



ESSENCE
PUBLIC SCHOOL

Scholar and Family Handbook

Preface

To Scholars and Parents:

Welcome to Essence Preparatory Public School! We wish this year to be an especially productive experience for each scholar. For this to happen, we must all work together: scholars, parents, and staff. This Scholar/Parent Handbook (“the Handbook”) is designed to help us accomplish this goal.

The Handbook is an overview of our school’s goals, services, and rules. It is an essential reference book describing what we expect of our scholars and parents/guardians, what they can expect of us, and how we will achieve our educational mission. We have attempted to make the language in this Handbook as straightforward as possible. Please note that the term “parent” is used to refer to the parent, legal guardian, or other person who has agreed to assume school-related responsibility for a scholar.

The Handbook is divided into six sections. The first section includes general information regarding school policy and procedures. The second section provides important health and safety information. The third section provides information about academics and grading. The fourth section is the scholar Code of Conduct, which is required by state law and intended to promote school safety and an atmosphere for learning. Both scholars and parents/guardians need to be familiar with the scholar Code of Conduct. The scholar Code of Conduct is also available in the front office at each campus, and is posted on the school’s website. The fifth section is especially for parents/guardians, with information regarding parental rights. Finally, the sixth section contains important notices regarding scholar information, computer resources, and electronic communication devices.

This Handbook is designed to be in harmony with Board Policy. Please be aware that the Handbook is updated yearly, while policy adoption and revision may occur throughout the year. Changes in policy and procedure that affect Handbook provisions will be made available to scholars and parents/guardians through newsletters and other communications. In case of conflict between Board Policy and any provision of this Handbook, the provision that was most recently adopted by the Board of Directors will be followed.

We ask our parents/guardians to review the entire Handbook with their scholars and to keep it as a reference during this school year. Parents or scholars with questions about the material in this Handbook should contact the front office.

Finally, you must complete and return the last three pages of the Handbook – to the front office. Electronic copy and electronic receipt will be available on our website.

On behalf of the entire Essence Preparatory staff and community, best wishes for a great 2022-2023 school year!

Mission:

Essence Preparatory Public School, through rigorous academics, intentional character development, and cultivating scholar knowledge of self, prepares all kindergarten through eighth grade scholars for high school, college, and beyond as leading agents of change in their communities.

RISE Creed:

Essence Scholars will RISE to the occasion.....

Responsibility

R~ We hold ourselves accountable to the highest standards of performance in pursuit of success.

Intellectual Investment

I~ We will push ourselves to engage deeply in all work.

Service

S~ We will become true change agents in our community by embracing a spirit of selfless service.

Excellence

E~ We aim for high-quality and exemplary attention to detail in everything we do.

Essence Preparatory VITALS:

Values, Interests, Temperament, Activities, Life Goals, & Strengths

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SECTION 1: GENERAL INFORMATION

Statement of Non-Discrimination

Essence Preparatory does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, color, national origin, sex or gender, disability, gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation, or age in providing educational services, activities, and programs, including vocational and career technology programs. Essence Preparatory complies with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended; Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972; Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990("ADA"), as amended, which incorporates and expands upon the requirements of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended; the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended; and any other legally-protected classification or status protected by applicable law.

Any questions or concerns about Essence Preparatory's compliance with these federal programs should be brought to the attention of the following persons designated as being responsible for coordinating compliance with these:

- The Title IX Coordinator for concerns regarding discrimination on the basis of sex/gender, is Dr. Daphene Carson, Director of Operations (dcarson@essenceprepsa.org)
- The ADA Coordinator for concerns against people with disabilities, Dr. Daphene Carson, Director of Operations (dcarson@essenceprepsa.org)
- Section 504 Coordinator, for concerns, Assistant Principal of Instruction, Lanece Carpenter, Sr. (Lanece Carpenter, Sr.).
- All other concerns regarding discrimination may be directed to the Chief Executive Officer, Akeem Brown (abrown@essenceprepsa.org).

General Admissions and Enrollment Information

Admission and enrollment of scholars shall be open to persons who reside within the geographic boundaries stated in the school's charter, and who are eligible for admission based on lawful criteria identified in the charter and in state law. The total number of scholars enrolled in Essence Preparatory shall not exceed the number of scholars approved in the charter or subsequent amendments. Total enrollment may further be limited by Essence Preparatory based on occupancy limitations, code compliance and staffing requirements as deemed necessary.

In accordance with state law, Essence Preparatory does not discriminate in its admissions policy on the basis of sex; national origin; ethnicity; religion; disability; academic, artistic, or athletic ability; or the district the child would otherwise attend.

Exclusion from Admission

As authorized by the Essence Preparatory charter and Texas Education Code § 12.111(a)(5)(A), scholars with a documented history of a criminal offense, a juvenile court

adjudication, or other discipline problems under Texas Education Code Chapter 37, Subchapter A may be excluded from admission and enrollment in Essence Preparatory School.

Submission of Applications and Admissions Lottery

Scholars wanting to attend Essence Preparatory must submit an application during the school's open enrollment period, which takes place from January 1 to March 30 each year, or as otherwise set by School Leadership. Enrollment forms are available at the main office, and online through the Essence Preparatory website.

If fewer applications than spots available are received, scholars will be offered admission on a first-come, first-served basis. If Essence Preparatory receives more applications than it has spots available in any grade level, it will conduct a random lottery. Each applicant selected during the lottery (up until all open seats are filled) will be offered admission. Once all enrollment spots have been filled by the lottery, the lottery will continue and applicants will be placed on a waiting list in the order in which they are drawn. If a vacancy arises before the commencement of the next school year, the individual on the waiting list with the lowest number assignment will be offered admission and then removed from the waiting list.

If an application is received after the application period has passed, the applicant's name will be added to the waiting list behind the names of the applicants who timely applied.

Families offered an enrollment seat will receive instructions for registering via phone and email. This notice will be sent no later than May 30th. Families must complete and return the registration packet by the published deadline in order to secure enrollment. If an enrollment offer is declined or if you do not complete the registration packet by the established deadline, your child's seat will be offered to the next potential scholar on the waiting list.

Exceptions to Lottery Process: Federal guidelines permit Essence Preparatory to exempt from the lottery scholars who are already attending Essence Preparatory; siblings of scholars already admitted to or attending Essence Preparatory; and children of Essence Preparatory's founders, teachers, and staff, so long as the total number of scholars allowed under this exemption constitutes only a small percentage of Essence Preparatory's total enrollment.

McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act of 2001

Homeless children and youth are ensured specific educational rights and protections. A listing of these specific rights may be obtained from Essence Preparatory by contacting the front office.

“Homeless children and youth” as defined and covered by the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act of 2001:

- Means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.
- Includes children and youth who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason.

- Are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative accommodations.
- Are living in emergency or transitional shelters.
- Are abandoned in hospitals, or are awaiting foster care placement.
- Children and youth who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.
- Children and youth who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations.

Parents of scholars in homeless situations can keep their scholars in their schools of origin (the school that the child or youth attended when permanently housed or the school in which the child or youth was last enrolled even if the scholar is now residing outside the school attendance area or school district) or enroll them in any public school that scholars living in the same attendance area are eligible to attend.

Scholar Information

Any scholar admitted to Essence Preparatory must have records, such as a report card and/or transcript from the previous school attended, to verify their academic standing. Verification of residency and current immunization records are also required. Every scholar enrolling in Essence Preparatory for the first time must present documentation of immunizations as required by the Texas Department of State Health Services.

No later than 30 days after enrolling in Essence Preparatory, the parent and school district in which the scholar was previously enrolled shall furnish records that verify the identity of the scholar. These records may include the scholar's birth certificate or a copy of the scholar's school records from the most recently attended school. Scholars will not be denied enrollment because they failed to meet this requirement.

Essence Preparatory will forward a scholar's records on request to a school in which a scholar seeks or intends to enroll without the necessity of the parents/guardians' consent.

Food Allergy Information

The parent of each scholar enrolled in Essence Preparatory must complete a form provided by Essence Preparatory that discloses (1) whether the child has a food allergy or a severe food allergy that should be disclosed to the school to enable it to take any necessary precautions regarding the child's safety and (2) specifies the food(s) to which the child is allergic and the nature of the allergic reaction.

For purposes of this requirement, the term "severe food allergy" means a dangerous or life-threatening reaction of the human body to a food-borne allergen introduced by inhalation, ingestion, or skin contact that requires immediate medical attention.

Essence Preparatory may also require information from a child's physician if the child has food allergies. Food allergy information forms will be maintained in the child's scholar records, and

shall remain confidential. Information provided on food allergy information forms may be disclosed to teachers, school counselors, school nurses, and other appropriate school personnel only to the extent consistent with Board policy and as permissible under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (“FERPA”).

Establishing Identification

Any of the following documents are acceptable for proof of identification and age: birth certificate; driver’s license; passport; school ID card; records, or report card; military ID; hospital birth records; adoption records; church baptismal record; or any other legal document that establishes identity.

Undocumented scholars Enrollment may not be denied to children who are not legally admitted into the United States.

Residency Verification The Texas Education Code authorizes schools to obtain evidence that a person is eligible to attend public schools. To be eligible for continued enrollment in Essence Preparatory, each scholar’s parent must show proof of residency at the time of enrollment. Residency may be verified through observation, documentation, and other means, including, but not limited to:

1. A recently paid rent receipt,
2. A current lease agreement,
3. The most recent tax receipt indicating home ownership,
4. A current utility bill indicating the address and name of the residence occupiers,
5. Mailing addresses of the residence occupiers,
6. Visual inspection of the residence,
7. Interviews with persons with relevant information,
8. Building permits issued to a parent on or before September 1st of the school year in which admission is sought (permits will serve as evidence of residency for the school year in which admission is sought only).

Falsification of residence on an enrollment form is a criminal offense.

School Calendar

Essence Preparatory operates according to the school calendar adopted annually by the Board of Directors. Holidays may be used as school make-up days for days lost due to bad weather. Families will receive a School Calendar with their First Day of School packet. The latest changes to the calendar will be available on the school’s website.

After School Care: (provided for free on year one which will be communicated by the campus):

- After School Care - 3:45pm-5:30pm

Drop-off and Pick-up Procedures

All scholars must be dropped off and picked up ONLY in the designated areas. Parents can also park and walk to drop off and pick up their child from the designated areas. The current drop off and pick up maps are available at the Front office.

Attendance

Regular attendance is expected of all Essence Preparatory scholars due to the rigor of our curriculum. Consistent school attendance is an essential component of each scholar's education. Official attendance is taken each day and recorded each instructional period. Tardies and early checkouts are also recorded each day.

Absence from school will affect a scholar's ability to succeed in class; therefore, scholars and parents/guardians should make every effort to avoid unnecessary absences. Additionally, state law mandates compulsory school attendance for children of a certain age, and Essence Preparatory policy deals with attendance for course credit and a scholar's final grade. These items are discussed below.

Attendance Triggers

In adherence to Essence Preparatory Public School attendance policy, Essence Preparatory will take actions to ensure that scholars are meeting attendance requirements. The leadership team, as well as the operations team will follow a set ladder of actions, according to the number of scholar absences. This eliminates any opportunity for a scholar to approach excessive absences without having had several levels of intervention.

Texas Compulsory Attendance Law

The state compulsory attendance law requires that a scholar between the ages of 6 and 19 must attend school and school-required tutorial sessions unless the scholar is otherwise legally exempted or excused. Essence Preparatory staff must investigate and report violations of the state compulsory attendance law. A scholar absent from school without permission from any class, from required special programs, or from required tutorials will be considered "truant" and subject to disciplinary action.

Notice to Parents: Under Texas Education Code § 25.095(a), you are hereby notified that if a scholar is absent from school on ten or more days or parts of days within a six-month period in the same school year, the scholar's parent is subject to prosecution under Texas Education Code § 25.093; and the scholar is subject to referral to a truancy court for truant conduct under Texas Family Code § 65.003(a).

Essence Preparatory shall notify a scholar's parent if the scholar has been absent from school, without excuse, on three days or parts of days within a four-week period. The notice will inform the parent that it is the parent's duty to monitor the scholar's school attendance and require the scholar to attend school; the scholar is subject to truancy prevention measures under Texas Education Code § 25.0915; and that a conference between school officials and the parent is needed to discuss the absences.

Attendance for Credit or Final Grade

To receive credit or a final grade in a class, a scholar must attend at least 90% of the days the class is offered. These days include both excused and unexcused absences. A scholar who attends fewer than 90% of the days the class is offered may be referred to the Attendance Review Committee to determine whether the absences were due to extenuating circumstances and how the scholar may regain credit or earn a final grade. The Attendance Review Committee will consist of the current Chief Learning Officer/Principal, Assistant Principal of Instruction, Dean of Empowerment and Culture, and PEIMS coordinator. If a scholar has 20 or more absences they will be required to attend summer school in order to earn credit.

The Attendance Review Committee will consider the following factors when determining whether there are extenuating circumstances for the absence:

1. All absences, whether excused or unexcused, must be considered, with consideration given to special circumstances as defined by the Texas Education Code.
2. For a scholar transferring into Essence Preparatory after school begins, including a migrant scholar, only those absences after enrollment will be considered.
3. In reaching consensus about a scholar's absences, the committee will attempt to ensure that its decision is in the best interest of the scholar.
4. The committee will consider whether the absences were for reasons over which the scholar or parent could exercise control.
5. The committee will consider the acceptability and authenticity of documentation expressing reasons for the scholar's absences.
6. The committee will consider the extent to which the scholar has completed all assignments, mastered the essential knowledge and skills, and maintained passing grades in the course or subject.
7. The scholar, parent or other representative will be given an opportunity to present any information to the committee about the absences and to discuss ways to earn or regain credit.

If credit is lost or a final grade is not earned due to excessive absences, the Attendance Review Committee will decide how the scholar may regain credit or earn a final grade. If the committee determines there are no extenuating circumstances and that credit or a final grade may not be earned, the scholar or parent may appeal the committee's decision to the Board of Directors by filing a written request with the Superintendent. The appeal notice must be postmarked to the following address within 10 days following the last day of instruction in the semester for which credit was denied:

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The appeal will then be placed on the agenda of the next regularly scheduled Board meeting. The Superintendent or designee shall inform the scholar or parent of the date, time, and place of the meeting.

Absence and Tardiness

When a scholar must be absent from school, parents/guardians are asked to call the school each day the scholar will be absent. Upon returning to school, the scholar must bring a note, signed by the parent, or a medical excuse signed and dated by a provider that describes the reason for the absence. Notes should be submitted to the school registrar, and may be scanned and emailed, submitted through the Essence Preparatory website, or faxed to the school. If a note is not received within 4 school days of the absence, the absence will be recorded as unexcused.

Because excessive absences are considered truancy under state law, Essence Preparatory reserves the right to take extreme absence cases to court.

Essence Preparatory recognizes two kinds of absences: excused and unexcused. scholars and parents/guardians should read this section carefully to understand the school's expectations. scholars and parents/guardians should also be aware of the school's policy regarding homework, quizzes, and tests following an absence.

State law allows exemptions to the compulsory attendance requirements for several types of absences if the scholar makes up all work. These include the following activities and events:

- Religious holy days.
- Required court appearances.
- Activities related to obtaining United States citizenship
- Service as an election clerk.
- Documented health-care appointments for the scholar or a child of the scholar, including absences for recognized services for scholars diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders. If a scholar returns to school the same day or attends part of the day prior to a doctor's appointment and then presents a doctor's note verifying the appointment, the absence is excused and the scholar is counted present. scholars should be picked up and signed out for early dismissal in the front office. We cannot call your scholar from the classroom until you are in the front office signing them out.
- For scholars in the conservatorship (custody) of the state.
- Mental health or therapy appointments.
- Court-ordered family visitations or any other court-ordered activity provided it is not practicable to schedule the scholar's participation in the activity outside of school hours.

A 6th, 7th, or 8th grade scholar may also be absent for up to two days per school year for purposes of visiting a college or university, so long as the scholar obtains permission for the visit from the CLO/Principal, follows the school's procedures to verify the visit, and makes up any work missed due to the absence.

Absences of up to five days will be excused for a scholar to visit with a parent, stepparent, or legal guardian who has been called to duty for, is on leave from, or immediately returned from certain deployments.

For religious holy days, required court appearances, activities related to obtaining citizenship, and services as an election clerk, one day of travel to the site and one day of travel from the site shall also be excused by Essence Preparatory.

The only additional excused absences are for personal illness, death in the immediate family (parent, sibling, grandparent, or member of the immediate household), a school-related absence or an absence approved in advance by CLO/Principal due to extenuating circumstances.

Unexcused Absences

Any absence not listed above or approved in advance by CLO/Principal due to extenuating circumstances will be considered an unexcused absence.

Tardiness and Late Arrival

If a scholar arrives late to school, they must report to the front office to sign in and receive a pass to class. A scholar is considered tardy if the scholar is not in their assigned class by 7:45 am. Repeated tardiness may result in School Interventions as allowed by the Scholar Code of Conduct. Late arrivals due to medical appointments will be excused, provided a medical note is submitted to the front office upon arrival.

Make-Up Work

If a scholar misses a class for any reason, a teacher may assign make-up work that incorporates the instructional objectives for the class and that will assist the scholar to master the essential knowledge and skills necessary to meet subject or course requirements. Scholars are responsible for obtaining and completing the make-up work in a satisfactory manner and within the time specified by the teacher.

When applicable, make-up work will be collected and held at the front office for parent/guardian to pick up.

Release of scholars

Parents/guardians signing a scholar out early from school must provide a reason and official identification. Scholars will only be released to approved persons listed in the scholar's registration file. Because class time is important, doctor's appointments or meetings with other professionals should be scheduled at times when the scholar will not miss instructional time, if possible.

Closed Campus

Scholars are not permitted to leave campus for lunch. Parents are welcome to eat lunch with their child in the cafeteria on designated Family Lunch Days. On these days, parents/guardians may only bring lunch for their own children. Scholars and adults may not bring in or give away food to other scholars during lunch times.

Withdrawals

Voluntary Withdrawal

A scholar under 18 years of age may be withdrawn from school only by a parent/guardian. Essence Preparatory requests notice from the parent at least three days in advance so that records and documents may be prepared. Parents may obtain a withdrawal form from the main office. The parent shall also provide the name of the new school in which the scholar will be enrolled, and must sign the withdrawal request to document that the scholar will continue to be enrolled in a school as required by compulsory attendance laws.

A scholar who is 18 years of age or older, who is married, or who has been declared by a court to be an emancipated minor, may withdraw without parental signature.

Withdrawing scholars and parents/guardians are expected to:

- Return all textbooks and checked-out materials and equipment;
- Complete any make-up work assigned;
- Pay any unpaid balance for scholar fees, if any; and
- Sign a withdrawal form.

In all cases, withdrawal forms must be appropriately completed and signed before withdrawal is complete.

Involuntary Withdrawal

Essence Preparatory may initiate withdrawal of a scholar under the age of 19 for non-attendance if:

1. The scholar has been absent 10 consecutive school days, and
2. Repeated efforts by the school to locate the scholar have been unsuccessful.
3. A scholar who has accumulated 20 or more unexcused absences
4. Additionally, Essence Preparatory may revoke the enrollment of a scholar 19 years of age or older who has more than five unexcused absences in one semester.

Uniform Requirements

Dress

As authorized by state law and the Essence Preparatory charter, scholars are required to wear uniforms to school. The school's uniform requirements are designed to ensure that an inclusive and equitable space is provided for all scholars. While there are general uniform requirements, scholars are encouraged to embody their own style within the guidelines provided. scholars are required to arrive in proper attire every day.

Essence Preparatory will provide two uniform shirts for scholars at the beginning of the school year.

