



**EMBER**  
CHARTER SCHOOLS

**FAMILY HANDBOOK  
SCHOOL YEAR 2022-2023**

Ember Charter Schools for Mindful Education,  
Innovative & Transformation  
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“The critical feature of a good school ... is that it forces young people and their teachers, to practice, over and over again, the habits that make democracy conceivable. That ... means selecting topics that have no yes/no, Google-able answer and pursuing them in ways that require us to listen to many views, to weigh evidence, to look for patterns, to conjecture, and to wonder why it matters.”

**Deborah Meier**

*Founder of Central Park East School*

*Author of “The Power of Their Ideas”*

“Plato defined a slave as one who accepts from another the purposes which control his conduct. This condition obtains even where there is no slavery in the legal sense ... it is found wherever men are engaged in activity which is socially serviceable, but whose service they do not understand and have no personal interest in.”

**John Dewey**

*Philosopher; Author of “Education and Democracy”*

“To be truly educated [in the 21st century], a student must also make connections across the disciplines, discover ways to integrate the separate subjects, and ultimately relate what they learn to life ...”

**Ernest Boyer**

*Former Chancellor, State University of New York*

“You may fill your heads with knowledge or skillfully train your hands, but unless it is based on high, upright character, upon a true heart, it will amount to nothing.”

**Booker Taliaferro Washington**

*Founding President, Tuskegee University*

## **SCHOOL HOURS**

Monday to Thursday: 7:45AM - 4:15PM

Friday: 7:45AM - 12:30PM

Elementary School (Grades K to 4th)

616 Quincy Street - 3rd Floor

Brooklyn, NY 11221

Middle School (Grades 5th to 8th)

500 Macon Street - 3rd Floor

Brooklyn, NY 11233

High School (Grades 9th to 12th)

295 Front Street

Brooklyn, NY 11233

Peace Families/Caregivers::

It is with great pride that we welcome you to Ember Charter School for Mindful Education, Innovation & Transformation (“Ember”). This upcoming school year promises to be an exciting one for us all, from students to teachers to operations staff, and, we hope it will be for you as well.

We are pleased to present you our Family Handbook. The purpose of this Family Handbook is to provide you with helpful information about day-to-day procedures at our school, to inform you about the core academic programs and philosophies, and share some of our important school culture elements.

It is our hope that this information will explain how we expect to prepare our students to become the future professionals who will lead our global society in the 21st Century. As you will see, our school is committed to providing a fun, community centered, culturally rich and relevant learning environment founded on cutting-edge research and exemplary methods of teaching and learning.

The Family Handbook provides information that explains how to measure your child’s progress, and what to expect from Family Conferences and progress reports throughout the school year. We describe some of our research-based curriculum programs, each element of which reflects the content and methods of teaching that form the basis of teaching and learning at our school. Being familiar with these concepts and material will help you develop a better understanding of how we—staff, students and families—hold one another accountable for achieving our goals.

In this handbook, you will also find the following:

- Information about regulations regarding student records and parent access to these records
- Our school attendance and the promotion policy
- Information regarding special education inclusion
- Discipline and safety policies, as well as sample daily schedules
- Title I program elements
- Measures for student safety and our uniform policy
- Information regarding transportation to and from school
- A sample daily schedule
- Our uniform policy

You, the parents, play an important role in making this school great. We simply cannot achieve our goals without you. Please know that we encourage parent participation in all class programs and extracurricular activities.

As specific questions arise over the course of the year, please refer to this Family Handbook. If you cannot find your answer here, please feel free to call the school office, or your child’s teacher with any additional questions you may have.

We all share the highest expectations for the upcoming school year. We look forward to working together with you to make this year extremely successful for students, staff and families alike.

Pamoja,

The Partners Council

Brother Rafiq Kalam Id-Din, Brother Damien Dunkley, Sister Ardnas Rashid, Brother Doron Townsell, Sister Nkenge Carter & Brother Kwadwo Gyase

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## **Mission**

We are dedicated to preparing our students to become the future professionals (lawyers, doctors, scientists, entrepreneurs, etc.) who will lead our global society in the 21st Century.

## **Vision**

We will provide a fun, 'college-successful', community-centered, culturally rich and relevant preparatory school experience to our students, where they will be nurtured, challenged and cultivated into highly intelligent, creative and critically thinking young leaders.

We are committed to creating an instructional environment that is student centered, data driven and mastery focused, where every teaching professional holds themselves and each other accountable for the school's most important outcome: high student achievement.

We believe that in order to accomplish this mission and prepare our students to compete in the 21st Century global economy, we must provide them with a world-class education, one driven by extraordinary instruction offered by highly talented, diligent teachers. Entering the 21st Century, our nation's economy has been such that those who possess a high level of academic achievement have flocked to careers in professional service industries, e.g., law, medicine, consulting, etc. We believe that schools must become educational enterprises that more closely resemble these professional service organizations in how they are structured, organized and managed if schools are to similarly compete for our nation's top talent. By attracting and retaining top talent, we will be in a position to provide our students with the world-class education they need to compete in the global economy. The charter school mechanism has provided us with the freedom and flexibility to re-engineer the school from the ground up and to prepare students for their future endeavors.

# **School Culture and Behavior Management Policy**

## **Overall Philosophy**

Our School Culture and Behavioral Management Policy is based on our holistic, student-centered approach, rooted in the cognitive theories of Constructivism and Choice Theory, and ultimately framed in the unique language of our Leadership Index Rubrics (please see attached). Together, these components provide the underlying rationale for the tailored decision making that occurs with respect to both major and minor behavior matters involving students.

## **Individualized and Student-Centered**

We believe that Lead Teachers are best positioned to respond to the individuals needs of students in each Schoolhouse (classroom), and thus our teacher-led leadership structure delegates to each lead teacher the authority to choose how to specifically implement the instruction around, and day-to-day management of the Leadership Index, as long as it is differentiated and done so in such a way that is consistent with the overall philosophy described above.

## **Schoolhouse Management**

While all staff members share the collective responsibility of exhibiting and instilling in our students the core values embodied in our Leadership Index, the primary responsibility for purveying and managing school culture and student behavior should be vested in the individual Schoolhouses (i.e. classrooms), with the expectation that the vast majority of behavior issues will be addressed by Lead Teacher within each Schoolhouse. All teachers are directed to use a variety of strategies to identify a student's needs (the source of their behavior), and help develop a plan to enable the student to address the behavior (including, but not limited to calling parents, interviewing other involved students, creating opportunities for meditation and reflection, etc.). Teachers may engage the Dean of Students and/or members of her team to help determine and develop such responses and behavioral plans. Under such circumstances where behaviors are more serious (including but not limited to the causing of injury, tantrums, property damage, etc.), the Dean may inform one of the Partners (usually the Stakeholder Partner), and when necessary refer particularly serious matters to the response to intervention team (RTI) for review and follow up. The Dean may also determine whether a more serious action (e.g. suspension), needs to be taken. In making such determinations, the Dean contacts the parent or guardian and, if necessary, a parent meeting is scheduled, conducted and followed up. See "**Highly Disruptive or Unsafe Behaviors**" below for more information on the policy and procedures under such circumstances.

## **Firmwide Resources**

The Partners, Dean of Students and staff members on the Dean's team (including the Learning Specialists, social workers, etc.) are available to provide strategic and targeted consultation and support teachers and staff members in their work in managing and supporting the positive behavioral development of students in each Schoolhouse as they work through behavior and leadership development matters (including but not limited to the development of any behavioral plans or interventions). The Dean of Students is designated as the DASA Coordinator and shall investigate all incidents of harassment and/or bullying (including but not limited to cyber bullying) involving students.

