

The Renaissance Charter School

FAMILY HANDBOOK  
for  
Elementary and Middle School Families

“Developing Leaders for the Renaissance of New York”

• **Please Note:** *This is an important document regarding the education of your child. Please have someone translate this document for you promptly.*

• **Spanish:** *Esto es un aviso importante con respecto a la educación de su niño. Haga por favor que alguien traduzca este documento para usted puntualmente.*

• **French:** *C'est une notification importante concernant l'éducation de votre enfant. Veuillez faire traduire à quelqu'un ce document pour toi promptement.*

• **Urdu:** *ye aik important ittelaah taak education ka tumhari child please someone translate ye kaghazaat liye tum promptly have hai.*

• **Chinese (traditional):** 这是一个重要的通知，关于您的孩子的教育。请有有人为你翻译这份文件及时。

• **Russian:** Это будет важным извещением относительно образования вашего ребенка. Пожалуйста имейте кто-то перевести этот документ для вас проворно.

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# ABOUT US

## Our History

*The Renaissance School*, New York City's first K-12 public school, was conceived in the early 1990s by a small group of teachers and parents who passionately believed that by taking personal responsibility and working together they could create a different, more positive educational experience for students. Fueled by a shared conviction that every child has unique and wonderful potential that can and must be developed, they determined to create a school where every person would be valued and every student could flourish. They presented their proposal, along with many hundreds of other applicants, to a foundation seeking to create several "New Visions" public schools in New York City. Their effort was successful and on March 17, 1993 the NYC Board of Education formally established *The Renaissance School* which opened in September 1993 with 130 students in grades 3-8. In 1996 the school moved to its current location, a beautiful facility in the heart of Jackson Heights, where it expanded to grades K-12 and a student body of more than 500. In September 2000 the school, among the first to be selected, was granted Charter status by New York State and became *The Renaissance Charter School* (TRCS). Based on its proven success, the school's original Charter has been renewed in 2005, 2010, 2015 and 2019 (for 5 years). TRCS expanded to include a Pre-K program in 2014.

## Our Mission

"Developing Leaders for the Renaissance of New York" is the school's motto. Underlying that motto is a belief in the power of the single individual and in the positive potential that exists within every human being. When that inherent potential is developed, or expressed, the world around the individual begins changing to reflect what is more positive and more value creative. In this way, as we change ourselves, we change our environment. The school was founded on the belief that such a change, or renaissance, in just one person can lead to the rebirth of a community, a nation and ultimately humankind. Convinced that the most powerful force for positive change were aware, educated, humanistic young people, the founders named the school "The Renaissance School" and determined to help all of its students realize their potential for positive change. The mission of the school continues to be to develop leaders who through their own personal growth and commitment will help spark a "renaissance" in the larger shared community of New York City and beyond. Toward that goal the school fights aggressively for the happiness and success of each student helping prepare them to become humanistic leaders and global citizens who respect human rights, protect the environment, and advocate for peace and sustainability.

## Our Core Values

*Students develop best when they feel safe and known*

Renaissance has created a supportive, stimulating environment where youth can flourish and achieve the highest academic standards in a small, family-like atmosphere. Its Pre-K-12 program enables students and families alike to enjoy a sense of continuity and stability as they progress through the elementary, middle and high school years. With only 1 or 2 classes per grade and an excellent faculty and guidance to student ratio, each student's sense of belonging is strengthened. In this supportive environment where individual effort and hard work is encouraged every student can succeed.

### **A diverse learning community that values respect and kindness opens hearts and minds**

The Renaissance community reflects the cultural mosaic of New York with its staff and student body mirroring the spectrum of ethnic backgrounds, talents, and abilities that make the City so unique. In this multi-cultural setting students, working together in heterogeneous classes and small groups, learn to value diversity while developing interpersonal skills that will benefit them throughout their lives. Here, students build open and trusting friendships with each other. Staff members move beyond cooperation to collaboration and become mentors to students. Parents are valued and the various levels of the school communicate and interact with one another. This environment fosters the development of deep human bonds and nurtures the hearts as well as the minds of its children.

### **The spirit of leadership is best transmitted through example**

Renaissance values the spirit of self-motivated and collaborative action. The school was started by a group of individuals who wrote and submitted a proposal for a new theme-based school without the backing of any prominent organization. The group's determination to make the impossible possible has continued to be a bedrock principle of the school. *Renaissance* honors dreams and gives full support to any member of the community—whether student, staff, or parent—who generates an idea they want to carry to fruition. *Renaissance* is committed not only to developing students as leaders, but also to developing parents, teachers, and support staff as educators who will help revitalize and reinvigorate our educational system.

### **The forums within the school must be valued and protected**

Renaissance strives to be a dynamic village where all citizens participate with a collaborative spirit that is characterized by compassion and responsible dialogue. Teachers work together, classes are arranged in clusters, student voices are heard, parents volunteer, and decisions are made after thorough dialogue among many people. There are various forums where these important discussions take place: Board of Trustees meetings, Collaborative School Governance sessions, Cluster and staff meetings, PA, Student Council, town hall meetings, the classroom and at informal gatherings. It is only through participation in these forums that powerful and wise decisions can be made. By becoming full citizens of this village and participating in its forums students gain immeasurable benefit and prepare for life in the “real world.”

### **All school constituents must work together utilizing each others' strengths and talents**

To foster communication, cooperation and collaboration among all its stakeholders, Renaissance adopted a multi-level Collaborative Leadership governance structure. It was designed to give voice to staff, parents and students; to develop new tiers of leadership; and to provide strong, independent oversight. The Board of Trustees, with staff/parent/community representatives makes sure the school fulfills its Charter mandates, monitors fiscal integrity, and evaluates the performance of the school's management team. The Collaborative School Governance Committee (CSG), with staff/parent/student representatives focuses on the quality of life in the school and reviews broad instructional policies. The School Management Team (SMT) composed of the principal, directors and Education Administrators, serve as the Renaissance “vision keepers,” implementing these policies, handling day-to-day operations in Teaching and Learning, Instructional Support, Data and Accountability, Development, Finance and Operations, School Culture, Parent Engagement and Student Support. Staff members, equally involved in all aspects of school governance and administration, serve on various committees including Instructional Support, Budget, Academic Intervention, Safety, Programming, Admissions, and Student Support. Staff leadership is further developed through Cluster Meetings, Learning Rounds and Data Teams led by Teacher Leaders to support initiatives proposed by these

groups. Through these mechanisms the school's governance structure helps foster a sense of ownership and a spirit that "I am Renaissance."

## Our School and Student Body

TRCS, one of NYC's few public Pre-K -12 schools, is a unique school that provides a very clear alternative for families. Its current student body is a rich mixture of diversity and talent reflecting the mosaic of New York and creating perfect soil for the development of leadership. TRCS serves approximately 604 students in grades Pre-K-12. There is one class per grade in PreK-4 and two classes per grade 5-12. Incoming UPK students must attain the age of 4, and kindergarten students must attain the age of five by December 31 of the year they enter school. The classes are grouped into Clusters to form small communities and facilitate collaboration.

The Pre-K-12 pattern has many advantages. It allows families to keep children of different ages in one school. It promotes a sense of continuity and eliminates the often stressful, traumatic transfer to a new middle school or high school. It provides beneficial opportunities for multiple-age interactions with peer tutoring and cross-grade groupings. Many families benefit from the Renaissance practice of "looping" students with the same teacher for two years so more stable and meaningful relationships with teachers can develop. Some parents and students also find the focus on the study of New York as a unifying curricular theme lends consistency to the educational experience.

Located in Jackson Heights, Renaissance serves families from Northwestern Queens and beyond. The school, enriched by a student body drawn from a wide variety of neighborhoods throughout the city, offers an increasingly rare opportunity for students to participate in a truly diverse community.

Renaissance addresses the individual needs of its students in a variety of ways:

- Curriculum with clear outcomes and differentiated instruction
- High quality Instructional Support Services program for students with IEPs, at-risk students, and English Language Learners
- Inclusion model of instruction for special needs students
- The Learning Center for long and short-term support and enrichment through small group or individualized instruction
- Assistive technology with ongoing support of trained professionals
- Student Support Team that focuses on students in crisis or exhibiting behaviors that impede learning
- A culture of developing teacher-empowered, teacher-led initiatives directly attuned to the needs of our students.
- A professional development program which employs reflective and collaborative practices to fine tune instruction so that it is aligned to assessments and standards
- Intervention Teams across the clusters targeted assistance for students who need academic support

- Reading Specialists in each cluster for targeted reading intervention
- Extended Day Programs with after-school homework help and tutoring
- Extra-curricular and enrichment activities
- A Pre-K-12 learning experience that includes academic rigor, college preparatory courses, arts appreciation and mastery, leadership skills and humanistic values.