A parent/guardian may choose for their scholar(s) to be exempted from the requirement of wearing a uniform if the parent/guardian provides a written statement that, as determined by the Board of Directors, states a bona fide religious or philosophical objection to the requirement.

Scholars who do not follow the school's guidelines for personal attire and appearance may be

subject to uniform-specific next steps, as determined by the individual campus. Additionally, a parent/guardian may be contacted to bring an acceptable change of clothing to school

The following specific guidelines must be adhered to:

Overview:

Scholars are expected to be in uniform for every school day. Scholars should focus on cleanliness, neatness, and safety when preparing to come to school.

Following are the uniform regulations for scholars: No high heels, house shoes, slippers, or sandals of any kind are permitted. **Please refer to your specific school addendum for more information.**

- **Footwear** can be any color, as long as it is school appropriate and follows the following guidelines:
 - All footwear must have closed toes and closed heels.
- **Pants** must be black or khaki. Shorts and skorts must also be black or khaki and must reach the top of the knee in length. Khaki and black pants may not be sweatsuit or spandex material (black yoga or stretch pants, for example would not be allowed)..
 - The hem may not be frayed, the pants/shorts/skorts may not be ripped in any way, and sweatpants are not allowed.
 - Pants/shorts must be worn at the waist.
- **Tights or leggings** may be worn under skirts or shorts of the appropriate length
- **Belts** must be worn when belt loops are present.
 - Belts and buckles should be appropriate in size and free from any vulgar or obscene design.
- **Shirts** must be official red shirts for grades K-8, polo-style collared shirts with the school logo.
 - Throughout the year, school-sanctioned t-shirts may be provided as incentives; these t-shirts may be worn instead of the official polo shirt on Fridays or other campus-approved days.
 - The uniform shirt must be tucked into pants at all times.
 - School T-shirts may remain untucked, but they must cover the belt area and fall no longer than the bottom of the pockets.
- **Undershirts** must be a solid color. .
 - Both short sleeve and long sleeve undershirts are acceptable.
- **Outerwear** (sweaters, sweatshirts, coats and jackets) is optional.
 - If scholars choose to wear outerwear, only school-approved outerwear may be worn inside the building. **Exceptions may be made based on School Leader approval or school-based incentives.**
 - Otherwise, all non-approved outerwear must be removed during uniform check.
 - Once inside the building, all hoods must be taken off.
- **Accessories** should not call excessive attention to the wearer.
 - Bracelets and other jewelry should not have any inappropriate writing or images.
 - No headwear that calls excessive attention to the wearer may be worn.
 - No visible tattoos with inappropriate writing or symbols.

- **Religious considerations:** Full uniform must be worn under all religious over-garments.
 - Uniform shirts should still be worn when possible or permissible.
- **Backpacks:** May be any color or school-appropriate design. Scholars should carry only those items necessary for school.

Uniform non-compliance policy:

Scholars may only go to class if they are in full uniform compliance. Parents/guardians will be contacted as needed to bring a required uniform item to school if the school is unable to provide the item or if the scholar has already received multiple reminders. Additional action will be determined by campus if uniform non-compliance continues.

Dress down days:

Occasionally, Essence Preparatory will sponsor dress down days as a reward or fundraiser. While scholars are afforded more freedom to choose their outfits on a dress down day, the following items are prohibited: open-toed shoes, flip-flops, shirts that do not cover the shoulders, tight and revealing clothing, skirts, shorts/skortos that do not reach the knees, offensive or inappropriate images and prints, and ripped clothing, including jeans if they are ripped above the knee.

Essence Preparatory will periodically review its dress policies, and make changes as needed.

While it is inevitable that there will be differences of opinion as to the appropriateness of dress, and/or determining whether a scholar's attire is disruptive or distracting to the educational environment of the school, the final determination will be made by School Leadership.

Scholar Fees

Materials that are part of the basic educational program are provided with state and local funds at no charge to a scholar. Scholars are expected to provide their own consumable items, such as pencils, paper, pens, erasers, notebooks, headsets, etc. Scholars may be required to pay certain fees or deposits, including:

1. A fee for materials for a class project that the scholar will keep, if the fee does not exceed the cost of materials;
2. Membership dues in voluntary scholar clubs or organizations and admission fees to extracurricular activities;
3. A security deposit for the return of materials, supplies or equipment;
4. A fee for personal physical education and athletic equipment and apparel, although a scholar may provide the scholar's own equipment or apparel if it meets reasonable requirements and standards relating to health and safety;
5. A fee for voluntarily purchased items, such as scholar publications, class rings, pictures, yearbooks, graduation announcements, etc.;
6. A fee for voluntary scholar health and accident benefit plan;
7. A reasonable fee, not to exceed the actual annual maintenance cost, for the use of musical instruments and uniforms owned or rented by the school;
8. A fee for items of personal apparel used in extracurricular activities that become the property of the scholar;
9. A fee for replacement of a scholar ID card;
10. A fee for replacement of a damaged or lost school-issued device;
11. A fee for an optional course offered for credit that requires the use of facilities not

available on campus or the employment of an educator who is not part of the school's regular staff;

12. A fee for summer school courses that are offered tuition-free during the regular school year;
13. A reasonable fee, not to exceed \$50, for costs associated with an educational program offered outside of regular school hours through which a scholar who was absent from class receives instruction voluntarily for the purpose of making up the missed instruction and meeting the level of attendance required for class credit, so long as the fee would not create a financial hardship or discourage the scholar from attending the program;
14. A fee for lost, damaged, or overdue library book; or
15. A fee specifically permitted by any other statute.

Essence Preparatory may waive any fee or deposit if the scholar and parent are unable to pay. A request for such a waiver must be made in writing to the Superintendent or designee, and include evidence of inability to pay. Details for the fee waiver are available in the Front Office.

Supply lists are posted on the Essence Preparatory website and are available on campus.

Families are responsible for paying all fees associated with extra-curricular programs, including clubs, parking, athletics, and fine arts prior to participation.

Textbooks and Curriculum Materials

State-approved textbooks and additional curriculum materials are provided free of charge for each subject or class, except for dual credit courses. Materials must be used by the scholars as directed by the teacher, and treated with care. A scholar who is issued damaged materials should report the damage to the teacher.

Scholars must return all textbooks and supplemental materials to the teacher at the end of the school year or when the scholar withdraws from school. Any scholar failing to return issued materials in an acceptable condition loses the right to free textbooks and educational materials until the scholar and/or parent pay for the damages. However, a scholar will be provided textbooks and educational materials for use during the school day. Essence Preparatory may reduce or waive the payment requirement if the scholar is from a low-income family. Release of scholar records, including official transcripts, will be delayed pending payment for lost or severely damaged textbooks.

Food Service

Essence Preparatory participates in the National School Lunch Program and offers nutritionally balanced breakfasts and lunches. Guidelines set by the Texas Department of Agriculture ("TDA") and United States Department of Agriculture ("USDA") are followed to meet the nutritional needs of all scholars. Menus may be obtained at the front office.

Free and reduced-price breakfasts and lunches are available based on financial need. Information about a scholar's participation is confidential. See the Director of Operations to apply. scholars must apply for meal assistance each school year.

Essence Preparatory Public Schools announced a change to its policy for serving meals to children served under the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program. Schools qualifying to operate the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) provide breakfast and

lunch to all children at no charge and eliminate the collection of meal applications for free, reduced-price, and paid scholar meals. This new approach reduces burdens for both families and school administrators and helps ensure that scholars receive nutritious meals.

In the event that Essence Preparatory no longer operates the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP), free and reduced-price breakfasts and lunches will be available based on financial need. Scholars must apply for meal assistance each school year. Questions about Food Service may be directed to the Director of Operations.

Scholars are highly encouraged to bring healthy, nutritious foods should they choose to bring their own meal from home. No food may be consumed in class outside of scheduled meal periods, unless permission is granted by teacher or CLO/Principal.

State-Mandated Nutrition Guidelines

The TDA places strict limits on any food or drink provided or sold to scholars other than through Essence Preparatory's food and nutrition services. More detailed information may be obtained at the front office or online at www.squaremeals.org.

Transportation

Essence Preparatory provides bus transportation at all campuses. Bus routes and any subsequent changes are posted in the front office. Further information may be obtained by calling the front office.

Riding a school vehicle comes with a level of personal responsibility for one's behavior. School vehicle drivers have the authority to maintain discipline and require seating charts. When riding a school vehicle, scholars are held to behavioral standards established in this Handbook and the Scholar Code of Conduct. scholars must:

1. Follow the driver's directions at all times;
2. Enter and leave the vehicle in an orderly manner;
3. Keep feet, books, instrument cases, and other objects out of the aisle;
4. Not deface the vehicle or its equipment;
5. Keep head, hands, arms, legs, or any object inside the bus; and
6. Wait for the driver's signal in order to leave or cross in front of the vehicle.

Only designated scholars are allowed to ride in the vehicle. scholars may neither ride the vehicle to a different location nor have friends ride the vehicle to participate in after-school activities.

If a scholar with a disability is receiving school transportation as a result of an IEP, the Admission Review and Dismissal ("ARD") Committee will have the discretion in determining appropriate disciplinary consequences related to inappropriate behavior in a school vehicle.

Transcripts

Essence Preparatory maintains an academic achievement record (or transcript) for each scholar enrolled. Transcripts list complete personal scholar data, give complete scholastic grades, and report scholar activities, honors, and scores on standardized achievement tests.

Requests for transcripts should be made to the campus registrar. scholars are provided with ten free official transcripts.

Displaying a scholar's Artwork, Projects, Photos, and Other Original Work

Teachers may display scholar work in classrooms or elsewhere on campus as recognition of scholar achievement. However, Essence Preparatory will seek parental consent before displaying scholar artwork, special projects, photographs taken by scholars, and other original works on the Essence Preparatory website, on any campus or classroom website, in printed materials, by video, or by any other method of mass communication. Essence Preparatory will also seek consent before displaying or publishing an original video or voice recording in this manner.

Distribution of Materials or Documents School Materials

Publications prepared by and for Essence Preparatory may be posted or distributed with prior approval by the CLO/Principal and/or teacher. Such items may include school posters, brochures, murals, etc.

Non-School Materials

Scholars must obtain express prior approval of the School Leaders or designee before distributing, posting, selling, or circulating written materials, handbills, photographs, pictures, petitions, films, tapes, posters, or other visual or auditory materials on campus or through the use of campus-issued technology.

Non-school literature shall not be distributed by scholars on Essence Preparatory property if:

- The materials are obscene, vulgar, or otherwise inappropriate for the age and maturity of the audience.
- The materials endorse actions endangering the health or safety of scholars.
- The materials promote illegal use of drugs, alcohol, or other controlled substances.
- The distribution of such materials would violate the intellectual property rights, privacy rights, or other rights of another person.
- The materials contain defamatory statements about public figures or others.
- The materials advocate imminent lawless or disruptive action and are likely to incite or produce such action.
- The materials are hate literature or similar publications that scurrilously attack ethnic, religious, or racial groups or contain content aimed at creating hostility and violence, and the materials would materially and substantially interfere with school activities or the rights of others.
- There is reasonable cause to believe that distribution of the non-school literature would result in material and substantial interference with school activities or the rights of others.

Any scholar who posts material without prior approval will be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with the Scholar Code of Conduct. Materials displayed without approval will be removed. Written or printed materials, handbills, photographs, pictures, films, tapes, or other visual or auditory materials over which Essence Preparatory does not exercise control shall not be sold, circulated, or distributed by persons or groups not associated with Essence Preparatory or a school support group on school premises unless the person or group obtains specific prior approval from the Superintendent or designee. To be considered, any non-school material must include the name of the sponsoring organization or individual. The requestor may appeal the Superintendent or designee's decision in accordance with Board policy.

Electronic Device Policy

Electronic devices that may distract scholars from their learning are not permitted at school.

If a scholar is permitted to possess an electronic or telecommunications device at school, including a cell phone, all such devices must be turned off and stored in their backpacks during school hours. If an Essence Preparatory employee observes a scholar using any electronic or telecommunication device (including a cell phone) during the school day or a school-related activity, the employee will collect the item and turn it in to the Front Office.

A parent will be contacted to pick up the item and any disciplinary action will be in accordance with the Scholar Code of Conduct.

Essence Preparatory will not be responsible for damage to or loss or theft of confiscated items.

Essence Preparatory will take the following actions in the event that a scholar does not have their electronic or telecommunication device properly stored:

- 1) 1st time: pick up the device, turn it into the office, and notify parents/guardians
- 2) 2nd time: pick up the device, turn it into the office, and hold it until parents/guardians are available to pick it up (with exceptions on a case-by-case basis).
- 3) 3rd time: pick up the device, turn it into the office, and hold it until parents/guardians are available to pick it up and pay \$5 to have the device returned (with exceptions on a case-by-case basis).
- 4) 4th time: pick up the device, turn it into the office, and any further action at the discretion of the leadership team.

Pledges of Allegiance and Moment of Silence

Each school day, scholars will recite the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States flag and the Pledge of Allegiance to the Texas flag.

State law requires that one minute of silence will follow recitation of the pledges. Each scholar may choose to reflect, pray, meditate, or engage in any other silent activity during that minute so long as the silent activity does not interfere with or distract others. In addition, state law requires that Essence Preparatory provide for the observance of one minute of silence at the beginning of the first class period when September 11 falls on a regular school day in remembrance of those who lost their lives on September 11, 2001.

According to Texas Education Code - EDUC § 25.082- On written request from a scholar's parent or guardian, a school district or open-enrollment charter school shall excuse the scholar from reciting a pledge of allegiance under Subsection (b).

Recitation of the Declaration of Independence

State law requires scholars in social studies classes in grades 3–12 to recite a portion of the text of the Declaration of Independence during "Celebrate Freedom Week." A scholar will be exempted from this requirement if a parent provides a written statement requesting that the scholar be excused, Essence Preparatory determines that the scholar has a conscientious objection to the recitation, or the parent is a representative of a foreign government to whom the United States extends diplomatic immunity.

Prayer and Meditation

Scholars have a right to individually, silently, and voluntarily pray or meditate in school in a manner that does not disrupt instructional or other school activities. Essence Preparatory will

not require, encourage, or coerce a scholar to engage in or refrain from such prayer or meditation during any school activity.

SECTION 2: SCHOLAR HEALTH AND SAFETY

Alcohol-Free School Notice

In order to provide a safe and alcohol-free environment for scholars and employees, all alcoholic beverages are prohibited on Essence Preparatory property at all times, and at all school-sanctioned activities occurring on or off School property. scholars may carry only clear water bottles containing water for consumption during class. Juices or other approved beverages may only be consumed during meal times. scholar violators are subject to possible prosecution, as allowed by law, as well as the disciplinary terms of the scholar Code of Conduct.

Tobacco-Free School Notice

Smoking (including electronic cigarettes, vape pens, cigars, and pipes) and using tobacco products is prohibited in school buildings, vehicles, or on or near school property, or at school-related or school-sanctioned events off school property. scholars may not possess tobacco products at any of the locations or activities listed above. scholar violators are subject to possible prosecution, as allowed by law, as well as the disciplinary terms of the scholar Code of Conduct.

Drug-Free School Notice

Essence Preparatory believes that scholar use of illicit drugs is both wrong and harmful. Consequently, Essence Preparatory prohibits the use, sale, possession, or distribution of illicit drugs by scholars on school premises or any school activity, regardless of its location. Essence Preparatory also prohibits the use, sale, possession, or distribution of look-alike substances and/or synthetic substances designed to imitate the look and/or effects of illicit drugs. scholar violators are subject to possible prosecution, as allowed by law, as well as the disciplinary terms of the scholar Code of Conduct.

Asbestos Management Plan

All school facilities have been inspected for asbestos by a licensed Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act (“AHERA”) inspector. An Asbestos Management Plan has been created for the school in accordance with federal regulations. Parents may view the Asbestos Management Plan at the campus office.

Bacterial Meningitis Information

State law requires Essence Preparatory to provide the following information:

What is bacterial meningitis?

Meningitis is an inflammation of the membranes that surround the brain and spinal cord. Meningitis can be caused by viruses, parasites, fungi and bacteria. Viral meningitis is common and most people recover fully. Parasitic and fungal meningitis are very rare. However, bacterial meningitis is very serious and may involve complicated medical, surgical, pharmaceutical and life support management.

What are the symptoms of bacterial meningitis?

Someone with meningitis will become very ill. The illness may develop over one or two days,

but it can also rapidly progress in a matter of hours. Not everyone with meningitis will have the same symptoms. Children (over 2 years old) and adults with bacterial meningitis commonly have a severe headache, high fever, and neck stiffness. Other symptoms might include nausea, vomiting, seizures, discomfort looking into bright lights, confusion and sleepiness and lethargy. In both children and adults, there may be a rash of tiny, red-purple spots or purple patches on the skin. These can occur anywhere on the body. The more symptoms, the higher the risk, so when these symptoms appear seek immediate medical attention.

The diagnosis of bacterial meningitis is based on a combination of symptoms and laboratory results.

How serious is bacterial meningitis?

Bacterial meningitis is a serious, potentially deadly disease that can progress extremely fast. If it is diagnosed early and treated promptly, the majority of people make a complete recovery. However, in some cases it can be fatal or a person may be left with permanent severe health problems or disability.

How is bacterial meningitis spread?

Fortunately, none of the bacteria that cause meningitis are as contagious as diseases like the common cold or the flu, and they are not spread by casual contact or by simply breathing the air where a person with meningitis has been. They are spread when people exchange saliva (such as by kissing, or by sharing drinking containers, food, utensils, cigarettes, toothbrushes, etc.) or come in contact with respiratory or throat secretions (such as by coughing or sneezing).

The germ does not cause meningitis in most people. Instead, most people become carriers of the germ for days, weeks, or even months. The bacteria rarely overcome the body's immune system and cause meningitis or another serious illness.

How can bacterial meningitis be prevented?

Maintaining healthy habits, like getting plenty of rest, can help prevent infection. Using good health practices such as covering your mouth and nose when coughing and sneezing and washing your hands frequently with soap and water can also help stop the spread of the bacteria. It's a good idea not to share food, drinks, utensils, toothbrushes, or cigarettes. Limit the number of persons you kiss.

There are vaccines available to offer protection from some of the bacteria that can cause bacterial meningitis.* The vaccines are safe and effective (85–90 percent). They can cause mild side effects, such as redness and pain at the injection site lasting up to two days. Immunity develops within seven to ten days after the vaccine is given and lasts for from three to five years.

* Please note that the Texas Department of State Health Services ("TDSHS") requires at least one meningococcal vaccination for grades 7 through 12, and state guidelines recommend this vaccination be administered between age 11 and 12, with a booster dose at 16 years of age. Also note that entering college scholars must show, with limited exception, evidence of receiving a bacterial meningitis vaccination within the five-year period prior to enrolling in and taking courses at an institution of higher education. Please see the school nurse for more information, as this may affect a scholar who wishes to enroll in a dual credit course taken off campus.

What should you do if you think you or a friend might have bacterial meningitis?

You should seek prompt medical attention.

Where can you get more information?

Your family doctor and the staff at your local or regional health department office are excellent sources for information on all communicable diseases. You may also call your local health department or Regional Texas Department of Health office to ask about the meningococcal vaccine. Additional information may also be found at the web sites for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: www.cdc.gov and the Texas Department of State Health Services: <https://www.dshs.tx.us/idcu/disease/meningitis/>.

Communicable Diseases

To protect other scholars from contagious illnesses, scholars infected with certain diseases are not allowed to come to school while contagious. Parents of scholars with a communicable or contagious disease should notify the CLO/Principal or designee so that other scholars who might have been exposed to the disease can be alerted. School authorities will report those scholars who are suspected of having a reportable condition. A list of reportable conditions can be found on the Texas Department of State Health Services website at: <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/idcu/investigation/conditions/>.

