the Scholar Registration Forms prior to the start of the school year. It is the family's responsibility to notify the school of any changes that occur during the year. It is especially important to have updated phone numbers.

Families/guardians are responsible for providing transportation home in the event of illness or other emergency.

## **2.9 Emergency School Closings**

Occasionally weather, and rarely other circumstances, may force cancellation of school. The Head of School will notify the major radio and TV stations when school is closed or delayed (TV channels 2, 4 and 7 and WBEN radio). Persistence Prep will close whenever Buffalo Public Schools closes. Emails and text messages will be our form of communication for emergency school closings and snow days.

## **2.10 Hallway Behavior**

Hallways are shared spaces and carry noise. We ask that all scholars and adults using the hallway during the school days keep in mind that classes are disrupted by hallway noise. Classes should transition from one space to another silently, in a single file line, with their hands to their sides, not touching the wall, and towards the right side of the hall.

## 2.11 Bathroom Behavior

In order to ensure that they are present in class to the greatest extent possible, scholars should make every effort to use the bathroom before school, during bathroom breaks, lunch and after school. When scholars have a bathroom emergency during class time, they should follow their individual class's protocol for receiving bathroom permission.

Bathrooms are shared space, and scholars should treat their bathroom space with pride. Scholars should pick up after themselves, flush the toilets, and ensure that no paper products are left on the floor. Scholars should not bring anything with them to the bathroom, including writing instruments. Scholars who do not behave appropriately in the bathrooms will receive a community violation and may require a bathroom escort.

At all times a scholar is expected to obtain permission from the teacher to use the restrooms. Scholars are not to write on the walls or damage the facility in any way. A scholar who is feeling ill should report to the nurse and not remain in the restroom.

## 2.12 Breakfast & Lunch Procedures

As a public school within the Buffalo City School District, all scholars are eligible to receive free breakfast, snack and lunch daily.

**Breakfast:** Breakfast is served from 9:30 AM until 9:50 AM. When scholars enter their classroom, they must place their Blue PPA folder in the bin, put away their belongings, and proceed quietly to their assigned seat. Once they are seated, they may begin to eat their breakfast. Scholars must remain seated during breakfast. After scholars finish breakfast, they may work on their morning work activities. Scholars are required to clean and wipe up their tables after breakfast.

**Lunch:** Scholars are welcome to bring a lunch from home. Scholars must remain seated during lunch. Scholars may talk using "restaurant level" voices. Scholars are required to clean and wipe up their tables after lunch.

**Food Allergies:** The school will make all reasonable efforts to accommodate scholars with food allergies. Families are required to inform the school of all food allergies and their severity. Once families have informed the school, the school nurse will meet with the family in order to develop an Individual Health Care Plan.

## 2.13 Internet Acceptable Use Policy

**Acceptable Use:** The Internet is a global network linking computers around the world. Internet use provides valuable opportunities for research, curriculum support, and career development. Persistence Prep offers Internet access to scholars and staff. The primary purpose of providing access to the Internet is to support the educational mission of the school. The school expects that scholars and staff will use this access in a manner consistent with this purpose.

While the Internet is a tremendous resource for electronic information, it has the potential for abuse. The school makes no guarantees, implied or otherwise, regarding the factual reliability of data available over the Internet. Users of the school's Internet service assume full responsibility for any costs, liabilities, or damages arising from the way they choose to use their access to the Internet. Technology resources covered by this policy include commercial, governmental, and private telecommunications-accessible networks (such as the Internet), local networks, databases, and any computer-accessible source of communication or information, whether from or to file servers, hard drives, tapes, compact disks, floppy disks, or other electronic storage or retrieval means.

**Unacceptable Use:** The following is a list of prohibited behaviors. The list is not exhaustive but illustrates unacceptable uses of the school's Internet service:

- disclosing, using or disseminating personal identification information about self or others;
- accessing, sending or forwarding materials or communications that are defamatory, pornographic, obscene, sexually explicit, threatening, harassing, or illegal;
- using the Internet service for any illegal activities such as gaining unauthorized access to other systems, arranging for the sale or purchase of drugs or alcohol, participating in criminal gang activity, threatening others, transferring obscene material, or attempting to do any of the above;
- using the Internet service to receive or send information relating to dangerous instruments such as bombs or other explosive devices, automatic weapons or other firearms, or other weaponry;
- vandalizing school computers by causing physical damage, reconfiguring the computer system, attempting to disrupt the computer system, or destroying data by spreading computer viruses or by any other means;
- copying or downloading of copyrighted material without authorization from the copyright holder, unless the copies are used for teaching (including multiple copies for classroom use), scholarship, or research. Users shall not copy and forward or copy and upload any copyrighted material without prior approval of the Head of School;
- plagiarizing material obtained from the Internet. Any material obtained from the Internet and included in one's own work must be cited and credited by name or by electronic address or path on the Internet. Information obtained through E-mail or news sources must also be credited as to sources;
- using the Internet service for commercial purposes;
- downloading or installing any commercial software, shareware, freeware or similar types of material onto network drives or disks without prior permission of the Computer Teacher; and
- overriding the Internet filtering software.

**Safety Issues:** Use of the Internet has potential dangers. The following are basic safety rules pertaining to all types of Internet applications.

- Never reveal any identifying information such as last names, ages, addresses, phone numbers, families' names, families' employers or work addresses, or photographs.
- Use the "back" key whenever you encounter a site that you believe is inappropriate or makes you feel uncomfortable.
- Immediately tell a teacher if you receive a message that you believe is inappropriate or makes you feel uncomfortable.

- Never share your password or use another person's password. Internet passwords are provided for each user's personal use only. If you suspect that someone has discovered your password, you should change it immediately and notify a teacher.

**Privacy:** Users should not have an expectation of privacy or confidentiality in the content of electronic communications or other computer files sent and received on the school computer network or stored in the user's directory or on a disk drive. The school reserves the right to examine all data stored on any medium involved in the user's use of the school's Internet service. Internet messages are public communication and are not private. All communications including text and images may be disclosed to law enforcement or other third parties without prior consent of the sender or the receiver. Network administrators may review communications to maintain integrity system-wide and ensure that users are using the system responsibly.

**Violations:** Access to the school's Internet service is a privilege not a right. The school reserves the right to deny, revoke, or suspend specific user privileges and/or to take other disciplinary action, up to and including suspension, expulsion (scholars), or dismissal (staff) for violations of this policy. The school will advise appropriate law enforcement agencies of illegal activities conducted through the school's Internet service. The school also will cooperate fully with local, state, and/or federal officials in any investigation related to any illegal activities conducted through the service.

## 2.14 Drug and Tobacco Free Zone

Persistence Prep is a Drug and Tobacco Free zone. New York State law specifically prohibits any type of tobacco on public school campuses. This includes outside on the grounds or in the parking lot. This also includes all forms of tobacco. No parent/guardian, scholar, staff member, or other person may smoke or have tobacco products anywhere on the campus at any time.

## 2.15 Electronics and Restricted Items

All electronic devices must be turned off and stored in the scholar's backpack. Scholars may carry a cell phone as long as it remains silent and unused during the school day in the scholar's backpack or scholar assigned locker. **Persistence Prep is NOT responsible for the loss, damage, and/or theft of any of these electronic devices.** Toys, electronic devices, magazines, hats worn inside the building, and any other item that violates school policy or disrupts the class or causes a hazard will be confiscated. Upon finding one of these restricted items, school personnel will confiscate, and only a parent/guardian may pick up these items in person from the school office.



## SECTION 3: ACADEMICS

Persistence Prep is committed to supporting academic achievement and personal growth by implementing a strong, rigorous academic program. Persistence Prep operates with an extended day and a longer school year. Scholars attend 183 school days, and our school day begins at 9:50 am and ends at 4:20 pm.

### A Challenging Curriculum

Persistence Prep's curricula are aligned to the Common Core Standards, internal standards, internal assessments, the NWEA MAP Assessment, and the NY State 3-8 ELA & Math Assessments. Our academic program will ensure your child's success in a college-preparatory environment.

### Exceptional Teachers

Persistence Prep's focus on class structure and exceptional teachers ensures that we can run quality small group instruction and give one-on-one help to all scholars. Teachers design exciting, innovative, and challenging lessons in the classroom, while working longer hours than their peers in traditional public schools. Persistence Prep teachers know that scholars learn material much better when they see how it might apply to their lives and therefore their lessons are relevant to the scholars' lives. They also foster a climate of success through a positive disposition, well maintained and organized classrooms, honest feedback, positive reinforcement, recognition of success, and strong classroom management skills. Persistence Prep teachers are trained to move at a fast pace so that every minute of class time is utilized for instruction. Teachers ask many critical thinking questions throughout the course of the day, as well as pack each class with a number of activities designed to keep scholars motivated and on task.

### **3.1 PPA Folder & Homework**

At Persistence Prep, homework is an essential component of our educational program. Homework reinforces the concepts and skills that are taught in class, which helps scholars to develop a deeper understanding of academic concepts, and promotes the habits that we recognize will be important in college and in life. It is critical that families review their child's homework and monitor progress every night. We also recommend that all scholars utilize the virtual Lexia reading program and Zearn math program (independently or with assistance in younger grades) for 15 minutes each daily.

The Persistence Prep folder is also the School's way of sending home parent/guardian and family communication. Please be sure to check the front pocket of the folder every night for any important information. Additionally, if you need to communicate something to the school, you may include the message within the folder. We will be sure to check for incoming messages.