## **Serious, Highly Disruptive or Unsafe Behaviors**

Like our instruction, every behavior issue is handled and determined on an individualized basis. The goal for every behavioral engagement with a student is to help ensure the consistent display and mastery of the behaviors outlined in the "Awakened" and "Developed" categories of the Leadership Index rubrics, while simultaneously ensuring the health and safety of all students, staff and school property. For any serious behavioral act or display that is inconsistent, or in conflict with the behaviors in the "Awakened" and "Developed" categories of each Leadership Attribute Rubric (including, but not limited to those behaviors highlighted in the "Dormant" and "Awakening" categories of the rubrics), teachers and instructional personnel may utilize a variety of strategies to help support students to reflect and improve and align their choice of actions and behaviors. These strategies could include, but are not limited to:

- asking students to take time to use breathing techniques
- writing reflections
- adult mediated and supervised peace-making discussions and planning
- peer mediated peace-making discussions and planning
- phone calls to parents
- one-on-one or group reflection conversations (with classroom or Dean's Team staff members)
- self reflection/meditation time (either inside or outside of the classroom (including another classroom))

For serious, highly disruptive and/or unsafe behaviors (including but not limited to causing injury to self, another student or staff member, screaming, running from staff members, damaging school property, etc.), that either interferes with, or may interfere with the learning and instructional environment, or places at risk or harms themselves, another student, staff member or school property (as determined by a teacher, member of the Dean's team or other staff member), students may be referred to the Dean for consideration for a more serious action, including but not limited to:

- asking students to take time to use breathing techniques
- writing reflections
- adult mediated and supervised peace-making discussions and planning
- peer mediated peace-making discussions and planning

- phone calls to parents
- one-on-one or group reflection conversations (with classroom or Dean's Team staff members)
- self reflection/meditation time (either inside or outside of the classroom (including another classroom))
- suspension (short term or long term)
- expulsion

### **Suspensions & Expulsions**

In the case of suspensions or expulsions, a member of the Dean's team will conduct an investigation of the matter, including speaking with all involved stakeholders (including and especially the student who is the subject of the suspension or expulsion). In every circumstance a student will be given the opportunity to be heard and provided with information about the behaviors/actions that have brought that matter up for consideration for suspension or expulsion. Depending on the severity of the incident, and the behavioral history of the student who is the subject of the suspension or expulsion consideration, the Dean will be presented with the information gathered from the investigation, along with a recommendation for suspension or expulsion. The Dean will make a determination based on a review of the record, as well as a direct conversation with the student who is subject of the suspension or expulsion consideration prior to making any determination of suspension or expulsion. In the case of expulsions, the Dean will be sure to talk with parents, guardians or caregivers before making any expulsion decisions.

In any instance where a student is being suspended, the student will receive appropriate due process protections, including but not limited to a notice of the suspension or expulsion qualifying behaviors committed and the right to be heard. Students and families will be given notice of violations under this policy within 48-hours of the initiation of the Dean's investigation, including notice of the possible suspension and/or expulsion. Students and parents will also be notified that the student has a right to have a hearing, formal or otherwise. Where students are potentially subjected to long term suspensions and expulsions, the Dean will conduct a formal hearing where such determination may be made and where students and families have the right to present and examine evidence, have a lawyer representing them, and have the incident held by an impartial arbiter.

For students with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), the Dean will further consult with learning specialists, teachers and other stakeholders in determining suspension or expulsion decisions for students with IEPs. Where the recommendation would be for an expulsion or a suspension that would exceed 10 days, the Dean will notify the Partners that they will forward a request for an MDR to the CSE, as well as the student's parent, guardian or primary caregiver. The purpose of the MDR is to determine whether the subject behavior is a manifestation of the student's disability. Where appropriate the school's request for an MDR shall also include a concurrent request for the CSE and DOE to provide the student with services outlined in their IEP as required by law.

Where it is determined that the behavior is a manifestation of the student's disability, when appropriate we shall request an emergency review of the student's IEP to ensure that they are in the appropriate setting and receiving adequate services. If it is determined that our school is not the appropriate setting, we shall request and work with the CSE and DOE to provide the student with the appropriate setting and services aligned with their needs as required by law.

In any circumstance where a student with an IEP has been determined to cause serious bodily harm to a person at school, on our premises or at a school function, the student may be suspended from school for no more than 45 school days. In all such circumstances, the Dean shall notify the CSE and request and work with the CSE and DOE to best provide for the education services for the student as outlined in their IEP.

### **The School Bus**

The Dean is the initial point person for any behavioral issues that occur on the school bus. The Dean informs the Stakeholder Partner of all significant behavioral matters from the school bus. Under most circumstances the Dean will make the determination of whether to contact parents. When serious incidents occur, or there is a consistent pattern of a student's unsafe choices, the Dean may determine whether a student will be suspended from the bus. Please note that under no circumstances will Ember make a determination to impermissibly restrict an IEP students access to mandated SPED bus services.

### **Students with IEPs**

For students with IEP's, the Partners Council will consult with the Learning Specialist and Dean in making disciplinary decisions. See "**Suspensions and Expulsions**" above.

### **Provision of Alternative Education**

In situations where students are removed from school for more than 10 days, we will work with the DOE and CSE to ensure the provision of appropriate alternative education and instruction as required by law. In all circumstances students will be provided with at least 2 hours of alternative instruction for every day that they are suspended, immediately after being suspended.

### **Documentation**

All serious behavior matters (including any behavior management plans established in conjunction with parents), will be documented and tracked by the Dean and reported to the Partners Council via the Stakeholder Partner.

### **Due Process and Compliance with Applicable Laws**



All matters involving discipline of students (including, but not limited to matters involving suspension, expulsion, etc.) shall comply with all applicable federal, state and local laws and regulations, including, but not limited to affording appropriate and required due process to all stakeholders. This includes ensuring that in each instance where suspension for any length of time is potentially implicated or contemplated, that the student involved is given oral or written notice of the charges against her/him, and if s/he denies them, s/he is provided with explanation of the evidence against them and an opportunity to present her/his version.

### **Appeals**

All disciplinary actions, including but not limited to suspension and expulsion decisions administered under this policy may be appealed to the Partners either orally or in writing. The Partners will review all documentation and/or testimonials, which may include but is not limited to interviewing the student who is the recipient of the disciplinary action, as well as any other stakeholder. The Partners will make a decision either to uphold, modify or reverse a disciplinary determination within 2 days, and shall provide notification of this decision to the student and their parent, guardian or primary caregiver orally or in writing.

## School Climate and Culture: Dignity for All Students Act (DASA)

### School Climate and Culture

The creation of an environment that is free from harassment, bullying and discrimination is fostered at Ember both through the frameworks that guide our school practice and through the structures in place that support them. Central to this is our Leadership Index (see attached) that outlines a set of skills, behaviors, and characteristics Ember expects that students and staff as leaders should all possess. Exposure, modeling, guidance, direct feedback, and explicit teaching of the Leadership Index in a wide variety of settings (classroom, lunch, recess, Family Meeting, arrival, dismissal, etc.) are proactive measures taken by Ember to cultivate a harassment, bully, and discrimination-free environment. The Dean's Team (comprised of the Dean of Students, School Social Worker, Clinical Social Worker, Learning Specialist, and Sociologist of Education) primarily support this learning and ensure Teacher accountability in each of these contexts.