Any scholar excluded from school attendance for reason of communicable disease may be readmitted by one or more of the following methods, as determined by the local health authority:

- Certificate of the attending physician, advanced practice nurse, or physician assistant attesting that the child does not currently have signs or symptoms of a communicable disease or to the disease's non-infectiousness in a school setting;
- Submitting a permit for readmission issued by a local health authority; or
- Meeting readmission criteria as established by the commissioner of health.

Please contact the Director of Operations if you have questions or if you are concerned about whether a child should stay home.

Immunization Requirements

The State of Texas requires that every child in the state be immunized against vaccine preventable diseases caused by infectious agents in accordance with an established immunization schedule.

To determine the specific number of doses that are required for your scholar, please read "2021–2022 Texas Minimum State Vaccine Requirements for scholars Grades K–12." For specific immunization requirements, please contact your campus school nurse or health aide or visit the Texas Department of State Health Services at <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/immunize/school/>.

Proof of immunization may be personal records from a licensed physician or public health clinic with a signature or rubber-stamp validation.

Provisional Enrollment

A scholar can be enrolled provisionally for no more than 30 days if they transfer from one

Texas school to another, and are awaiting the transfer of the immunization record.

A scholar may be enrolled provisionally if the scholar has an immunization record that indicates the scholar has received at least one dose of each specified age-appropriate required vaccine. To remain enrolled, the scholar must complete the required subsequent doses in each vaccine series on schedule and as rapidly as is medically feasible and provide acceptable evidence of vaccination to the school. Essence Preparatory shall review the immunization status of a provisionally enrolled scholar every 30 days to ensure continued compliance in completing the required doses of vaccination. If at the end of the 30-day period, a scholar has not received a subsequent dose of vaccine, then the scholar is not in compliance and Essence Preparatory shall exclude the scholar from school attendance until the required dose is administered.

A scholar who is homeless, as defined by the McKinney Act (42 U.S.C. § 11302), shall be admitted temporarily for 30 days if acceptable evidence of vaccination is not available. Essence Preparatory shall promptly refer the scholar to appropriate public health programs to obtain the required vaccinations.

Exclusions from Immunization Requirements

Exclusions from immunization requirements are allowable on an individual basis for medical reasons, reasons of conscience (including a religious belief), and active duty with the armed forces of the United States.

To claim exclusion for medical reasons, the scholar must present a statement signed by the scholar's physician (M.D. or D.O.), duly registered and licensed to practice medicine in the United States who has examined the scholar, in which it is stated that, in the physician's opinion, the vaccine required is medically contraindicated or poses a significant risk to the health and well-being of the scholar or any member of the scholar's household. Unless it is written in the statement that a lifelong condition exists, the exemption statement is valid for only one year from the date signed by the physician.

To claim an exclusion for reasons of conscience, including a religious belief, a signed Texas Department of State Health Services ("TDSHS") affidavit must be presented by the scholar's parent, stating that the scholar's parent declines vaccinations for reasons of conscience, including because of the person's religious beliefs. The affidavit will be valid for a period of two years. The form affidavit may be obtained by writing the TDSHS Immunization Branch (MC 1946), P.O. Box 149347, Austin, Texas 78714-9347, or online at <https://webds.dshs.state.tx.us/immco/default.aspx>. The form must be submitted to the CLO/Principal within 90 days from the date it is notarized. If the parent is seeking an exemption for more than one scholar in the family, a separate form must be provided for each scholar. scholars, who have not received the required immunizations for reasons of conscience, including religious beliefs, may be excluded from school in times of emergency or epidemic declared by the commissioner of public health.

To claim exclusion for armed forces, the scholar must prove that they are serving on active duty with the armed forces of the United States.

Immunization Records Reporting

The school's record of a scholar's immunization history, while private in most instances, may be inspected by the Texas Education Agency, local health departments, and TDSHS and transferred to other schools associated with the transfer of the scholar to those schools.

Emergency Medical Treatment

If a scholar has a medical emergency at school or a school-related activity and the parent cannot be reached, Essence Preparatory staff will seek emergency medical treatment unless the parent has previously provided a written statement denying this authorization. Therefore, parents/guardians are asked each year to complete an emergency care consent form. Parents should keep emergency care information up-to-date (name of doctor, emergency phone numbers, allergies, etc.). Please contact the campus registrar to update any information.

Scholar Illness

When your child is ill, please contact Essence Preparatory to let us know if they will not be attending that day. Scholars must be fever-free without the use of fever-reducing medication and must be free of vomiting/diarrhea without the use of diarrhea suppressing medication for at least 24 hours before returning to school.

If a scholar becomes ill during the school day, they must receive permission from the teacher before reporting to the front office. If the health aide determines that the child should go home, the health aide/ designated staff will contact the parent.

Administration of Medication

Medication should be administered at home whenever possible. If necessary, medication can be administered at school by the designated staff under the following circumstances:

1. Nonprescription medication brought to school must be submitted to Essence Preparatory by a parent along with a written request. The medication must also be in the original and properly labeled container.
2. Prescription medications administered during school hours must be prescribed by a physician or advanced nurse practitioner ("ANP") and filled by a pharmacist licensed in the State of Texas. **In accordance with the Texas Board of Nursing's Nurse Practice Act, Essence Preparatory will not administer medications prescribed or fulfilled in Mexico.**
3. Prescription medications must be submitted in a labeled container showing the scholar's name, name of the medication, reason the medication is being given, proper dosage amounts, the time the medication must be taken, and the method used to administer the medication. Medications sent in plastic baggies or unlabeled containers will NOT be administered.
4. If the substance is herbal or a dietary supplement, it must be provided by the parent and will be administered only if required by the scholar's Individualized Education Program ("IEP") or Section 504 plan for a scholar with disabilities.
5. Only the amount of medication needed should be delivered to Essence Preparatory, *i.e.*, enough medication to last one day, one week, etc. In cases of prolonged need, send in the amount for a clearly specified period. Extra medication will not be sent home with the scholar.
6. In certain emergency situations, Essence Preparatory may administer a nonprescription medication to a scholar, but only in accordance with the guidelines developed by the school's medical advisor and when the parent has previously provided written consent for emergency treatment.

Changes to daily medications require written instructions from the physician or ANP and written permission from the parent. Parents are responsible for advising Essence Preparatory

that a medication has been discontinued.

Asthma and Anaphylaxis Medication

Asthma and anaphylaxis are life-threatening conditions, and scholars with those conditions are entitled to possess and self-administer prescription medication while on Essence Preparatory property or at school-related events.

Scholar possession and self-administration of asthma or anaphylaxis medication at school requires the scholar to demonstrate their ability to self-administer the medication to the scholar's physician or other licensed health care provider and the school nurse, if available. Requirements also include written authorization from the scholar's parent and physician or other licensed health care provider on file in the front office indicating the scholar is capable of independently administering their own asthma or emergency anaphylaxis medication. Medication in a scholar's possession must be in an original container with a prescription label. Please note that most pharmacies will place a label on the inhaler device upon request.

Steroid Notice

Essence Preparatory does not permit steroid use. A notice shall be posted in a conspicuous location in the school gym or in each other place in a building where physical education classes are conducted.

Dyslexia and Related Disorders

From time to time, scholars may be tested and, where appropriate, treated for dyslexia and related disorders in accordance with programs, rules and standards approved by the state. Parents will be notified should Essence Preparatory determine a need to identify or assess their scholar for dyslexia and related disorders.

Fitness Testing

According to requirements under state law, Essence Preparatory will annually assess the physical fitness of scholars. Essence Preparatory is not required to assess a scholar for whom, as a result of disability or other condition identified by rule or law, the assessment exam is inappropriate.

Spinal Screening

In compliance with Health and Safety Code, Chapter 37, all children shall undergo screening for abnormal spinal curvature in accordance with the following schedule:

- Girls will be screened two times, once at age 10 (**or fall semester of grade 5**) and again at age 12 (**or fall semester of grade 7**).
- Boys will be screened one time at age 13 or 14 (**or fall semester of grade 8**).

The screening requirement for scholars entering grade six or nine may be met if the child has been screened for spinal deformities during the previous year. A parent who declines participation in the spinal screening provided by Essence Preparatory must submit to the CLO/Principal or designee documentation of a professional examination which includes the results of a forward-bend test. This documentation must be submitted to Essence Preparatory during the year the scholar is scheduled for screening or, if the professional exam is obtained during the following summer, at the beginning of the following school year.

Exemption: A scholar is exempt from screening if the screening conflicts with the tenets and

practices of a recognized church or religious denomination of which the individual is an adherent or member. To qualify for the exemption, the scholar's parent, managing conservator, or guardian must submit to the School Leaders or designee on or before the day of the screening procedure an affidavit stating the objections to screening.

Vision and Hearing Screenings

All children enrolled in Texas schools must be screened for possible vision and hearing problems in accordance with regulations issued by the Texas Department of State Health Services. scholars in certain grade levels identified by state regulations shall be screened for vision and hearing problems annually.

Screening records for individual scholars may be inspected by the TDSHS or a local health department, and may be transferred to another school without parental consent.

Exemption: A scholar is exempt from screening requirements if screening conflicts with the tenets and practices of a recognized church or religious denomination of which the individual is an adherent or a member. To qualify for the exemption, the individual or, if the individual is a minor, the minor's parent, managing conservator, or guardian, must submit to the Superintendent or designee on or before the day of admission an affidavit stating the objections to screening.

Freedom from Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation Statement of Nondiscrimination

Essence Preparatory prohibits discrimination, including harassment, against any scholar on the basis of race, color, religion, gender or sex, national origin, disability, age, gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation or any other basis prohibited by law. Retaliation against anyone involved in the complaint process is a violation of school policy.

Discrimination

For purposes of this Handbook, discrimination against a scholar is defined as conduct directed at a scholar on the basis of race, color, religion, gender or sex, national origin, disability, age, gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation or any other basis prohibited by law and that adversely affects the scholar.

Prohibited Harassment

Prohibited harassment of a scholar is defined as physical, verbal, or nonverbal conduct based on the scholar's race, color, religion, gender or sex, national origin, disability, age, gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation or any other basis prohibited by law that is so severe, persistent, or pervasive that the conduct:

- Affects a scholar's ability to participate in or benefit from an educational program or activity, or creates an intimidating, threatening, hostile, or offensive educational environment;
- Has the purpose or effect of substantially or unreasonably interfering with the scholar's academic performance; or
- Otherwise adversely affects the scholar's educational opportunities.

Examples of prohibited harassment may include offensive or derogatory language directed at another person's religious beliefs or practices, accent, skin color, or need for accommodation; threatening or intimidating conduct; offensive jokes; name calling, slurs, or rumors; physical aggression or assault; display of graffiti or printed material promoting racial, ethnic, or other

negative stereotypes; or other kinds of aggressive conduct such as theft or damage to property.

Sexual Harassment and Gender-Based Harassment

In compliance with the requirements of Title IX, Essence Preparatory does not discriminate on the basis of sex in its educational programs or activities. Sexual harassment of a scholar, including harassment committed by another scholar, includes unwelcome sexual advances; requests for sexual favors; or sexually motivated physical, verbal, or nonverbal conduct when the conduct is so severe, persistent, or pervasive that it:

- Affects the scholar's ability to participate in or benefit from an educational program or activity, or creates an intimidating, threatening, hostile, or offensive educational environment;
- Has the purpose or effect of substantially or unreasonably interfering with the scholar's academic performance; or
- Otherwise adversely affects the scholar's educational opportunities.

Examples of sexual harassment of a scholar may include sexual advances; touching intimate body parts or coercing physical contact that is sexual in nature; jokes or conversations of a sexual nature; and other sexually motivated conduct, communications, or contact.

Essence Preparatory also does not tolerate sexual harassment of a scholar by school employees. Romantic or inappropriate social relationships between scholars and school employees are prohibited. Any sexual relationship between a scholar and a school employee is always prohibited, even if consensual.

Sexual harassment of a scholar by a school employee includes both welcome and unwelcome sexual advances; requests for sexual favors; sexually motivated physical, verbal, or nonverbal conduct; or other conduct or communication of a sexual nature when:

- A school employee causes the scholar to believe that the scholar must submit to the conduct in order to participate in a school program or activity, or that the employee will make an educational decision based on whether or not the scholar submits to the conduct; or
- The conduct is so severe, persistent, or pervasive that it:
 - Affects the scholar's ability to participate in or benefit from an educational program or activity, or otherwise adversely affects the scholar's educational opportunities; or
 - Creates an intimidating, threatening, hostile, or abusive educational environment.

Gender-based harassment includes harassment based on a scholar's gender, expression by the scholar of stereotypical characteristics associated with the scholar's gender, or the scholar's failure to conform to stereotypical behavior related to gender.

Examples of gender-based harassment directed against a scholar, regardless of the scholar's or the harasser's actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity, may include, but not be limited to, offensive jokes, name-calling, slurs, or rumors; physical aggression or assault; threatening or intimidating conduct; or other kinds of aggressive conduct such as theft or damage to property.

Retaliation

Essence Preparatory prohibits retaliation against a scholar alleged to have experienced discrimination or harassment, including dating violence, or another scholar who, in good faith, makes a report, serves as a witness, or otherwise participates in an investigation. Examples of retaliation may include threats, rumor spreading, ostracism, assault, destruction of property, unjustified punishments, or unwarranted grade reductions. Unlawful retaliation does not include petty slights or annoyances.

A scholar who intentionally makes a false claim, offers false statements, or refuses to cooperate with a school investigation regarding discrimination or harassment is subject to appropriate discipline.

Reporting Procedures

Any scholar who believes that they have experienced prohibited harassment or believes that another scholar has experienced prohibited harassment should immediately report the alleged acts to a teacher, counselor, the CLO/Principal or designee, or other school employee.

A scholar shall not be required to report prohibited harassment to the person alleged to have committed the conduct. Reports concerning prohibited conduct, including reports against the Title IX Coordinator, the ADA/Section 504 Coordinator, and/or the Age Discrimination Coordinator may be directed to the CLO/Principal . If a report is made directly to the CLO/Principal, Essence Preparatory shall appoint an appropriate person to conduct an investigation.

Investigation of Complaints

After receiving a complaint of prohibited discrimination or harassment, Essence Preparatory may, but need not, require the scholar to prepare a written report. Oral complaints will be reduced to written form. Upon receipt of a complaint, the authorized school official shall promptly authorize and undertake an investigation. Following completion of the investigation, the authorized school official will prepare a written decision regarding the complaint, including a determination of whether prohibited discrimination or harassment occurred.

When appropriate, Essence Preparatory may take interim action to avoid additional opportunities for discrimination or harassment. The investigation may consist of personal interviews with the person making the report, the person against whom the report is filed, and any others with knowledge of the circumstances surrounding the allegations. If the results of the investigation establish that prohibited discrimination or harassment occurred, Essence Preparatory shall promptly respond by taking appropriate disciplinary or corrective action reasonably calculated to address the discrimination or harassment and prevent its recurrence. Essence Preparatory may take disciplinary action based on the results of an investigation, even if Essence Preparatory concludes that the conduct did not rise to the level of harassment prohibited by law or policy.

Confidentiality

To the greatest extent possible, Essence Preparatory shall respect the privacy of the complainant, persons against whom a report is filed, and witnesses. Limited disclosures may be necessary in order to conduct a thorough investigation and comply with applicable law.

Appeal

A scholar or parent who is dissatisfied with the outcome of the investigation may appeal through the Essence Preparatory grievance procedure. A scholar shall be informed of their

right to file a complaint with the United States Department of Education Office for Civil Rights.

Freedom from Bullying and Cyber-bullying

Essence Preparatory prohibits bullying as defined by this section, as well as retaliation against anyone involved in the complaint process. Bullying occurs when a scholar or group of scholars engages in written or verbal expression, expression through electronic means, or physical conduct that occurs on school property at a school-sponsored or school-related activity, or in a vehicle operated by Essence Preparatory that:

- Has the effect or will have the effect of physically harming a scholar, damaging a scholar's property, or placing a scholar in reasonable fear of harm to the scholar's person or of damage to the scholar's property; or
- Is sufficiently severe, persistent, and pervasive enough the action or threat creates an intimidating, threatening, or abusive educational environment for a scholar.

Conduct described above is considered bullying if that conduct:

- Exploits an imbalance of power between the scholar perpetrator and the scholar victim through written or verbal expression or physical conduct; and
- Interferes with a scholar's education or substantially disrupts the operation of Essence Preparatory.

Essence Preparatory also prohibits cyberbullying, which is defined as the use of any electronic communication device to engage in bullying or intimidation.

Reporting Procedures

Any scholar who believes that they have experienced any form of bullying or believes that another scholar has experienced bullying should immediately report the alleged acts to the

Dean of Empowerment and Culture,, a teacher, counselor, or other school employee. A report may be made orally or in writing. Any school employee who receives notice that a scholar has or may have experienced bullying shall immediately notify the Dean of Empowerment and Culture, any staff involved, and the CLO/Principal.

Investigation of Report

The CLO/Principal or designee shall determine whether the allegations in the report, if proven, would constitute prohibited harassment, and if so proceed under that policy instead. The Superintendent or designee shall conduct an appropriate investigation based on the allegations in the report, and shall take prompt interim action calculated to prevent hazing and/or bullying during the course of an investigation, if appropriate.

The School Leaders designee shall prepare a written report of the investigation, including a determination of whether hazing and/or bullying occurred. If the results of an investigation indicate that hazing and/or bullying occurred, the school shall promptly respond by taking appropriate disciplinary or corrective action reasonably calculated to address the conduct in accordance with the scholar Code of Conduct. Essence Preparatory may take action based on the results of an investigation, even if the school concludes that the conduct did not rise to the level of hazing and/or bullying under this policy.

Confidentiality

To the greatest extent possible, Essence Preparatory shall respect the privacy of the complainant, persons against whom a report is filed, and witnesses. Limited disclosures may be necessary in order to conduct a thorough investigation.

Appeal

A scholar or parent who is dissatisfied with the outcome of the investigation may appeal through the Essence Preparatory grievance procedure.

Law Enforcement Agencies Questioning of Scholars

When law enforcement officers or other lawful authorities wish to question or interview a scholar at school, CLO/Principal will cooperate fully regarding the conditions of the interview if the questioning or interview is part of a child abuse investigation. In other circumstances:

1. The CLO/Principal or designee shall verify and record the identity of the official and request an explanation of the need to question or interview the scholar at school.
2. The CLO/Principal or designee ordinarily will make reasonable efforts to notify the scholar's parent, unless the interviewer raises what the CLO/Principal or designee considers to be a valid objection.
3. The CLO/Principal or designee ordinarily will be present during the questioning or interview, unless the interviewer raises what the Superintendent or designee considers to be a valid objection.

When the investigation involves allegations of child abuse, special rules apply.

Scholars Taken into Custody

State law requires Essence Preparatory to permit a scholar to be taken into legal custody:

1. Pursuant to an order of the juvenile court;
2. Pursuant to the laws of arrest;
3. By a law enforcement officer if there is probable cause to believe the scholar has engaged in conduct that violates a penal law, delinquent conduct or conduct in need of supervision, or conduct that violates a condition of probation imposed by the juvenile court;
4. By a probation officer if there is probable cause to believe the scholar has violated a condition of probation imposed by the juvenile court;
5. Pursuant to a properly issued directive to apprehend; or
6. By an authorized representative of the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services ("TDFPS"), a law enforcement officer, or a juvenile probation officer, without a court order, under the conditions set out in Section 262.104 of the Texas Family Code relating to the scholar's physical health or safety.

Before a scholar is released to a law enforcement officer or other legally authorized person, the CLO/Principal or designee will verify the officer's identity and, to the best of their ability, verify the official's authority to take custody of the scholar.