### **3.2 Promotion Policy**

We will make grade level promotion decisions based on assessment data on benchmark exams, number of absences and grade level standard mastery. We will track daily attendance closely and communicate promptly and directly with families to minimize the impact of absence on any child's academic progress. Scholars who have 15 or more absences during the school year will automatically be considered for retention.

Scholars who are not reading or doing math on grade level by the end of the academic year are eligible for retention. Families of scholars who are in jeopardy of being retained will receive notice of this possibility in writing at the end of the second trimester (end of March).

Promotion recommendations are made by classroom teachers, and final promotion decisions will be made by the Head of School. All efforts will be made to avoid retention including multiple conferences with the family, teachers, scholar, and school leadership. These decisions will not be made lightly, but will always reflect what is in the best interest of the scholar. The school reserves the right to make exceptions to this policy given special circumstances.

### **3.3 Progress Reports, Report Cards and Parent/guardian Meetings**

Teachers and staff will use progress reports and report cards to communicate scholars' academic and behavioral performance. At the beginning of the year, families will receive login information to SchoolRunner—Persistence Prep's grading platform. Once parents gain access, they can use their login information to track student grades throughout the school year. If you lose, forget, or misplace your login information, please contact the main office to request a copy.

Families will also be expected to meet with their children's teachers during the three Family Achievement Conferences held each year in December, April and June. All families are also required to attend a parent/guardian orientation before the start of the school year.

## SECTION 4: CODE OF CONDUCT

Persistence Prep is characterized by a culture that is structured, supportive, joyful and focused on academic work. Our staff is clear and consistent in sharing, and holding scholars to, high academic and behavioral expectations. We know that when our scholars know what is expected of them and are surrounded by adults who support them, they will thrive.

**Core Values:** Persistence Prep's five core values – Community, Respect, Enthusiasm, Grit and Justice—are at the heart of our community and represent the cornerstones of the school's Code of Conduct. It is expected that all scholars will live by these values.

**Community:** In all we do, we are a team. Our community is made up of teachers, scholars, families, and the larger community. We recognize that our actions impact not only ourselves, but also those around us. We always strive to act in the best interest of our community.

**Respect:** We value and appreciate each other, as demonstrated through our words and actions. We accept all individuals for who they are. We show our respect at all times for each other, for property, for differences, and for opinions different from our own. We treat others the way we want to be treated.

**Grit:** We do whatever it takes to achieve our goals, exuding steadfast commitment and positivity in the face of challenges. We embrace our mistakes, reflect on them, and use them to make us better. We value the process, no matter how demanding, just as much as the outcome.

**Enthusiasm:** We approach each day and each task with excitement and curiosity. We are excited by new opportunities, recognizing that they offer a chance to grow. We consistently bring a positive attitude and maintain an optimistic viewpoint.

**Justice:** We treat all members of our community with fairness. We actively look for ways to improve our community, and are always willing to help someone in need. We recognize and celebrate that we have unique gifts and talents to impact change in the world around us. We believe that our role in ensuring justice is in finding the power of our voice, and using it to impact positive change.

### 4.1 Safe and Orderly Environment

Persistence Prep is unequivocally committed to providing a safe and orderly environment in which scholars can maximize their academic achievement. Scholars whose behavior does not meet the school community's clearly defined standards for reasonable and acceptable behavior will not be permitted to disrupt the education of others.

Without a firm and consistent discipline policy, none of what we envision for the school can happen; therefore, we cannot overemphasize the importance of providing a firm and consistent discipline policy. Scholars and families have a right to attend a safe and orderly school. Therefore, for every disruptive behavior, there will be a consequence. This is the basis of our scholar code of conduct.

## 4.2 Behavior System

At Persistence Prep, scholars are recognized, celebrated, and rewarded throughout the year for demonstrating PPA's five Core Values, excellent behavior, and academic growth. In addition, teachers employ various strategies aligned to the Responsive Classroom model to redirect scholarly behavior respectfully to continue nurturing an emotionally and physically safe learning environment.

## 4.3 Community Violations

We believe that our consistent use of in-class interventions, positive narration, and support will address the large majority of scholar behavior concerns. However, if the misbehavior is more serious or continues despite corrections and support, the scholar will receive a community violation, and will face a series of progressive consequences designed to deter a scholar from repeating these choices in the future.

. These serious infractions include:

- Continued disrespect of an adult, including rolling eyes, sucking teeth, or other such body language, defiance, or rudeness;
- disrespect of a fellow scholar, such as name-calling, insulting, or excluding;
- disrespect of the school, such as drawing on a table or book, taking school supplies without permission;
- unsafe behaviors, such as hitting, kicking, biting, pushing, play fighting or throwing tantrums;
- making verbal or physical threats, empty or otherwise;
- leaving class without permission;
- cheating or plagiarism, or copy of anyone else's work;
- use of inappropriate language; and
- extreme disruption of class.

Please note that these infractions apply to students while on school grounds, on the school bus, and at any school related trip or activity.

Community violations have escalating consequences throughout the trimester. The consequences increase as follows:

- The first, second and third Community Violations of the trimester will be accompanied by a phone call home at the end of the day. The teacher may also request a conference with a parent/guardian.
- If a scholar receives four or more Community Violations in a trimester, a parent/guardian will be required to attend a mandatory conference with the Head of School, Dean of Culture, classroom teacher(s) and the scholar.
- At the 6th Community Violation of a trimester, the parent/guardian will be required to observe their child in class for 60 to 90 minutes. This parent/guardian observation helps teachers, families, and scholars create a behavior plan for the scholar in order to successfully keep the scholar in class.

- Scholars may lose the privilege of social time with their classmates until these parent/guardian meetings and/or parent/guardian observations occur. This means that scholars may sit away from their peers in their classroom (including sitting in the Dean of Culture's Office) as well as during snack and lunch times. They may also be held from recess until the parent/guardian comes in for that meeting and/or observation.
- Kindergarten Community Violations will reset half way through the first trimester (at progress reports). This will not occur in the second or third trimester.

Families will receive a phone call home for each Community Violation; the phone call will be made by the child, the classroom teacher, the Dean of Culture or the Head of School.

Community Violations must be signed by a parent/guardian and returned the next day. Failure to return a signed Community Violation may result in an additional Community Violation or a request for a meeting. Signed Community Violations are kept in the Dean of Culture's office.

If a scholar has earned eight or more Community Violations in a trimester, they may not be allowed to attend field trips until the trimester resets. If school staff members believe that a scholar will be a safety concern on a field trip, a parent/guardian may be required to attend the field trip in order for the scholar to attend.

Persistence Prep believes that our use of community violations will minimize our need to rely on in-school or out-of-school suspensions. We do, however, reserve the right to assign these consequences if the misbehavior presents a serious safety or other concern.

#### **4.4 Use of Physical Intervention by Supervisory Personnel**

Any administrator, teacher or other school employee trained in nonviolent crisis intervention and entrusted with the care and supervision of a minor may use reasonable and appropriate physical intervention upon the minor to the extent reasonably necessary and appropriate to maintain safety. Use of physical intervention shall not be construed to constitute corporal punishment. Similar physical intervention will be appropriate in self-defense, and in the defense of other scholars and school personnel.

#### **4.5 Suspension**

In the case of a suspension, the scholar will be removed from class and sent to the Main Office or another designated school location. Following this, the school will notify the scholar's parent/guardian or guardian of the incident. In all cases where the scholar has committed a crime or violated local, state or federal law, law enforcement authorities will be notified.

Under the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, scholars are guaranteed due process and fair treatment at school. Therefore, prior to Persistence Pep taking disciplinary action against a scholar, the School will provide the scholar with appropriate due process. When the disciplinary action consists of ten days of suspension or a lesser penalty, this process will inform the scholar of the disciplinary issue and give the scholar an opportunity to respond. As described below,

more formal procedures are followed when the discipline proposed is greater than ten days of suspension.

In every case of scholar misconduct for which suspension or expulsion may be imposed, the Head of School shall exercise discretion in deciding the consequences for the offense; consider ways to re-engage the scholar in learning; and avoid using long-term suspension from school as a consequence until alternatives have been tried. Alternatives may include the use of evidence-based strategies and programs such as mediation, conflict resolution, restorative justice, and positive interventions and supports.

### **Suspension Under or Equal to 10 Days (Short-Term)**

Scholars in grades K-2 may receive a suspension for egregious acts of disrespect or defiance. If a scholar commits one of the infractions listed below, the scholar may receive a suspension in addition to receiving a Community Violation.