The school facility itself is located next to the Public Library in an active and beautiful neighborhood. It features state of the art building design, indoor playground, spacious classrooms, large “town square” common areas surrounded by classrooms, media centers, recording studio, gym, auditorium and dance studio, art room, music room, student kitchen, roof garden, and science lab.

## Our Parents, Families and Parent Association (PA)

Renaissance values the important roles that parents and family members play in the school’s successful functioning and is strongly committed to parental involvement in all aspects of school life. Appointed and elected parent representatives are members of the Board of Trustees and also comprise fifty percent of the CSG. The PA (formerly, The PTA) was involved in both the original and renewal Charter School application process.

Renaissance has an active Parent Association that is an integral, respected part of the school. The PA affords parents and families many opportunities to be involved. The primary goal of the PA is “to foster communication and collaboration between the parents and families of our children and the teachers and staff of TRCS and to broaden parent’s understanding of our school structure and curriculum.” The PA has a monthly meeting, which everyone is encouraged to attend, and sponsors events that are of particular interest to parents, such as “High-School Unwrapped”, workshops on “how to talk to your teen”, and “going back to school” nights where parents experience classroom subject matter taught by Renaissance teachers. The Parent Association has several committees such as Fundraising and Parent Engagement. In addition, parents are included in various school-wide committees including Hiring Committees, Budget and Safety.

The school is organized into clusters according to grade levels. These cluster configurations may change from year to year, depending on different Teaching & Learning initiatives and needs. There are usually three or four clusters covering the early grades, middle grades and high school. The PA elects a parent representative who functions as liaison between other Cluster parents, the Cluster Teaching and Learning Coordinator and the PA. At the monthly PA meeting, parents in each cluster meet to discuss issues of interest or concern. Parents are encouraged to get to know their cluster representatives who are also members of the PA Executive Board along with the Co-Presidents for PreK-8 and 9-12, Treasurer, Corresponding Secretary and Recording Secretary.

## Our Graduates

Renaissance enjoys both high graduation and college acceptance rates, thanks to our College Bound and Leadership Program that begins working with students in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Many of our seniors have received full or partial scholarships including a number of recipients of the prestigious Posse scholarships. Among the institutions of higher learning our graduates have attended are all the CUNY’s including Macaulay Honors

College and Honors Programs at City College, Hunter, Baruch and Queens, many of the SUNY's including Binghamton, Purchase, Geneseo, Oneonta, Oswego and Stonybrook, New York University, Syracuse University, Colgate University, Trinity College, Connecticut College, Smith College, University of Massachusetts, University of North Carolina, Purdue University, Hobart College, William Smith Colleges, Penn State, Skidmore College, DePauw University, Boston University, Brandeis University, Sarah Lawrence College, Dickinson College, Fairleigh-Dickinson University, Georgetown University, Vanderbilt University, Georgia Tech, Adelphi University, Marymount, Lafayette, Wheaton Colby, Parsons School of Design, , College of the Atlantic, St John's University, Clark University, Alfred University, and others.

The *College Bound teachers and College and Career Team* follows-up with Renaissance graduates and helps maintain a continuing relationship with many of them. Many former students come back to the school each year to share their experiences and offer advice and encouragement to the current students.

## Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees at The Renaissance Charter School is composed of founding teachers, appointed teachers, parents, staff, an elected teacher, an elected parent, and community members. The Board of Trustees determines whether the school is fulfilling the mandates of its charter, monitors the fiscal integrity of the school and oversees the evaluation and performance of the principal. The Board's meetings are governed by the NYS Open Meeting Laws and therefore are open to anyone. Parents and guardians are encouraged to attend.

## CSG (Collaborative School Governance) and SMT (School Management Team)

The CSG is the leadership team for The Renaissance Charter School. It meets regularly (at least 5 times) during the school year to discuss school-wide issues, such as curriculum, budgeting, and discipline. It monitors the quality of life and instruction at Renaissance. The CSG is composed of the principal, chapter chairperson (the school liaison to the United Federation of Teachers), PA co-presidents, parent and teacher representatives for each cluster, a non-pedagogical representative, and three student representatives. These voting members of the CSG make policy recommendations based on the goals of our charter, and set the direction for the school. Examples of policy decisions made by the CSG in the past are the decision to open a new 5th grade class in 2005-2006, the implementation of the Writing Project Initiative, and the opening or closing of positions based on charter improvement goals. These policy recommendations go to the School Management Team for implementation, and may be brought to the Board of Trustees if the policy warrants that level of change. The CSG meets once per month. In addition to these official members, all parents, guardians, and school employees are welcomed and encouraged to attend CSG meetings.

The SMT consists of the Principal, Directors and Educational Administrators who implement the policies of the Board and CSG. The team handles the day-to-day operation of the school including: teaching and learning, instructional support services (special education), behavioral support, operations, and development. The SMT is responsible for maintaining accountability to all of the charter goals, and for guiding the school through each charter renewal. The team meets frequently to share the joint responsibility for the oversight and development of the school and staff supervision. One of its main responsibilities is to be the vision keepers of the school, and as such is often involved in wider education advocacy to further the interests of our school.



## Our Supporters -- Partners and Community Collaborators

From its inception, Renaissance has reached out into the broader community to form relationships and seek opportunities to enrich the educational experience of its students. Community involvement, one of the three tiers of its academic and leadership program, has occurred in various ways and in diverse settings.

Renaissance students have completed internships, done community service and participated in special programs with organizations such as the American Museum of Natural History, Elmhurst Hospital, Beth Israel Medical Center, Sadie Nash Leadership Project, Columbia University, Bronx Zoo, Cornell University, Project Read, Global Kids, Youth Lab, Urban Ambassadors, Latin American Integration Center, National Youth and Peace Coalition, Municipal Arts Society, New Visions For Public Schools, The Posse Foundation, Langston Hughes Library and Cultural Center of Queens, Lehman College Writing Project, Outward Bound, Nature's Classroom, New York Road Runners Club, Teens for Racial and Ethnic Awakening, Global Teens, Reuter's International, the United Nations, City at Peace Youth Development Program, and many others.

Renaissance has also formed alliances and relationships with a number of arts organizations including The Noguchi Museum, The Metropolitan Opera Guild, Arts for All, Move This World, Urban Arts Project, Urban Word, TADA Theater for Youth, Learning-By-Design, Cooper-Hewitt Design Museum, Salvatori Center for Engineering, The Jazz Project at Queens College, Carnegie Hall Link Up and American Roots Programs, Natural History Museum, New York Historical Society, Children's Museum of the Arts, The Queens Museum, Queens Council on the Arts, just to name a few.

The school has been involved with its local community through various community groups. Renaissance students have also benefited from the collaboration of professional staff members with many educational and policy organizations such as the Coalition for Public Charter Schools, NYC Special Education Collaborative, Center for Educational Innovation-Public Education Association, Cahn Fellowship Program for Distinguished Public School Principals, Lincoln Center Institute, Teachers for Tomorrow, Teacher-Powered Schools, School Reform Initiative, Bank Street College of Education, St. John's University, The New School for Social Research, NYC Writing Project, NYU Institute of Policy and Social Research, NYU Child Study Institute, NYC Charter School Center, National School Reform Faculty (NSRF), and the All Kinds of Minds Institute.

## ACADEMIC PROGRAM

### Curriculum

Renaissance has a three-tiered curriculum —core academics based on compacted and effective delivery of standard-based instruction, project-based learning, and community involvement. Each tier is valued as a significant pathway for student learning. As a Pre-K-12 school, TRCS has the unique ability to integrate subject matter from grade to grade and to take full responsibility for student learning. This allows expectations for student learning to remain high and consistent throughout the grades. It also enables better articulation and coordination between grades to take place. At Renaissance all students are expected to maintain a strong work ethic and to strive to realize their full potential. Teachers are expected to provide interesting, relevant and challenging coursework, and to help every student succeed by differentiating instruction and employing varied teaching methods that address multiple learning styles and levels of ability. This wide array of innovative teaching methods makes Renaissance distinctive.