The CLO/Principal or designee will immediately notify the Superintendent and will ordinarily attempt to notify the parent unless the officer or other authorized person raises what the CLO/Principal or designee considers to be a valid objection to notifying the parents/guardians. Because the CLO/Principal or designee does not have the authority to prevent or delay a

scholar's release to a law enforcement officer, any notification will most likely be after the fact.

Child Abuse Reporting and Programs

Essence Preparatory provides child abuse anti-victimization programs and cooperates with official child abuse investigators as required by law. Essence Preparatory also provides training to its teachers and scholars in preventing and addressing incidents of sexual abuse and other maltreatment of children, including knowledge of likely warning signs indicating that a child may be a victim of sexual abuse or maltreatment. Assistance, interventions and counseling options are also available.

The Essence Preparatory administration shall cooperate with law enforcement investigations of child abuse, including investigations by the Texas Department of Protective and Family Services. School officials may not refuse to permit an investigator to interview a scholar who is alleged to be a victim of abuse or neglect at school. School officials may not require the investigator to permit school personnel to be present during an interview conducted at school.

Investigations at school may be conducted by authorized law enforcement or state agencies without prior notification or consent of the scholar's parent, if necessary.

Plan for Addressing Sexual Abuse and Other Maltreatment of Children

What is Sexual Abuse of a Child?

The Texas Family Code defines "sexual abuse" as any sexual conduct harmful to a child's mental, emotional, or physical welfare as well as, in certain circumstances, failure to make a reasonable effort to prevent sexual conduct harmful to a child.

What is Other Maltreatment of a Child?

Under State law, "other maltreatment" of a child includes "abuse" or "neglect," as defined by Texas Family Code sections 261.001 and 261.401.

Reporting Obligation

Anyone who suspects that a child has been or may be abused or neglected has a legal responsibility, under state law, for reporting the suspected abuse or neglect to law enforcement or to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services ("DFPS"). Reports may be made by contacting one of the following:

- Texas Abuse Hotline: 1-800-252-5400 or, in non-emergency situations only;
- <http://www.txabusehotline.org>;
- Your local police department; or
- Call 911 for emergency situations.

Essence Preparatory has established a plan for addressing child sexual abuse and other maltreatment of children (the "Plan"). The Plan is addressed in this section of the Handbook.

Methods for Increasing Awareness Regarding Sexual Abuse or Other Maltreatment of Children For Staff:

Essence Preparatory annually trains staff in all content areas addressed in the Plan. Training is provided by campus staff, administrative staff, or outside agencies as determined by the campus administration.

For scholars: Network counseling staff or outside agency will address issues to increase awareness regarding sexual abuse and other maltreatment of children and anti-victimization programs with age appropriate conversation and materials no less than once per school year. These discussions will occur in classroom group settings.

For Parents/Guardians: Parents/guardians must be aware of warning signs indicating that their child may have been or is being sexually abused or otherwise maltreated. A child who has experienced sexual abuse or other maltreatment should be encouraged to seek out a trusted adult. Be aware as a parent or other trusted adult that evidence of sexual abuse or other maltreatment may be more indirect than disclosures or signs of physical abuse. It is important to remain calm and comforting if your child, or another child, confides in you. Reassure the child that they did the right thing in coming to you.

The fact that the abuser is a parent or other family member does not remove your obligation to protect the child. Parents/guardians who permit their child to remain in a situation where they may be injured or abused may also be subject to prosecution for child abuse. And, if you are frightened for your own safety or that of your child, you should call 911 or 1-800-252-5400.

Also remember that parents/guardians/guardians are legally responsible for the care of their children and must provide their children with safe and adequate food, clothing, shelter, protection, medical care and supervision, or arrange for someone else to provide these things. Failure to do so may be considered neglect.

The CLO/Principal or designee will provide information regarding counseling options available in your area for you and your child if your child is a victim of sexual abuse or other maltreatment. The DFPS also provides early abuse intervention through counseling programs. Services available in your county can be accessed at the following web address:
[http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Prevention_and_Early_Intervention/Programs_Available_In_Your_Cou
nty/default.asp](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Prevention_and_Early_Intervention/Programs_Available_In_Your_County/default.asp).

These websites are also helpful:

- Texas Education Agency – Prevention of Child Abuse Overview:
[http://tea.texas.gov/Texas_Schools/Safe_and_Healthy_Schools/Child_Abuse_Preventi
on/Child_Abuse_Prevention_Overview/](http://tea.texas.gov/Texas_Schools/Safe_and_Healthy_Schools/Child_Abuse_Prevention/Child_Abuse_Prevention_Overview/)
- Sexual Abuse Prevention Programs:
<https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/preventing/programs/sexualabuse/>
- Promoting Healthy Families in Your Neighborhood:
<https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/packet.pdf>
- Signs of Child Abuse:
http://www.keepkidshealthy.com/welcome/commonproblems/child_abuse.html
- DFPS – Prevent Child Abuse (HelpandHope.org) <http://helpandhope.org>
DFPS – How to Report Child Abuse or Neglect
http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Contact_us/report_abuse.asp
- Texas Attorney General – What Can We Do About Child Abuse?
<https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/cvs/what-can-we-do-about-child-abuse>
- Prevent Child Abuse.org – Texas Chapter
www.preventchildabusetexas.org
- Texas Council on Family Violence – Abuse Prevention Links
<http://www.tcfv.org/>

Likely Warning Signs of Sexual Abuse or Other Maltreatment

Psychological and behavioral signs of possible sexual abuse or other maltreatment may include:

- Nightmares, sleep problems, extreme fears without an obvious explanation.
- Sudden or unexplained personality changes; becoming withdrawn, angry, moody, clingy, “checking out” or showing significant changes in eating habits.
 - Depression or irritability.
 - An older child behaving like a young child, for example, bedwetting or thumb sucking.
 - Developing fear of certain places or resisting being alone with an adult or young person for unknown reasons.
 - Resistance to routine bathing, toileting, or removing clothes, even in appropriate situations.
 - Play, writing, drawings, or dreams of sexual or frightening images.
 - Refusal to talk about a secret they have with an adult or older child.
 - Leaving clues that seem likely to provoke a discussion about sexual issues.
 - Using new or adult words for body parts.
 - Engaging in adult-like sexual activities with toys, objects or other children.
 - Developing special relationships with older friends that may include unexplained money, gifts, or privileges.
 - Intentionally harming him or herself, for example, drug/alcohol use, cutting, burning, running away, and sexual promiscuity.
 - Thinking of self or body as repulsive, dirty, or bad.
 - Becoming increasingly secretive about Internet or telephone use.

Physical symptoms of possible sexual abuse or other maltreatment include:

- Stomachaches or illness, often with no identifiable reason.
- Difficulty in walking or sitting.
- Stained or bloody underwear.
- Genital or rectal pain, itching, swelling, redness, or discharge.
- Bruises or other injuries in the genital or rectal area.
- Unexplained soreness, pain or bruises around the mouth, sexually transmitted disease, or pregnancy.

Any one sign does not necessarily mean that a child has been sexually abused or maltreated, but the presence of several signs is the time you should begin asking questions and seeking help. Often signs first emerge at other times of stress, such as during a divorce, death of a family member or pet, problems at school or with friends, or other traumatic or anxiety-inducing events.

Actions That a Child Who Is a Victim of Sexual Abuse or Other Maltreatment Should Take

During scholar awareness sessions concerning sexual abuse and other maltreatment issues, scholars will be encouraged to tell a trusted adult in a private and confidential conversation if they have been a victim of sexual abuse or other maltreatment or have been in situations that make them feel uncomfortable in any way. School employees are trained to take appropriate

actions to help the child obtain assistance and to follow proper reporting procedures. Older scholars will also be provided with local crisis hotline numbers to obtain assistance.

Available Counseling Options

A list of counseling providers can be found at:

[http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Prevention_and_Early_Intervention/Programs_Available_In_Your_Cou nty/](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Prevention_and_Early_Intervention/Programs_Available_In_Your_County/)

Procedures for Use of Restraint and Time-Outs

School employees, volunteers or independent contractors are authorized to use restraint in the event of an emergency and subject to the following limitations:

- Only reasonable force, necessary to address the emergency, may be used.
- The restraint must be discontinued at the point at which the emergency no longer exists.
- The restraint must be implemented in such a way as to protect the health and safety of the scholar and others.
- The scholar may not be deprived of basic human necessities.

At no time, however, may a scholar be placed in seclusion.

A scholar with a disability may not be confined in a locked box, locked closet or other specially designated locked space as either a discipline management practice or a behavior management technique.

Visitor and Volunteer Policy

Essence Preparatory encourages parents/guardians and family members to regularly visit the school and become involved in scholar activities. The impact that positive parental involvement has on the learning and development of scholars is immeasurable. With that in mind, the following policies must be adhered to so that a safe, secure, and productive learning environment can be ensured for all.

- Visitors **MUST** sign in at the Front Office whenever they are on campus and present official government identification. The identification card will be scanned and They will be provided with a visitor ID that must be worn while on campus. Visitors are not permitted to make unscheduled or drop-in visits to classrooms.
- When visiting campus to meet with teaching staff, visitors must have a pre-arranged time set up with the teacher(s) in question except for urgent matters. Times are best arranged via email. An email directory is located on our website. With few exceptions, conferences are scheduled during teacher/team planning time, and/or immediately before or after school. Under no circumstances can a teacher be interrupted while providing instruction before, during, or after the school day to meet with a parent.
- Visitors to campus must be the parent, guardians, or other adult family members with permission of the parent/guardian. scholars' friends, younger siblings, and other non related individuals cannot visit the campus during school hours.
- Volunteers **MUST** go through a background check conducted by our school office. Once the check is cleared, volunteers are notified and may begin helping on campus. Until this clearance is obtained, they are not to be involved in any educational or extra-curricular activities.

Additionally, theCLO/Principal or designee may take the following actions whenever there is a school visitor:

- Establish an electronic database for the purpose of storing information concerning visitors. Information stored in the electronic database may be used only for the purpose of school security, and may not be sold or otherwise disseminated to a third party for any purpose.
- Verify whether the visitor is a sex offender registered with the computerized central database maintained by the Department of Public Safety or any other database accessible by Essence Preparatory.

Any visitor identified as a sex offender shall be escorted by school personnel at all times during a school visit and shall have access only to common areas of the campus.

Disruptions

In order to protect scholar safety and sustain an educational program free from disruption, state law permits Essence Preparatory to take action against any person – scholar or non scholar – who:

- Disrupts classes while on school property or on public property that is within 500 feet of school property. Class disruption includes making loud noises; trying to entice a scholar away from, or to prevent a scholar from attending, a required class or activity; entering a classroom without authorization; and disrupting the activity with profane language or any misconduct.
- Interferes with an authorized activity by seizing control of all or part of a building.
- Interferes with the movement of people at an exit or an entrance to school property.
- Interferes with the movement of people in an exit, an entrance, or a hallway of a school building without authorization from an administrator.
- Interferes with the transportation of scholars in school vehicles.
- Uses force, violence, or threats in an attempt to prevent participation in an authorized assembly.
- Uses force, violence, or threats in an attempt to prevent people from entering or leaving school property without authorization from an administrator.
- Uses force, violence, or threats to cause disruption during an assembly.

Emergency Closings

Generally, Essence Preparatory dismisses classes for weather-related events on the same days as surrounding local independent school districts. Any closures for weather will be broadcast on local news stations. Essence Preparatory may also need to close during certain emergency situations beyond the control of school officials. The announcement of non-weather related school closings will be broadcast on Essence Preparatory Public Schools social media pages, and/or local news stations as early as possible. Any emergency closures will also be posted on the official Essence Preparatory Public Schools social media pages and/or local news stations

Drills: Fire, Tornado, and Other Emergencies

scholars, teachers, and other staff will participate in drills of emergency procedures. When the alarm is sounded, scholars should follow the direction of school staff quickly, quietly, and in an orderly manner. Order rather than speed shall be stressed. Defined instructions for vacating each room will be posted in each room, and scholars should familiarize themselves with these instructions.

Pest Control Information

Essence Preparatory periodically applies pesticides inside school buildings and on school grounds. Except in an emergency, scholars may not reenter a treated area inside a building or use an area on school grounds for at least 12 hours following application. Parents who want to be notified prior to pesticide application may contact their school's Director of Operations..

SECTION 3: ACADEMICS AND GRADING

Academic Programs

The CLO/Principal will provide scholars and parents/guardians with information regarding academic programs to prepare for higher education and career choices. A scholar removed from the regular classroom to another setting will have an opportunity to complete their daily work just as if they were in the regular learning center. Scholars and parents/guardians are encouraged to discuss options for ensuring that scholars complete all work required with a teacher or the CLO/Principal.

Curricular Vision

Essence Preparatory offers instruction in the TEKS of the appropriate grade levels.

Essence Preparatory Public School, through rigorous academics, intentional character development, and cultivating student knowledge of self, prepares all kindergarten through eighth grade students for high school, college, and beyond as leading agents of change in their communities.

To fulfill our ambitious college preparatory mission for every scholar, Essence Preparatory: (1) equips all scholars with the academic skills and intellectual habits necessary to solve challenging problems; (2) builds within them with the character traits and sense of purpose to lead in their community; and (3) propels them towards a life of opportunity for themselves and their families.

We fulfill this vision by adhering to our core belief that we must foster a learning environment free from distractions – one where scholars can focus on the essential work of being a scholar and where they experience first-hand that learning is exciting, rewarding, and worthwhile.

We also believe the responsibility is on schools to provide scholars with opportunities to prepare for the evolving job market. This means we must focus our attention not only on what it takes to get a scholar to and through college, but also what it takes to prepare each scholar for life after they earn their degree. We must commit to developing our scholars' deep thinking skills, allowing them opportunities to create, collaborate, and participate in their education, with the same intensity with which we ensure they are able to read, write, and do math at grade level.

Academic Integrity

All scholars are expected to be honest and to display a high standard of integrity in the preparation and presentation of work for credit in classes. A scholar's attempt to present the work of another as their own will be viewed as a serious offense, and the scholar may be subject to a grading penalty and/or discipline in accordance with the scholar Code of Conduct.

Computer Resources

To prepare scholars for an increasingly computerized society, Essence Preparatory has made a substantial investment in computer technology for instructional purposes. Use of these resources is restricted to scholars working under a teacher's supervision and for approved purposes only. scholars and parents/guardians must read and agree to abide by the **scholar Acceptable Use Policy found in this Handbook**.

Counseling

Academic Counseling

Scholars and parents/guardians are encouraged to talk with the Campus Leadership Team to learn about course offerings, graduation requirements, and early graduation procedures. Each spring, scholars in 8th grade will be provided with information on anticipated course offerings for the next year and other information that will help to make the most of academic and vocational opportunities. To plan for the future, scholars should work closely with the Academic Counselor to take the courses that best prepare them for the future.

Credit by Exam

Essence Preparatory uses examinations and guidelines established by the State Board of Education to offer credit and acceleration by exam.

In order to qualify for kindergarten acceleration, the scholar must meet these qualifications:

- The scholar must be 5 years old on or before September 1, 2022.
 - The scholar must be registered for kindergarten at an Essence Preparatory campus for the 2022-2023 school year.

If both qualifications are met, then a parent/guardian may request that their child test for placement in first grade. To determine whether testing and possible placement in first grade are the best options, parents/guardians, scholars, and staff should consider the following:

- Academic rigor of first grade
 - Social and emotional impact
 - Effect of skipping a grade level on the scholar's overall educational experience.

Essence Preparatory strongly encourages all learners to participate in kindergarten due to the social, developmental, emotional, and academic benefits this grade level provides.

In order to advance to first grade, the scholar must score at the 89th percentile or above on the district approved assessments in both Reading and Math. These assessments measure cognitive development and academic skills that are appropriate for scholars completing kindergarten.

A scholar in the 1st to 5th grade will be eligible to accelerate to the next grade level if the scholar scores at least 80 on each examination in the subject areas of language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies, a district administrator recommends that the scholar be accelerated, and the scholar's parent gives written approval of the grade advancement.

If a scholar plans to take an examination, the scholar (or parent) must register with the school no later than the established network deadline dates prior to the scheduled testing date.

If a scholar has Prior Instruction

A scholar in grades 6–12 who has previously taken a course or subject (but did not receive credit for it) may, in circumstances determined by the CLO/Principal or designee, be permitted to earn credit by passing an exam on the essential knowledge and skills defined for the course or subject. To receive credit, a scholar must score at least 70% on the exam.

The Attendance Review Committee may also offer a scholar with excessive absences an opportunity to receive credit for a course by passing an exam.

If a scholar Has Not Taken the Course

A scholar will be permitted to take an exam to earn credit for an academic course or subject area for which the scholar has had no prior instruction or to accelerate to the next grade level. The exams offered by Essence Preparatory are approved by the Board of Directors. The dates on which exams are scheduled during the 2021-2022 year will be published in an appropriate school publication and on the Essence Preparatory website.

A scholar in grade 6 or above will earn course credit with a passing score of at least 80 on the exam, or a score designated by the state for an exam that has alternate scoring standards. A scholar may take an exam to earn course credit no more than twice. If a scholar fails to achieve the designated score on the approved exam before the beginning of the school year in which the scholar would need to enroll in the course according to the school's course sequence, the scholar must complete the course.

If a scholar plans to take an exam, the scholar (or parent) must register with the CLO/Principal no later than 30 days prior to the scheduled testing date. Essence Preparatory will or will not honor a request by a parent to administer a test on a date other than the published dates. If Essence Preparatory agrees to administer a test other than the one chosen by the school, the scholar's parent will be responsible for the cost of the exam.

Distance Learning

Distance learning and correspondence courses include courses that encompass the state-required essential knowledge and skills but are taught through multiple technologies and alternative methodologies, such as mail, satellite, Internet, video-conferencing, and instructional television.

The Texas Virtual School Network ("TxVSN") has been established as one method of distance learning. A scholar has the option, with certain limitations, to enroll in a course offered through the TxVSN to earn course credit for graduation. If you have questions or wish to make a request that your child be enrolled in a TxVSN course, please contact the CLO/Principal. Unless an exception is made by the CLO/Principal, a scholar will not be allowed to enroll in a TxVSN course if the school offers the same or a similar course.

If a scholar wishes to enroll in a correspondence course or a distance learning course that is not provided through the TxVSN in order to earn credit in a course or subject, the scholar must receive permission from the CLO/Principal prior to enrolling in the course or subject. If the scholar does not receive prior approval, Essence Preparatory may not recognize and/or apply the course or subject toward graduation requirements or subject mastery.

Extracurricular Activities, Clubs, and Organizations

Participation in school-related activities is an excellent way for a scholar to develop talents, receive individual recognition, and build strong friendships with other scholars. Participation,

however, is a privilege and not a right. Eligibility for participation in many school-related activities is governed by state law and rules of the University Interscholastic League (“UIL”), a statewide association overseeing interscholastic competition between public schools. Additional

information regarding extracurricular activities, clubs, and organizations may be obtained from the CLO/Principal.

Participation in these activities may result in events that occur off-campus. When Essence Preparatory arranges transportation for these events, scholars are required to use the transportation provided by Essence Preparatory to and from the event. Exceptions may only be made with approval from the activity’s coach or sponsor.

Please note: Sponsors of scholar clubs and performing groups such as the band, choir, and drill and athletic teams may establish standards of behavior – including consequences for misbehavior – that are stricter than those for scholars in general. If a violation of organization rules is also a violation of school rules, the consequences specified by the scholar Code of Conduct or by local policy will apply in addition to any consequences specified by the organization.

Standardized Testing

STAAR (State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness)

In addition to routine tests and other measures of achievement, scholars in grades 3–8 will take state-mandated assessments, such as the STAAR, in the following subjects:

- Mathematics, annually in grades 3–8.
- Reading, annually in grades 3–8.
- Science in grades 5 and 8.
- Social Studies in grade 8.