If a scholar commits one of the infractions listed below, the scholar may receive an out-of-school suspension rather than receiving a Community Violation. The Head of School may suspend any scholar for up to 10 school days. Before the scholar is returned to class, the scholar, his or her parent/guardian or guardian, and the Head of School will meet in order to address the scholar's behavior and plan for improvement. Furthermore, scholars will not be allowed to return to class after a suspension without a parent/guardian signature on the suspension letter. If the school is unable to contact the parent/guardian/legal guardian, the suspended scholar will be held in school until the end of the day. The parent/guardian/legal guardian shall be held liable for all damages caused by a scholar. Scholars are not entitled to appeal a short-term suspension. Infractions that merit immediate suspension include:

- Gross disrespect of a fellow scholar, staff member, or school property
- Uncontrollable tantrums
- Using or possessing over-the-counter medication inappropriately
- Using or possessing tobacco products
- Damaging, destroying, or stealing personal or school property or attempting to do so
- Committing sexual, racial, or any form of harassment or intimidation
- Skipping school or class
- Using abusive, vulgar, or profane language or treatment
- Making verbal or physical threats, empty or otherwise
- Fighting, pushing, shoving, or unwanted physical contact
- Setting off false alarms or calling in groundless threats
- Gambling
- Departing, without permission, from class, building, or school-sponsored activity
- Forgery of any sort, including parent/guardian signatures
- Cheating or plagiarism, or copying of anyone else's work
- Violent or threatening behavior
- Bullying or harassing conduct
- Repeated and fundamental disregard of school policies and procedure

### **Suspension Over 10 Days (Long-Term)**

Using the same list of infractions listed under short-term suspension, the Head of School will make a recommendation to the Governing Board, if the suspension of a scholar is more than 10 days.

Prior to a suspension of more than 10 days, the following due process procedures will apply:

- The parent/guardian/legal guardian will be notified of the intent to suspend for over 10 school days
- Date, time and place of a hearing will be sent to the parent/guardian/legal guardian with at least five working days' notice
- Notice of the right at the hearing to:
  - Be represented by his/her families, legal or other representative (at the scholar's/parent/guardian'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 scholar upon request.
- This hearing must include the scholar, the Head of School (or other staff), and the parent/guardian/legal guardian.
- The Governing Board has decided that all expulsion hearings shall be closed to protect the privacy of the scholar unless the parent/guardian requests that it be open to the public.
- The student and/or parent/guardian may submit any complaint regarding this process to the SUNY Board of Trustees.

#### **4.6 Expulsion**

In the case of an expulsion, the scholar will be removed from class and will be sent to the Main Office or another designated school location, following which the scholar's parent/guardian or guardian will be notified of the incident by the school. In all cases where the scholar has committed a crime or violation of local, state or federal law, law enforcement authorities will be notified. Expulsion is defined as the permanent withdrawal of the privilege of attending a school unless the governing board reinstates the privilege of attending the school.

The Head of School may recommend to the Governing Board expulsion of a scholar for serious cause, including, but not limited to:

- A pupil who cuts, defaces or otherwise injures school property;
- Being on school premises or at school-sponsored or school-related events, including athletic games, in possession of a dangerous weapon, including, but not limited to, a gun or a knife; or a controlled substance, including, but not limited to, marijuana, cocaine, and heroin;
- Assaulting another scholar, school employee, school consultant, or school volunteer on school premises or at school-sponsored or school-related events, including athletic games;
- Possession, use, sale, or transfer of drugs and alcohol;
- Destruction or attempted destruction of school property including arson

In addition to any of the preceding infractions, any breaches of federal law or law may be handled in cooperation with the and may result in expulsion.

Due Process: Scholar disciplinary offenses resulting in removal from the classroom (i.e., suspensions and expulsions) are subject to due process procedures, including notices, hearings, appeals, and educational services during removals.

- The parent/guardian/legal guardian will be notified of the intent to long-term suspend or expel a scholar;

- The date, time and place of a hearing will be sent to the parent/guardian/legal guardian with at least five working days' notice
- The scholar and parent/guardian will be given written notice of the right at the hearing to:
  - Be represented by his/her families, legal or other representative (at the scholar's/parent/guardian'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 scholar upon request;
- The hearing will include the scholar if he or she chooses to participate, the Head of School (and/or other staff), and the parent/guardian/legal guardian if he, she, or they choose to participate;
- All expulsion hearings shall be closed to the protect the privacy of the scholar unless the parent/guardian requests that it be open to the public;
- A scholar and/or parent/guardian, upon request, will have the right to review the scholar's records;
- The decision by the board will be in writing and the controlling facts upon which the decision is made will be stated in sufficient detail to inform the parties of the reasons for the decision;
- The student and/or parent/guardian may submit any complaint regarding this process to the SUNY Board of Trustees.

Scholars have the right to reapply for admission after one year of expulsion. The Governing Board has the right to deny admission of a scholar who has been expelled from another school or is in the process of being expelled, and to deny, upon review of a request, readmission of a scholar previously expelled from Persistence Prep.

#### **4.7 Discipline of Scholars with Special Needs**

Persistence Prep will meet all requirements of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act as defined in Part B of IDEA, and State laws regarding disciplining of scholars with disabilities.

As explained in section 4.5, above, under the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, scholars are guaranteed due process and fair treatment at school. Therefore, prior to the School taking disciplinary action against a scholar, the Head of School will provide the scholar with appropriate due process. When the disciplinary action consists of ten days of suspension or a lesser penalty, this process will consist of informing the scholar of the charges against him/her and giving the scholar an opportunity to respond. More formal procedures must be followed when the discipline proposed is greater than ten days of suspension.

Scholars may have additional rights pursuant to laws governing the provision of educational services to scholars with disabilities.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and related regulations provide eligible scholars with certain procedural rights and protections in the context of scholar discipline. A brief overview of these rights is provided below.



**Short-term suspensions:** School personnel may refer a scholar to an alternative placement or suspension for up to 10 total school days without services. For subsequent exclusions the school year which do not constitute a change in placement:

1. The school must provide Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) services to the extent necessary for progress in the general curriculum and IEP goals as determined by school personnel in consultation with at least one teacher.
2. If appropriate, the school must conduct a functional behavioral assessment and develop a behavioral plan.

**Change of placement:** A change of placement is defined as removal for more than ten consecutive school days or for a series of shorter removals (exceeding 10 days in total) with consideration of the length and total time removed, as well as the proximity and similarity of behavior. On the date of a decision to make a removal constituting a change of placement, families/guardians must be notified of the decision and the procedural safeguards.

Within ten school days of a decision resulting in a change of placement, the team must conduct a manifestation determination. The meeting must include representatives of the school, families/guardians and any other relevant members. The team must consider all relevant information in the scholar's file, teacher observations, and relevant information from the families/guardians. The team must determine whether the conduct was: (1) caused by the disability; or (2) had a direct and substantial relationship to the disability; or (3) was a direct result of the district's failure to implement the IEP. If any of these criteria are met, then the conduct is a manifestation of the scholar's disability.

If the team determines that the conduct was a manifestation of the disability, the scholar must be returned to his/her placement. The parties, however, may change the IEP and placement through the team process. Also, the team must conduct a functional behavioral assessment and implement a behavior intervention plan or, if a behavioral plan already exists, review the plan and make any necessary modifications.

If the team determines that the conduct was not a manifestation of the disability, the school discipline can be put into effect. The scholar is entitled, however, to receive educational services to enable progression in the general curriculum and IEP goals. The team must determine which services are necessary and the setting where they will be provided.

**Appeal Rights:** When a parent/guardian/guardian disagrees with the Team's decision on "manifestation determination," or an alternative placement, the families/guardians have the right to request an expedited hearing from the Bureau of Special Education Appeals. Placement pending the appeal is in the alternative setting as determined by the team for the duration of the discipline or completion of the appeal.

**Exceptions for Specified Conduct:** Under certain special circumstances as defined by federal law, school personnel may place the scholar in an interim alternative setting for 45 school days, without regard to the manifestation determination. These special circumstances include incidents where the scholar possesses, uses, sells or solicits illegal drugs, carries or possesses a weapon, or inflicts serious bodily injury while on school premises or at a school function. The federal definition for serious bodily injury means bodily injury that involves:

1. A substantial risk of death;

2. Extreme physical pain
3. Protracted and obvious disfigurement; or
4. Protracted loss or impairment of a bodily member, organ or mental facility.

Otherwise, if the scholar's continuation in the current placement is substantially likely to cause injury to himself/herself or others the district may request an expedited hearing for an order to place a scholar in an alternative setting for a period not to exceed 45 school days. The district also has the right to seek a court injunction.

Scholars with Disabilities under Section 504 Scholars who are not eligible for services under the IDEA, but who have disabilities within the meaning of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act are entitled to certain procedural protections associated with Section 504.

Complaint Process: Both the school and the Board work in conjunction with one another to hear and resolve any complaints by families. If a problem arises, both the school and the Board encourage the complainant to address the problem directly with the staff member(s). If the complainant is dissatisfied with the proposed resolution by the appropriate faculty or staff member, the complaint should be delivered in writing to the Head of School. The Head of School will receive 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 Head of School will present a decision to the complainant. The Board will not hear complaints that have not followed this procedure.

If the complaint has still not been resolved to the parent/guardian's satisfaction, the parent/guardian should contact the Governing Board Chair about placing the issue on the agenda for the next Governing Board meeting. Notifying the Board Chair (or Head of School, or any other board member) of the issue, however, is not a guarantee that the issue will actually be placed on the Board's agenda. Also, the parent/guardian should bear in mind that the more information that a board member receives about the issue outside of the properly noticed open meeting of the Board, the more likely that particular board member will have to recuse himself or herself from discussion and voting on the issue.