The study of New York City is a central theme of the Renaissance curriculum. Whenever possible, teachers integrate its history, culture, geography and economics into the study of traditional academic subjects. New York City, with its diverse population, is a microcosm of the world. By gaining knowledge, understanding and appreciation of their own city, students will be more responsible citizens of New York. When firmly girded in their own community, they will be better equipped to become global citizens.

Social responsibility is another theme embedded in the Renaissance program as part of community involvement and leadership training. Students at all levels perform service within their classroom, the school and beyond; participate in advisories; and take responsibility for clubs, town meetings and other special activities.

The Renaissance program has many other innovative features. Spanish is taught to all students K-12. The K-12 teachers are trained in the Great Books Shared Inquiry approach to reading comprehension, in all subjects, not just ELA. We use the hands-on FOSS Science curriculum in grades K-7 Science classes. Small group Advisories start in grade 6, and guide students through a series of social-emotional lessons with a dedicated advisor, and includes academic advisory sessions that keep students focused on their personal growth. Community Service plays a strong role in these advisories, developing a sense of empathy and ownership of our community's needs. For example, 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> graders may attend Nature's Classroom environmental camp for a week while 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> graders may travel to Philadelphia, Baltimore or Washington DC for a three-day history tour one year, and to Quinipet Camp on Shelter Island the next.

## Assessment

At Renaissance students are assessed at an early age and then repeatedly throughout their education so their specific needs can be quickly identified and met. Student achievement is measured through both standardized tests and course grades. Students take all NYS mandated examinations. Students from K-8 are assessed through the Fountas and Pinnell Leveled Reading Intervention System and screenings for speech, hearing, vision, and motor coordination. In all grades we utilize interim testing, such as the Achievement Network series of standards-based assessments, to help us gauge student progress during the school year. Various other comprehensive evaluations, such as the NWEA national standards-based assessment, are provided when necessary. Each student at risk has an individualized academic plan to set educational goals and record progress.

Student performance in the classroom is evaluated in a variety of ways across the Pre-K-12 spectrum and is grade appropriate at each level. Each grading system assesses student strengths and identifies areas for improvement. Designed to give a better understanding of the teacher's objectives and the student's progress, they help highlight additional support or enrichment a student might need. In the younger grades, teachers use a combination of narratives and skill/development checklists. Teachers in the middle and upper grades use different formats. A combination of similar criteria is used throughout to evaluate performance, or determine promotion including, but not limited to class work, homework, attendance, lateness, state, local and subject tests, other school instruments, and social/emotional readiness. In grades K-8 the homeroom/subject teacher confers with other subject teachers to consider the student's overall performance and readiness for advancement.

The school year is divided into four marking periods for most classes and report cards or progress reports are distributed at the end these periods. The specifics of how and when the reports are disseminated vary according to grade level and time of year. They might be sent home with the student, mailed or given out at a scheduled conference. In the younger grades the report card must be signed and returned to the teacher. The dates of the marking periods for each school year and of Parent/Teacher Conferences are included on the school calendar. Timely reminders of these events are also sent home with students.

## Extra-Curricular Activities

Renaissance students are strongly encouraged to participate in extra-curricular activities to help them develop as well rounded, highly skilled individuals and to satisfy an important component in their application to college. Our school offers a wide variety of extra-curricular activities, some sponsored by Renaissance and others conducted through outside programs.

Activities are available to all students but vary across the grades. Pre-K-4 students can participate in a fee-based after school and child-care program offered by our after-school partner, 82<sup>nd</sup> Street Academics, Inc. 5<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> grade students are offered free extended day activities through 82SA, that include homework help, athletics, and extracurricular activities. See the **After School at Renaissance** section under **Services for Students**, later in this handbook, visit our website at [www.renaissancecharter.org/parents](http://www.renaissancecharter.org/parents), or contact the Main Office for more detailed information and registration.

## Important School Events

- **Curriculum Night** – Scheduled near the beginning of the school year, “Curriculum Night” provides families with the opportunity to meet with teachers who will be instructing their children. While the manner of presentation may vary across the grades, in every cluster, teachers briefly present a description of their class curriculum, as well as information about any requirements or supplies that students need. While “Curriculum Night” is not a time for parents to meet individually with all teachers, it is an opportunity to learn more and ask questions about our instructional program.
- **Parent-Teacher Conferences** – These events are preset times when parents can meet briefly and privately with teachers to discuss their child’s progress. Both evening and afternoon hours are provided for these conferences which are generally scheduled in November and April. If parents/guardians are unable to attend one of these events, or feel they need a longer meeting, it is suggested that they contact their child’s teacher. The teacher will schedule a meeting at an alternative time.
- **Family Conferences** – These conferences are scheduled individually with parents and families who may need an extended time to discuss their child’s progress. Many of the child’s teachers attend these meetings which may include student support and guidance personnel. Family conferences are intended to provide direct strategies for success and often result in specific plans.
- **Arts Exhibition Nights** – All TRCS students study an art discipline (creative movement, visual arts, music, or drama) during the school year and have the opportunity to exhibit or perform their work at Exhibition Night. This activity is scheduled in the spring and families are strongly encouraged to attend.
- **Academic Showcase** – HS students display academic portfolios that showcase a subject or project of which they are most proud. The portfolio fair is organized at the end of the school year, and includes written work, art projects, power-points and videos, and live presentations.

- **Fundraising Activities** – Students frequently sponsor day and evening activities such as luncheons, talent shows, and multicultural festivals in order to raise money for various activities. Students organize and promote these events and families are welcome to attend and provide support.
- **Parent Workshops** – Parent workshops that are planned from parent suggestions, and are held every year on such diverse topics as learning about the Fountas & Pinnell Leveled Reading System, how to talk with your teen, online and social-network safety, your child’s social-emotional development, nutrition, arts and subject-based workshops and continuing education workshops for adults. Watch out for the email announcements, and make sure you are receiving our online newsletter to find out more.

## Homework

Homework is given on a grade appropriate level and should be expected on most, if not all, evenings. Homework and after school projects are designed to reinforce classroom learning through practice and application; develop study skills and work habits such as time management; and help students connect their classroom learning with leisure activities and career centered interests. Students are expected to complete their assignments on time and parents/guardians will be notified if a student’s assignments are habitually late, incomplete or unsatisfactory. When absent, students are expected to find out what assignments were missed. Parents can help their children avoid falling behind by communicating with their teachers and making sure he/she can contact another student for assignments, and by utilizing the various on-line options for posting homework and assignments. We also encourage our parents to help their children develop good study habits by creating a setting conducive to learning, talking to them about their schoolwork and activities, and making sure they have library cards so they can begin to develop reading as a lifelong pastime.

## School Supplies

Students need school supplies to use during the school year. Valuable instructional time is lost when a student is not prepared for a lesson; this may affect her/his performance and be reflected in the class grade. The supplies needed vary across the grades but at the beginning of the school year the teachers will provide a list of what is required in specific classes to each student. Often lists are posted on our website at the beginning of the summer to take advantage of summer sales. Parents/guardians are responsible for providing these and making sure that their children come to school prepared every day. (Families who have difficulty obtaining supplies should speak with their child’s teacher or one of the administrators.)

# CITIZENSHIP, HEALTH AND SCHOOL SAFETY

## Student Responsibilities

Renaissance is a village. A village prospers when there is community spirit built on trust and respect, and everyone takes responsibility for its safety and well-being. This is why there are school rules and guidelines that govern how members of the Renaissance community work and live together. The rules governing student citizenship are based on several important ideas:

- One of a student’s most important rights is the right to learn. Any type of behavior that interrupts a student’s right to learn is unacceptable.

- A school must be a safe place, physically and emotionally. As members of the community, Renaissance students are responsible for maintaining and protecting its safety.
- Students share the responsibility for improving the village – its facilities, its reputation, and its relationship with the community.
- Renaissance is a school about leadership. Its students, having common sense and knowing right from wrong, are expected to take initiative and fulfill their responsibilities without being told to do so.
- Every adult at Renaissance is here to support the education of the students. In that capacity, students should respect them equally as their teacher.
- In all disciplinary matters, students will receive notice and be asked to present in writing their version of the facts and circumstances leading to the imposition of disciplinary measures. Depending on the severity of the infraction, disciplinary responses include detention, exclusion from extracurricular activities, suspension, and expulsion. Where appropriate, school officials will also contact law enforcement agencies.