Successful performance on the reading and math assessments in grades 5 and 8 is required by law, unless the scholar is enrolled in a reading or math course intended for scholars above the scholar’s current grade level, in order for the scholar to be promoted to the next grade level.

STAAR Modified and STAAR Alternative, for scholars receiving special education services, will be available for eligible scholars, as determined by the scholar’s ARD committee.

STAAR-L is a linguistically accommodated assessment that is available for certain limited English proficient scholars, as determined by the scholar’s Language Proficiency Assessment Committee. A Spanish version of STAAR is also available to scholars in grade 5 who need this accommodation. As per TEA’s guidelines, “ELL scholars must meet participation requirements for a substantial degree of linguistic accommodation in these subject areas. Under the guidance of the Director of Special Services, scholars will be determined as requiring STAAR-L accommodations or not.”

STAAR Modified and STAAR Alternate, for scholars receiving special education services, will be available for eligible scholars, as determined by the scholar’s ARD committee. These particular EOC assessments may have different testing windows than the general assessments, and the ARD committee will determine whether successful performance on the

assessments will be required for graduation.

STAAR-L, which is a linguistically accommodated assessment, will be available for scholars who have been determined to be limited English proficient and who require this type of testing accommodation. As per TEA's guidelines, "ELL scholars must meet participation requirements for a substantial degree of linguistic accommodation in these subject areas. Under the guidance of the Director of Special Services, scholars will be determined as requiring STAAR-L accommodations or not."

Texas Success Initiative Assessment

Prior to enrollment in a Texas public college or university, most scholars must take a standardized test called the Texas Success Initiative ("TSI") assessment. The purpose of the TSI assessment is to assess the reading, mathematics, and writing skills that entering freshmen-level scholars should have if they are to perform effectively in undergraduate certificate or degree programs in Texas public colleges and universities. This assessment may be required before a scholar enrolls in a dual-credit course offered through Essence Preparatory as well.

Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System ("TELPAS")

The Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System ("TELPAS") is a system of statewide assessments administered to all Limited English Proficient ("LEP") scholars in grades K–12. The TELPAS measures English ability based on the stages of language development of second language learners. These results will further the understanding of the educational needs of LEP scholars by providing a state-level measure of both their current academic English levels and their annual progress in English.

Promotion and Retention

A scholar may be promoted on the basis of academic achievement and/or demonstrated proficiency in the subject matter of the course or grade level. To earn credit in a course, a scholar must demonstrate mastery on grade level standards and meet Essence Preparatory's requirements for attendance. A scholar in grades 9–12 will be advanced a grade level based on the number of course credits earned.

In addition, at certain grade levels a scholar – with limited exceptions – will be required to pass the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness ("STAAR"), if the scholar is enrolled in a public Texas school on any day between January 1 and the date of the first administration of the STAAR.

- In order to be promoted to grade 6, scholars enrolled in grade 5 must perform satisfactorily on the Mathematics and Reading sections of the grade 5 grade assessment exam in English or Spanish.
- In order to be promoted to grade 9, scholars enrolled in grade 8 must perform satisfactorily on the Mathematics and Reading sections of the grade 8 assessment exam in English.

If a scholar in grade 5 or 8 is enrolled in a course that earns high school credit and for which an end-of-course ("EOC") assessment will be administered, the scholar will not be subject to the promotion requirements described above for the relevant grade 5 or 8 assessment. However, for federal accountability purposes, the scholar may be required to take both the grade level and EOC assessment.

If a scholar in grade 8 is enrolled in a class or course intended for scholars above their current grade level in which the scholar will be administered a state-mandated assessment, the scholar will be required to take an applicable state mandated assessment only for the course in which they are enrolled, unless otherwise required to do so by federal law.

Parents/guardians of scholars who do not perform satisfactorily on their STAAR or EOC assessments will be notified that their child will participate in an Accelerated Instructional Program designed to improve performance. A scholar in grade 5 or 8 will have two additional opportunities to take a failed assessment. If a scholar fails a second time, a grade placement committee, consisting of the CLO/Principal or designee, the scholar's teacher, and the scholar's parent will determine the additional special instruction the scholar will receive.

If a scholar fails after a third attempt, the scholar will be retained at their current grade level. The parent, however, may appeal this decision to the Committee. A decision to promote a scholar to the next grade level must be unanimous. Regardless of whether the scholar is retained or promoted, an educational plan for the scholar will be designed to enable the scholar to perform at grade level by the end of the next school year.

In addition to the requirements listed above for scholars in grades 5 and 8, a scholar may be considered for retention if they have met any of the following criteria:

1. failed one or more core subject areas (scholar also required to attend summer school)
2. failed one or more state assessments
3. is below level in one or more core subject areas;
4. missed more than 10% of instructional days in an academic year. The decision must be made by a committee, which is composed of the child's core subject area teachers, the counselor, and the CLO/Principal.

Scholars with Disabilities

Upon the recommendation of the Admission, Review, and Dismissal ("ARD") Committee, a scholar with disabilities who is receiving special education services may be promoted and/or permitted to graduate under the provisions of their Individualized Education Program ("IEP").

A scholar who receives special education services and has completed four years of high school, but has not met the requirements of their IEP, may participate in graduation ceremonies and receive a certificate of attendance. Even if the scholar participates in graduation ceremonies to receive the certificate of attendance, they may remain enrolled to complete the IEP and earn their high school diploma; however, the scholar will only be allowed to participate in one graduation ceremony.

Report Cards

Report cards with each scholar's grades or performance and absences in each class or subject are issued to parents/guardians at least once every nine weeks. During the fourth week of a nine-week grading period, parents/guardians will be given a school-printed or digital progress report of their child's performance in English language arts, mathematics, science, or social studies. If a scholar is not meeting satisfactory performance at the end of a grading period, the parent will be requested to schedule a conference with the teacher of that class or subject. Report cards and progress reports must be signed by the parent/guardian and returned to the school within seven days.

Questions about grade calculation should first be discussed with the teacher; if the question is not resolved, the parent or scholar may request a conference with the CLO/Principal. State law provides that a test or course grade issued by a teacher cannot be changed unless the Board determines that the grade was arbitrary or contains an error, or that the teacher did not follow the school's grading policy.

Grading Guidelines

Kindergarten - 2nd Grade		3rd Grade - 8th Grade	
Standard Based Grading Scale		Traditional Grading Scale	
Points	Notes	Letter Grade	%
4	Advanced	A	90-100%
3	Meets Expectation for Target	B	80-89%
2	Partial Mastery of Target	C	70-79%
1	Little or No Mastery of Target	D	60-69%
		F	59% and below

Standards based definitions:

- 4 **Advanced** - Above grade level
- 3 **Meets Expectations for Target** - On grade level
- 2 **Partial Mastery of Target** - Demonstrates partial understanding or can perform portions of the target with assistance.
- 1 **Little or No Mastery**- Cannot demonstrate mastery, even with instructors assistance.

Special Programs

Bilingual/ESL Services

Essence Preparatory offers Bilingual/English as a Second Language ("ESL") services for English language learners who are limited to their English proficiency. The program is designed to assist scholars identified as having Limited English Proficiency with development in language – listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The goal of this program is to provide

additional English language assistance to scholars, enabling them to become academically successful in all classes. scholars are assessed with state-approved Oral Language Proficiency and Norm-Referenced Test to qualify for placement in the program. If the test results indicate either limited oral or limited cognitive academic English ability, the scholar (with parent approval) is provided additional English language support.

Special Education Services

Essence Preparatory has the responsibility of identifying, locating, and evaluating individuals with disabilities who are 5 to 21 years of age and who fall within the school's jurisdiction. If you know or suspect that your scholar has a disability, please contact the CLO/Principal or school's special education teacher for information about available programs, assessments, and services.

Special education services are specifically designed to meet the unique needs of scholars with disabilities. Each scholar who receives special education services has an Individual Education Plan ("IEP"), which is developed by the scholar's ARD Committee. The ARD Committee considers the scholar's disability and determines appropriate accommodations, supplementary aids, and/or services that are necessary for the scholar to participate in the general curriculum.

All special education services are provided in the least restrictive environment, which may be special education settings, general education settings, or a combination of both. All scholars receiving special education services are educated to the maximum extent appropriate with their non-disabled peers as well as participating in all school activities on the same basis as scholars who are not disabled.

The *Notice of Procedural Safeguards – Rights of Parents of scholars with Disabilities*, can be obtained from the CLO/Principal or at the Texas Education Agency Special Education Website: http://tea.texas.gov/Curriculum_and_Instructional_Programs/Special_Education/.

Providing Assistance to scholars Who Have Learning Difficulties or Who Need Special Education Services

If a scholar is experiencing learning difficulties, the parent may contact the Director of Special Programs to learn about Essence Preparatory's overall general education referral or screening system for support services. This system links scholars to a variety of support options, including referral for a special education evaluation. Scholars having difficulty in the regular classroom should be considered for tutorial, compensatory, and other academic or behavior support services that are available to all scholars, including a process based on Response to Intervention ("RtI"). The implementation of RtI has the potential to have a positive impact on Essence Preparatory's ability to meet the needs of all struggling scholars.

At any time, a parent is entitled to request an evaluation for special education services by presenting a written request to the School Leader or an administrative employee. Essence Preparatory must, within 15 school days of receiving the request, either (1) give the parent an opportunity to give written consent for the evaluation or (2) refuse to provide the evaluation and provide the parent with written notice that explains why the child will not be evaluated. This written notice will include a statement that informs the parents of their rights if they disagree with Essence Preparatory. Additionally, the parent will receive a copy of the *Notice of Procedural Safeguards – Rights of Parents of scholars with Disabilities*.

If consent for evaluation is obtained, Essence Preparatory must generally complete the evaluation and report within 45 school days of the date Essence Preparatory receives the written consent. Essence Preparatory must give a copy of the evaluation report to the parent.

Section 504 Services

Essence Preparatory provides a free appropriate public education to each qualified scholar with a disability, regardless of the nature or severity of the scholar's disability. A "scholar with a disability" is one who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the scholar's major life activities, has a record of having such impairment, or is regarded as having such impairment. A scholar with a disability is "qualified" if they are between the ages of 3 and 21, inclusive.

An appropriate education is the provision of regular or special education and related services that are (1) designed to meet the scholar's individual educational needs as adequately as the needs of scholars who do not have disabilities are met; and (2) based on adherence to procedures that satisfy federal requirements for educational setting, evaluation and placement, and procedural safeguards.

Qualified scholars with disabilities will be placed in the regular educational environment, unless Essence Preparatory demonstrates that education in the regular environment with the use of supplemental aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily. Should an alternate educational environment be necessary, Essence Preparatory will comply with all legal requirements regarding least restrictive environment and comparable facilities for scholars with disabilities. In providing or arranging for nonacademic and extracurricular services and activities, Essence Preparatory will ensure that a qualified scholar with a disability participates with scholars who do not have disabilities to the maximum extent appropriate.

To be eligible for services and protections against discrimination on the basis of disability under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, a scholar must be determined, as a result of an evaluation, to have a "physical or mental impairment" that substantially limits one or more major life activities. If a scholar has or is suspected of having a disability, or requires special services, parents/guardians or teachers should contact the CLO/Principal for information concerning available programs, assessments, and services.

Aiding scholars Who Have Learning Difficulties or Who Need Special Education or Section 504 Services

For those scholars who are having difficulty in the regular classroom, all school districts and open enrollment charter schools must consider tutorial, compensatory, and other academic or behavior support services that are available to all scholars, including a process based on Response to Intervention (RtI). The implementation of RtI has the potential to have a positive impact on the ability of districts and charter schools to meet the needs of all struggling scholars.

If a scholar is experiencing learning difficulties, their parent may contact the individual(s) listed below to learn about the school's overall general education referral or screening system for support services. This system links scholars to a variety of support options, including making a referral for a special education evaluation or for a Section 504 evaluation to determine if the scholar needs specific aids, accommodations, or services. A parent may request an evaluation for special education or Section 504 services at any time.

Special Education Referrals:

If a parent makes a written request for an initial evaluation for special education services to the director of special education services or an administrative employee of the school district or open enrollment charter school, the district or charter school must respond no later than 15 school days after receiving the request. At that time, the district or charter school must give the parent a prior written notice of whether it agrees to or refuses to evaluate the scholar, along with a copy of the *Notice of Procedural Safeguards*. If the school district or charter school agrees to evaluate the scholar, it must also give the parent the opportunity to give written consent for the evaluation.

Please note that a request for a special education evaluation may be made verbally and does not need to be in writing. Districts and charter schools must still comply with all federal prior written notice and procedural safeguard requirements and the requirements for identifying, locating, and evaluating children who are suspected of being a child with a disability and in

need of special education. However, a verbal request does not require the district or charter school to respond within the 15-school-day timeline.

If the district or charter school decides to evaluate the scholar, it must complete the scholar's initial evaluation and evaluation report no later than 45 school days from the day it receives a parent's written consent to evaluate the scholar. However, if the scholar is absent from school during the evaluation period for three or more school days, the evaluation period will be extended by the number of school days equal to the number of school days that the scholar is absent.

There is an exception to the 45-school-day timeline. If a district or charter school receives a parent's consent for the initial evaluation at least 35 but less than 45 school days before the last instructional day of the school year, it must complete the written report and provide a copy of the report to the parent by June 30 of that year. However, if the scholar is absent from school for three or more days during the evaluation period, the June 30th due date no longer applies. Instead, the general timeline of 45 school days plus extensions for absences of three or more days will apply.

Upon completing the evaluation, the district or charter school must give the parent a copy of the evaluation report at no cost.

Additional information regarding special education is available from the district or charter school in a companion document titled *Parent's Guide to the Admission, Review, and Dismissal Process*.

Contact Person for Special Education Referrals:

The designated person to contact regarding options for a scholar experiencing learning difficulties or regarding a referral for evaluation for special education services is:

Contact Person: TBD

Email: TBD@compassroseschools.org

Section 504 Referrals:

Each school district or charter school must have standards and procedures in place for the evaluation and placement of scholars in the district's or charter school's Section 504 program. Districts and charter schools must also implement a system of procedural safeguards that includes notice, an opportunity for a parent or guardian to examine relevant records, an impartial hearing with an opportunity for participation by the parent or guardian and representation by counsel, and a review procedure.

Contact Person for Section 504 Referrals:

The designated person to contact regarding options for a scholar experiencing learning difficulties or regarding a referral for evaluation for Section 504 services is:

Contact Person: TBD

Email: TBD@compassroseschools.org

Additional Information: The following websites provide information and resources for scholars with disabilities and their families.

- Legal Framework for the Child-Centered Special Education Process
- Partners Resource Network

- Special Education Information Center
- Texas Project First

SECTION 4: SCHOLAR CODE OF CONDUCT

Purpose of the scholar Code of Conduct

To function properly, education must provide an equal learning opportunity for all scholars by recognizing, valuing, and addressing the individual needs of every scholar. In addition to the regular curriculum, principles and practices of good citizenship must also be taught and modeled by school staff. To foster a productive and distraction-free environment, Essence Preparatory has established this scholar Code of Conduct in accordance with state law and the Essence Preparatory open-enrollment charter. The Code of Conduct has been adopted by the Board of Directors, and provides information to parents/guardians and scholars regarding expectations for behavior, consequences of misconduct, and procedures for administering discipline.

In accordance with state law, the Code of Conduct will be posted at each Essence Preparatory campus and/or will be available for review at the campus office. Parents will be notified of any violation that may result in a scholar being suspended or expelled from Essence Preparatory. scholars must be familiar with the standards set forth in the scholar Code of Conduct, as well as campus and classroom rules.

The Code of Conduct does not define all types and aspects of scholar behavior, as Essence Preparatory may impose campus or classroom rules in addition to those found in the Code of Conduct. These rules may be posted in classrooms or given to the scholar and may or may not

constitute violations of the Code of Conduct. When scholars participate in scholar activities, they will also be expected to follow the guidelines and constitutions that further specify the organization's expectations, scholar behavior and consequences.

The Code of Conduct is also supplemented at each individual Essence Preparatory school by their behavior management systems. School-specific rules and systems may be found in school-specific addendums.

Authority and Jurisdiction

Essence Preparatory has disciplinary authority over a scholar:

1. During the regular school day and while the scholar is going to and from school on Essence Preparatory transportation;
2. During lunch periods in which a scholar is allowed to leave campus;
3. While the scholar is in attendance at any school-related activity, regardless of time or location;
4. For any school-related misconduct, regardless of time or location;
5. For any expulsion offense committed while on Essence Preparatory property or while attending a school-sponsored or school-related activity of Essence Preparatory or another school in Texas;
6. While the scholar is in transit to or from school or to or from school-related activities or events;
7. When retaliation against a school employee or volunteer occurs or is threatened, regardless of time or location;
8. When the scholar commits a felony, as provided by Texas Education Code §§ 37.006 or 37.0081; and
9. When criminal mischief is committed on or off Essence Preparatory property or at a school-related event.

Reporting Crimes

In addition to disciplinary consequences, misdemeanor and felony offenses committed on campus or while attending school-sponsored or school-related activities will be reported to an appropriate law enforcement agency.

Standards for scholar Conduct

Each scholar is expected to:

- Demonstrate courtesy, even when others do not.
- Behave in a responsible manner, always exercising self-discipline.
- Attend all classes, regularly and on time.
- Prepare for each class; take appropriate materials and assignments to class.
- Meet Essence Preparatory's dress code expectations.
- Follow all campus and classroom rules.
- Respect the rights and privileges of scholars, teachers, and other Essence Preparatory staff and volunteers.
- Respect the property of others, including Essence Preparatory property and facilities.
 - Cooperate with and assist the school staff in maintaining safety, order, and discipline.

- Adhere to the requirements of the Scholar Code of Conduct.

Discipline Management Techniques

Disciplinary techniques are designed to improve conduct and to encourage scholars to adhere to their responsibilities as members of the school community. Disciplinary action will draw on the professional judgment of teachers and administrators and on a range of discipline management techniques. Discipline will be correlated to the seriousness of the offense, the scholar's age and grade level, the frequency of misbehavior, the scholar's attitude, the effect of the misconduct on the school environment, and statutory requirements.

Essence Preparatory Public Schools will utilize individual school-wide behavior management systems during the 2021-2022 school year for:

- Logging positive/negative scholar behavior
- Parent communication regarding scholar behavior

Individual schools may print weekly reports and distribute them to scholars at the end of each week or distribute them electronically.

Scholar behavior and attendance will be documented by the school. Each school's behavior management system will reinforce positive behavior and utilize a combination of consequences and restorative practices to address negative behaviors.

Techniques

The following discipline management techniques may be used—alone or in combination—for behavior prohibited by the scholar Code of Conduct or by campus or classroom rules:

- Restorative conversations (see Glossary)
- Restorative circles (see Glossary)
- Assignment of school duties such as cleaning or picking up litter.
- Behavioral contracts (see Glossary)
- Cooling-off time or "time-out."
- Counseling by teachers, counselors, or administrative personnel.
- Rewards for positive behavior.
- Demerits.
- Extension or Reflection periods during lunch or After School.
- Expulsion from Essence Preparatory, as specified in the expulsion section of the Code.
- Grade reductions for cheating, plagiarism, and as otherwise permitted by policy.
- In-school suspension, as specified in the suspension section of the Code.
- Out-of-school suspension, as specified in the suspension section of the Code.
- Parent-teacher conferences.
- Referral to an outside agency or legal authority for criminal prosecution in addition to disciplinary measures imposed by Essence Preparatory.
- School-assessed and school-administered probation (final warning contracts).
- Seating changes within the classroom.
- Sending the scholar to the office or other assigned area.
- Techniques or penalties identified in individual scholar organizations' extracurricular standards of behavior.