#### **4.8 Field Trips**

The school's curriculum may sometimes call for outside learning experiences. During these activities, it is important for all scholars to be responsible for their behavior since the site of the activity is a temporary extension of the school grounds. A permission slip that allows scholars to attend each school field trip will be sent home prior to the trip and must be signed by a parent/guardian or guardian. Scholars who fail to return the signed slip – or who are not permitted to attend the particular trip as a result of a loss of privileges – will not be eligible to participate and will be required to remain either in another classroom or in the office during the field trip. If families or other volunteers assist with field trips, scholars must give these families or other volunteers the same respect they would give to teachers. Appropriate behavior must be maintained when attending school-sponsored events, and riding on school-provided transportation. No younger/older siblings who are not enrolled with Persistence Prep may attend the field trips due to safety. Inappropriate behavior may result in community violations, suspension, or loss of field trip privileges. If school staff believe the scholar to be a safety concern, a parent/guardian/guardian will be required to attend the field trip in order for the scholars to be allowed to attend the field trip.

## 4.9 Forgery

Shared information and constant communication among teachers, scholars, and families are crucial to the success of the school. Progress regarding academic and behavioral performance will be conveyed through a variety of means, including progress reports and report cards, to be brought home by scholars, signed by families, and returned by scholars the next school day. Scholars who forge their parent/guardian or guardian's signature, or forge parent/guardian or guardian approval on any official or unofficial school communication, including community violations, may face an out-of-school suspension.

## Section 5: Building Safety and Security

There are a number of basic procedures the school has in order to ensure the safety and security of its scholars and staff. Cooperation on everyone's part will go a long way in guaranteeing that the business of the school – teaching and learning – can take place.

### 5.1 Closed Campus

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

### 5.2 Visitors/Volunteers

**Visitors:** Persistence Prep is happy to have visitors. Anyone, including family members who wish to visit the school, must first call the office to set up an appointment. Our Office Manager will make every attempt to arrange the visit within 24 hours of the request. Visitors to the building must sign in and out in the office on the iPad through the ENVOY software. A notification will be sent to the staff member you are visiting and they will meet you in the office to escort you to the proper location in the building. While in the building, all visitors must wear a visitor badge.

**Volunteers:** As a family member, you are an essential part of the Persistence Prep Charter School community. Your input is welcome on all levels and volunteerism is encouraged in the school throughout the year. Volunteer opportunities are plentiful. A volunteer coordinator will organize and schedule family volunteers. When volunteering in the school, please keep in mind the following:

- You should arrange with the teacher the specific time you would like to volunteer at the school ahead of time. If you are unable to keep your scheduled time, please let the school know.
- Younger siblings should not accompany a parent/guardian/guardian to school during his/her volunteer time.
- When in the classroom, please support the school philosophy and model the code of behavior scholars and staff follow school wide.

Volunteers often inadvertently have access to sensitive information. Any information about scholars or their grades, discipline, or any personally identifiable information about School employees, including address, salary, Social Security number, or telephone number, etc. is to remain confidential. If a volunteer has a concern involving something that is witnessed or overheard it should be discussed with a faculty member or the Head of School. If a volunteer disregards this policy, the privilege of volunteering may be revoked. All employees of charter schools, and school volunteers who work with scholars, shall be fingerprinted and have a criminal background check conducted as required by statute.

Any visitor, including families and guardians, who do not report to the office or are found in the building without authorization will be asked to leave immediately. Visitors should wear visitor badges at all times to indicate that they have checked-in at the main office.

### **5.3 Scholar Searches**

In order to maintain the security of all scholars, Persistence Prep reserves the right to conduct searches of its scholars and their property. If searches are conducted, the school will ensure that the privacy of the scholars is respected to the greatest extent possible, and that scholars and their families are informed of the circumstances surrounding and results of, the search. School cubbies and desks, which are assigned to scholars for their use, remain the property of the school and scholars have no expectation of privacy in these areas. All school premises are subject to random searches by school officials at any time.

### **5.4 Emergency Drills**

**Fire Drills and Lockdown Drills:** During the first month of school PPACS will host a Safety Day with the Buffalo Police Department and the Buffalo Fire Department to practice all safety procedures. Once a month throughout the school year, scholars and staff will participate in fire drills to ensure that the entire school community is familiar with the appropriate response in the event of an emergency. It is important for scholars to follow instructions quickly and quietly during an emergency drill. Procedures are as follows:

## **Section 6: Family Involvement**

Persistence Prep is an academically rigorous, disciplined, and joyful elementary school in which all members of the school community – board members, leaders, teachers, families and scholars – understand and are driven by the mission of college. We believe in the importance of working together to make a positive impact in the academic growth, character growth, and development of every child. Although the responsibility of making decisions of school policy belongs to the Governing Board and Head of School, families are involved on an individual level and through organized parent/guardian groups. We recognize that an effective partnership between school and home sets each scholar up for success by garnering family support of our school and reinforcement in the home for the school's activities and expectations.

## 6.1 Family Communication

It is vitally important that the school has methods of contacting families or other family members at all times. This is of critical importance in case of emergency, illness, or behavior requiring immediate family contact. Families are advised to notify the office of moves, changes of home or emergency telephone numbers, and/or places of employment.

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

## 6.2 Parent/guardian and Family Involvement

Family involvement in a child's educational life is critical to a child's success. We encourage families to develop strong positive partnerships with the school.

**Visiting Classes:** Our school has an open door policy that allows family members to sit in on class during any time AFTER the first month of school. During the beginning of school, it is critical for scholars to transition into their new setting, and the presence of families in the classroom can slow this process. Beginning in October, we encourage families to come into the classroom and see our dedicated teachers and scholars at work. Please do not bring other children into the classroom. When observing in the classroom, families are asked not to disrupt the education of their child or of other children or to attempt to conduct individual conversations with the teacher during instructional time. Family members who are disruptive to the educational process will be asked to leave. Visitors need to sign in at the office before visiting a classroom and wear a visitor badge while in the school.

**Family Orientation:** New families of Persistence Prep are asked to bring their children in to the school before the start of school to meet with school staff and review expectations. These sessions will last approximately 1.5 hours; a family is only required to attend one session. It is critical that all families and children attend this initial Orientation session. At the orientation, teachers will explain vital information about class rules and discipline systems, class specific policies, give an overview of the general daily schedule, and answer any general questions that families have about the classroom. It will also give families a chance to meet families of other scholars in the school.

**Home Visits.** Members of the school's staff visit every new family's home prior to the start of school, or soon after enrollment for scholars who enter mid-year as an initial opportunity to build strong relationships, as we learn about the interests of our scholars, as well as the hopes and dreams their families have for them.

**Curriculum Nights:** We are excited about our curriculum at the school and want to share what is going on in our classrooms. Throughout the year, we will hold parent/guardian curriculum nights, and we encourage all families who can attend to do so. We will send out a calendar at the start of the year that has all of the dates for the monthly curriculum nights.

**Progress Reports:** Scholar achievement data and behavior progress is communicated with families throughout the school year. Families receive reports that outline: (1) their child’s academic proficiency regarding prioritized standards in every subject, (2) the targeted intervention the school will provide in the coming weeks to maximize academic progress, and (3) tangible support to be provided by the family at home.

**Volunteer at Persistence Prep.** Families are asked to host and give tours to school visitors, assist classroom teachers with various needs, serve as chaperones for school field trips, and participate in planning sessions for school activities that support the school’s mission. All employees of charter schools, and school volunteers who work with scholars, shall be fingerprinted and have a criminal background check conducted by the New York State Department of Public Safety and the FBI. We demonstrate appreciation of all of our families for entrusting us to educate their children to the highest quality, and we honor and recognize families that go above and beyond the required efforts to enhance their scholar’s achievement and our mission.

**Community Newsletter:** Community newsletters will be sent home about once a month. The newsletters will have critical information about upcoming school events, and families are asked to read the newsletter carefully.

**Family Achievement Conferences:** Family Achievement Conferences are a crucial component of our educational program. A parent/guardian or guardian is expected to attend conferences as indicated on the school calendar, and at other times as requested by the classroom teacher or Head of School. Families should plan on attending a 30-minute conference during that school day or at a pre-arranged time before or after school during that week.

## **Section 7: General School Information**

### **7.1 Address**

Persistence Preparatory Academy Charter School  
378 Urban Street Avenue  
Buffalo, NY 14211  
Telephone: 716-235-1520  
[www.persistenceprep.org](http://www.persistenceprep.org)

### **7.2 Phone Use**

Although Persistence Prep aims to have as much communication as possible with families, it would take an incredible amount of staffing and resources to provide message services, and we cannot guarantee that messages will actually reach scholars or teachers during the day. Teachers will, however, receive messages after 4:00 pm. Scholars are prohibited from using school telephones unless it is an emergency that requires immediate attention.

The office phone is a business phone and should be used by scholars for emergencies only. If families need to leave a message for their child, they should call the office, to leave a message before 12:30 p.m. Scholars will not be called from class to the office to speak with a family member except in case of an emergency.

### 7.3 Lost and Stolen Property

We strongly encourage families to ensure that children do not bring valuable objects to school. Any items that scholars bring to school which may cause disruption will be confiscated at the school. We make every reasonable effort to return all personal property to a parent/guardian; however, the school is not responsible for replacing lost or stolen property or compensating the family for the value of that property.