## Discipline Policy

*Renaissance is committed to being a school where students can learn and staff members can teach in a safe and secure environment. To accomplish this goal, students must assume responsibility for their behavior; realize that standards of behavior exist and that there will be consequences if they violate these standards. The school's discipline policy, outlined in [The Renaissance Student Support and Discipline Policy Handbook](#) provides comprehensive guidelines to determine unacceptable behaviors and a range of permissible disciplinary measures to ensure consistency and equitable treatment for all students. The policy also enables teachers, student support staff, and administrators to exercise discretion and educational judgment. Because students, parents, and staff all have a role in maintaining a safe school it is imperative that good communication and cooperation exist between the school and the home. Parents, as active and involved partners, should become familiar with the Discipline Policy so that they can instill a sense of responsibility in their children. The Renaissance staff should inform parents about their child's behavior and nurture the skills the students need to succeed in school and society. You can find this policy posted on our website on the Parents page, or you can pick up a copy from the main office upon request.*

TRCS will not tolerate harassment, bullying, or cyber-bullying. We adhere to the Dignity for All Students Act (The Dignity Act), passed into state law that became effective on July 1, 2012. First offenses will result in a warning. Second offenses will result in an educational assignment and written parent notification. Third offenses will result in one-day suspension. For additional information about consequences for continued bullying, please contact Student Support. Details concerning The Dignity Act are available in "The Renaissance Student Support and Discipline Policy". All students are required to report any acts of bullying of which they become aware.

The standards set forth in the Discipline Policy apply to behavior exhibited in school during school hours; before and after school while on school property; while traveling to and from school; at all school-sponsored events; and on property outside the school when the behavior endangers the health, safety, morals, or welfare of the school community. Students are seen as representatives of Renaissance and as such their behavior reflects on the school as a whole. (For detailed information about the rules and regulations governing student behavior, see *The Renaissance Student Support and Discipline Policy Handbook*, (available on our website at <http://www.renaissancecharter.org/parents.html/studentsupport.html>).

## Attendance

Students are expected to attend class every day unless they are sick, have been officially excused or for religious observances. Students who miss school are required to bring a note from their parent/guardian or health care provider explaining the absence. Work missed during the absence must be made up. If possible, parents should notify the school on the first day of their child's illness, especially if he/she has a contagious disease that might spread to other students. The school must be advised if the student will be absent over three days. More than five absences per semester is considered excessive. Missing more than 10% of the school year is one factor considered when determining grade retention. Students hospitalized or convalescing at home for an extended period may possibly continue their work through a hospital school or home schooling to avoid missing promotion to higher grade. Student Support can assist in arranging appropriate services

To get early release for a medical appointment, a student must bring a written request in advance from the parent, guardian or doctor's office and must be picked up by a designated parent or guardian. Parents should try to schedule appointments after school hours to limit intrusion into their child's school day.

## Lateness to school

School is a preparation for the world of work. It is important that students be on time both for school and for each class during the day. If a student is late to school three or more days in one week, or five or more days in the period of one month, parents or guardians will be notified by the Student Support Team to determine appropriate action. Students who are late to school for a legitimate reason, such as a medical appointment, should bring a note written by their parent, guardian, or physician.

## Dress Code

The Renaissance Charter School expects that all students will dress in a way that is appropriate for the school day or for any school sponsored event. Student dress choices should respect the school's intent to sustain a community that is inclusive of a diverse range of identities. The primary responsibility for a student's attire resides with the student and their parent(s) or guardian(s). The school is responsible for seeing that student attire does not interfere with the health or safety of any student, that student attire does not contribute to a hostile or intimidating atmosphere for any student, and that dress code enforcement does not reinforce or increase marginalization or oppression of any group based on race, sex, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, cultural observance, household income, or body type/size. Dress code enforcement must also be conducted respectfully and mindfully. Any restrictions to the way a student dresses must be necessary to support the overall educational goals of the school and must be explained within this dress code.

**1. Students Must Wear\***, (while following the basic principle of Section 1 above):

- A **Shirt** (with fabric in the front, back, and on the sides under the arms), **AND**
- **Pants/jeans** or the equivalent (for example, a **skirt, sweatpants, leggings, a dress, shorts**, etc.), **AND**
- **Safe and seasonally appropriate footwear**

*\*Courses that include attire as part of the curriculum (for example, professionalism, public speaking, and job readiness) may include assignment-specific dress, but should not focus on covering bodies in a particular way or promoting culturally-specific attire. Activity-specific shoes requirements are permitted (for example, athletic shoes for PE).*

**2. Students May Wear:**

- Hats facing any direction. Hats must allow the face to be visible to staff, and not interfere with the line of sight of any student or staff
- Religious headwear
- Hoodie sweatshirts (wearing the hood overhead is allowed, but the face and ears must be visible to school staff). **However**, if a teacher or staff member asks you to remove your hoodie, you **must** comply, especially if it is pulled tight and covers your ears.
- Fitted pants, including opaque leggings, yoga pants and “skinny jeans”
- Ripped jeans, as long as underwear and buttocks are not exposed.
- Tank tops, including spaghetti straps; halter tops
- Athletic attire
- Shorts, skirts, or dresses above your fingertips, as long as your buttocks are not exposed.

**3. Students Cannot Wear:**

- Violent language and/or images.
- Images or language depicting drugs, alcohol, illegal activities and/or gang affiliations, hate speech, profanity, pornography.
- Images or language that creates a hostile or intimidating environment based on any protected class or consistently marginalized group.
- Any clothing that reveals visible undergarments, with the **exception of bra straps**. Gym or athletic shorts under sagging pants are allowed.
- Swimsuits (except as required in class or athletic practice).
- Accessories that could be considered dangerous or could be used as a weapon.
- Any item that obscures the face or ears (except as a religious observance).

**4. Dress Code Enforcement**

To ensure effective and equitable enforcement of this dress code, school staff shall enforce the dress code consistently using the requirements below. School administration and staff shall not have discretion to vary the requirements in ways that lead to discriminatory enforcement. **Students will only be removed from spaces, hallways, or classrooms as a result of a dress code violation as outlined in Sections 3.**

Students in violation of **Section 3** will be provided three (3) options to be replaced and dressed more to code during that school day:

1. Students will be asked to put on their own alternative clothing, if already available at school, to be dressed more to code for the remainder of the day.
2. Students will be provided with temporary school clothing to be dressed more to code for the remainder of the day.
3. If necessary, students' parents may be called during the school day to bring alternative clothing for the student to wear for the remainder of the day.

**If an individual violates the dress code three or more times, staff members will request/set a meeting with the student in violation.**

Guidelines for Staff:

- School staff shall enforce the school's dress code equally and fairly, without regard to the racial identity, sex assigned at birth, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, ethnicity, cultural or religious identity, household income, body size/type, or body maturity of the student.
- School staff shall enforce the school's dress code equally and fairly, without regard to a student's transgender or gender nonconforming identity.
- School staff shall enforce the school's dress code respectfully and privately. Students should not be shamed or required to display their bodies in front of others (students, parents, or staff) in school. "Shaming" includes, but is not limited to:
  - asking students to account for their attire in the classroom or in hallways in front of others
  - calling out students in spaces, in hallways, or in classrooms about perceived dress code violations in front of others
  - accusing students of "distracting" other students with their clothing
- School Staff will limit the amount of educational time used to address dress code violations; they will attempt to use transition time to deal with ay issues
- School staff will ask students to turn clothing inside out if it contains offensive language or content to minimize loss of instruction time.
- School staff will follow this dress code in all classrooms and common spaces, except when clothing choices inhibit safety or learning (such as science labs, or theatre class). Classroom specific dress code rules are not allowed.

These dress code guidelines shall apply to regular school days and summer school days, as well as any school-related events and activities, such as graduation ceremonies, dances and prom.

Students who feel they have been subject to discriminatory enforcement of the dress code policies should contact a member of the School Management Team.

## Plagiarism

At Renaissance, plagiarism is not acceptable and has serious consequences. Plagiarism means taking credit for work that is not one's own. It can include copying someone's ideas or essays word for word. Plagiarism also includes adding information from the Internet or other research sources to one's own work without giving proper credit or citation. Information that is not general knowledge, even if rewritten in one's own words, must be cited. Plagiarism is a serious offense in both higher education and in the work world, so it is important that students understand the magnitude of this infraction. In college, a student who is caught plagiarizing may even be asked to leave the school.