- Temporary confiscation of items that disrupt the educational process.
- Verbal correction, oral or written.
- Withdrawal of privileges, such as participation in extracurricular activities, field trips, eligibility for seeking and holding honorary offices, or membership in school-sponsored clubs and organizations.
- Withdrawal or restriction of bus privileges.
- Other strategies and consequences as determined by school employees.

Corporal Punishment

Essence Preparatory will NOT administer corporal punishment upon a scholar for misconduct.

Scholar Code of Conduct Offenses

The categories of conduct below are violations of the Code of Conduct at school and all school-related activities. As a reminder, all scholar individualized needs are met with positive behavior interventions prior to assigning consequences. (See Restorative Practices in Glossary) For campus -specific rules and expectations, please contact your front office, staff member or school leader.

Example Level 1 Offenses: As a reminder, positive interventions and restorative practices are enacted prior to assigning consequences.

Level 1 offenses listed here but not limited to:		
1	Uniform Infractions	<p><i>May include, but not limited to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Not meeting basic uniform expectation of the campus ● Mildly ripped clothing ● Wearing an outer layer that is not campus-approved
2	Behavior that may cause minor disruptions	<p><i>May include, but not limited to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Not focusing on instructions appropriately, ● Side conversations ● Not completing work or participating in class activity
3	Negative Attitude	<p><i>May include, but not limited to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Creating a negative tone or experience for others through words or minor actions ● Laughing in a way that conveys disrespect or trivializes lack of seriousness ● Snapping or using other hand signals to be distracting and/or disrespectful rather than a sign of non-verbal agreement
4	Unprofessional / Disorganization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Wasting materials ● Unacceptable desk, common space maintenance; leaving trash or mess, especially when given the opportunity to address it ● Failure to use personal organizer when given time to do so ● Running in the hallway

6	Inappropriate volume	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volume unacceptable for the situation (e.g., calling out during silent time, yelling in hallways or cafeteria)
7	Not following class or school procedure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entering classroom without an adult • Out of seat without permission • Talking in the hallway when expectation is silent • Playing in restroom or hallway
8	Unprepared	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No functional writing utensil • Missing item required for class (e.g., calculator), missing binder or text, even after being reminded • Incomplete homework

Disciplinary Consequences (may not necessarily be followed in order and progressive disciplinary measures are not required)

1. Restorative conversation or intervention.
2. After school or lunch extension or reflection.
3. Loss of time or participation in a school-based privilege or activity.
4. Application of one or more Discipline Management Techniques listed above.
5. Confiscation of cell phones or other electronic devices.
6. Grade reductions for academic dishonesty.
7. In-school suspension.
8. Out-of-school suspension.
9. Removal from the classroom and/or placement in another classroom.
10. Restitution/restoration, if applicable.
11. School-assessed and school-administered probation.
12. Temporary confiscation of items that disrupt the educational process.
13. Verbal correction.
14. Withdrawal of privileges, such as participation in extracurricular activities and eligibility for seeking and holding honorary offices, and/or membership in school-sponsored clubs or organizations.

Example Level 2 Offenses: As a reminder, positive interventions and restorative practices are enacted prior to assigning consequences

Level 2 offenses listed here but not limited to:		
1.	Inappropriate Reaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responding with raised voice, physical reaction, angry expression, or expressed argument at earning a consequence. Note: we encourage scholars to communicate and problem-solve in appropriate ways and advocate for themselves when warranted • Ignoring or refusing to comply with teacher directions • Rolling eyes, sucking teeth, exasperated body gestures (e.g., flailing arms)

2.	Disrespect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disrespectful comments expressed about an individual • Spreading rumors about others or verbal teasing and minor name calling • Leaving marks on desks or other school property • Leaving marks in books, damaging books, or being neglectful or careless with books
3.	Misuse of Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of resources not intended for scholar use without permission (e.g., staff refrigerator, laminator)
4.	Prohibited Physical Contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Putting hands on another person, except for shaking hands, fist-bump, or high five
5.	Talking during emergency drills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talking during any emergency drill is prohibited to ensure the safety of all scholars.
6	Unauthorized area without a pass	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scholars going to an area without a written pas

Disciplinary Consequences (may not necessarily be followed in order and progressive disciplinary measures are not required)

1. Any applicable Level I Disciplinary Consequence or Discipline Management Techniques Listed above, including multiple consequences as deemed appropriate by Essence Preparatory Public Schools.
2. Out-of-school suspension for up to three days.
 - a. Alternatives to Suspension- At the discretion of an administrator, a scholar can complete any combination of (but not limited to) the following alternatives to suspension listed below:
 - Research project
 - Presentation
 - Campus beautification
 - Family meeting or shadow
 - Community Service

Example Level 3 Offenses

Level 3 offenses listed here but not limited to:

1.	Significant Disrespect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Intentional use of profanity or grossly disrespectful language, including language that targets another person's racial or sexual identity. This includes spoken or written words and gestures that imply profanity. ● Comments or actions that undermine the dignity or authority of an adult ● Comments or actions that undermine the dignity or emotional safety of a peer ● Intentionally refusing to follow directions: a more severe form of ignoring / refusing ● Intentionally attempting to disrupt or derail a lesson
2	Uncontrolled Conduct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Play-fighting, rough-housing ● Throwing things that could not cause serious physical injury during class ● Verbal altercation
3	Dishonesty or Avoiding Responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Being dishonest ● Framing others for own actions ● Not taking responsibility for choices or actions
4	Academic Dishonesty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Plagiarism or cheating: including copying, passing of work ● <i>ALL plagiarism earns a Zero Grade</i>
5	Destroying property	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Tagging or defacing school property; graffiti of any form ● Damaging school property in a way that requires replacement or repair
6	Skipping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Skipping a school day ● Skipping detention ● Skipping class in the bathroom or other location within school
7	Intimidation and Bullying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Causing an individual to act through the use of threat or coercion. ● Bullying a scholar employee or volunteer of Essence Preparatory, whether on or off school property. If the conduct causes a substantial disruption of the educational environment it may be elevated to a level 4 offense depending on circumstances as determined by Essence Preparatory.

Disciplinary Consequences (may not necessarily be followed in order and progressive disciplinary measures are not required)

1. Any applicable Level I Disciplinary Consequence or Discipline Management Technique

listed above, including multiple consequences as deemed appropriate by Essence Preparatory Public School.

2. Out-of-school suspension for up to three days.

Example Level 4 Offenses:

1.	Hate Speech	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Hate speech based on gender, race, sexual orientation, any disabilities
2.	Physical Violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Physical harm of any kind ● Threats of physical violence, regardless of intent
3.	Theft	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Theft / stealing; taking what is not one's own (may also be a higher level offense)
4.	Illicit/Unsafe Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Being in possession of illegal or controlled substances (i.e. weapons, drugs, alcohol, pornographic material) ● Being under the influence of drugs or alcohol ● Sexual activity of any kind ● Leaving school or school trip without permission
5.	Sexual Harassment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Suggestive touching, stroking, squeezing, tickling, or brushing against a person ● Actual or attempted sexual assault
6	Possession and/or use of an illegal substance drugs or contraband	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Smoking or using tobacco, tobacco-based e-cigarettes or vape pens at school or school related functions or activities on or off school property. ● Possessing of or selling drugs or look-alike drugs, or attempting to pass items off as drugs or contraband. ● Participating in hazing ● Abusing over the counter drugs ● Being under the influence of drugs or alcohol ● Smoking or using tobacco, tobacco-based e-cigarettes or vape pens at school or school related functions or activities on or off school property. ● Possessing of or selling drugs or look-alike drugs, or attempting to pass items off as drugs or contraband. ● Abusing over the counter drugs ● Being under the influence of drugs or alcohol
7	Extortion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Committing extortion or blackmail , meaning or obtaining money or an object or value from an unwilling person. ● Verbal altercation

Disciplinary Consequences (may not necessarily be followed in order and progressive disciplinary measures are not required)

1. 1. Any applicable Level I Disciplinary Consequence or Discipline Management Technique listed above, including multiple consequences as deemed appropriate by Essence Preparatory Public Schools.
2. Out-of-school suspension for up to three days.

Level 5 Offenses:

The offenses listed below may lead to long term suspension or expulsion.

Possession or use Prohibited Items, including but not limited to:

- A. Fireworks of any kind, smoke or stink bombs, or any other pyrotechnic device;
 - B. A razor, box cutter, chain, or any other object used in a way that threatens or inflicts bodily injury to another person;
 - C. A “look-alike” weapon;
 - D. An air gun or BB gun;
 - E. Ammunition; A stun gun;
 - F. A pocket knife or any other small knife;
 - G. Mace or pepper spray;
 - H. Matches or a lighter;
 - I. A laser pointed for other than an approved use; or
 - J. Any articles not generally considered to be weapons, including school supplies, when the CLO/Principal or designee determines that a danger exists.
1. 1. Abusing a scholar’s own prescription drug, giving a prescription drug to another scholar, or possessing or being under the influence of another person’s prescription drug while on school property or at a school-related event. (See glossary for “abuse.”)
 2. Aggravated assault.
 3. Aggravated kidnapping.
 4. Aggravated robbery.
 5. Aggravated sexual assault
 6. Any offense listed in Sections 37.006(a) or 37.007 (a), (b), and (d) of the Texas Education Code, no matter when or where the offense takes place.
 7. Arson.
 8. Burglary of a motor vehicle on campus.
 9. Capital murder.
 10. Committing or assisting in a robbery or theft, even if it does not constitute a felony according to the Texas Penal Code.
 11. Commission of a felony offense listed under Title 5, Texas Penal Code. (See glossary.)
 12. Committing the following offenses on school property or within 1,000 feet of school property as measured from any point on the school’s real property boundary line, or while attending a school-sponsored or school-related activity on or off school property:
 - a. Engaging in conduct punishable as a felony.

- b. Committing an assault (see glossary) under Texas Penal Code 22.01(a)(1).
 - c. Selling, giving, or delivering to another person, or possessing, using, or being under the influence of marijuana, a controlled substance, or a dangerous drug (may include e-cigarettes or vape pens if it is connected to potential marijuana use) in an amount not constituting a felony offense. (See glossary for “under the influence.”).
 - d. Selling, giving, or delivering to another person an alcoholic beverage; committing a serious act or offense while under the influence of alcohol; or possessing, using, or being under the influence of alcohol, if the conduct is not punishable as a felony offense.
 - e. Behaving in a manner that contains the elements of an offense relating to abusable volatile chemicals.
 - f. Behaving in a manner that contains the elements of the offense of public lewdness or indecent exposure.
13. Conduct endangering the health and safety of others.
 14. Criminal attempt to commit murder or capital murder.
 15. Criminally negligent homicide.
 16. Deliberate destruction or tampering with school computer data or networks.
 17. Engaging in “bullying” and/or cyberbullying. (See glossary.)
 18. Engaging in conduct punishable as a felony.
 19. Engaging in conduct relating to a false alarm or report (including a bomb threat) or a terroristic threat involving a public school. (See glossary.)
 20. Engaging in conduct punishable as a felony listed under Title 5 (see glossary) of the Texas penal Code when the conduct occurs off school property and not at a school-sponsored or school-related event and:
 - a. The scholar receives deferred prosecution (see glossary);
 - b. A court or jury finds that the scholar has engaged in delinquent conduct (see glossary); or
 - c. The School Leader or designee has reasonable belief (see glossary) that the scholar engaged in the conduct.
 21. Engaging in conduct that constitutes discrimination or harassment, including conduct motivated by race, color, religion, national origin, gender, disability, or age and directed toward another scholar or Essence Preparatory employee. (See glossary.)
 22. Engaging in conduct that constitutes sexual harassment or sexual abuse, whether by word, gesture, or any other conduct directed toward another person, including a Essence Preparatory scholar, employee, or volunteer.
 23. Engaging in conduct that contains the elements of retaliation against any Essence Preparatory employee or volunteer, whether on or off of school property.
 24. Engaging in inappropriate or indecent exposure of private body parts.
 25. Felony criminal mischief against school property, another scholar, or school staff.
 26. Gang activity (violent or likely to cause harm to another or disrupt the educational environment in any way).
 27. Inappropriate sexual conduct.
 28. Indecency with a child.

29. Issuing a false fire alarm.
30. Manslaughter.
31. Murder.
32. Persistent Level I offenses
33. Persistent Level II offenses
34. Possessing, selling, distributing, or being under the influence of inhalants.
35. Possessing, selling, distributing, or being under the influence of a simulated controlled substance.
36. Possession, use, transfer or exhibition of any firearm, illegal knife, club, or any other prohibited weapon or harmful object (as determined by Essence Preparatory).
37. Public lewdness.
38. Required registration as a sex offender.
39. Setting or attempting to set fire on school property (not arson).
40. Sexual abuse of a young child or children.
41. Sexual assault.
42. Stealing from scholars, staff, or Essence Preparatory.
43. Targeting another individual for bodily harm.
44. Use, exhibition, or possession of a knife with a blade more than 1.5" in length, including but not limited to switchblade knives or any other knife not defined as an illegal knife.
45. Violating computer use policies, rules, or agreements of Essence Preparatory, such as the Student Acceptable Use policy, including but not limited to:
 - a. Attempting to access or circumvent passwords or other security-related information of Essence Preparatory or its scholars or employees, and uploading or creating computer viruses, including such conduct off school property if the conduct causes a substantial disruption to the educational environment.
 - b. Attempting to alter, destroy, or disable Essence Preparatory computer equipment, Essence Preparatory data, the data of others, or other networks connected to the Essence Preparatory system, including conduct occurring off school property if the conduct causes a substantial disruption of the educational environment.
 - c. Using the Internet or other electronic communications to threaten Essence Preparatory scholars, employees, or volunteers, including conduct occurring off school property if the conduct causes a substantial disruption to the educational environment.
 - d. Sending or posting electronic messages that are abusive, obscene, sexually oriented, threatening, harassing, damaging to another's reputation, or illegal, including conduct occurring off school property if the conduct causes a substantial disruption to the educational environment.
 - e. Using e-mail or Web sites at school to encourage illegal behavior or threaten school safety.
46. Any discretionary or mandatory expulsion violation under Texas Education Code, Chapter 37.
 1. Out of school suspension for three days.
 2. Expulsion.

Student Code of Conduct Consequences

During Lunch or After School Extension. Reflection or Extension time may be earned by a scholar for engaging in any of the negative behaviors, persistently or in isolation as listed above. Each school provides a specific system through which Reflection or Extension are implemented. The following rules apply to scholars assigned to reflection or extension:

1. Students will bring materials to work on. Classroom materials may also be sent by a teacher.
2. All materials must be brought to the reflection space or office.
3. Sleeping is not permitted.
4. Students will follow all rules concerning classroom behavior. Failure to comply may also mean suspension from school.
5. Any scholar assigned to extension must stay the entire time. Students refusing to complete their time may receive additional consequences.

Suspension

Essence Preparatory utilizes two kinds of suspension: in school suspension and out of school suspension.

In School Suspension

The following rules and regulations apply to all scholars assigned to in school suspension (“ISS”):

1. Designated staff member will pick-up scholars from their class.
2. Students will bring materials to work on, including an ISS assignment with their teachers’ names, subjects, and assignments. Students are responsible for obtaining assignments from each teacher.
3. All materials must be brought to the room when reporting.
4. No disruptive behavior will be allowed.
5. Unexcused absences from suspension will be referred to the CLO/Principal.
6. Sleeping is prohibited.
7. Students must abide by the Essence Preparatory policies and behavioral standards during their suspension period.
8. A scholar who misses a scheduled ISS session without a confirmed excuse may be assigned out of school suspension. If a scholar misses more than one scheduled ISS session without a confirmed excuse, they may be subject to additional consequences.
9. Depending on the level of severity, scholars may be able to access lesson virtually during in-school or out of school suspension days. An out of school suspension is still coded as such even if the scholar is accessing virtual learning.

Failure to follow these guidelines will be reported to the CLO/Principal for further action, which may include up to three days of out of school suspension or any other Level I consequence.

Out of School Suspension

The CLO/Principal will give notice of suspension and the reasons for the suspension to the scholar. In deciding whether to order out-of-school suspension, the administrator may take into consideration factors including self-defense, prior discipline history, intent or lack of intent and other appropriate or mitigating factors determined by the administrator.

Removal from School Transportation

A scholar being transported by Essence Preparatory transportation to or from school or a school-sponsored or school-related activity may be removed from a school vehicle for conduct violating the school's established standards for conduct in a school vehicle.

Conferences, Hearings, and Appeals

All scholars are entitled to conferences, hearings, and/or appeals of disciplinary matters as provided by applicable state and federal law, and Essence Preparatory policy.

Process for Suspensions Lasting Up to Three Days

In addition to the above list of Code of Conduct violations, the CLO/Principal has authority to suspend a scholar for a period of up to three school days for any of the following additional reasons:

1. The need to further investigate an incident,
2. A recommendation to expel the scholar, or
3. An emergency that constitutes endangerment to health or safety.

Prerequisites to Suspension

Prior to suspending a scholar for up to three days, the CLO/Principal or designee must attempt to hold an informal conference with the scholar to:

1. Notify the scholar of the accusations against him/her,
2. Allow the scholar to relate their version of the incident, and
3. Determine whether the scholar's conduct warrants suspension.

Alternatives to Suspension

Suspension shall be imposed only when other means of correction fail to bring about proper conduct. However, a pupil, including an individual with exceptional needs may be suspended for any Level offense upon a first offense, if Leadership determines that the scholar committed a level 3 or higher offense, or the scholar's presence causes a danger to persons.

At the discretion of an administrator, a scholar can complete any combination of (but not limited to) the following alternatives to suspension listed below:

- Research project
- Presentation
- Campus beautification
- Family meeting or shadow
- Community Service

Notification to Parents/Guardians

If the CLO/Principal or designee determines the scholar's conduct warrants suspension during the school day for up to five days, the CLO/Principal or designee will make reasonable effort to notify the scholar's parent(s) that the scholar has been suspended before the scholar is sent home. The CLO/Principal or designee will notify a suspended scholar's parent(s) of the period of suspension, the grounds for the suspension, and the time and place for an opportunity to confer with the CLO/Principal.

Credit During Suspension

A scholar shall receive credit for work missed during the period of suspension if the scholar makes up work missed during the period of suspension within the same number of school days the scholar was absent on suspension.

Process for Out-of-School Suspensions and Expulsion Notice

When the CLO/Principal or designee determine that a scholar's conduct warrants suspension for more than five days (extended suspension) or expulsion, but prior to taking any such action, the CLO/Principal or designee will provide the scholar's parent(s) with written notice of:

1. The reasons for the proposed disciplinary action; and
2. The date and location for a hearing before the CLO/Principal, within five school days from the date of the disciplinary action.

The notice shall further state that, at the hearing, the scholar:

1. May be present;
2. Shall have an opportunity to present evidence;
3. Shall be apprised and informed of Essence Preparatory's evidence;
4. May be accompanied by their parent(s); and
5. May be represented by an attorney.

Hearing Before the CLO/Principal

Essence Preparatory shall make a good faith effort to inform the scholar and the scholar's parent(s) of the time and place for the hearing, and Essence Preparatory shall hold the hearing regardless of

whether the scholar, the scholar's parent(s) or another adult representing the scholar attends.

The CLO/Principal may audio record the hearing.

Immediately following the hearing, the CLO/Principal will notify the scholar and the scholar's parent(s) in writing of their decision. The decision shall specify:

1. The length of the extended suspension, expulsion, or in lieu of expulsion, if any;
2. When or if the expulsion is not permanent, the procedures for re-admittance at the end of the expulsion period if at all; and
3. The right to appeal the CLO/Principal decision to the Board of Directors or the Board's designee. The notice shall also state that failure to timely request such a hearing constitutes a waiver of further rights in the matter.