### 7.4 Birthday Celebrations

On the last Friday of each month of the school year, we celebrate all of our scholars who have birthdays in that month. This ensures that scholars' birthdays are celebrated in a way that does not interrupt the academic day. On the Monday prior to the last Friday of the month, families should request approval from teachers if they want to bring any celebratory items to class. Families will be informed if there is a food allergy in the class; if such an allergy exists, we ask families to be considerate and avoid that food product in birthday snacks. Families are not required to send birthday treats to school, and the Persistence Prep community will sing "Happy Birthday" regardless of whether families have sent anything to school. Please also note that children may not distribute invitations to parties within the school building unless every member of the class is invited. Families, guardians, family, and friends are asked not to have flowers, cakes, balloons, etc. delivered to school for scholar celebrations. These are disruptive in the classroom and are a safety concern at school. If they are delivered, they will be kept in the office and the scholar's parent/guardian/guardian will be notified to pick up these items. According to the New York State Department of Health Services, all food distributed in the classes must be pre-packaged and store-bought.

If your child does not celebrate birthdays, please send a note in writing informing us that your child is not permitted to participate in birthday celebrations. This note will be held in the scholars' file.

### 7.5 Enrollment Policies

Persistence Preparatory Academy Charter School is an open-enrollment public charter school that does not charge tuition and does not administer entrance examinations. Enrollment is based on a fair and equitable system, which provides for an Open Registration Period, a lottery, if necessary, and a Waitlist.

*Persistence Prep does not discriminate in admission by race, color, religion, national origin, sex, handicap, or any characteristic against which discrimination is prohibited by applicable law, and operates on a nondiscriminatory basis throughout the institution.*

### Open Enrollment

**How to Apply:** During the Open Enrollment Period, defined below, families/guardians may complete and submit an application using the Schoolmint platform.

Persistence Prep's open enrollment period begins on November 1<sup>st</sup> of each calendar year and ends April 1st at 11:59 pm ("Open Enrollment Period"). The Open Enrollment period is not first-come, first served. Only Priority Status scholars, as defined below, who have submitted a complete

Application to the school are guaranteed admission during the Open Enrollment Period. All submitted applications will be entered into SchoolMint with the date and time the application was received. Following the Open Enrollment Period, applications will be counted to determine if any grade level has received a number of applications that exceed available seats. In this event, the school will hold a public random lottery to determine enrollment for the impacted grade level. Priority Status scholars are not subject to the lottery and only Enrollment Packets submitted during the OPEN ENROLLMENT PERIOD are included within that lottery pool.

Applications received after the Open Enrollment Period will not be eligible to enter the open enrollment lottery. Except for applications received from Priority Status scholars, applications will be processed on a first-come, first-served basis behind applications received during the Open Enrollment Period and will be subject to the waitlist discussed below. A scholar is considered “enrolled” at Persistence Prep when the school has received the scholar’s complete Enrollment Packet, including supplementary documents, and the school has notified the family of the scholar’s enrollment.

Persistence Prep accepts scholars off of the waitlist as space becomes available throughout the school year. Persistence Prep will fill available seats at all grade levels throughout the school year as they become available.

### **Lottery**

Persistence Prep's Open Enrollment Period for the 2023-2024 school year ends on April 1, 2023 at 11:59 pm. If applications for a grade exceed the number of available spaces for that grade, Persistence Prep will have a public lottery the first week of April. The school will randomly select applicants for enrollment during the lottery process until the grade level capacity is met; all other eligible scholars will be placed on a waitlist for that grade level. Scholars selected up to that point will be notified of their successful enrollment at Persistence Prep. The School will continue to fill open spots using the computer-generated waitlist for each grade level. Scholars selected through the lottery after that grade level’s capacity has been reached will be placed on the grade-specific waitlist in the order their name was selected. The School will then notify families of their scholar’s waitlist position.

### **Waitlist/Priority Status**

Scholars who submit a complete application after the Open Enrollment Period will be offered enrollment if there is space available in the grade level of interest. If space is not available, the scholar will be placed on a waitlist for the grade level based on the date he/she submitted the completed application to the school; however, scholars with applicable and verifiable enrollment priorities will receive waitlist numbers according to their priority type (see Priority Status discussion below).

Families with children on the waitlist are encouraged to advise the school of any change in their contact information so that they may be reached if an opening develops for which their child is eligible. Families are also asked to notify the school if they no longer wish to have their child included on the waitlist, so that the waitlist can be updated accordingly.

It is not possible for us to determine your child’s chances of being offered a spot. Once our classes are full, any spots that open up are the result of scholar withdrawals. Although we do typically see



a number of spots open up before the start of school, we have no way of knowing in which grades spots will open up or how many spots will become available.

**Applications Eligible for Priority Status:** The following types of applications are eligible for “Priority Status”, and in the following order:

1. Returning Persistence Prep scholars
2. Siblings of currently enrolled Persistence Prep scholars\*
3. Siblings of scholars selected through the lottery\*
4. Children of employees of Persistence Prep
5. Residents of the City of Buffalo

*\*Sibling Priority Policy:* Sibling priority for this school only applies when the incoming applicant has a sibling that is officially enrolled at, or currently attending, Persistence Prep.

1. A “sibling” is defined as an immediate family member of the applicant, or a blended family member of the applicant that resides under the same roof as the applicant.
2. The sibling must be currently enrolled at the same school to which the applicant is applying.
3. If the sibling withdraws from the school before the applicant is officially enrolled at Persistence Prep, the applicant may not receive Priority Status.
4. Priority status does not guarantee placement.

### **Process for Re-Enrolling Scholars**

Currently enrolled scholars will automatically be given Priority Status for the next school year unless the parent/guardian/guardian indicates to Persistence Prep that their scholar will not be returning. During the spring of each year, Persistence Prep will send a survey to families to indicate whether they plan to keep their scholar in the school, as well as if they have incoming siblings to get an estimate of projected enrollment numbers for the following year. Families/guardians will be given an opportunity at the beginning of each school year to update their returning child’s information; however, it is ultimately the parent/guardian/guardians’ responsibility to notify Persistence Prep of such changes. If a currently enrolled scholar fails to attend Persistence Prep within the first ten (10) days of classroom instruction, the scholar will be automatically withdrawn and lose his or her Priority Status designation as well as any entitlements associated with that designation.

### **Homeless Education Policy**

Persistence Prep will comply with the provisions of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act of 2001 (the “McKinney-Vento Act”) as well as any applicable regulations, as well as Arizona state laws and regulations concerning the education of homeless scholars.

The Head of School will designate a staff person as liaison for homeless scholars who will carry out duties as assigned. Among those duties will be the responsibility to coordinate activities and programs in the best interest of homeless scholars as set forth in the McKinney-Vento Act.

## McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Procedure for the Identification of Homeless Children & Youth

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Liaison will identify scholars experiencing homelessness during enrollment by ensuring the following:

- Family to complete McKinney-Vento Enrollment Questionnaire.
- Liaison will follow-up with family to obtain additional information, if needed.
- Liaison will post the Educational Rights of Homeless Scholars Posters at enrollment counters.
- Liaison will include the Educational Rights of Homeless Scholars in the enrollment packet.

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Liaison will identify scholars experiencing homelessness during the academic year by ensuring the following:

- Liaison will train all staff who have interaction with scholars including the following:
  - Bus Drivers
  - Teachers
  - Resource Officers
  - Enrollment Counselors
  - Front Office Staff
- Liaison will provide the Educational Rights of Homeless Scholars two additional times during the academic year in one or more of the following means: <sup>[L]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>
  - Newsletters
  - Pamphlets
  - Scholar Handbook
  - Website
  - Posted on the front bulletin.

### **Persistence Prep Dispute Resolution Process**

If a dispute arises over school selection or enrollment for a scholar eligible under the McKinney-Vento Act – The child or youth shall be immediately admitted to the school in which enrollment is sought, pending resolution of the dispute. Persistence Prep will provide its share of the transportation to the school selected for the duration of the dispute resolution process. The child, youth, parent/guardian, or guardian shall be referred to Persistence Prep’s Local Educational Liaison, Kela Powers, who shall carry out the dispute resolution process as expeditiously as possible after receiving notice of the dispute. In the case of an unaccompanied youth, Ms. Powers shall ensure that the youth is immediately enrolled in school pending the resolution of the dispute.

Ms. Powers shall work through the expedited dispute resolution process. For Persistence Prep that process involves:

- A. Ms. Powers gathering all information and making a final decision;
- B. Ms. Powers will review HCY Dispute Resolution Form as submitted by parent/guardian, guardian or unaccompanied youth. Ms. Powers will meet with parent/guardian, guardian or unaccompanied youth to discuss the reason for complaint.
- C. A final decision will be made within 5 school days of receiving the complaint.
- D. Persistence Prep shall provide the parent/guardian, guardian, or homeless youth with:
  1. a written explanation of the school’s decision regarding school selection or enrollment; and

2. written forms so that, if dissatisfied with the school's decision, the parent/guardian, guardian or youth may appeal the decision to the state level.

## 7.6 Registration and Records

Registration: Enrollment forms need to be filled out for each child to be registered at Persistence Prep. The forms should be submitted to the school office along with the following documents:

- A copy of the pupil's birth certificate or other acceptable proof of age;
- An up-to-date record of immunizations (this is usually a 4x6 blue booklet);
- Last report card (unless registering for kindergarten);
- Custody papers (if applicable);
- IEP, psychological reports, and/or other documentation of special education (if applicable);
- Proof parent/guardian's Arizona residency.