## Cell Phone Usage

Renaissance policy prohibits student use of cell phones or other electronic communication devices in the school. This equipment, if seen or heard, will be confiscated. In case of an emergency, students should get a pass to use the phone in the Main Office. Parents/guardians should not call their child's cell phone while he/she is in school. They should contact the Main Office and leave a message for their child.

## Returning Books and other School Materials

Most courses and classes require specific textbooks or reading materials. Students can borrow these books and materials from the school, signing them out from the person who is in charge of the third floor media center for high school students, the second floor media center for middle school students and with the classroom teacher in other grades. Students are required to return all borrowed books by the end of the school year. Students must replace any books that are lost or damaged, so that the school maintains a class set of books. Students must pay for textbooks that are lost or damaged, as well as other books that are not readily available. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that bar codes remain on books that were borrowed. If a student returns a book without a bar code, she/he will not be credited and must replace the book or (in the case of textbooks) pay the cost of the book in full.

## Change of Address

A student whose emergency contact information changes after school begins must notify the Main Office immediately so that the change can be noted. It is essential that the school has an accurate home address for mailings and telephone numbers where parents or guardians can be reached. The official school records (computer ATS records) must also accurately reflect each student's current address, home phone number and contact information (daytime phone numbers) for parents or guardians.

## Health

Renaissance considers the health and well being of all its students to be of central importance and is committed to creating a safe environment for them. There is a full-time nurse on staff to assist with medical issues. On-site hearing and vision screening is provided to newly admitted students, at-risk students, and students referred by teachers, parents, or themselves. Annual physical, dental and vision examinations for all students are also recommended.

- *School Nurse –The nurse, whose office is located inside the Main Office, is responsible for providing medical attention but is prohibited by law to diagnose medical problems or to prescribe or dispense medications without a legally filed 504 form. Students who do not feel well should get a pass from their classroom teacher and go to the nurse. Students MUST have a pass to be admitted to see the nurse and are not permitted to stop in between classes. Failure to follow these procedures will be considered an unexcused class absence. Students are not permitted to call their parents from a cellphone to report an illness without first seeing the nurse. After entering the Nurse's Office, students must sign in and wait quietly. If it is necessary to send a student home, the nurse will contact the student's parent/guardian or emergency contact. Students under 18 cannot leave school without being accompanied by a parent, guardian, or designated emergency contact who is 18 years or older.*
- **Medications** – Some students take medication during the day due to physical or emotional conditions. A 504 form (a written physician's order and parent permission form) is necessary for the nurse to be

permitted to administer medication or for the student to self-administer medication during the school day. These medications must be given to the school nurse who keeps them in a safe place and dispenses them to students at designated times. Students must take the medication in the Nurse's Office and return the container to the nurse for safekeeping. The 504 form must be updated annually by parents or guardians and submitted to the nurse for ongoing medication needs.

- *Immunizations – Students entering TRCS must have a satisfactory physical examination with certification of immunization on file. The required immunizations change from year to year, so please check with the staff in the Main Office for updated information. Some students may be exempt from immunizations due to conscientious, religious or health considerations. Please contact the Main Office for information on immunization exemption.*

## Safety

- *Reporting Safety Concerns - Students are urged to contact any adult about safety concerns. The student may do so verbally, through an incident report, or in an anonymous note. Renaissance has developed an incident report form that is available in the Student Support Office, outside the College Office, or in the Main Office. The completed form, which may be anonymously written, can be given to any staff member, or placed in the main office mailbox of any member of the Student Support Team.*
- **Middle School ID** - All middle school students must have Renaissance ID cards that are provided at the beginning of the school year, and to newly admitted students throughout the year. If a student loses the ID during the school year, a replacement costs \$5.00. It is extremely important that students carry their IDs at all times. New York City schools are not all on the same schedule, so transit police may stop students while traveling to or from school.
- **Fire, Safety, Intruder Drills** - Every student knows the seriousness of fire and safety drills. Students also know why we need speed, quiet, and order during any potential emergency. Students who misbehave during fire and safety drills are endangering the safety of others as well as their own, and will receive disciplinary action. Students are not to talk during fire drills. Due to the large number of students who leave and then reenter the building, there is a need for students to remain silent at all times from the beginning of the drill until they have reentered their classrooms. They must remain quiet and orderly while exiting the building, waiting outside, and reentering the building to return to class. Students who do not follow these guidelines, or disregard the instructions of Renaissance staff will be referred to the Student Support Team. Students must remain with their group for the duration of a fire or safety drill. After a fire drill, if a student returns to the classroom late, this will be recorded as lateness to class.
- **Evacuation Plan** - In the case of a fire drill, or in the event of real emergency, students will adhere to the following evacuation plan. All students must leave the building immediately with speed, order, and silence. They must follow the instructions of school staff and assemble outside the building at one of the designated locations. In the case of a prolonged event, students should proceed to a designated safe haven.

- **Elevator Usage** - There is one elevator at Renaissance and it is essential for the safe and smooth functioning of the school. Students may not ride the elevator unless accompanied by an adult or staff member. Some students may be permitted to use the elevator due to medical conditions. In this case, documentation is required from the students' health care provider and must be filed appropriately with the school nurse. Students with elevator privileges should not bring another student on to the elevator with them unless the accompanying student is designated by a Renaissance staff member to provide assistance.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

### Important School Contact Information

School Address:	35-59 81st Street, Jackson Heights, NY 11372
School Telephone Number:	718-803-0060
School Fax Number:	718-803-3785
School Website:	<a href="https://rencharters.org">https://rencharters.org</a>
Staff Directory:	<a href="https://rencharters.org/trsc-jackson-heights/staff-directory/">https://rencharters.org/trsc-jackson-heights/staff-directory/</a>

### School-Wide Communication

Communication starts at the most basic level; between students and teachers. Remember to go to your child's teacher as the first step to getting information or resolving an issue relating to your child's education. Our carefully developed communication protocol ensures that you are getting the timeliest and most accurate information: 1) Talk to your child's teacher; 2) if the issue is not resolved, talk to the cluster leader; 3) if the issue is not resolved, talk to one of the members of the SMT; 4) if the issue is not resolved, talk to the Principal; 5) and finally, an issue can be brought before our Board of Trustees. Contact information can be found on our website at <http://www.renaissancecharter.org/about/contact/directory>.

- **SchoolMessenger®** and <http://www.renaissancecharter.org> – the majority of messages will be sent by email, rather than by paper flier. Please make sure we have an updated email address on file for you. Those who opt in to text messages will receive brief texts. In addition, our website is packed with information for parents and friends of Renaissance. Please take time to explore the site, especially the information on the Parent Association, Parents and Parents/Notices and Events pages, and check back frequently for updates.
- **Monthly Newsletters** are provided in an online format that comes directly to your email, your phone, or can be accessed from our website from the "About Renaissance" page.
- **The APIL** – The Annual Parent Information Letter is sent home to all parents at the end of the summer, before the start of the new school year. You will receive this letter by email, or you can request a printed copy that you can pick up as soon as it is published each year. **Please note** that while this handbook is only updated whenever major policy, staff or structural changes are made, the APIL has the most current information on school policies and guidelines. If you note a discrepancy between what is printed in any of our handbooks and what is published in the current APIL, the APIL will most likely be correct.

## Contacting Staff

The faculty and staff at Renaissance believe that clear communication among all community members is key to a successful and supportive educational environment. Parents/guardians are encouraged to contact the school regarding matters that they feel might impact a student's education or well-being. They can contact their child's teacher or a member of the Student Support Team if they have questions or concerns, or need to share pertinent information. Renaissance has an automated phone system that provides voice mail for all staff members, and there is a staff directory on our website that provides staff email addresses. Some teachers may prefer email to voicemail, and will so state on their outgoing voicemail message. To leave a message, follow the automated phone instructions or call the Main Office and request the teacher's voice mail. Teachers will call back at their earliest convenience. It is the policy of the school to protect classroom instructional time by reducing, as much as possible, any unnecessary disruptions. Therefore, neither students nor teachers will be contacted or asked to leave the classroom during instruction except for an emergency.

Parents and Guardians must NOT call or text your child during the school day on his or her cell phone. If you have an emergency situation and need to speak with your child, please contact the main office and a staff member will assist you.