The Leadership Index describes a range of skills, behaviors, and characteristics that our students and staff are expected to practice and ultimately develop mastery over. Some of these include empathy (Banyan Tree), reflection (Sankofa), honesty (Ma'at), and confidence (Tama) See attached. Ember also supports developing metacognitive processes within students by "observing, listening to and analyzing others point of view and using language that affirms and supports others". Staff refer to these skills, behaviors, and characteristics in a range of settings throughout the school day. The implementation of, and commitment to, culturally relevant pedagogy at Ember supports students in learning to value their own identities and cultural heritage as wells as that of others. The utilization of a holistic approach provides that all adults in the building nurture the range of potentials (physical, emotional, social, civic) in each student.

If an incident of bullying or harassment occurs, an interdisciplinary approach is used which involves the Teachers, the Dean's Team, and the Partners, in order to collaborate and develop an appropriate response and behavior plan tailored to the needs of the specific students involved. This response may include referral to the Response To Intervention team (RTI) for review and follow up, meetings with the students' families, and in some cases, school discipline leading up to suspension.

Our School Culture and Behavior Management Plan (see attached) outlines this process and is distributed to all stakeholders including the families of each student at the beginning of each school year. This policy is under constant review and the most current version is included in the Family Handbook. If any updates are made mid-year, the new version of the policy is redistributed to all stakeholders.

### **Creating an Inclusive School Community: Sensitivity to the Experience of Specific Student Populations**

The demographic population of Ember is extremely diverse: 29 different countries are represented in our student body, socioeconomic status ranges from below poverty level to middle income, students possess a wide range of learning styles and abilities, and there are a variety of family compositions. Diversity is celebrated, acknowledged and discussed. Each of our classrooms is an inclusion co-taught classroom that accommodates a wide range of learning styles and needs. Students are aware of each other's strengths and challenges and work to support each other's growth. We have student accessible literature that provides further information on the disabilities that we serve in our community so that our students are best equipped to support each other. If a student expresses any lack of sensitivity to a specific student population, it is not only taken very seriously but it is treated as a learning opportunity.

### **School Personnel**

Staff members are expected to have be trained in or have knowledge of DASA and actively implement measures in alignment with DASA in their classrooms. Additionally, staff receive various trainings and professional development courses provided by Ember on the frameworks that support DASA being enforced at our school. The Partners Council, the Dean of Students, the Assistant Dean, the Clinical Director and the School Social Worker, work in collaboration to document and respond to any reports of abuse. Students and parents both have complete access to this entire team via cell phone numbers, email addresses and our open door policy in which we communicate to families that they can come at anytime with or without notice or appointment. Students that are capable are always encouraged to write written reflections about any incidents that occur and work towards way to resolve a wrongdoing.

Our Employee Handbook specifically outlines process that staff members should engage in if they witness or experience any harassment, bullying or discrimination. Any incidents of the sort are investigated, documented in our student information system, documented in the School Environment and Educational Climate form and provided with responsive interventions.

### **The Dignity Act Coordinator**

#### *Identification and appointing the Dignity Act Coordinator (DAC)*

The Dean of Students (licensed masters of social work) and Dean's Team (comprised of school social worker, clinical social worker, learning specialist, and sociologist of education) are primarily responsible for identifying and mitigating matters related harassment, bullying, discrimination, exclusion, bias, and aggression and reporting all incidents to Damien Dunkley. By identifying multiple DACs and using a team approach at TFOA, we are better equipped to respond to bias-based harassment (than by designating just one individual),

and can increase the level of access, comfort and trust for students and personnel to speak about specific concerns related to harassment, bullying, and discrimination.

#### *Accessibility*

Students, personnel, and all other stakeholders are able to access the Dean of Students and Dean's Team during all school hours M-F. Although we currently do not have a dedicated email to address such matters, nor do we post in highly-visible areas or on our website ways to access DAC, the Dean of Students and Dean's Team are highly visible and accessible within the school and ensure to regularly reach out and educate all students and stakeholders on an ongoing basis how to access the Dean and the Dean's Team to discuss such matters.

#### *Allegations of Student-to-Student Harassment and/or Discrimination*

Ember has created a personalized Code of Conduct and School Culture Behavior Management Policy that references NYS Education Laws, to ensure that the school investigates and appropriately responds in the same manner to student harassment, bullying, and discrimination. With regards to student discipline, we ensure to incorporate a progressive model that includes measured, balanced and age-appropriate remedies and procedures that make appropriate use of prevention, education, intervention and discipline, the nature and severity of the offending student's behavior, the developmental age of the student, the previous disciplinary measures used on the student, and the impact the student's behaviors had on an individual who was physically injured and/or emotionally harmed.

#### *Investigating and Responding to Allegations of Staff-to-Student Harassment or Discrimination*

Ember employs a due process including provisions related to staff-to-student misconduct as outlined in the Employee Handbook and School Culture Policy.

### **Family and Parent Engagement: Communicating with the School Community**

Ember uses multiple means of communicating with the school community to ensure the Dignity Act becomes part of the fabric of the existing school culture. In addition, the Leadership Index, as part of Ember school frameworks, has interwoven aspects of the Dignity Act to ensure we employ proactive measures to educate students how to help to foster a bully, harassment, and discrimination-free school environment and culture, and ensure student and personnel accountability. We employ several means to establish and have an ongoing relationship with all stakeholders including (but not limited to) the following: Parent Council for each Schoolhouse, school workshops for various stakeholder groups including but not limited to parents, students, faculty and staff, and community members, school website and facebook page, school questionnaires and surveys, and Sister's Keeper meetings. In addition, Ember includes students in promoting positive and respectful interpersonal relations using the following strategies: Family Meeting for students and any stakeholders interested in attending (held every Friday), integration of school culture and Leadership Index into every day curriculum, displays of student work that promote interpersonal and intergroup respect, awards provided for students who demonstrate the strong practice of Leadership qualities.

### **Restorative Approaches and Progressive Discipline**

Ember uses a wide range of intervention measures to address discrimination and/or harassment, including, where appropriate, restorative practices, classroom problem-solving, conflict resolution, self-reflection exercises, and counseling, rather than over-relying on exclusionary methods of discipline, such as suspension or class removal. We adopt the philosophy that instances of wrongdoing and conflict can be a "teachable moment" and educate students on the importance of reflecting on their actions, taking accountability and attempting to repair their wrong doings if possible. In addition, families are often involved in the process to learn ways in which they can help reinforce these practices at home and to gain insight as to how other factors may be contributing to a student's wrongdoing so that an appropriate plan can be implemented to address the student's needs on a time-limited or ongoing basis.

#### *Guidance for a Progressive Student Discipline Process*

Ember has established a code of conduct in the form of our School Culture and Behavior Management Policy that includes a due process and progressive student discipline process to ensure the safety of the school community. We have identified several successful alternatives to suspension or other forms of exclusionary discipline for student misbehavior that does not require removing the student from the school including: emphasizing behavioral expectations, collaborating with families, addressing root causes of misbehavior through counseling, using Sankofa rooms for written or verbal self-reflections and exploring way to work towards restoration, referral for additional services to address root causes, close in school monitoring which involves closer adult supervision and restriction of lunchtime, field trips, or recess activities. In addition, Ember has guidelines for progressive measures to be taken in order to address classroom removal and/or school suspensions.