If a child is transferring from another school, and in order to complete the registration process, Persistence Prep will need the records from the child's previous school. This documentation should include a withdrawal form, the child's immunization history and a copy of his/her birth certificate, as well as his/her complete academic and disciplinary records, including any special needs or information. A request form may be obtained at the school office. Official transcripts should be sent to Persistence Prep directly by the previously attended school or, if hand delivered, the transcripts should arrive sealed with a signature across the back of the envelope. If your child was home-schooled, a signed description of the curriculum and course content mastered must also be provided.

Families have the right of access to the records of their children. The school reserves the right to have a 24-hour waiting period in order to maintain the smooth flow of school business, and to charge a reasonable fee for the cost of copying records. Non-custodial families also have the right of access to records, unless the school has received a court document to the contrary.

## 7.7 Health Information

Health screenings are provided annually in order to identify scholars with health problems such as vision or hearing deficits that may now, or in the future, affect their education. Families/guardians are requested to notify the office if a scholar has a health problem. School personnel make every effort to comply with physicians' recommendations.

Families and guardians are requested to keep scholars home if the following symptoms are present: nausea and/or vomiting, elevated temperature, yellow or green nasal discharge, red or inflamed eyes, cold symptoms, any skin rash unless it has been diagnosed by a physician as non-infectious, severe headache, or other pain. State law requires that scholars be excluded from school if they are suspected of having a communicable disease.

**Emergency contact:** Families/guardians must make arrangements to have either a parent/guardian, neighbor, or other responsible person available at all times to pick up a child who is ill. Because it is occasionally necessary to contact families/guardians, it is very important that families/guardians inform the school immediately of any phone number or address changes. School

officials may contact Child Protective Services if a child is not picked up within two hours of the parent/guardian/guardian being contacted.

**Chicken Pox:** The scholar must remain home seven to ten days after the first pox appear so that all pox can be completely scabbed over before the scholar returns to school.

**Emergency Form:** Families are required to complete an emergency medical referral form for each of their children every year. Tell us how to contact you or another responsible adult if your child becomes ill or is injured at school. Families are expected to notify school officials regarding scholars' health problems including allergies to foods, medicine, insect stings, etc. It is important to notify the office of your address, home phone number, business phone or emergency phone number changes during the school year.

**Flu:** School officials immediately send home scholars who exhibit an abrupt onset of any of the following symptoms: fever, chills, headache, muscle aches, vomiting, or severe sore throat.

#### Health Screening Programs

- **Hearing:** We follow the guidelines recommended by the Arizona Department of Health Hearing Conservation program. Hearing tests are given to scholars at specified grade levels.
- **Vision:** We follow the guidelines of the Arizona Department of Health Services Vision program. Vision tests are given to pupils at specified grade levels.
- **Pink Eye:** Pink eye (conjunctivitis) is an eye infection with symptoms of red, swollen, runny and/or sticky eyelids, especially in the morning. Bacteria or a virus can cause pink eye that are easily spread from person to person by contact with discharge from the infected person's eyes. When it is necessary to send a child home because of pink eye symptoms, we encourage the parent/guardian to call the child's doctor and report the symptoms. The doctor will then decide if an antibiotic eye medication is necessary. If medication is prescribed, the child can return to school after using the medication for 24 hours.

#### **New York State Immunization Requirements**

Many of the New York State health mandates affect Elementary School aged scholars. The following are state requirements:

- Four to Five doses of tetanus, pertussis, and diphtheria toxoid
- Three or more doses of polio vaccine
- Two doses of measles and one dose of rubella vaccine
- One dose of mumps vaccine
- Complete Hepatitis B series
- Chickenpox vaccine for scholars born after Jan. 1, 1994
- Tdap booster for scholars born on or after Jan. 1, 1994.

These immunizations are required by the state of New York and enforced by state law; scholars may be barred from attending school until the requirements have been met. Families must provide written documentation of these immunizations as well as school physicals on an annual basis to the school nurse. There are several local service providers that may provide assistance with both immunizations and school physicals. Please contact the school nurse or the main office for connections to those agencies.

**Over-the-Counter(OTC) Medication Policy:** Administration of prescription medication is governed by the school's separate Policy for Administration of Prescription Medications at School. For over-the-counter (OTC) medications, families must fill out an Emergency Information Card that will remain on file in the nurse's office. This form will also allow families to indicate permission for the scholar to take specific OTC medication (e.g., acetaminophen or ibuprofen). If a scholar must take any OTC medications while at school, the parent/guardian must bring the OTC medication to the health office and complete an additional permission form with signed instructions for administration. Dosage requested by the parent/guardian or guardian shall be in keeping with the manufacturer's recommendations. Each instance of administration of a prescription or non-prescription (OTC) drug shall be documented in the school's database by the administering office staff. The school does not provide any medications; therefore, families will need to provide any OTC medications their child will need. This includes cough drops, ibuprofen, antacids and acetaminophen. Scholars are not permitted to keep OTC medications on their person or in their backpacks on campus (all drugs, including cough drops, are kept locked in the health office). The Head of School must be notified immediately of scholars suspected of breaching these regulations. All medication must be kept within the health office. If a scholar has regular medication needed daily, the school needs to be able to keep the medication rather than sending it home each day (inhaler, epipen, breathing treatment, etc).

**Restricted Physical Education Activities:** If for any reason you feel your child should have restricted physical education activities, please provide school officials with a doctor's statement giving the reason and the length of the restriction. This information will be forwarded to the classroom teacher.

**First Aid Provision and Medical Emergencies:** Minor accidents, cuts, scrapes, and bruises will generally be treated at the school by the school nurse and administrators. In the event that a child requires emergency medical care, a parent/guardian or guardian will be notified as soon as possible. If a parent/guardian, or other emergency contact cannot be reached, the school may need to initiate medical treatment. Thus, it is essential that we have on file each scholar's Office/Health Emergency Card, which provides up-to-date contact information for families and guardians, and which gives the school permission to initiate emergency medical treatment if a parent/guardian or guardian cannot be reached.

In the event of an emergency, the school will attempt to contact the parent/guardian or emergency contacts provided by the parent/guardian. If the condition is life threatening, beyond the scope of the health office staff, or the families/emergency contacts cannot be contacted, the school will contact Emergency Medical Services (EMS) to assess and treat the scholar. If medical transport is required, as determined by EMS, the families are responsible for any costs incurred.

## **7.8 Administration of Prescription Medication**

In the event that a physician and parent/guardian or legal guardian determine that a scholar needs medication which can be administered while the scholar is at school or during school activities, the following shall apply:

- All medication or testing equipment will be kept in the school office. In the case of diabetes, the parent/guardian or legal guardian shall also provide a diabetes medical management plan, signed by the scholar's physician. School personnel will not administer medication by injection or perform diabetes testing that involves breaking the skin unless the diabetes medical management plan provides specific written notice that the scholar's health would be seriously impaired without the injection or testing during school hours or school activities, and also provides specific written instructions for techniques used to determine the proper dosage of medication in a specific situation. It is the parent/guardian or legal guardian's responsibility to provide adequate staff training for administration of medicine or diabetes testing. In no event will school personnel administer medications in dosages not prescribed by a physician.

## **7.9 Freedom of Information Law "FOIL"**

Freedom of Information Law ("FOIL") Notice, which should, at a minimum, identify the records access officer and the records access appeals officer (and appropriate contact information for each), FOIL "regulations," information subject matter list, and the FOIL list of officers and employees (which should identify all personnel, including the board, along with their public office addresses and any public salaries). See the FOIL guidance at [www.newyorkcharters.org/category/operational-resources/compliance/](http://www.newyorkcharters.org/category/operational-resources/compliance/) for more information.

The FOIL policy can be found in Appendix A.

The FOIL Subject Matter List can be found in Appendix B.

## **7.10 Child Find**

The intent of Child Find is that schools identify, locate, and evaluate all children from birth through age 21 with delays or disabilities in order for the children to receive the supports and services they need. Public schools are responsible for "finding" eligible children and providing services needed for them to reach their developmental milestones or meet their educational needs. Child Find procedures include identification (screening), referral, and evaluation procedures. The Child Find process includes the diagnostic testing, the Scholar Supports Team (SST), and review of enrollment data and educational performance for transferring scholars. For children suspected of having a disability, the SST will recommend that a multidisciplinary evaluation team conduct a full and individual evaluation to determine eligibility and need for special education.

## 7.11 FERPA - Annual Notification to Families and Eligible Scholars Regarding Scholar Records

This Notification is required by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and provides you with important information regarding your rights as they relate to scholar educational records. It is directed to families (including a natural parent/guardian, a guardian or an individual acting as a parent/guardian in the absence of a parent/guardian or guardian) and eligible scholars (scholars aged 18 or older) or attending an institution of postsecondary education).

### Parent/guardian Rights

- **The Right to Inspect and Review the Scholar’s Educational Records.** If you wish to inspect/review the scholar’s educational records, please contact the Head of School to make an appointment to do so. You will be provided access to records within a reasonable period of time, but in no case more than 45 days after your request is received. School personnel will respond to reasonable requests for explanations and interpretations of the records. Persistence Prep will provide you with a copy of the records or make other arrangements for inspection and review of the requested records if its failure to do so would effectively prevent you from exercising your rights to inspect and review the records.
- **The Right to Consent to Disclosures of Personally Identifiable Information Contained in the Scholar’s Educational Records, Except to the Extent the Law Authorizes Disclosure Without Your Consent.** Persistence Prep will limit the disclosure of information contained in a scholar’s education records except: (1) By your prior, written consent; (2) As directory information; or (3) Under certain limited circumstances permitted by FERPA, the Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act of 2001 (USA PATRIOT Act), and the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Some instances in which disclosure is permitted without your consent are set forth below.