## Pick up by Parent/Guardian

Students in grades Pre-K-1<sup>st</sup> are picked up at the student's classroom. In grades 2-5, parents pick students up in the cafeteria. Students may be allowed to leave school on their own at dismissal, starting in 4<sup>th</sup> grade, with written permission from parents. If the student/s are not picked up by the parent/guardian, they are directed to wait in the Main Office, until a parent or guardian can be contacted. All students must be in a supervised program following their dismissal if staying afterschool. Under no circumstances can younger siblings wait for older siblings in an unsupervised area of the school. Waiting in the main office for an older sibling on a regular basis is also not allowed. You must make arrangements for your child to be in the after-school program, be picked up by a designated adult, or leave the school on their own.

## Visitor Policy

All visitors must present a picture ID and sign in with the Security Safety Agent when they visit the school. They must then report to the Main Office for further assistance. All visitors must have an appointment in order to meet with school staff.

## Subway, Bus and Parking Directions

The nearest *subway* station is the 82nd Street stop on the #7 train. From the station walk one block to 37th Avenue, turn left and go one block to 81st Street. We are directly adjacent to the Jackson Heights Library. We are also close to the E, F, R, and V trains (Roosevelt Avenue). Several *buses* are close by: The Q32, Q66, and Q33.

By *car*, take Northern Boulevard to 82nd Street. Turn south, three long blocks to 37th Avenue. Parking can be difficult. There is a parking garage on 82nd Street right before the corner of 37th Avenue.

## School Calendar and Daily Schedule

At the beginning of each school year, Renaissance issues its own calendar detailing key dates, events and information pertinent to the school. Renaissance generally follows the student calendar of the New York City Department of Education for half-days, holidays and breaks *with some variations*. The calendar appears on

the school's website, [www.renaissancecharter.org](http://www.renaissancecharter.org). Other information regarding school operations including the daily student arrival/dismissal time, school bus procedures, drop off/pick-up procedures, etc., vary according to grade level and is communicated in other ways.

## School Closings Policy

Renaissance follows New York City Public School Closings in the event of inclement weather or other emergencies. Check the following TV and radio morning news programs for information about school closings: Radio: WINS 1010 AM, WABC 770 AM, WCBS 880 AM. Local TV: WCBS, WNBC, FOX, WABC (Channels 2, 4, 5, and 7). Cable TV: New York I (Channel 1).

## Breakfast and Lunch Programs

Renaissance employs a chef and a full kitchen staff to provide a wide variety of fresh food daily in our kitchen. Breakfast is available daily in the school cafeteria in the mornings, lunch is served during several different periods according to grade level, snack is available to certain classrooms and in after-school, and supper is available to all students starting after their dismissal. Starting with the 2018 school year, Renaissance has been approved to participate in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) which allows universal free lunch to all students. Snacks and Supper are offered for free to all students. Food menus are prepared to provide healthy, nutritious and tasty meals. Soft drinks and sugary snacks are not provided. Children may bring a non-perishable lunch from home. Drinks in glass bottles are not allowed, and all food carried in from the outside must be stored inside a back-pack or locker. No open drinks are allowed to be carried into the building.

Students in grades 7-12 in good academic standing and satisfactory conduct in school may be eligible for outdoor lunch privileges. These students must have all permission slips, emergency contact forms, and meal eligibility forms completed and filed in the school office. In addition, outdoor lunch privileges may be rescinded at any time for infractions of the school discipline code as detailed in *The Renaissance Student Support and Discipline Policy Handbook*. Students who leave the building for lunch cannot bring food back into the building. However, 7-12 students are encouraged to eat in the cafeteria and then go out for a walk, or to mingle with their classmates. Eating in classrooms or during after-school is not permitted except during a special event or in the cafeteria during supper. We do not allow parents to bring "outside" lunch to students in the cafeteria during their designated lunch period.

## School Bus

Renaissance utilizes the New York City Department of Education's Office of Pupil Transportation for school bus service for eligible K-5 and special education students. It is imperative that students utilizing this service understand that the bus driver is the source of authority on every school bus and all students must follow his/her directions and instructions. The potential for serious accidents is a very real consequence if the driver of a bus is constantly distracted by the misbehavior of students behind her/him. Students are to show respect and be polite to the driver at all times and should remain seated with seat belts fastened during the entire bus ride. All general school rules apply on the bus. Students who do not follow these rules will lose all or part of their bus privileges and face the consequences listed in the *Discipline Policy Handbook*. Detailed instructions and rules for students who ride the buses will be distributed at the beginning of the school year or can be obtained in the main office.

## **MetroCards**

Renaissance provides student MetroCards for eligible students twice during the school year, at the beginning of each semester. The office of Pupil Transportation, NYC Department of Education, *not* Renaissance, makes eligibility determinations for yellow bus service and MetroCards. Under no circumstances can a student both ride the yellow bus and receive a MetroCard. MetroCards should be kept in a safe place. The school cannot guarantee replacement of a lost card.

## **Personal Items and Lost and Found**

Personal items must be kept on the student's person, or in their secured locker. Items left in common spaces or unattended may be lost or disappear. In order to safeguard possessions, students should leave unnecessary personal items, large amounts of cash and electronics at home.

A Lost and Found is maintained in the cafeteria. Over the school year our staff finds many unmarked student belongings. Students are encouraged to keep their coats and other extra clothing in their lockers, and to mark all their belongings for identification.

## **What to Bring and Not to Bring to School**

Students should always bring pencils, pens, paper and a folder for notices. Early grade classrooms are furnished with cubbies or desks to store personal items, and 5<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade students are furnished with a locker. Renaissance will issue locks for all school lockers. No outside locks will be permitted and students without a school lock will not be issued a locker. Locks need only be purchased once, unless they are lost and need to be replaced. Returning students who paid for their locks and returned them will get their lock at no cost.

The following items are always prohibited: laser pointers, weapons of any kind (including pocket knives, razors, items with spikes), illegal and/or non-prescribed medications, tobacco, alcohol, glass containers, matches, lighters, stink bombs, spray paint and any other item that may jeopardize the health, welfare, or safety of the school community. We will confiscate all prohibited items and students will be subject to disciplinary action including suspension and expulsion. We will also contact the police as necessary.

Students are not permitted to take any medication on school property without having a 504 form on file with the Medical Office. This includes Tylenol, ibuprofen, cough medicine, Benadryl or other allergy medication and all prescription medications. If your child needs to take any medication for any reason, please contact the main office.

## **Admissions Policies**

The Renaissance Charter School is a non-sectarian, public school. Renaissance does not discriminate against any student on the basis of ethnicity, national origin, religion, gender, sexual orientation or disability.

Admission to Renaissance is determined according to guidelines that are specified in our Charter.

Parents/Guardians interested in having their child attend TRCS are strongly encouraged to attend an Open House.

Applications will be available at the school beginning on a date to be determined each year, at the conclusion of each open house and at our website. Renaissance also participates in the NYC Charter School Online Common Application. Renaissance will conduct a lottery for openings in Pre-Kindergarten, kindergarten and one-fifth grade class. Some seats may be available in grades 1-4, 6-8, 9-12. Applications for these grades are automatically wait listed and will be considered only if openings occur. Siblings of current Renaissance students will be given priority. A lottery will be conducted if applicants exceed available seats. If seats become available after the initial lottery, a lottery of wait list applications will be conducted. Final acceptance of all students into Pre-kindergarten is conditional upon the student turning 4 years of age no later than December 31 of the year admitted, and is conditional for kindergarten students upon the student turning 5 years of age no later than December 31 of the year admitted. Students applying for grades 1-12 must submit copies of final report cards and/or transcripts from current schools and must meet the criteria for promotion to the grade for which they are applying. More complete details on the admissions procedures are available upon request.

## Class Trips

Most of our students attend various field trips during the year to enhance their educational experience. The field trips are an integral part of the curriculum at The Renaissance Charter School, and connect to classwork and homework assignments that students receive. If a student is unable to attend a trip, she/he may be given an alternative assignment to compensate for the missed activity.

Participation in a class trip requires that students be attentive, responsible, and respectful to others, for the safety and well being of all concerned. If a student's behavior in school indicates that she/he is lacking in self control or the ability to follow directions, it may be necessary that a parent or guardian accompany the student on the trip or the student may be required to remain at school with alternative work.

Permission slips will be sent home before each trip and must be signed by a parent/guardian in order for the student to participate. If a student does not have a signed permission slip on the day of the activity, she/he must remain at school. The school should receive a parent or guardian's permission in writing.

## *SERVICES FOR STUDENTS*

We believe that students can develop when they feel safe and supported, and are challenged to do their best. Teachers often instruct students for more than one year. This enables teachers to better know the individual abilities and needs of each student and more effectively provide instruction. The following services are available to students.