Appeal to the Board of Directors

The scholar or their parent(s) may appeal the extended suspension or expulsion decision to the Board of Directors by notifying the CLO/Principal in writing within five calendar days of the date of receipt of the CLO/Principal decision. The Board will review the audio or transcribed record from the hearing before the CLO/Principal at a regular or specially called meeting in closed session. The Board will notify the scholar and their parent(s) of its decision within five calendar days of the hearing. The decision of the Board is final and may not be appealed.

Please note that discipline consequences will not be deferred pending the outcome of an appeal of an extended suspension or expulsion to the Board.

No Credit Earned

Except when required by law, scholars will not earn academic credit during a period of Expulsion.

Emergency Placement and Expulsion

If the CLO/Principal or designee reasonably believes a scholar's behavior is so unruly, disruptive, or abusive that it seriously interferes with a teacher's ability to communicate effectively with scholars in a class, with the ability of a scholar's classmates to learn, or with the operation of Essence Preparatory or a school-sponsored activity, the CLO/Principal or designee may order immediate removal of the scholar. The CLO/Principal or designee may impose immediate

suspension if they reasonably believe such action is necessary to protect persons or property from imminent harm. At the time of such an emergency removal, the scholar will be given verbal notice of the reason for the action and appropriate hearings will be scheduled within a reasonable time after the emergency removal.

Placement of Students with Disabilities

All disciplinary actions regarding scholars with disabilities (504 or special education under the IDEA) shall be conducted in accordance with applicable federal and state laws.

Suspension/Expulsion Requirement

A scholar with a disability shall not be removed from their current placement for disciplinary reasons and/or pending appeal to the Board of Directors for more than ten days without ARD Committee action to determine appropriate services in the interim and otherwise in accordance with applicable law. If a special education due process appeal to a TEA special education hearing officer is made, the scholar with a disability shall remain in the then current education setting in place at the time such appeal is noticed to Essence Preparatory, unless Essence Preparatory and the scholar's parents/guardians agree otherwise.

Gun-Free Schools Act

In accordance with the Gun-Free Schools Act, Essence Preparatory shall expel, from the scholar's regular program for a period of one year, any scholar who is determined to have brought a

firearm, as defined by federal law, to school. The CLO/Principal may modify the term of expulsion for a scholar or assess another comparable penalty that results in the scholar's expulsion from the regular school program on a case-by-case basis and in accordance with legal requirements.

For the purposes of this section, "firearm" means:

1. Any weapon – including a starter gun – which will, or is designed to, or which may readily be converted to expel a projectile by the action of an explosive from the frame or receiver of any such weapon;
2. Any firearm muffler or firearm silencer;
3. Any destructive device. "Destructive device" means any explosive, incendiary or poison gas bomb, grenade, rocket having a propellant charge of more than four ounces, missile having an explosive or incendiary charge of more than 1/4 ounce, mine, or device similar to any of the preceding described devices. It also means any type of weapon – other than a shotgun shell or a shotgun that is generally recognized as particularly suitable for sporting purposes – by whatever name known which will, or which may be readily converted to, expel a projectile by the action of an explosive or other propellant, and which has any barrel with a bore of more than 1/2 inch in diameter; and any combination of parts either designed or intended for use in converting any device into a destructive device as described, and from which a destructive device may be readily assembled.

SECTION 5: ESPECIALLY FOR PARENTS

Parent Contact Information

Parents are responsible for notifying Essence Preparatory of any changes in their address, telephone number, and/or email address so that we can update our records accordingly. Parents are encouraged to check the campus website on a regular basis as it is our primary means of communication. It is important for parent communication that Essence Preparatory has a valid, working parent email address.

Your Involvement as a Parent

A child's education succeeds best when there is a strong partnership between home and school, a partnership that thrives on communication. Your involvement in this partnership may include:

1. Encouraging your scholar to put a high priority on education and working with your scholar on a daily basis to make the most of the educational opportunities the school provides. Be sure your child comes to school each day prepared, rested, in appropriate

attire, and ready to learn.

2. Becoming familiar with all of your child's school activities and with the academic programs, including special programs, offered by Essence Preparatory. Discuss with the CLO/Principal any questions you may have about the options and opportunities available to your child.
3. Monitoring your scholar's academic progress and contacting teachers as needed. Including, but not limited to, reviewing weekly Progress Reports printed from DeansList.
4. Attending scheduled conferences and requesting additional conferences as needed. To schedule a conference or in-person conference with a teacher or CLO/Principal, please call the front office for an appointment. A teacher will usually return your call or meet with you at a mutually convenient time before or after school.
5. Becoming a school volunteer. For further information, contact the Front Office. All volunteers must complete a Volunteer Application and criminal background check prior to volunteering.
6. Offering to serve as a parent representative on a planning committee to assist in the development of educational goals and plans to improve scholar achievement. For further information, contact the Front Office.

Surveys and Activities

Students will not be required to participate without parental consent in any survey, analysis, or evaluation – funded in whole or in part by the U.S. Department of Education – that concerns:

1. Political affiliations or beliefs of the scholar or the scholar's parent;
2. Mental or psychological problems of the scholar or the scholar's family;
3. Sexual behavior or attitudes;
4. Illegal, antisocial, self-incriminating or demeaning behavior;
5. Critical appraisals of individuals with whom the scholar has close family relationship;
6. Relationships privileged under law, such as relationships with lawyers, physicians and ministers;
7. Religious practices, affiliations, or beliefs of the scholar or parents/guardians; or
8. Income, except when the information is required by law and will be used to determine the scholar's eligibility to participate in a special program or to receive financial assistance under such a program.

Parents will be able to inspect the survey or other instrument and any instructional materials used in connection with such a survey, analysis, or evaluation.

“Opting Out” of Surveys and Activities

Parents have the right to receive notice of and deny permission for their scholar's participation in:

1. Any survey concerning the private information listed above, regardless of funding;
2. School activities involving the collection, disclosure, or use of personal information gathered from their scholar for the purpose of marketing or selling that information;
3. A non-emergency, invasive physical examination, or screening required as a condition of attendance, administered and scheduled by the school in advance and not necessary to protect the immediate health and safety of the scholar (exceptions are hearing, vision, or

scoliosis screenings, or any physical exam of screening permitted or required under state law.)

Notice of Teacher Qualifications

At the beginning of each school year, Essence Preparatory will notify the parent of each scholar attending with information regarding the professional qualifications of their scholar's classroom teachers. Essence Preparatory will also provide this information upon request from a parent.

The

notification will include, at a minimum:

1. Whether your child's teacher(s) have met state qualification and licensing criteria for their grade levels and subject areas.
2. Whether your child's teacher(s) are serving under emergency or other provisional status that is less than full state certification.
3. The bachelor's degree major of your child's teacher(s) and any graduate degrees held, and the field of certification or degree.
4. Whether your child receives services from paraprofessionals and, if so, their qualifications.

Please contact the Director of Operations to request this information.

Accommodations for Children of Military Families

Children of military families will be provided flexibility regarding certain school requirements, including:

- Immunization requirements;
- Grade level, course, or educational program placement;
- Eligibility requirements for participating in extracurricular activities; and
- Graduation requirements.

In addition, absences related to a scholar visiting with their parent, including a stepparent or legal guardian, who has been called to active duty for, is on leave from, or is returning from a deployment of at least four months will be excused by Essence Preparatory. The school will permit no

more than five excused absences per year for this purpose. For the absence to be excused, the absence must occur no earlier than the 60th day before deployment or no later than the 30th day after the parent's return from deployment.

Student or Parent Complaints and Concerns

Essence Preparatory values the opinions of its scholars and parents/guardians, and the public it serves. Parents and scholars have the right to express their views through appropriate informal and formal processes. The purpose of this grievance policy is to resolve conflicts in an efficient, expeditious, and just manner. The Board of Directors encourages parents/guardians and the public to discuss their concerns and complaints through informal meetings with the CLO/Principal. Concerns and complaints should be expressed as soon as possible to allow early resolution at the lowest possible administrative level. Neither the Board of Directors nor any School employee shall unlawfully retaliate against a parent or scholar for voicing a concern or complaint. The Superintendent may develop more detailed grievance procedures. The

Director of Operations shall ensure that the school's grievance procedures are provided to all parents/guardians and scholars. The formal grievance procedure shall provide for any grievance to ultimately be considered or heard by the Board of Directors in accordance with Commissioner of Education rules. For purposes of this policy, "days" shall mean school days, and announcement of a decision in the scholar's or parent's presence shall constitute communication of the decision.

Informal Conferences

A parent or scholar may request an informal conference with the CLO/Principal, teacher, or other campus administrator within seven school days of the time the parent or scholar knew or should have known of the event(s) giving rise to the complaint. If the person is not satisfied with the results of the informal conference, they may submit a written grievance form to the School Leader. Grievance forms may be obtained from the CLO/Principal office, upon request at the Front Office.

Formal Grievance Process

The formal grievance process provides all persons with an opportunity to be heard up to the highest level of management if they are dissatisfied with an administrative response. Once all administrative procedures are exhausted, a person can bring concerns or complaints to the Board, as outlined below.

A grievance must specify the harm alleged by the parent and/or scholar, and the remedy sought. A parent or scholar should not submit separate or serial grievances regarding the same event or action. Multiple grievances may be consolidated at the school's discretion. All time limits shall be strictly complied with; however, if an administrator determines that additional time is needed to complete a thorough investigation of the complaint and/or to issue a response, the administrator shall inform the parent or scholar in writing of the need to extend the response time and provide a specific date by which the response will be issued. Costs of any grievance shall be paid by the grievant.

Level One Complaint – CLO/Principal Review

A parent or scholar shall submit a written Level One Grievance Form to the CLO/Principal or designee within the later of (1) 5 school days from the time the event(s) causing the complaint were or should have been known, or (2) within 2 school days following an informal conference with the CLO/Principal. The school reserves the right to require the grievant to begin the grievance process at Level Two.

The CLO/Principal or designee must meet with the complaining parent or scholar. Following this conference, the CLO/Principal shall issue a written Level One Decision. The Level One Decision must be issued within ten school days of the CLO/Principal receipt of the complaint.

Note: A complaint against the Superintendent shall begin at Level Four.

Level Two Complaint –Dean of Empowerment and Culture Review

If the parent or scholar is not satisfied with the Level One Decision, or if no Decision is provided, the parent or scholar may file a written appeal to the Dean of Empowerment and Culture. The appeal must include a signed statement of the complaint, any evidence supporting the

complaint, and a copy of the written complaint to the CLO/Principal and a copy of the Level One Decision, if issued. The appeal shall not include any new issues or complaints unrelated to the original complaint. The appeal must be filed within ten school days of the Level One Decision or the response deadline if no Decision is made. The Dean of Empowerment and Cultures or designee will meet with the complaining parent or scholar. Following this conference, the Director of Operations or designee shall issue a Level Two Decision. The Level Two Decision must be issued within 10 school days of the written Appeal.

Level Three Complaint – Superintendent Review

If the parent or scholar is not satisfied with the Level Two Decision, or if no Decision is provided, the parent or scholar may file a written appeal to the Superintendent. The appeal must include the documentation submitted to the Dean of Empowerment and Culture or designee, and a copy of the Level Two Decision, if issued. The appeal shall not include any new issues or complaints. The appeal must be filed within ten school days of the Level Two Decision or the response deadline if no Decision is made. The Superintendent or designee will meet with the complaining parent or scholar. Following this conference, the Superintendent or designee shall issue a Level Three Decision. The Level Three Decision must be issued within 10 school days of the written appeal.

Level Four Complaint - Superintendent

If the parent or scholar is not satisfied with the Level Three Decision, or if no Decision is provided, the parent or scholar may file a written appeal to the Superintendent. The appeal must include the documentation submitted to the Superintendent or designee, and a copy of the Level Three Decision, if issued. The appeal shall not include any new issues or complaints. The appeal must be filed within ten school days of the Level Three Decision or the response deadline if no Decision is made.

The Superintendent or designee will meet with the complaining parent or scholar. Following this conference, the Superintendent or designee shall issue a Level Four Decision. The Level Four Decision must be issued within 10 school days of the written appeal.

Level Five Complaint – Board of Directors Review

If the scholar or parent is not satisfied with the Level Four Decision, or if no decision is provided, the parent or scholar may submit to the Superintendent or designee a written appeal to the Board of Directors. The request must be filed within ten school days of the Level Four Decision or the response deadline if no Decision is made. The scholar or parent shall be informed of the date, time, and place of the hearing. The Board of Directors shall hear the scholar or parent complaint, and may set a reasonable time limit for presenting the complaint. Only written documentation and issues previously submitted and presented by the scholar or parent and Essence Preparatory will be considered. An audiotape recording of the hearing may be made. The Board of Directors shall communicate its decision, if any, orally or in writing before or during the next regularly scheduled Board meeting. If no decision is made by the end of the next regularly scheduled Board meeting, the decision being appealed shall be upheld. The Board may not delegate its authority to issue a decision, and any decision by the Board of Directors is final and may not be appealed.

If the complaint involves concerns or charges regarding a scholar or Essence Preparatory employee, it shall be heard by the Board in closed meeting unless the scholar or employee to whom the complaint pertains requests that it be heard in public.

Additional Complaint Procedures

This Parent and Student Complaints and Grievances process does not apply to all complaints:

1. 1. Complaints alleging discrimination or harassment based on race, color, gender, national origin, disability, religion, gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation or any other characteristic protected by law shall be submitted as described in "Freedom from Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation," page 27 of this Handbook.
2. Complaints concerning retaliation related to discrimination and harassment shall be submitted as described in "Reporting Procedures,".
3. Complaints concerning bullying or retaliation related to bullying shall be submitted as described in "Freedom from Bullying and Cyber-Bullying,".
4. For complaints concerning loss of credit on the basis of attendance.
5. For complaints concerning disciplinary long-term suspensions and/or expulsions.
6. Complaints concerning the identification, evaluation, or educational placement of a scholar with a disability within the scope of Section 504 shall be submitted as described in "Student or Parent Complaints and Concerns" above, except that the deadline for filing an initial Level One grievance shall be 30 calendar days and the procedural safeguards handbook.
7. Complaints concerning the identification, evaluation, educational placement, or discipline of a scholar with a disability within the scope of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act shall be submitted in accordance with applicable Board policy and the procedural safeguards provided to parents/guardians of all scholars referred to special education.

Complaints regarding the Free and Reduced Price Meal Program. In accordance with federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, the school is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, religious creed, sex, political beliefs, age, disability, national origin, or limited English proficiency. (Not all bases apply to all programs.) Reprisal is prohibited based on prior civil rights activity.

If you wish to file a Civil Rights program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, which is available online at the following website:

http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, or at any USDA office, or call (866) 632-9992 to request the form. You may also write a letter containing all of the information requested in the form.

Send your completed complaint form or letter by mail to

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410,

by fax (202) 690-7442

or email at program.intake@usada.gov.

Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339, or (800) 845-6136 (Spanish).

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

SECTION 6: IMPORTANT NOTICES

Annual Notice of Parent and Student Rights (Annual FERPA Confidentiality Notice)

The Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (“FERPA”) affords parents/guardians and scholars over 18 years of age (“eligible scholars”) certain rights with respect to the scholar’s educational records. These rights include the following:

The Right to Inspect and Review

Parents and/or eligible scholars have the right to inspect and review the scholar’s educational records within 45 days of the day the school receives access. Parents or eligible scholars should submit to the CLO/Principal or designee a written request that identifies the record(s) they wish to inspect. Essence Preparatory will make arrangements for access and notify the parent or eligible scholar for the time and place where the records may be inspected.

If circumstances effectively prevent the parent or eligible scholar from exercising the right to inspect and review the scholar’s educational records, Essence Preparatory shall provide the parent or

eligible scholar with a copy of the records requested to make arrangements for the parent or eligible scholar to inspect and review the requested records.

If the scholar’s educational records contain information on more than one scholar, the parent or eligible scholar may inspect and review or be informed of only the specific information about that scholar.

The Right to Seek Amendment of the Student’s Educational Records

Parents or eligible scholars may ask Essence Preparatory to amend a record that they believe is inaccurate, misleading, or in violation of the scholar’s privacy rights. Parents or eligible scholars should submit to the CLO/Principal or designee a written request that clearly identifies the part of the record they want changed, and specifies why it is inaccurate, misleading, or in violation of the scholar’s privacy rights. Essence Preparatory will decide whether to amend the record as requested within a reasonable time after receiving the request. If Essence Preparatory decides not to amend the record as requested by the parent of eligible scholar, the school will notify the parent of eligible scholar of the decision and advise them to their right to a hearing to challenge the content of the scholar’s education records on the grounds that the information contained in the educational records is inaccurate, misleading, or in violation of the scholar’s privacy rights.

If, as a result of the hearing, Essence Preparatory decides that the information in the educational record is not inaccurate, misleading, or in violation of the scholar's privacy rights, it shall inform the parent or eligible scholar of the right to place a statement in the record commenting on the contested information in the record or stating why they disagree with the decision of Essence Preparatory. If the school places an amended statement in the scholar's educational records, Essence Preparatory is obligated to maintain the amended statement with the contested part of the record for as long as the record is maintained and disclose the statement whenever it discloses the portion of the record to which the statement relates.

The Right to Consent Prior to Disclosure

Parents and/or eligible scholars have the right to consent to disclosures of personally identifiable information contained in the scholar's educational records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent.

One exception that permits disclosure without consent is disclosure to school officials with legitimate educational interest. A "school official" is a person employed by Essence Preparatory as an administrator, supervisor, instructor, or support staff member (including health or medical staff and law enforcement unit personnel); a person serving on the Board of Directors; a person or company with whom Essence Preparatory has outsourced services or functions it would otherwise use its own employees to perform (such as an attorney, auditor, medical consultant, or therapist); a parent or scholar serving on an official committee, such as a disciplinary or grievance committee; or a parent, scholar, or other volunteer assisting another school official in performing their tasks.

A school official has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an educational record in order to fulfill their professional responsibility.

Upon request, Essence Preparatory discloses educational records without consent to officials of another school in which a scholar seeks or intends to enroll or is already enrolled, so long as the disclosure is for purposes related to the scholar's enrollment or transfer.

The Right to File a Complaint

Parents and/or eligible scholars have the right to file a complaint with the Family Policy Compliance Office of the U.S. Department of Education ("Office") concerning alleged failures by Essence Preparatory to comply with the requirements of FERPA. These complaints should be addressed as follow:

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

Access to Medical Records

Parents are entitled to access their scholar's medical records.

Notice for Directory Information

Under FERPA, Essence Preparatory must, with certain exceptions, obtain written consent prior to the disclosure of personally identifiable information from a scholar's education records. However, Essence Preparatory may disclose appropriately designated "directory information" without written consent, unless a parent or eligible scholar has advised Essence Preparatory, in writing, to the contrary.

The primary purpose of directory information is to allow the school to include this type of information from a scholar's education records in certain school publications.

Essence Preparatory has designated the following categories of information as directory information for the purpose of disclosure relating to school-related purposes:

- Student name;
- Date and place of birth;
- Major field of study
- Degrees, honors, and awards received;
- Dates of attendance;
- Grade level;
- Most recent educational institution attended;
- Participation in officially recognized activities and sports; and
- Weight and height of members of athletic teams.
- School-related purposes are those events/activities that Essence Preparatory conducts and/or
- sponsors to support the school's educational mission. Examples include, but are not limited to:
 - Extracurricular programs or events (school plays, concerns, athletic events, graduation ceremony, etc.).
 - Publications (newsletters, yearbook, etc.).
 - Honor roll and other scholar recognition lists.
 - Marketing materials of Essence Preparatory (print media, website, videos, newspaper, etc.).
- Essence Preparatory has designated the following categories of information as directory information for purposes of disclosure to military recruiters and institutions of higher education, but only for secondary scholars:
 - Student's name, address, and telephone number.
- Essence Preparatory shall not release directory information except for the purposes indicated above, namely, disclosure relating to school-sponsored/school-affiliated purposes or for the purposes of disclosure to military recruiters and institutions of higher education for secondary scholars.