**Directory Information.** Your consent is not required for Persistence Prep to release the following scholar information designated as “directory information:” If you wish to refuse to permit Persistence Prep to release directory information, you must submit your written refusal to the Head of School’s Office within two weeks of the date of this notice.

	Date and Place of Birth	Class Designation
Address	Grade level or major field of study	Previous School or District Attended
Telephone	Participation in officially recognized activities and sports	Wt. and Ht. for athletic teams
Parent/guardian Name	Scholar Photograph	Dates of Attendance

Email	Degrees and awards received	
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**Disclosure To School Officials.** Persistence Prep may disclose personally identifiable information from a scholar’s education record without your consent to school officials who have a legitimate educational interest in the information. School officials include, but are not necessarily limited to:

- Administrators, supervisors, and teachers
- Counselors, therapists, and other non-teaching personnel
- Authorized volunteers or interns
- Temporary substitutes for administrative, supervisory, or teaching personnel
- Members of Governing Board, when acting in their official capacity
- Contracted consultants or other professionals (i.e., attorneys, auditors, evaluators)

A “legitimate educational interest” is the person’s need to know in order to fulfill the school official’s professional responsibility and/or to provide a service or benefit to the scholar or the scholar’s family.

- The Right to Seek Amendment of the Scholar’s Education Records that the Parent/guardian or Eligible Scholar Believes to Be Inaccurate, Misleading, or Otherwise in Violation of the Scholar’s Privacy Rights. If you believe the scholar’s records contain information that is inaccurate, misleading, or in violation of the scholar’s privacy or other rights, you may ask Persistence Prep to amend the record. You are also entitled to a hearing to present evidence that the record should be changed if Persistence Prep decides not to alter it according to your request. A form for this purpose and additional information is available in the Head of School’s office.
- The Right to File a Complaint with the U.S. Department of Education Concerning Alleged Failures by Persistence Prep to Comply with the Requirements of FERPA. You are entitled to file a Complaint with the U.S. Department of Education if you believe Persistence Prep has violated FERPA.

Persistence Prep complies with FERPA (20 U.S.C. § 1232g and § 1232h; 34 C.F.R. Part 99); the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. § 1400 et seq.; 34 C.F.R. Part 300); and A.R.S. §§ 15-141, 15-142.

Families and eligible scholars have a right to file a complaint concerning alleged failures by a school district to comply with the requirements of the scholar records laws and regulations with the Arizona Department of Education. Complaints relative to federal statutes and regulations governing scholar records may be filed with the Family Policy Compliance Office, U.S. Department of Education.

**Title I – Right to Know**

We are pleased to notify you that in accordance with the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*, you have the right to request information regarding the professional qualifications of your child’s teacher. Specifically, you may request the following:



- Whether the teacher has met State qualification and licensing criteria for the grade levels and subject areas in which the teacher provides instruction.
- Whether the teacher is teaching under emergency or other provisional status through which State qualification or licensing criteria has been waived.
- The baccalaureate degree major of the teacher and any other graduate certification or degree held by the teacher, and the field of discipline of the certification or degree.
- Whether the child is provided services by paraprofessionals and, if so, their qualifications.

If you would like to receive this information, please provide a written request to our Main Office.

### 7.12 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

IDEA is a federal law that protects the rights of scholars with disabilities. In addition to standard school records, for children with disabilities education records could include evaluation and testing materials, medical and health information, Individualized Education Programs and related notices and consents, progress reports, materials related to disciplinary actions, and mediation agreements. Such information is gathered from a number of sources, including the scholar's families and staff of the school of attendance. Also, with parent/guardian permission, information may be gathered from additional pertinent sources, such as doctors and other health care providers. This information is collected to assure the child is identified, evaluated, and provided a Free Appropriate Public Education in accordance with state and federal special education laws. Each agency participating under Part B of IDEA must assure that at all stages of gathering, storing, retaining and disclosing education records to third parties that it complies with the federal confidentiality laws. In addition, the destruction of any education records of a child with a disability must be in accordance with IDEA regulatory requirements.

### 7.13 Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973

Persistence Preparatory Academy, along with our partners Buffalo Hearing & Speech Center and Community Based Therapies, work collaboratively to provide services to all students with special needs. These services allow students to fully participate in school. If your child needs health services and accommodations under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, please contact the Director of Special Education and Scholar Supports to receive copies of necessary paperwork. Persistence Preparatory Academy **requires** a new approval for services each school year. All completed forms must be returned to the school nurse for approval by August 1<sup>st</sup>, for the new school year. This ensures that your child will receive approved services at the start of the new school year; forms sent after this date may delay processing.

There are three types of health services and accommodations forms:

1. **Medication Administration Forms (MAFs)** – Complete these forms to receive medicine or treatment at school (MAFs can be completed for: asthma, allergies, diabetes or other health conditions)

**2. Medically Prescribed Treatment (Non-Medication) Form** – Complete this form to request special procedures such as tube feeding catheterization, suctioning, etc. to be performed at school. This form may be used for all skilled nursing treatments.

**3. Request for Section 504 Accommodation(s)** – Complete this form to request special services such as a barrier-free building, elevator use, testing modification, etc.

#### **7.14 Custody**

In most cases, natural families shall be given reasonable access to their children at school and to their children's official school records. Exceptions to this will be made in cases where there are court orders restricting the rights of a parent/guardian to access a child and/or the child's official school records.

It shall be the responsibility of the natural parent/guardian who has a court order restricting the rights of the other (non-custodial) parent/guardian to a child or the child's official school records to notify school officials of the conditions of the court order and to provide school officials with a current copy of the court order. In cases in which a person other than the natural parent/guardian has been granted guardianship, the rights and privileges of the natural parent/guardian shall be considered divested, in the absence of court action granting the natural families specific rights. In cases of guardianship, the legal guardian shall be responsible for notifying school officials of the conditions of the guardianship and for providing school officials with all pertinent written documentation or changes.

#### **7.15 Reporting Child Abuse**

Child abuse is something that will not be ignored at Persistence Prep. All school employees are required by New York state law and school policy to report any suspected child abuse. Persistence Prep is required by law to report to Child Protective Services or the police department with jurisdiction any suspected non-accidental injury, sexual molestation, abuse, or neglect.

#### **7.16 Non-Discrimination**

Persistence Prep does not discriminate in admission to, access to, treatment in, or employment in its services, programs and activities, on the basis of race, color or national origin, in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI); on the basis of sex, in accordance with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972; on the basis of disability, in accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504) and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA); on the basis of age, in accordance with the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1974 (ADEA), or on the basis of pregnancy status in accordance with the Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978. In addition, no person shall be discriminated against in admission to the school on the basis of race, sex, color, creed, ethnicity, sexual orientation, mental or physical disability, age, or ancestry. Finally, no person shall be discriminated against in obtaining the advantages, privileges, or access to the courses of study offered by the school on the basis of race, sex, color, religion, national origin, or sexual orientation.

## 7.17 Harassment

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

### **Definition Of Harassment:**

**In General.** Harassment includes communications such as jokes, comments, innuendoes, notes, display of pictures or symbols, gestures, or other conduct that offends or shows disrespect to others based upon race, color, religion, national origin, age, gender, sexual orientation, or disability.

By law, what constitutes harassment is determined from the perspective of a reasonable person with the characteristic on which the harassment is based. What one person may consider acceptable behavior may reasonably be viewed as harassment by another person. Therefore, individuals should consider how their words and actions might reasonably be viewed by other individuals. It is also important for individuals to make it clear to others when a particular behavior or communication is unwelcome, intimidating, hostile or offensive.

**Sexual Harassment.** While all types of harassment are prohibited, sexual harassment requires particular attention. Sexual harassment includes sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and/or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:

1. Acceptance of or submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of employment or education.
2. The individual's response to such conduct is used as a basis for employment decisions affecting an employee or as a basis for educational, disciplinary, or other decisions affecting a scholar.
3. Such conduct interferes with an individual's job duties, education or participation in extracurricular activities. The conduct creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work or school environment.

**Harassment and Retaliation Prohibited:** Harassment in any form or for any reason is absolutely forbidden. This includes harassment by administrators, certified and support personnel, scholars, vendors and other individuals in school or at school related events. In addition, retaliation against any individual who has brought harassment or other inappropriate behavior to the attention of the school or who has cooperated in an investigation of a complaint under this policy is unlawful and will not be tolerated by Persistence Prep.

Persons who engage in harassment or retaliation may be subject to disciplinary action, including, but not limited to reprimand, suspension, termination/expulsion or other sanctions as determined by the school administration and/or Governing Board, subject to applicable procedural requirements.

## 7.18 Bullying and Cyberbullying

Bullying is illegal and will not be tolerated at Persistence Prep. Scholars have a right to be free from any form of bullying. Scholars, families, and school employees have a right and a responsibility to report incidents of bullying. Any scholar who engages in such behavior will face behavioral consequences through the school, and could face charges in the legal system.

Cyberbullying (bullying via the internet on any electronic device) that is conducted at school will be treated the same as in-person bullying and all consequences will apply. Scholars will be trained in what to do if they are being cyberbullied (starting in third grade).