### **Internet Safety and Acceptable Use Policies**

#### *The Children's Internet and Protection Act*

Ember ensures safe and responsible use of the internet in accordance with the Education Law that includes protection measures that block or filter internet access to pictures that are: obscene, child pornography, or harmful to minors. An internet safeguard policy is included in the Employee Handbook and provided to all staff members upon hiring.

### **Guidance on Bullying and Cyber-bullying**

#### *Cyber-bullying*

Ember uses measures to address and/or discipline the student who has engaged in the harassment in addition to providing support to the targeted student. Disciplinary and supportive measures may include referral to counseling, restorative approaches, or as appropriate, suspension.

## **Educational Program Overview**

### **Curricular Approach Overview**

Ember has chosen to focus its curriculum (i.e. 'what we want our students to learn and know') on the knowledge and skills that will enable our students to make the widest set of choices in their career paths and life's work, with a core commitment to furthering social justice through social entrepreneurship, engineering and global leadership. Lead by the Partners, Ember's instructional professionals engage in a process of developing and refining all curricula materials. Our practitioners have moved beyond 'teaching' to a engage fully in human development, where we create the vast majority of curricula resources to ensure they are not merely 'common core-aligned', but are deeply inquiry-based, self-efficacy and agency-centered, integrated, culturally and economically responsive. These curricular tools are created during the summer prior to the start of the school year in an authentic reflection and revision process that involves the entire instructional team (including learning specialists and mental health professionals from our Dean's Team). These materials include our Leadership Index, Academic Rubrics (for ELA, Math, Science, Social Studies, Spanish, Integrated Arts and Core Movement training and practice (Yoga Core Training, Capoeira, Step, Soccer, and African and Diasporic Dance)), SEL and Executive Functioning Rubrics, and our Programs of Inquiry (master documents that coordinate the interconnection of critical thinking skills and these core content).

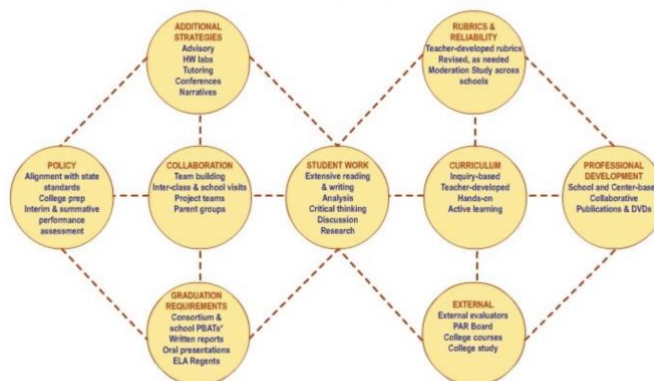
### **Integration of Project-Based Learning (PBL) and Performance-Based Assessments (PBA)**

As we reflect on our academic progress over the last ten years, especially during the extremely challenging last year and a half of the Covid-19 public health crisis, we attribute our success and strong growth over this time to our steadfast commitment to support our students in their academic AND socio-emotional growth and development. To that end, we used the last several years to fully embrace our current instructional approach that rejects the traditional focus on content coverage and test prep, and instead embraces the authentic approach to nurturing mastery of self-efficacy, executive functioning and critical thinking skills inherent in our integrated trauma-informed, culturally responsive PBL and PBA model. Beginning in SY2016-17, we researched and studied schools across the country who had successfully implemented PBL and PBA models and strategies, including the Consortium. That year we started to pilot PBL and PBA, integrating elements of its instructional approach and assessment into our structure and developing other instructional innovations based on its core methodology. In SY2017-18 we implemented a more substantive integration, as well as our new internally developed Case Study Methodology, using the final academic term of the school year to dive deep into these approaches with a focus on Grades 3 and up. For the next three years, we studied how the introduction and integration of PBL and PBA methods impacted our students' academic progress. We also gauged how well the PBA mirrored and matched the academic outcomes effected and predicted by our normative internal assessments. The results were strikingly positive, with PBL not only increasing engagement, but also PBA providing a broader opportunity for students to demonstrate knowledge understanding and skills mastery. Indeed, it was these instructional pivots that positioned us to be best responsive to the abrupt shift to online instruction demanded by the Covid-19 pandemic and crisis. The project-based nature of our assignments helped to facilitate stronger collaboration between students who attended onsite and those online, ultimately helping to spur daily attendance rates to greater than 90% during the worse of the Covid-19 crisis.

In light of this success, we are now ready to fully embrace and expand our integrated trauma-informed and culturally responsive PBL instructional model across the entire school, with attendant revisions to our subject matter infrastructure that better reflect the conceptual nature of PBL. To that end we are seeking authorization to be granted the same waivers from all normative state test requirements in the same type and manner as those granted to the schools who are a part of the New York Performance Standards Consortium. In place of normative state test, we will adopt and use a similar rigorous PBA system as those utilized by schools in the Consortium (described in detail here: <http://www.performanceassessment.org/how-it-works>).

## New York Performance Standards Consortium

### Performance-Based Assessment System



Center for Inquiry

\*Performance-based Assessment Tasks

Like those schools who are members of the Consortium, we will continue to require students to take and pass the ELA state exam for grades 3-8, as well as the ELA Regents for high school. For all other content areas, students will complete internally created performance-based assessments centered on projects that require conceptual fluency and integrated skills usage. We've included sample assessments and their attendant rubrics with this renewal application.

### ***Deepening Practitioner Efficacy in Trauma-Informed SEL Methodology***

We have also spent the last several years honing and developing our trauma responsive model and approach as we've recognized the deep and pervasive trauma our students and families have experienced. In many ways this evolution in our design and approach proved prescient as we were more prepared to deal with the social-emotional challenges brought on by the Covid-19 crisis.

Over this past 5-year charter cycle, we deepened and expanded our provision of our trauma responsive education program and learning environment, investing in the long-term development of students' positive cognitive psychology and analytical skills. Ember is designed to address the needs of at-risk students whose traumatic experiences with poverty and racism yield significant socio-emotional challenges that impede long-term educational success. Despite the prominence of these obstacles, the development of positive cognitive psychology, agency and self-identity are at best secondary, and far too often unaddressed by most public schools, traditional and charter. At Ember, we place addressing these needs at the center of our instructional practice, driving our service to students and families. We use a targeted, individualized and differentiated strategy to deploy instruction, developing all of our content instruction, student assessment and professional development policies and practices within the following frameworks:

#### *Targeted Content*

- Appropriate and relevant teacher created Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS)-aligned and thinking skill infused content and academic rubrics are taught through a lens of content and conceptual integration. Academic rubrics are used to map the pathways of student acquisition of knowledge and skill mastery.
- Ongoing integration of critical reading and analysis, as well as executive functioning skills practice across the content areas to reinforce and support mastery in English language arts.

#### *Pedagogy*

- Pedagogical practices continued and deepened involve the following: neuro-pedagogy (brain-based research driven), choice-theory, inquiry and socratic questioning, content and conceptual integration, mindfulness, design thinking, autonomy, and culturally- and economically responsive pedagogy.
- Instructional practice includes various forms of differentiation, mixed-ability groupings and data analysis to drive instructional planning.
- Our differentiated instructional approach is particularly effective for students with IEPs and English Language Learners (ELLs), which is made possible through our innovative trauma responsive ICT/CTT model (two highly qualified teachers (one Gen Ed designated, one SPED designated) and mental health professional in every classroom, keeping our practitioner-student ratios well under 1 to 12). For schoolhouses with a meaningful number of students with disabilities we also provide at least one Paraprofessional (bringing practitioner-student ratios in these schoolhouses under 1 to 8).
- Trauma responsive and cognitively focused instructional practice infused with a focus socio-emotional, critical thinking, executive functioning and pro-social skills.