## Instructional Support Services (ISS)

The Renaissance Charter School is committed to an inclusive model of instruction for special needs students. This model provides an opportunity for special needs students to grow and learn in the least restrictive environment and for general education students to develop their leadership skills

- **Individual Education Plan (IEP)**

This is an educational plan created by a multi-disciplinary team consisting of at least an educational evaluator, psychologist, social worker, parent, related services providers, and classroom teacher under the auspices of the Committee of Special Education (CSE). The team discusses results of the various evaluations, classroom observations and parent input. Based on the profile developed, the IEP includes the type of classroom placement, related services and modifications (testing, promotion, etc.). This plan is then implemented by the school.

- **Section 504**

This is a regulation under federal Rehabilitation Act (1973). It allows for “leveling of the playing field” for people with disabilities to prevent discrimination due to disability. For schools, this process allows for emergency modifications in various aspects of school life, such as testing modifications, elevator pass, etc.

- **English Language Learners (ELL)**

TRCS offers services for English Language Learners using structured English language immersion so that they achieve proficiency in English as quickly as possible. TRCS ensures that ELL students will not be excluded from curricular and extra curricular activities based on an inability to speak and understand the language of instruction, and also that ELL students will not be assigned to special education because of their lack of English Language proficiency.

- **Support for special needs students**

The ISS staff provides educational assistance to special needs students through classes called Special Education Teacher Support Services (SETSS). SETSS is a regularly scheduled class incorporated into a student’s schedule as required by her/his IEP (individualized education plan). Students with IEPs have been evaluated based on a battery of tests by a team of professionals.

SETSS is not a credit-bearing course. Conducted by certified special education teachers, its function is not to teach new curricula but to support students with their academic coursework, providing learning strategies and reinforcement of skills through tutoring, modified instruction, and smaller groupings.

The ISS staff also provides assistance to special needs students through inclusion or “push in” instruction. In this model, the SETSS teacher attends academic classes with students and works together with the class instructor in a co-teaching capacity to provide additional support. Students with IEPs are often provided with differentiated instruction in the same classroom as their peers, reviewing the same or similar materials.

- **Response to Intervention and support for at-risk students**

Middle School and High School Students who are considered at-risk of academic failure are sometimes also referred for The Learning Center (TLC) support services on a temporary basis. The type of intervention is determined by the needs of the student. These students are generally identified by their general education teachers as being in need of additional services. This is not a substitute for services mandated under an IEP (SETTS); it is solely to serve as a supplementary and, in general, short term intervention. For ongoing support, the Committee on Special Education (CSE) of the Department of Education (DOE) must refer a student who has failed to respond sufficiently to intervention for evaluation.



## Counseling Services and Guidance

The Renaissance Charter School has a licensed, certified social worker and a school counselor, who are full-time members of the ISS Team. The school social worker and counselor's primary responsibilities are to provide mandated counseling for students with IEPs. Additional appointments for other students are available on a limited basis.

Appointments with the school social worker or school counselor must be made through ISS. If students need to see the school social worker or school counselor during class hours, it is important that they first notify their teacher in person. The teacher will call ISS and provide a pass. For a first appointment with the social worker, students may be referred by a teacher or refer themselves. Parents must sign a consent form for subsequent appointments or ongoing counseling.

There are also walk-in times when the school social worker or school counselor are available to meet with students, when classes are not scheduled and after school.

## The Student Support Team

Student Support (SST) was established to, among other things:

- (1) Provide support for students to help prevent discipline code infractions. This support includes: Peace Studies Programs, Peer Mediation Programs, Behavior Plans, Advisories, support to individual students, support to parents and legal guardians ("parents") through conferences and parent meetings, working with teaching and learning to provide professional development to staff in related matters and referral to the counseling department, and the intervention team when needed;
- (2) Investigate incidents and determine the appropriate consequences for students who violate the school's discipline code. This includes: Investigating all occurrences of disciplinary infractions, determining and implementing consequences on a case-by-case basis, including suspension and expulsion when deemed necessary; and
- (3) Assist The Learning Center staff with both in- and out-of- school suspensions.
- (4) Conduct Child Studies in cooperation with the classroom teacher and the Child Study Team.

## The Learning Center (TLC)

The Renaissance Charter School has developed The Learning Center (TLC) to meet the needs of three different populations. Although the populations share the space, TLC staff members are highly cognizant of the membership of individual students. Staff members effectively meet the needs of each assigned student and physically place students within TLC in a way that best meets their needs.

- **The At-Risk Population**

The students in this program are identified by their general education teachers as being in need of receiving additional educational services (i.e. tutoring, modified instruction, smaller groupings, etc) in order to meet the immediate need of their general education class. This in no way is to substitute for

services mandated under an IEP (i.e. SETSS). This is solely to serve as a supplement and, in general, is a short-term intervention.

- **The Enrichment Program**

The students in this program are identified by their general education teachers as functioning at, or above, grade level and are in need of enriched or expanded learning tasks. This program is a short term supplement to the regular class and asks students to provide a higher level of direction and initiative. This program promotes higher order thinking processes that bring students to a new level of mastery of the subject.

- **Suspension Program – Alternative Instruction**

When, in the course of the school year, a student is in need of either in-school or out-of-school suspension, the educational component or alternative instruction for the suspension may be conducted in TLC or another designated location in the school.

## Supervision of in-school suspensions:

When a student is in need of either in-school or out-of-school suspension, the educational component of this suspension is conducted in TLC.

If the Student Support Team determines that all or part of the student's suspension is to be served in-school, a representative of the team will meet with the Coordinator of TLC or his/her designee to discuss the student and pertinent facts of the suspension. The Coordinator of TLC will conduct an orientation meeting with the said student upon her/his return to school to explain the ground rules of the suspension. Upon the basis of this meeting and with consideration to the needs of other TLC students, the Coordinator will decide the appropriate physical placement of the suspended student. Suspended students who stay in TLC must follow all TLC regulations and stay in TLC unless directed otherwise by staff. Suspended students must stay in TLC during lunch.

In the case of an out-of-school suspension, the student will be given a scheduled time to attend TLC or another designated location in the school for one hour of academic instruction for students up to 6<sup>th</sup> grade and two hours of academic instruction for students in 7<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grades. The student must remain in TLC or another designated location in the school at all times unless directed otherwise by staff.

Please note that in the event of suspension, students will be provided with applicable assignments and materials from their scheduled classes. During a suspension, students will be permitted to take any examinations required for their scheduled classes.

## Teacher Teams

The general education teachers meet frequently in grade cluster groupings as well as academic department groupings to discuss students, coordinate cross-classroom collaborations, and develop curriculum. These meetings are known as "cluster meetings". Cluster meetings may also include short discussions on specific issues concerning particular students. Lengthier discussions known as "child studies" may also take place. Child studies include a review of the student's academic history, family history, classroom observations and current academic issues.

In addition to the general education teachers, cluster meetings include representatives from Instructional Support Services, specifically, the special education teacher and the social worker or guidance counselor. Also, in certain cases, it may be appropriate for the student's parents to participate in family conferences with the above personnel.

Based on the recommendations developed at the cluster meetings certain action plans are put into place. These include at-risk services, tutoring, counseling (parental consent is required), informal behavior plans (i.e., without CSE involvement) and outside referrals (e.g., medical). A recommendation may be made for the ISS team to perform an evaluation, or vision and hearing screenings. A referral to the CSE for comprehensive evaluation may also result from the cluster group's efforts.

## After-School at Renaissance

The **TRCS PK-4 After-School Center** provides a quality, affordable, on-site child-care option to accommodate the needs of working parents. **82<sup>nd</sup> Street Academics, Inc.** provides the service, which includes a wide range of enrichment activities as well as an opportunity for active play.

Currently, the Center is open to students in grades K-4. TRCS provides space for this program and administrative support, but all questions should be directed to 82SA at 718-457-0429. You may find registration forms and more information on our website at <http://www.renaissancecharter.org/parents.html/afterschool.html>, or you may pick up the forms from the main office.

Renaissance also partners with 82SA to bring a high-quality, thoughtfully planned and staffed after-school program for **5<sup>th</sup> through 10<sup>th</sup> graders**. The program is a comprehensive academic program designed to increase student enthusiasm for higher learning and includes homework help, academic tutoring, social-emotional skill building, book clubs and outdoor excursions.