## 7.19 Complaint Policy

**Introduction:** It is Persistence Prep's policy to ensure that scholars or families with a grievance relating to Persistence Prep, its administration, and/or other employees shall, except as otherwise set forth below, use a procedure which may resolve grievances as quickly and as fairly as possible.

**1. Initial Conversation:** If you or your child has a grievance you should discuss it informally with the teacher, administrator, coach, or staff member directly involved in the matter. We hope that the majority of concerns will be resolved at this stage.

**2. Where To File A Complaint.** Any scholar who believes that Persistence Prep has discriminated against or harassed her/him because of her/his race, color, creed, ethnicity, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, mental or physical disability, age, or ancestry in admission to, access to, treatment in, or employment in its services, programs, and activities may file a complaint in writing with the Director of Operations. If the Director of Operations is the person who is alleged to have caused the discrimination or harassment, the complaint may be filed with the Head of School. These individuals are listed below and are hereinafter referred to as "Grievance Administrators."

- Head of School
- Director of Operations

**Complaints of harassment by peers:** In the event the complaint consists of a scholar's allegation that another scholar is harassing him/her based upon the above-referenced classifications, the scholar may, in the alternative, file the complaint with the Dean of Culture.

**Complaints of discrimination based upon disability:** A scholar who alleges discrimination on the basis of disability relative to the identification, evaluation, or educational placement of that scholar, who because of a handicap needs or is believed to need special instruction or related services, pursuant to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Chapter 766, and/or the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act should first contact the Head of School. If the complaint remains unresolved after contacting the Head of School, the procedure set forth by the Governing Board of Trustees must be followed.

**Contents of Complaints and Timelines for Filing.** Complaints under this Grievance Procedure must be filed within 30 school days of the alleged discrimination. The complaint must be in writing. Any

person of the scholar's choosing, may assist the complainant with filing the complaint. The written complaint must include the following information:

1. The scholar's name and the parent/guardian's name who is filing the complaint on behalf of the scholar.
2. The name, address, telephone number, and e-mail address of the scholar's legal representative, if any.
3. The name of the person(s) alleged to have caused the discrimination or harassment (respondent).
4. A description, in as much detail as possible, of the alleged discrimination or harassment.
5. The date(s) of the alleged discrimination or harassment.
6. The name of all persons who have knowledge about the alleged discrimination or harassment (witnesses), as can be reasonably determined.
7. A description, in as much detail as possible, of how the scholar or parent/guardian wants the complaint to be resolved.

**Investigation and Resolution of the Complaint:** Respondents will be informed of the charges as soon as the Director of Operations or Head of School deems appropriate based upon the nature of the allegations, the investigation required, and the action contemplated. The Director of Operations, Head of School, or one of their designees will interview witnesses whom s/he deems necessary and appropriate to determine the facts relevant to the complaint, and will gather other relevant information. Such interviews and gathering of information will be completed within fifteen (15) school days of receiving the complaint.

Within twenty (20) school days of receiving the complaint, a member of the Leadership Team will meet with the scholar, parent/guardian and/or her/his representative to review the information gathered and, if applicable, to propose a resolution designed to stop the discrimination or harassment and to correct its effect. Within ten (10) school days of the meeting with the scholar, parent/guardian, and/or representative, the member of the Leadership Team will provide written disposition of the complaint to the scholar, parent/guardian and/or representative and to the respondent(s).

Notwithstanding the above, it is understood that in the event a resolution contemplated by Persistence Prep involves disciplinary action against an employee or a scholar, the complainant will not be informed of such disciplinary action, unless it directly involves the complainant (i.e., a directive to "stay away" from the complainant, as might occur as a result of a complaint of harassment).

All the timelines above will be implemented as specified, unless the nature of the investigation or circumstances prevent such implementation, in which case, the matter will be completed as quickly as practicable. If the timelines specified above are not met, the reason(s) for not meeting them must be clearly documented. In addition, it should be noted that in the event the respondent is subject to a collective bargaining agreement which sets forth a specific timeline for notice and/or investigation of a complaint, such timelines will be followed.

Confidentiality of scholars/respondents and witnesses will be maintained, to the extent possible.

Retaliation against someone because he/she has filed a complaint under this Grievance Procedure is strictly prohibited. Acts of retaliation may result in disciplinary action, up to and including suspension or expulsion/discharge.

**Appeals.** If the scholar/parent/guardian is not satisfied with the disposition of a complaint, the scholar/parent/guardian may appeal the disposition to Governing Board. The Governing Board will issue a written response to the appeal within 30 school days of receiving the appeal. The Board expects that all prior steps have been followed before action is taken at a Board level. All applicable public open meeting laws will be followed for the Board's meeting, including prior notice and the right of the employee to request that any potential employment action be held in an open meeting. The Board's decision is final.

**Appendix A:**

**PERSISTENCE PREPARATORY ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL FREEDOM OF INFORMATION POLICY**

The freedom of Information law, which took effect on January 1, 1978, gives you the right of access to many public records. Persistence Preparatory Academy Charter School has adopted a policy governing when, where, and how you can see public records. The policy can be seen where all records are kept.

**1. Designation of Records Access Officer**

(a) The Board of Trustees is responsible for insuring compliance with the Freedom of Information Law, and designates the following person(s) as records access officer(s):

**Adria Sortino  
Director of Operations  
Persistence Preparatory Academy Charter Schools  
378 Urban Street  
Buffalo, NY 14211**

**2. Location and Hours**

Records shall be available during all regular school hours for public inspection at:

<b>Persistence Preparatory Academy Charter School 378 Urban Street Buffalo, NY 14211</b>	<b>Persistence Preparatory Academy Charter School 378 Urban Street Buffalo, NY 14211</b>
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**3. Denial of access to records**

(a) Denial of access to records shall be in writing stating the reason therefor and advising the requester of the right to appeal to the Board of Trustees.

(b) If requested records are not provided promptly, as required in Section 6, such failure shall also be deemed a denial of access.

(c) The Board of Trustees shall determine appeals regarding denial of access to records under the Freedom of Information Law:

(d) Any person denied access to records may appeal within thirty days of a denial to:

**Elisha Tomasello  
Board Chair  
Persistence Preparatory Academy Charter Schools  
378 Urban Street  
Buffalo, NY 14211**

**4. Family Education Rights and Privacy Act:** The School will not disclose any information from a student's permanent record except as authorized pursuant to the Federal Education Rights and Privacy Act or in response to a subpoena as required by law. The parents or guardians of a student under the age of 18 years of age, or a student 18 years of age or older, are entitled to access to the student's school records by submitting a written request to the school leader.

**The school maintains a reasonably detailed current list, by subject matter, of all records in the school's custody or possession.**

**PERSISTENCE PREP ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOLS FREEDOM OF INFORMATION PUBLIC NOTICE**

The Freedom of Information Law, which took effect on January 1, 1978, gives you the right of access to many public records. Persistence Preparatory Academy Charter School has adopted a policy governing when, where, and how you can see public records. The policy can be seen where all records are kept. According to this policy, records can be seen and copied at:

<b>Persistence Preparatory Academy Charter School 378 Urban Street Buffalo, NY 14211</b>	<b>Persistence Preparatory Academy Charter School 378 Urban Street Buffalo, NY 14211</b>
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The Records Access Officer will help you exercise your right to access these public records. The Records Access Officer is:

**Adria Sortino  
Director of Operations  
Persistence Preparatory Academy Charter Schools  
378 Urban Street  
Buffalo, NY 14211**

If you are denied access to a record, you may appeal to the following person(s) or body:

**Elisha Tomasello  
Board Chair  
Persistence Preparatory Academy Charter Schools  
378 Urban Street  
Buffalo, NY 14211**

*Family Education Rights and Privacy Act:* The School will not disclose any information from a student's permanent record except as authorized pursuant to the Federal Education Rights and Privacy Act or in response to a subpoena as required by law. The parents or guardians of a student under the age of 18 years of age, or a student 18 years of age or older, are entitled to access to the student's school records by submitting a written request to the school leader.



**Appendix B:**

**Persistence Preparatory Academy Subject Matter List Pursuant to the Freedom of Information Law**

**Records Maintained by Persistence Preparatory Academy Charter School**

**ACCOUNTABILITY**

Correspondence

Comparative Performance Analysis Reports

Renewal Reports

School Visit Reports

Enrollment and Retention Targets Information

**Annual Reports**

**School Board Information**

Minutes

Agendas

New Trustee Information

Annual Disclosures

Policies (various, personnel, discipline, SPED discipline)

By-Laws

Code of Ethics

**Charters**

Requests for Change in Programs/Revisions

Charter agreements

Incorporation Papers (provisional charters)

501(c)(3) Tax Exempt IRS Letters

Reviews and Evaluations

Reports and Letters

Applications

**Complaints**

**Enrollment**

Student Applications

Application and Admissions Summaries

Student Recruitment and Marketing Efforts

**Facilities**

Certificates of Occupancy

Insurance Information

Lease/Purchase Agreements

Facility Completion Schedules

Correspondence

Miscellaneous

Mortgage/Bond/Financing Agreements

**Financial Information**

Budgets

Financial Statements

Initial Statements

Fiscal Dashboard Information

Audited Financial Statements

Management Letters

Policy and Procedure Manuals

Grant Information

Insurance Information

**Notification**

**Probation/Violations**

Violation Letters

Corrective Plans

Remedial Action Plans

Resolutions