#### *Student Assessment and Data Analysis*

- The Targeted Assistance Program (TAP) identifies students based on their performance on the most recent administration of the state assessments, CTP and internal teacher-created interim assessments. Targeted assistance is determined based on cut-off points established in both Reading/Language Arts and Mathematics sections of the aforementioned assessments. Students who perform below those established cut-off points are focused on for additional differentiated intervention instruction. Teachers monitor and evaluate the progress of students using formative, summative, formal and informal assessments.
- The administration of Developmental Reading Assessments to monitor students' literacy levels.
- Instructional staff participation in quarterly Instructional Methods and Professional Practice (IMAPP) conferences. During the IMAPP conference, each Lead teacher and grade team presents grade-level data for critical analysis and discussion to determine where adjustments should be made, and develop strategies for improving learning outcomes.

#### *Staff Practice and Development*

- Twice-weekly Professional Development sessions: short form: schoolhouse practice team meetings (1 hour); long form: Friday PD sessions: (5 hours).
- Bi-weekly Lead and Co-Teacher Apprentice meetings.
- Partners emphasize teacher autonomy as a key organizational component of the school's structure.
- Utilize the following staff development tools: One-on-one feedback sessions, individualized instructional and cognitive developmental coaching and feedback, and instructional video review and analysis.

In addition to the aforementioned content, and pedagogical and student assessment strategies, we work tirelessly towards full inclusion of the of our students with disabilities having built and instructional and human development model centered on empowering a wide spectrum of neuro-diverse learners. Ember is in full compliance with all applicable laws and regulations, ensuring students with special needs receive adequate learning supports by deploying an instructional model and approach that treats every student like they have unique needs and differentiating accordingly. Additionally, for our English language learners, we provide curricular and instructional supports to ensure reading, writing and speaking mastery. Lastly, the Partners and all teaching professionals remain in constant communication about students with students and parents about the school's expectations regarding

academic performance, persistence, resiliency and behavior. We believe that the combination of these applied strategies meets the diverse needs of our students.

### **Leadership Index: Self-Efficacy, Agency, Critical Thinking and Executive Functioning Skills**

As mentioned above, we implement instruction centered on Ember's unique Leadership Index to continue and deepen our work and focus on developing our students' strong sense of: 1) positive self-identity as a person with full agency; 2) self-love; and 3) knowledge and practice of the habits of mind that drive an analytical mindset. Inspired in part by the University of Virginia's Classroom Assessment Scoring System<sup>1</sup> ("CLASS"), Ember's Leadership Index is a socio-emotional, critical thinking, pro-social and executive functioning skills content framework and attendant rubric designed by Ember's human development practitioners. Ember's instructional practice and pedagogical approach not only commits more than 7-hours of instructional time per week to the focused and explicit instruction centered on the knowledge and skill embedded in the Leadership Index, they are also integrated into instruction across all academic and non-academic domains. By using inquiry and mindfulness practice to teach mastery of the behaviors and thinking skills outlined therein, the Leadership Index is integrated throughout all practitioner-student interactions, into and across the academic, creative and non-academic curriculum. With such an approach, Ember's human development practitioners have been able to help empower students in their ongoing development and strengthening of a growth-, culturally-competent, and analytical mindset necessary to achieve ever more positive academic and social-emotional health. Through ongoing tracking and quarterly measurement of students' anecdotal progress along the developmental range from "Dormant" to "Developed" in our Leadership Index Rubrics, Ember courts increased student achievement outcomes by attending to our target population's oft ignored socio-emotional needs.

### **Detailed Overview Curricular Description**

#### **Instructional Frameworks**

EMBER employs an innovative instructional methodology (i.e. 'how we teach'), which includes the following researched-based practices:

- Integrated Instruction\*: an approach to teaching that connects different areas of study by cutting across subject-matter lines and emphasizing unifying concepts (see researchers John Bransford and Howard Gardner);
- Differentiation: the process of tailoring instruction to meet individual needs (see researcher Carol Tomlinson);
- Looping: practice of keeping groups of students together for two or more years with the same teacher (see Rudolph Steiner, Waldorf schools; Northeast and Islands Regional Educational Laboratory at Brown University);
- Choice Theory/Decision-making/Agency\*: an approach to student behavior management and psycho-social development that emphasizes student choice and agency to cultivate positive, community and success-oriented decision-making (see William Glasser, *Choice Theory in the Classroom*).
- Culturally Relevant Pedagogy\*: an approach to teaching that endeavors to develop student self efficacy by empowering them intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically through using their cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes (see researcher Gloria Ladson-Billings);
- Economically Relevant Pedagogy\*: developed, coined and created by human developers here at Ember, this is an approach to teaching that endeavors to empower students to notice, explore and understand the interconnectivity of all knowledge, people, systems and the environment, and their collective relationship to how human beings have and will proceed to satisfy their needs and wants now and in the future. We place a particular emphasis on exploring Game Theory;
- Inquiry-based instruction and Socratic Questioning (Socratic Inquiry)\*: an approach to instruction that involves teaching through asking students an ongoing series of substantive questions as the primary instructional tool for developing the mastery of critical thinking, analysis and other higher order thinking skills (see researcher David Perkins; the Galileo Educational Network; CriticalThinking.org);
- Critical/Analytical/Design Thinking\*: an instructional practice that involves using and teaching the mastery of problem solving process through a "backwards" thinking framework that demands an exploration of purpose (goals

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<sup>1</sup> <http://curry.virginia.edu/research/centers/castl/class>



or needs to satisfy), perspective (impact on various stakeholders) and people (end users) (see thought leaders Tim Brown (IDEO), and Paulo Friere (Pedagogy of the Oppressed));

- Neuropedagogy\*: an approach to teaching that involves applying neuroscience research on the brain and learning as we attend to students' development and mastery of executive functioning and critical thinking skills (see researchers Richard Guare and Christopher Kaufman; National Center for Learning Disabilities); and
- Mindfulness\*: an instructional practice that involves teaching students to develop and use meditation, breathing and focused attention techniques to help cultivate and improve executive functioning skills, particularly response inhibition/emotion control, working memory and flexibility (see Association for Mindfulness in Education).
- Visualizing and Verbalizing\*—an approach to literacy based on the development of concept imagery—the ability to create an imagined or imaged gestalt from language—as a basis for comprehension and higher order thinking. The development of concept imagery improves reading and listening comprehension, memory, oral vocabulary, critical thinking, and writing (see the Lindamood-Bell research centers).