A PARENT OR ELIGIBLE STUDENT MAY OPT OUT OF THE RELEASE OF DIRECTORY INFORMATION FOR EITHER OR BOTH OF THESE PURPOSES BY SUBMITTING A WRITTEN OBJECTION TO THE FRONT OFFICE WITHIN 15 DAYS AFTER RECEIVING THIS "NOTICE OF PARENT AND STUDENT RIGHTS (ANNUAL FERPA CONFIDENTIALITY NOTICE)."

Student Acceptable Use Policy

Computer Resources

To prepare scholars for an increasingly computerized society, Essence Preparatory has made a substantial investment in computer technology for instructional purposes. Use of those resources is restricted to scholars working under a teacher's supervision and for approved proposed only.

Students with access to Essence Preparatory computers and their parents/guardians agree to follow the following user agreement regarding use of these resources. Violations of this agreement may result in withdrawal of computer privileges and other disciplinary action. Electronic communications, such as e-mail using Essence Preparatory computers, are not private and may be monitored by school staff.

Technology Mission Statement

Essence Preparatory is committed to utilizing the maximum potential of technology to enhance scholar learning and increase teacher effectiveness by providing scholars with technology-related experiences. Recognizing the ever-changing influences of technology on all aspects of our lives, Essence Preparatory is dedicated to providing an integrated technological curriculum for all scholars and staff. Students will have access to the technology necessary to produce, manage, communicate, and retrieve information in an efficient manner for educational use. In the attainment of both present and future goals, Essence Preparatory will provide a continually evolving staff development program oriented toward the integration of technology in areas of curriculum.

Instructional Resource

Essence Preparatory is proud to bring network and Internet access to school staff and scholars. Essence Preparatory believes the Internet offers many diverse and unique resources to both scholars and staff. Essence Preparatory's goal in providing these services to staff and scholars is to promote educational excellence by facilitating resource-sharing, innovative teaching, and communication skills.

Students and staff have access to numerous research oriented and instructional resources via the Internet. Online encyclopedias, professional journals, and databases filled with timely information on thousands of topics are just a few of the resources provided. School computers have the technology necessary to support scholar research and to promote academic Achievement.

Student Safety

Essence Preparatory is aware that resources which are inappropriate or not designed for use in the educational setting may be accessed on the Internet. To protect scholars and staff from such inappropriate material, the school's Internet access is filtered with one of the highest rated Internet filtering systems available. However, users must recognize that it is impossible for Essence Preparatory to restrict access to all controversial material and individuals must be responsible for their own actions in navigating the network.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure school-level compliance with all procedures and regulations regarding the local area network and Internet usage. All scholars, parents/guardians, teachers, administrators, and school staff who obtain their Internet access through the school are expected to use these services appropriately.

User Responsibilities

The use of the Internet comes with a level of personal responsibility for one's behavior.. Abusive conduct will lead to access being revoked. Essence Preparatory is providing Internet resources for

educational purposes only. Student/staff use of Internet resources must be related to an expressed educational and/or administrative goals or objectives.

1. The use of the school's Internet and computer network must be in support of educational goals, research, and class assignments and be consistent with the educational objectives of Essence Preparatory.
2. Users must have a valid, authorized account to access the network, and use only those computer resources that are authorized. Accounts may be used only in accordance with authorized purposes.
3. Individual accounts may be used only by the owner of the account, except where specifically authorized by administrators. In the case of class accounts, all use must be under the supervision of the sponsoring teacher/supervisor.
4. The user is responsible for safeguarding the computer account. Users are expected to protect access to accounts by periodically changing the password and keeping it confidential. They must respect the privacy of others by not tampering with their files, passwords, or accounts.

Policy Terms and Conditions

Acceptable Use

Users are to properly use Essence Preparatory network resources for educational and/or administrative purposes. Respectful and responsible network etiquette and behavior should be in keeping with the school's mission statement. Students and staff are expressly prohibited from accessing obscene, profane, vulgar, or pornographic sites or materials.

Students are prohibited from sending or posting electronic messages that are abusive, obscene, sexually oriented, threatening, harassing, damaging to another's reputation or illegal. This prohibition applies to conduct off school property if it results in a substantial disruption to the educational environment.

Any person taking, disseminating, transferring or sharing obscene, sexually oriented, lewd or otherwise illegal images or other content, commonly referred to as "sexting," will be disciplined according to the Student Code of Conduct and may, in certain circumstances, be reported to law enforcement. Because engaging in this type of behavior can lead to bullying or harassment, scholars involved in "sexting" or the sharing of inappropriate images or other content may also

be disciplined for violating the school's anti-harassment and bullying policies.

Monitored Use

Electronic mail transmissions and other use of the electronic communications system by scholars and employees shall not be considered confidential and may be monitored at any time by designated Essence Preparatory staff to ensure appropriate use for educational or administrative purposes. Forgery or attempted forgery of electronic mail messages is prohibited. Only the school's authorized IT Manager may read, delete, copy or modify the electronic mail of other system users.

Vandalism

Vandalism is defined as any malicious attempt to harm, disrupt or destroy data of another user of Essence Preparatory's network or any other agencies or networks that are connected to the Internet. This includes, but is not limited to, the uploading or creating of computer viruses. Any of these actions may be viewed as violations of school policy, administrative regulations and, possibly, as criminal activity under applicable state and federal laws. Users must respect the privacy of other users, and will not intentionally seek information on, obtain copies of, or modify any file, data, or password belonging to another user, or represent themselves as another user unless explicitly authorized. Deliberate attempts to degrade or disrupt system performance and/or degrade, disrupt or bypass system security are violations of school policy and administrative regulations, and may constitute criminal activity under applicable laws. Any prohibited behavior under this policy will result in the cancellation of technology privileges. Essence Preparatory will, in accordance with school policy, cooperate with local, state, or federal officials in any investigation concerning or relating to misuse of the school's network.

Network Etiquette

Each network user is expected to:

- Be polite (i.e., an all-caps message implies shouting);
- Use appropriate language;
- Refrain from any activity that may be considered "cyber bullying," including but not limited to threats of violence, extortion, obscene or harassing messages, harassment, stalking, child pornography, and sexual exploitation;
- Maintain confidentiality of the user, colleagues, and scholars;
- Respect copyright laws; and
- Be respectful in all aspects of network use.
- Consequences
- Violation of Essence Preparatory policies and procedures concerning use of the computer on the network will result in the same disciplinary actions that would result from similar violations in other areas of school policy, including the Student Code of Conduct. Any or all of the following consequences may be enforced if a scholar violates the terms of this policy:
 - Loss of computer privileges/Internet access, with length of time to be determined by campus administration.
 - Any disciplinary consequence, including suspension or expulsion, as deemed

- appropriate by the administration.
- Suspension may be considered for flagrant violations or violations that corrupt the educational value of the computers or the Internet.
 - Expulsion may be considered in instances where scholars have used the school's Internet access to engage in conduct that constitutes felony criminal mischief, and/or have deliberately attempted to bypass installed security software or copy/modify another scholar's work files. Violations of law may also result in criminal prosecution as well as disciplinary action by Essence Preparatory.

Glossary

The glossary provides legal definitions and locally established definitions and is intended to assist in understanding terms related to the Student Code of Conduct.

Abuse is improper or excessive use.

Abusable Volatile Chemical Offense, as defined by Health and Safety Code § 485.001 and 485.031. No scholar shall inhale, ingest, apply, use, or possess an abusable volatile chemical with intent to inhale, ingest, apply or use any of these in a manner:

1. Contrary to the directions for use, cautions, or warnings appearing on a label of a container of the chemical; and
2. Designed to affect the central nervous system, create or induce a condition of intoxication, hallucination, or elation, or change, distort, or disturb the person's eyesight, thinking process, balance, or coordination.

No scholar shall knowingly deliver to a person younger than 18 an abusable volatile chemical. Health and Safety Code § 485.032

No scholar shall knowingly use or possess with intent to use inhalant paraphernalia to inhale, ingest, or otherwise introduce into the human body an abusable volatile chemical. No scholar

shall knowingly deliver, sell, or possess with intent to deliver or sell inhalant paraphernalia knowing that that person who receives it intends to use it to inhale, ingest, apply, use, or otherwise introduce into the human body an abusable volatile chemical. Health and Safety Code § 485.033

Armor-piercing ammunition is handgun ammunition used School Leaderly in pistols and revolvers and that is designed primarily for the purpose of penetrating metal or body armor.

Arson is defined by Texas Penal Code § 28.02 and occurs when a person starts a fire, regardless of whether the fire continues after ignition, or causes an explosion with intent to destroy or damage:

- Any vegetation, fence, or structure on open-space land; or
- Any building, habitation, or vehicle:
 - Knowing that it is within the limits of an incorporated city or town,
 - Knowing that it is insured against damage or destruction,
 - Knowing that it is subject to a mortgage or other security interest,
 - Knowing that it is located on property belonging to another,
 - Knowing that it has located within it property belonging to another, or
 - When the person starting the fire is reckless about whether the burning or explosion will endanger the life of some individual or the safety of the property of another.

Arson also occurs when a person:

- Recklessly starts a fire or causes an explosion while manufacturing or attempting to manufacture a controlled substance and the fire or explosion damages any building, habitation, or vehicle; or
- Intentionally starts a fire or causes an explosion and in so doing recklessly damages or destroys a building belonging to another, or recklessly causes another person to suffer bodily injury or death. Assault is defined in part by Texas Penal Code § 22.01 as intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly causing bodily injury to another.

Behavior Contracts: A behavior contract is an agreement between the leadership team, teacher, scholar, and the scholar's parents/guardians that sets limits for scholar behavior, outlines consequences for bad choices and supports scholars in developing and maintaining positive behavior.

Bullying is defined to mean engaging in written or verbal expression, expression through electronic means, or physical conduct that occurs on school property, at a school-sponsored

event, or school related activity, or in a vehicle operated by Essence Preparatory and that: has the effect of physically harming a scholar, damaging a scholar's property, or placing a scholar in reasonable fear of harm to the scholar or damage to the scholar's property; or is sufficiently severe, persistent, or pervasive enough that the action or threat creates an intimidating, threatening, or abusive educational environment for a scholar.

The conduct described above is also considered bullying if that conduct exploits an imbalance of power between the scholar perpetrator and the scholar victim through written or verbal expression and physical conduct, and interferes with a scholar's education or substantially disrupts the operation of Essence Prep.

“Cyberbullying” means the use of any electronic communication device to engage in bullying or intimidation.

Chemical dispensing device is a device designed, made, or adapted for the purpose of dispensing a substance capable of causing an adverse psychological or physiological effect on a human being.

Club is an instrument specially designed, made, or adapted for the purpose of inflicting serious bodily injury or death, including but not limited to a blackjack, nightstick, mace, and tomahawk. Controlled substances or dangerous drugs include but are not limited to marijuana; any narcotic drug, hallucinogen, stimulant, depressant, amphetamine, barbiturate; anabolic steroid; or prescription medicine provided to any person other than the person for whom the prescription was written. The term also includes all controlled substances listed in Chapters 481 and 483 of the Texas Health and Safety Code.

Criminal street gang means three or more persons having a common identifying sign or symbol or an identifiable leadership who continuously or regularly associate in the commission of criminal activities.

Dating violence is the intentional use of physical, sexual, verbal, or emotional abuse by a person to harm, threaten, intimidate, or control another person with whom the scholar has or has had a dating relationship, as defined by Texas Family Code § 71.0021.

Deadly conduct occurs when a person recklessly engages in conduct that places another in imminent danger of serious bodily injury, and includes but is not limited to knowingly discharging a firearm in the direction of an individual, habitation, building, or vehicle.

Deferred adjudication is an alternative to seeking a conviction in court that may be offered to a juvenile for delinquent conduct or conduct indicating a need for supervision. Deferred prosecution may be offered to a juvenile as an alternative to seeking a conviction in court for delinquent conduct or conduct indicating a need for supervision.

Delinquent conduct is conduct that:

- Violates either state or federal law, other than a traffic offense, and is punishable by imprisonment or confinement in jail;
- Violates a lawful order of a court under circumstances that would constitute contempt of that court in a justice or municipal court, or a county court for conduct punishable only by a fine;
- Constitutes an intoxication and alcoholic beverage offense under Chapter 49 of the Texas Penal Code; or
- Violates Texas Alcoholic Beverage Code § 106.041 relating to driving under the influence of alcohol by a minor (third or subsequent offense).

Discretionary means that something is left to or regulated by a local decision maker.

E-Cigarette means an electronic cigarette or any other device that simulates smoking by using a mechanical heating element, battery, or electronic circuit to deliver nicotine or other substances to the individual inhaling from the device. The term does not include a prescription medical device unrelated to the cessation of smoking.

Explosive weapon is any explosive or incendiary bomb, grenade, rocket, or mine that is designed, made, or adapted for the purpose of inflicting serious bodily injury, death, or substantial property damage, or for the CLO/Principal purpose of causing such a loud report as to cause undue public alarm or terror, and includes a device designed, made, or adapted for delivery or shooting an explosive weapon.

False Alarm or Report occurs when a person knowingly initiates, communicates, or circulates a report of a present, past, or future bombing, fire, offense, or other emergency that they know is false or baseless and that would ordinarily:

- Cause action by an official or volunteer agency organized to deal with emergencies;
- Place a person in fear of imminent serious bodily injury; or
- Prevent or interrupt the occupation of a building, room, or place of assembly.

Firearm silencer means any device designed, made, or adapted to muffle the report of a firearm. **Graffiti** means making marks with paint, an indelible pen or marker, or an etching or engraving device on tangible property without the effective consent of the owner. The markings may include inscriptions, slogans, drawings, or paintings.

Harassment is:

- Conduct that meets the definition established in Board policy and/or the Student Handbook; or
- Conduct that threatens to cause harm or bodily injury to another scholar, is sexually intimidating or obscene, causes physical damage to the property of another scholar, subjects another scholar to physical confinement or restraint, or maliciously and substantially harms another scholar's physical or emotional health or safety.

Hazing is an intentional, knowing, or reckless act, occurring on or off campus, by one person alone or acting with others, that is directed against a scholar and endangers the mental or physical health or safety of a scholar for the purpose of pledging, initiation into, affiliation with, holding office in, or maintaining membership in an organization. **Hit list** is a list of people targeted to be harmed, using a firearm, a knife, or any other object to be used with intent to cause bodily harm.

Illegal Knife means a knife with a blade over 5-1/2"; hand instrument designed to cut or stab another by being thrown; dagger, including but not limited to a dirk, stiletto, and poniard; bowie knife; sword; spear; or as otherwise defined by Board policy.

Indecent Exposure means exposing one's anus or genitals with intent to arouse or gratify the sexual desire of any person while being reckless about whether another is present who will be offended or alarmed by the act.

Knuckles means any instrument consisting of finger rings or guards made of a hard substance and designed or adapted for inflicting serious bodily injury or death by striking a person with a fist enclosed in the knuckles.

Machine gun is any firearm that is capable of shooting more than two shots automatically, without manual reloading, by a single function of the trigger.

Mandatory means that something is obligatory or required because of an authority.

Online Impersonation occurs when a person, without obtaining the consent of another person and with the intent to harm, defraud, intimidate, or threaten any persons, uses the name or persona of another person to:

- Create a web page on a commercial social networking site or other Internet website; or
- Post or send one or more messages on or through a commercial social networking site or other Internet website, other than on or through an electronic mail program or message board program.
- Online impersonation also occurs when a person sends an electronic mail, instant message, text message, or similar communication that reference a name, domain address, phone number, or other item of identifying information belonging to any person:
 - Without obtaining the other person's consent;
 - With the intent to cause a recipient of the communication to reasonably believe that the other person authorized or transmitted the communication; and
 - With the intent to harm or defraud any person.

Paraphernalia are devices that can be used for inhaling, ingesting, injecting, or otherwise introducing a controlled substance into a human body. It also includes equipment, products, or materials used or intended for use in planting, propagating, cultivating, growing, harvesting, manufacturing, compounding, converting, producing, processing, preparing, testing, analyzing, packaging, repackaging, storing, containing, or concealing a controlled substance.

Possession means to have an item on one's person or in one's personal property, including but not limited to clothing, purse, or backpack; a private vehicle used for transportation to or from school or school-related activities, including but not limited to an automobile, truck, motorcycle, or bicycle; or any other school property used by the scholar, including but not limited to a locker or desk.

Prohibited Weapon means an explosive weapon; a machine gun; a short-barrel firearm; a firearm silencer; knuckles; armor-piercing ammunition; a chemical dispensing device; a zip gun; or a tire deflation device.

Public school fraternity, sorority, secret society, or gang means an organization composed wholly or in part of scholars that seeks to perpetuate itself by taking additional members from the scholars enrolled in school based on a decision of its membership rather than on the free choice of a qualified scholar.

Reasonable belief is a determination made by the Superintendent or designee using all available information, including the information furnished under Article 15.27 of the Code of Criminal Procedure.

Restorative circles are a framework for building community and for responding to challenging behavior through authentic dialogue, coming to understanding, and making things right. Restorative conversations may happen during the school day and teachers, school leaders, or other facilitators will use restorative language and questions to allow scholars to understand the impact of their behaviors.

Restorative Practices promote positive relationships and community building while providing meaningful opportunities for members of the school community to share the responsibility for making our schools a safe and nurturing environment. Restorative Practices are used throughout all levels of support and intervention to create positive school culture, alternative discipline and change.

Self-defense is the use of force against another to the degree a person reasonably believes the force is immediately necessary to protect himself or herself.

Short-barrel firearm is a rifle with a barrel length of less than 16 inches or a shotgun with a barrel length of less than 18 inches, or any weapon made from a rifle or shotgun that, as altered, has an overall length of less than 26 inches.

Switchblade Knife is any knife with a blade that folds, closes, or retracts into the handle or sheath and that opens automatically by pressing a button or by the force of gravity or by the application of centrifugal force. The term does not include a knife that has a spring, detent, or other mechanism designed to create a bias toward closure and that requires exertion applied to the blade by hand, wrist, or arm to overcome the bias toward closure and open the knife.

Terroristic threat is a threat of violence to any person or property with intent to:

- Cause a reaction of any type by an official or volunteer agency organized to deal with emergencies;
- Place any person in fear of imminent serious bodily injury;
- Prevent or interrupt the occupation or use of a building; room, place of assembly, or place to which the public has access; place of employment or occupation; aircraft, automobile, or other form of conveyance; or other public place;

- Cause impairment or interruption of public communications, public transportation, public water, gas, or power supply or other public service;
- Place the public or a substantial group of the public in fear of serious bodily injury; or Influence the conduct or activities of a branch or agency of the federal government, the state, or a political subdivision of the state, or a public charter school (including Essence Preparatory).

Title 5 offenses are those that involve injury to a person and include murder; manslaughter; criminally negligent homicide; trafficking in persons; unlawful transport; kidnapping; assault (on a public servant); aggravated assault; sexual assault; aggravated sexual assault; unlawful restraint; indecency with a child; injury to a child, an elderly person, or a disabled person; abandoning or endangering a child; deadly conduct; terroristic threat; aiding a person to commit suicide; harassment of a public servant; improper photography; smuggling persons; and tampering with a consumer product.

Under the influence means lacking the normal use of mental or physical faculties. Impairment of a person's physical or mental faculties may be evidenced by a pattern of abnormal or erratic behavior, the presence of physical symptoms of drug or alcohol use, or by admission. A scholar "under the influence" need not be legally intoxicated to trigger disciplinary action. Use means voluntarily introducing into one's body, by any means, a prohibited substance.

Zip gun is a device or combination of devices, not originally a firearm, but adapted to expel a projectile through a smooth-bore or rifled-bore barrel by using the energy generated by an explosion or burning substance.