**Eleventh and twelfth grade** after-school consists of various opportunities for tutoring and homework help starting in October. Individualized meetings with college and leadership advisors are held by appointment, and various clubs are available to all 7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade students. Students and teachers are empowered to suggest clubs and classes and then we match up the staff to the ideas.

Athletic teams such as Basketball, Soccer, Baseball, Softball, and Volleyball are available to all 5<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade students through the Public School Athletic League and the Charter School Athletic Association.

### **Student Behaviors during After-School**

All students who remain after regular school hours must have parental permission. Students not engaged in supervised activities should leave the school premises at dismissal. After that time, teachers and staff are available to supervise only those students involved in official after-school activities. Unsupervised students may not remain on the premises and if found unsupervised in the building will be subject to disciplinary action. Alternative transportation should be arranged for K-5 students who attend after-school activities and ride the school bus. Younger children who need to be escorted must be picked up on time.

While participating in the 82SA after-school program or any other supervised after-school, students may have access to computers, but only if properly supervised. All students who wish to use the computers after-school must follow the guidelines listed below. Any student who disregards these guidelines may lose some or all after-school privileges. In such cases, parents or guardians will be notified in writing.

- The purpose of the 5<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade after-school is to provide students with a quiet place to work, computer access for the purposes of work and study, and assistance with their academic work, and other structured activities. After-school is NOT a hang out, and students who are not working or being disruptive will be asked to leave immediately and may have their after-school privileges permanently revoked.
- No food or drinks are allowed near the computers at any time.
- Students who use computers for inappropriate activities (such as social networking or video games) will be asked to leave.
- Students are NOT permitted to print from the computers on the second floor unless directly supervised by an adult staff member.
- When students are ready to leave, they should collect all their belongings, and leave their work area neat and clean.

## Transportation

TRCS will utilize the New York City Department of Education's Office of Pupil Transportation for school bus service for eligible K-6 and special education students and MetroCards for eligible K-12 students.

The bus driver is the source of authority on every school bus and all students must follow his/her directions and instructions. The potential for serious accidents is a very real consequence if the driver of a bus is constantly distracted by the misbehavior of students behind her/him. Students are to show respect and be polite to the driver at all times. Students are to remain seated with seat belts fastened during the entire bus ride. Students are the ambassadors of our school to the community and are expected to be courteous to all community residents while waiting for, riding on or exiting a bus. Students are not to yell, curse, insult, or "dis". Fighting or play fighting on the bus is strictly forbidden. Older students are expected to be role models for and nurture younger students. All general school rules apply on the bus. Violations that result in suspension on the school campus will also result in suspension on the bus. In addition, students who do not follow these rules will lose all or part of their bus privileges and face the consequences listed in other sections of the discipline code.

We expect our students:

- To follow the directions of the driver.
- To board the bus quickly and remain in their seats patiently while waiting for others to board.
- To wear a seat belt at all times.
- To stay in assigned seats facing the front of the bus at all times. Students may not sit on book bags or face sideways in seats. (As the bus approaches your stop, stay seated until the bus reaches a complete stop.)
- To keep all parts of your body in the bus and the aisle clear at all times.

- To refrain from throwing anything on the bus or out of the window.
- To talk in a quiet voice and only to the people near you.
- To refrain from taking glass containers on board the bus.
- To know that riding a school bus is a privilege that may be lost for failure to obey the rules.
- To be completely ready when the bus arrives. There must be someone at home when the bus drops children off.

Students cannot ride another bus or get off at a different stop unless this request is put in writing. Phone calls will not be accepted to arrange bus changes. Drivers will not let students on their buses or put them off at different stops without an authorized note. When requesting a bus change the note should include: the student's name, teacher, the reason for the different bus or bus stop, the date, and number that the parents can be reached at in case the request cannot be granted. This is for the safety of the students and the drivers. Drivers are not allowed to make stops that are not on their routes. They are not allowed to let students off at stops other than their designated stop.

## Grievances

Individuals with grievances should first speak with the staff member directly involved with the situation. If the issue is not resolved after this discussion, the matter should be referred to the cluster leader, or a member of the SMT. If the matter is still not resolved after the SMT member's intervention, it will be referred to the Principal. In the event that the Principal cannot resolve the situation, the following grievance procedures will be followed:

- Individuals should address their issue in writing to the Chairperson of The Board of Trustees (Dr. Monte Joffee, [mjjoffee@rencharter.org](mailto:mjjoffee@rencharter.org)).
- Once the committee reviews the issues, the matter will be referred to the appropriate person, cluster or committee for further investigation, mediation, action and/or recommendations. A report will be generated back to the Board's Grievance Committee for its recommendation to the full Board. The full board will vote on a decision.
- People who have had their grievances denied by the Board of Trustees will be notified in writing of their right to appeal the decision to the Chancellor of the New York City Department of Education and the New York State Board of Regents.

## Privacy Policy

### **Access to Student Records Policy Pursuant To Ferpa:**

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

These rights are:

- (1) The right to inspect and review the student's education records within 45 days of the day the

School receives a request for access. Parents or eligible students should submit to Michelle Cardoña, Pupil-Personnel Secretary, a written request that identifies the record(s) they wish to inspect. TRCS will make arrangements for access and notify the parent or eligible student of the time and place where the records may be inspected.

(2) The right to request the amendment of the student's education records that the parent or eligible student believes are inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the student's privacy rights under FERPA. Parents or eligible students who wish to ask TRCS to amend a record should write Michelle Cardoña, Pupil-Personnel Secretary, clearly identify the part of the record they want changed, and specify why it should be changed. If TRCS decides not to amend the record as requested by the parent or eligible student, the TRCS will notify the parent or eligible student of the decision and advise them of their right to a hearing regarding the request for amendment. Additional information regarding the hearing procedures will be provided to the parent or eligible student when notified of the right to a hearing.

(3) The right to privacy of personally identifiable information in the student's education records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent. One exception, which permits disclosure without consent, is disclosure to school officials with legitimate educational interests. A school official is a person employed by TRCS as an administrator, supervisor, instructor, or support staff member (including health or medical staff and law enforcement unit personnel); a person serving on TRCS's Board of Trustees; a person or company with whom TRCS 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 student serving on an official committee, such as a disciplinary or grievance committee; or a parent, student, or other volunteer assisting another school official in performing his or her tasks. A school official has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record in order to fulfill his or her professional responsibility.

Upon request, TRCS discloses education records without consent to officials of another school or a school district in which a student seeks or intends to enroll, or is already enrolled if the disclosure is for purposes of the student's enrollment or transfer. TRCS will make a reasonable attempt to notify the parent or student of the records request.

(4) The right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by TRCS to comply with the requirements of FERPA. The name and address of the Office that administers FERPA are:

Family Policy Compliance Office  
U.S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20202-8520

**Directory Information under FERPA:**

TRCS may disclose appropriately designated "directory information" without written consent, unless you have advised the School to the contrary in accordance with TRCS's procedures. The primary purpose of directory information is to allow TRCS to include this type of information from your child's education records in certain school publications, for example, the school yearbook, Honor Roll and other recognition lists,

graduation programs, activities announcements, and sports activity lists with height and weight. This list is not exclusive but is meant as an illustration.

Directory information, which is information that is generally not considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if released, can also be disclosed to outside organizations without a parent's prior written consent. Outside organizations include, but are not limited to, companies that manufacture class rings or publish TRCS's yearbooks.

In addition, at present two federal laws require TRCS to provide military recruiters, upon request, with three directory information categories (names, addresses and telephone numbers) unless parents have advised TRCS that they do not want their student's information disclosed without their prior written consent.<sup>1</sup>

If you do not want TRCS to disclose directory information from your child's education records without your prior written consent, you must notify TRCS in writing by October 31 of the current school year. TRCS has designated the following information as directory information:

- Student's name
- Address
- Telephone numbers
- Email address
- Photograph
- Date and place of birth
- Dates of attendance
- Grade level
- Participation in officially recognized activities and sports
- Weight and height of members of athletic teams
- Degrees, honors, and awards received
- The most recent educational agency or institution attended
- Student ID number, user ID, or other unique personal identifier used to communicate in electronic systems that cannot be used to access education records without a PIN, password, etc. (A student's SSN, in whole or in part, cannot be used for this purpose.)

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<sup>1</sup> Elementary and Secondary Education Act (20 U.S.C. § 7908), as amended ("ESEA"), § 9528; and 10 U.S.C. § 503(c), as amended.