*\*Ember core foundational frameworks*

## **Assessment Tools**

We assess students (i.e. determine whether they have learned what we've taught) using the following tools:

- Bi-weekly formative assessments designed to gauge student mastery of content and skills taught during the intervening period
- Quarterly Subject Matter (ELA and Math, Science and Social Studies) Performance-Based Interim Assessments (teacher created, project centered assessments)
- Case Studies (complex narrative-based problem sets that demand in-depth logical reasoning and multi-step and interconnected quantitative analysis, strategies and computation)
- Year-end project-based assessments
- Quarterly Leadership Index qualitative observations and analysis (includes teacher and student-self assessments/surveys)
- Quarterly Executive Functioning Skills qualitative observations and analysis (includes teacher and student-self assessments/surveys)
- Quarterly Homework completion rates
- Quarterly Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA)
- Yearly State Assessments (standardized, criterion and norm referenced assessments)

Ember's teaching professionals will create the vast majority of curricular resources used to implement our common core-aligned, inquiry-based, integrated and culturally responsive curricula. These materials will be created during the summer prior to the start of the school year in an authentic process that involves the entire Ember instructional team (including learning specialists and mental health professionals from the Deans' Team). These materials integrate our Leadership Index, academic rubrics (for ELA, Math, Science and Social Studies), and our programs of inquiry, master documents that coordinate the interconnection of critical thinking skills and core academic content. We have included below samples of each of these teacher-created curricular materials to provide concrete examples of how we intend to operationalize the various instructional frameworks we will use.

Also, below are brief descriptions of several influential curricular programs from which our teaching professionals draw on to aid in the development and implementation of our inquiry-based and thinking skills integrated curriculum. Ember's teaching professionals will select similar common core-aligned texts, materials, and software, which are developmentally appropriate for students. Lead by the Partners, Ember's teaching professionals will engage in a process of developing and refining these curriculum materials.

## **English-Language Arts/Reading (K-8)**

The foundation of our literacy instruction will involve the development and practice of reading and comprehension skills from the both Visualizing and Verbalizing (V&V) approach and critical reading and analysis (CRA) applied to the exploration of authentic text. V&V asks students to practice creating mental images of what they read to build vocabulary, while CRA requires students to use questioning to develop understanding. Instruction will occur primarily in small groups with guided inquiry. Mini-lessons may be used to provide a brief introduction to specific skills each day. Guided Reading groups will be flexible by design, changing as often as necessary in order for groups to be specific enough to target needs.

Assessment practices, such as checking for reading behaviors or checking for understanding are built into this curriculum approach. In order to ensure that students are on track, Ember will administer the DRA2 a minimum of 4 times a year.

### **ELA (Reading): Specific Support for ELLs (K-8)**

The structure of our reading curriculum provides a great deal of support to our English Language Learners. During the Professional Development Lab block following the ELA-Social Studies period, students will have opportunities, through peer discussions, to apply what the teacher and students modeled. They also have an opportunity to work one-on-one, or in small groups with the Apprentice or Lead. Through these interactions, Native English speakers can provide models of language patterns for the English Language Learners in a lower-stakes setting. In addition, alternate lesson strategies (e.g. use of manipulatives, hands-on activities, sorting and classifying activities, real life examples, etc.) will be available to teachers.

### **English Language Arts: Writing (K-8)**

We want to develop students who are active, critical readers, who can convey their experiences, thoughts, and opinions both orally and in writing. In order to accomplish these goals, we draw on writing programs that:

- Teach writing as a process;
- Offer students frequent opportunities to write;
- Give students a framework through which to assess their own writing;
- Teach writing mechanics as a part of writing process;
- Emphasize the reading-writing connection; and
- Give teachers and students structured learning opportunities with flexibility to incorporate/share culturally relevant experiences.

Students are encouraged to develop writing products through several stages: prewriting, drafting, revising, editing or proofreading, and publishing. Research suggests that when writing is taught as a process, student achievement increases. Students are given the tools to evaluate their own writing by learning the six-traits model to identify strengths and weaknesses. The six-traits of good writing are 1) stimulating or interesting ideas, 2) logical organization, 3) engaging voice, 4) original word choice, 5) good sentence flow, and 6) correct writing mechanics.

### **Social Studies (K-8)**

Ember's social studies program prepares students to meet or exceed NY State standards. We will use the common core-aligned curriculum presented in the NY State Social Studies Frameworks and the NY State Common Core Curriculum. NY State teachers built the Common Core Curriculum over time, and it is complete in its coverage of the standards. We especially appreciate its interdisciplinary approach, connecting content and skills, particularly English-Language Arts. With its use of Common Core suggested content and organizing questions, our social studies curriculum highlights connections to students' cultural heritage, and encourages in-class exploration and analysis of peers, families, communities, and countries of origin. Moreover, Ember's use of the NY State Common Core Social Studies in concert with our integrated and inquiry-based approach, allows our teaching professionals to develop a plethora of resources aimed at empowering and assessing students. Through our social studies curriculum, we will deeply and strategically deploy our culturally-responsive pedagogical tools, to ensure that our students find multiple connections to their histories cultures, and futures.

### **Math (K-8)**

We believe that it is crucial for students to have strong conceptual understandings in mathematics in order to be successful in high school and college. Students must also develop strong procedural competency as math concepts become more complex. One of the tools we will use to develop teacher-created materials will be Eureka/GreatMinds, an example of common core-aligned standards based materials, which provides students with multiple pathways to a concept, from the workshop model for concept introduction to manipulatives that personalize understanding.

Eureka/GreatMinds is aligned with New York State Common Core Standards, as well as National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) standards. It consists of a series of units that use an investigative approach to developing mathematical concepts within the areas of numbers and arithmetic, geometry, data, measurement and early algebra. Envisions content and materials make it ideally suited for the Math-Science interdisciplinary period, presenting challenging yet engaging content to help students develop flexibility and confidence in solving math problems. Eureka/GreatMinds deploys its program through “investigations” and exploratory activities allowing students to explore multiple paths toward solving problems through modeling, drawing, writing and discussion.

While English will be the primary language for instruction during the STEM, we will use our sheltered English strategies to provide ELLs with supports as they acquire English language skills, as conceptual understanding in mathematics is not necessarily dependent upon fluency in English. We will also ensure that some of the STEM concepts are revisited in the Spanish class to provide our native English speakers with exposure to Spanish in core disciplines.

### **Science (K-8)**

Ember has chosen a science program that at its core develops students’ understanding of the process of inquiry, including prediction, compare and contrast, induction, deduction, etc. The Full Option Science System (FOSS) engages students in inquiry-based learning in a manner that enables students to construct an understanding of science concepts through their own investigations and analyses using laboratory equipment, student readings, and interactive technology. The FOSS materials are also closely aligns with supporting and complementary Math concepts and skills.

### **Foreign Language: Spanish (K-12)**

All students will receive instruction in Spanish four days per week for 45 minutes each day or 180 minutes total per week. Our goal is to enable our students to attain appropriate proficiency by the time they graduate from fifth grade. Deployed primarily through a combination of direct instruction and guided language lab using a digital web-based platform (e.g. Rosetta Stone), not only will students have the opportunity to learn the language, they will explore and cultivate an understanding for the various cultures of people who speak that language as their principal means of communication. Our focus on Spanish was a strategic decision because Spanish speakers not only make up a significant portion of the inner-city population in which our students live, but it is also spoken in one of the fastest growing portions of the globally economy: Central and South America. The use of the digital web-based platform and guided language lab approach also permits students who progress quickly and/or already have strong skills in Spanish to learn at least one additional language.

### **Integrated Art, Music, Health and Physical Education (K-12)**

While teachers will be required to utilize the arts, movement, etc. to enhance instruction in the core disciplines, students will explore the history, product, process and/or practice of the arts and cultural health and physical disciplines through their Arts, Health and Physical Education (PE) classes. Using the program “Blueprint for the Arts,” an evolving curricular framework aligned to the NY State standards, teachers will have a ready “blueprint” for engaging visual arts, dance, music (instrumental and choral), and theatre arts. Health will be taught in conjunction with both Science and Physical Education (as appropriate), and Family and Consumer Sciences will be taught in conjunction with Science.

### **Personalized Learning (K-12)**

In addition to the above, we will also utilize a comprehensive set of digital, web-based learning platforms to enable instructors to further differentiate and personalize learning for students. To support critical reading skills these platforms include “Ready Theory” “Flocabulary” “Reading A-Z and Raz-Kids” and “MySciLearn”. To support math skills development, these platforms include “Dreambox” “EnVisions” “iXL” and “Khan Academy”. To support foreign language skills development, these platforms include “Rosetta Stone” and “Rockalingua”. To support executive functioning and logical reasoning skills, these platforms include “MySciLearn” and “Brain-it-On”. To support instruction, we use the dynamic student response systems of “Socrative” and “ClassFlow” in concert with our smart boards, tablets and laptops.

### **Leadership: Character, Critical Thinking and Executive Functioning Skills (K-12)**

As initially discussed above, Ember will use instruction that integrates our unique Leadership Index<sup>2</sup> to continue and deepen our work and focus on developing our students' strong sense of: 1) positive self-identity as a person with full agency; 2) self-love; and 3) knowledge and practice of the habits of mind that drive an analytical mindset. Inspired in part by the University of Virginia's Classroom Assessment Scoring System<sup>3</sup> ("CLASS"), the Leadership Index is a socio-emotional, critical thinking and pro-social skills content framework and attendant rubric designed by Ember's predecessor institution Ember's teacher-leaders to be both explicitly taught and integrated into instruction across all academic and non-academic domains. By using inquiry and mindfulness practice to teach mastery of the behavior and thinking skills outlined in the Leadership Index, and integrating this instruction into and across the academic, creative and non-academic curriculum, we have been able to help students in their ongoing development and strengthening of a growth-, culturally-competent, and analytical mindset necessary to achieve ever more positive academic and social-emotional health. Through ongoing tracking and quarterly measurement of students' anecdotal progress along the developmental range from "Dormant" to "Developed" on our Leadership Index Rubrics (see example below), we court the increased student achievement outcomes discussed below by attending to our target population's oft ignored socio-emotional needs. Ember will commit at least 7.25 hours of instructional time per week to focused instruction centered on these skills.

### **Project-Based Learning (PBL) and Performance-Based Assessment (PBA) (K-12)**

Inspired by and based on the New York Performance Standard Consortium's (Consortium) learning and assessment research and frameworks, Ember will fully implement a PBL and PBA instructional infrastructure in a manner consistent with the best practices espoused by the Consortium and national PBL/PBA standard setting organizations. Currently students from the Bedford Stuyvesant and Central Brooklyn community we serve do not have an opportunity to attend a performance-based learning and assessment K-12 school in our community, limiting the options available to families here. By embracing the PBL/PBA model, Ember will replace the current normative state test-based assessment structure with the more holistic and rigorous performance-based assessment model and approach pioneered by the Consortium and other national organizations. This approach will enable us to more fully deliver on our promise to our community of at-risk, high poverty and low opportunity Black and Brown students and families to provide them with a holistic, comprehensive and K-12 university-like education across the full primary, middle and secondary education experience.

PBL/PBA enables Ember to fully embrace an instructional approach that rejects the traditional focus on content coverage and test prep, and instead embraces the authentic approach to nurturing mastery of self-efficacy, executive functioning and critical thinking skills inherent in our integrated trauma-informed, culturally responsive PBL and PBA model. In place of normative state tests, Ember will adopt and use a similar rigorous PBA system as those utilized by schools in the Consortium (described in detail here: <http://www.performanceassessment.org/how-it-works>).

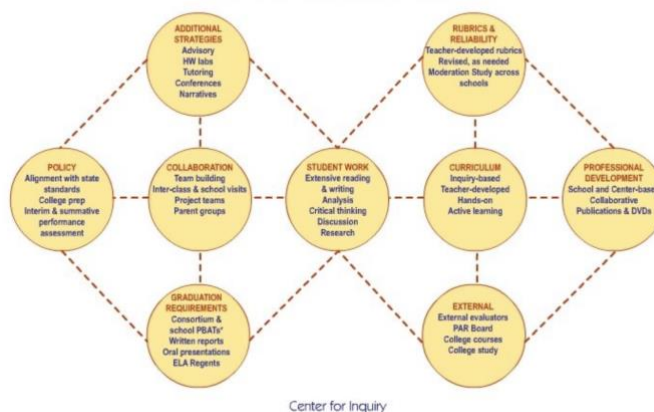
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<sup>2</sup> See above in Section I. B: Key Design Elements, p.9-11

<sup>3</sup> <http://curry.virginia.edu/research/centers/castl/class>

## New York Performance Standards Consortium

### Performance-Based Assessment System



\*Performance-based Assessment Tasks

Like those schools who are members of the Consortium, Ember will continue to require students to take and pass the ELA state exam for grades 3-8, as well as the ELA Regents for high school. For all other content areas, students will complete internally created performance-based assessments centered on projects that require conceptual fluency and integrated skills usage. We've included sample assessments and their attendant rubrics with this application.

### Essential Components of PBL/PBA Instructional Model:

- Students complete written tasks that require extensive reading, writing, and revising and are then presented orally for external evaluation. The tasks grow out of curriculum and classroom discussions and allow for student contribution and choice.
- Students must complete grade and/or graduation-level written tasks and oral presentations, known as PBATs (performance-based assessment tasks), including an analytic essay on literature, a social studies research paper, an extended or original science experiment, and problem-solving at higher levels of mathematics.
- Teachers design rubrics that integrate concepts across the curriculum and revise them as needed. They also participate in annual training and professional development sessions to help improve the efficacy of evaluating student work and assigned tasks to ensure optimal alignment to PBL/PBA best practices on an ongoing basis. Practitioners will engage in regular and extensive teacher-led professional development. Practitioners will collaborate on curriculum and rubrics, design courses that promote conceptual understanding and critical analysis, support student questioning and voice, author books and articles, annotate reading lists, and serve as mentors for each other, visiting schoolhouses, participating in PBAT presentations, and leading workshops throughout the year.

### High School Coursework (9-12)

For high school level, Ember will still implement course work that both aligns with Regent-relevant course requirements while simultaneously attending to the integrated subject and conceptual learning required by the PBL/PBA approach. To that end Ember intends to continue to model its high school curriculum on the International Baccalaureate (IB) program. We appreciate how the IB curriculum values a student's personal development as much as her cognitive development and is accessible to all students. Inquiring, knowledgeable, thinking, open-minded, communicating, caring, risk-taking, principled, balanced and reflective are all traits of the IB Learner Profile; they directly align with the mission and vision of Ember. IB programs aim to increase access to the curriculum and engagement in learning for all students, hewing closely to Ember's mission to serve all students and to our core values of mindfulness and responsible global citizenship. A recent study on Chicago Public Schools IB program showed that students, with similar demographics to those Ember intends to serve, who completed the IB program were more likely to not only enroll in college, but also to enroll in selective colleges and to stay enrolled with better performance (Coca et al, "Working to My Potential: The Postsecondary Experiences of CPS Students in the International Baccalaureate Degree Programme" *University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research* (2011)).

Students will continue to learn through the same integrated instruction approach we've used in our K-8 programs, using our well-honed interdisciplinary approach, enabling the students to learn at the intersection of knowledge and skill. Our approach will continue to empower students to exercise agency and responsibility over their own learning, growth and development by embedding student driven research into courses and assignments. Aligned with Ember's core values of strong self identity, agency and service, IB's core tenants are designed to inspire students to inquire, take action and reflect on how they can engender change in their lives and the world.

While **ALL** Ember high school students will take and receive instruction within the above course structure, students will have the option of taking whichever summative assessments (PBA, Regents, IB, AP, etc.) that fit with their post-secondary goals and trajectories and are permissible in accordance with New York State Education graduation requirements. Ember's Science, Math, Social Studies, English, Spanish, Art and Electives curriculum will all be deployed through the holistic and rigorous PBL/PBA experience for all grades. Students will also have the opportunities to pursue supervised independent study and internships. As they do for grades K-8, the high school teaching staff will ensure that the design of all course work also aligns to the New York State standards. Students will have the option to choose to pursue whatever Regents Diploma pathway that is most aligned with their post-secondary goals. The table below outlines a sample two-year course sequence and offerings.

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Ember Course Options</b>	<b>Ember Course Options</b>
Leadership/SEL	Mindfulness Practice	Mind-Up: Understanding EF Skills and the Architecture of the Brain
Spanish		
	Spanish I	Spanish II
English	Black Writers in America	Poetry in Motion: A Study of the Evolution of Hip Hop
	Language and Literature	Language and Literature 2
Math	The Geometry of the Natural World	Algebra, Finance and the Marketplace
Science	Environmental Systems and Society	Environmental Systems and Society
	The Physics of Flying Machines	Chemistry: Pandemics and Virology
Social Studies	U.S. History: 1865-Present	Game Theory
	Introduction to Economics	Introduction to Business Law
	Psychology 101	Racism and Nationalism
Art	Visual Arts	Theater
	Dance and Drumming	Photography and Video Production

## **Curriculum by Subject**

**English and Social Studies:** The English and Social Studies curriculum will be organized as a thematic interdisciplinary curriculum where students are applying skills in English with concepts in Social Studies, increasing their ability to think critically and creatively, and synthesizing knowledge beyond the disciplines. Such an interdisciplinary approach will amplify the benefits of a Humanities based model that values conceptual understanding rather than the acquisition of data and facts. This pedagogical approach has been proven successful, highlighted consistently in the graduation and college persistence outcomes at High Tech High and New Tech High, both of which exceed the national rates by over 20 percentage points.

*Engage NY:* Ember will be sure to integrate Engage NY’s ELA curriculum across the relevant content areas. Engage NY is developed and maintained by the New York State Education department.

*Cultural Relevant Literature:* all curricula material will be chosen and designed to empower our students with a strong sense of their cultural identity by ensuring that they see themselves within and thru the material and subject matter. Such an approach will help nurture citizens who are critical readers, culturally literate, and able to communicate ideas effectively for a variety of purposes and audiences. Further this will help integrate English Language Arts and Social Studies disciplines around thematic units rather than strict chronological order.

**Foundational Literacy:** all curricula will help nurture foundational reflection and inquiry skills, while the Social Studies and Science subject matter will provide the context for applying these reading, writing, and discussion skills. In addition to fiction and nonfiction texts, course-reading materials are selected from newspapers, published reports and periodicals, and primary sources such as political speeches and legal documents. Reading instruction focuses on five key principles:

1. Student engagement
2. Student independence that require little to no teacher intervention to engage students or establish basic comprehension
3. Reading strategies reinforce engagement while emphasizing independence
4. Reading strategies are most effectively taught with print materials rather than electronic formats
5. Reading groups, shared inquiry discussions, and other opportunities for peer-to-peer discussion foster deeper understanding of a text

Writing instruction focuses on three key principles:

1. Frequent writing reinforces content learning and higher order thinking while teaching communication
2. A multi-stage writing process with focus on multiple drafts and peer-editing emphasizes the attributes of good writing
3. A writer makes choices based on the interconnectedness of tone, audience, and purpose.

Current Event activities primarily are governed by four principles:

1. Knowledge of one’s community and world events is essential for developing an active sense of citizenship and empowerment.
2. Current events serve to widen students’ perspectives and sphere of awareness.
3. The application of active reading strategies, such as marking the text, is more feasible and hands-on with the use of print materials.
4. Print materials help remediate reading readiness and develop literacy skills that students may not receive without school intervention or primarily through electronic texts.



Language and Literature: these course components aims to develop skills of textual analysis and the understanding that texts, both literary and non-literary, can relate to culturally determined reading practices, and to encourage students to question the meaning generated by language and texts. An understanding of the ways in which formal elements are used to create meaning in a text is combined with an exploration of how that meaning is affected by reading practices that are culturally defined and by the circumstances of production and reception. Helping students to focus closely on the language of studied texts and to become aware of the role of wider context in shaping meaning is central to the course. The study of literature in translation from other cultures is especially important to IB DP students because it contributes to a global perspective. Texts are chosen from a variety of sources, genres and media. Language and Literature standard level course components are intended to:

- introduce students to a range of texts from different periods, styles and genres
- develop in students the ability to engage in close, detailed analysis of individual texts and make relevant connections
- develop the students' powers of expression, both in oral and written communication
- encourage students to recognize the importance of the contexts in which texts are written and received
- encourage an appreciation of the different perspectives of other

**Science:** Ember's proposed science curriculum is based on the three tenets of the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) research-based program – practicing science and engineering, understanding the relationship between the science disciplines and core disciplinary ideas and linking knowledge of science with opportunities to practice. This recently developed framework for K-12 education aims to build students proficiency and appreciation of science.

*Lab-Aid, Years 9-12:* Ember will use the Lab-Aids *Biology, Integrated Science, Earth Science and Chemistry* curriculum in the 9th- 12th grades which has been proven to be highly correlated to academic performance in Common Core Science, English/Language and mathematics (<http://www.corestandards.org/read-the-standards/>).

LabAids (also known as Science Education for Public Understanding Program) developed at the University of California Berkley takes an issues-oriented approach to scientific inquiry by thematically organizing units based on personal and societal issues providing real-world context and a framework for understanding scientific concepts ([sepuplhs.org](http://sepuplhs.org)). For example, students are asked to advise US Food and Drug and Administration office policymakers on issues such as allowing farmers to grow genetically modified corn. Learning science becomes a microcosm of current day issues and questions allowing students to see the relevance while deepening their understanding of content specific knowledge through investigation. Students also analyze research to formulate an opinion and determine the most appropriate medium to effectively communicate to their audience. When students have the opportunity to test their own developing knowledge and apply it to practical problems, they not only enhance their understanding of science but also their interest in science. We are committed to helping our students see the connections between the disciplines and how we address challenges within our society, whether or not students pursue a career in science or engineering. Science and Global Issues (Biology), Science and Sustainability (Integrated Science), and Earth Science curriculum is aligned with the New York State standards, which is in the process of adopting a framework similar to the NGSS, and the 21st Century Competencies. Research studies on the effectiveness of the program with similar populations to Ember's indicates a greater number of students enrolling in advanced level science courses ([http://sepuplhs.org/pdfs/sepup\\_research\\_summary\\_2013.pdf](http://sepuplhs.org/pdfs/sepup_research_summary_2013.pdf)). Research indicates students





were more likely to use a data driven versus theory based approach when approaching a problem and more likely to see the relevance of science in their everyday lives. We are committed to a learning space where students have the tools and resources to take an evidence-based approach to solving problems within their communities. Ember has selected the Lab-Aids and IB Science curricula because they are rigorous and challenging college preparatory curricula and Ember is enthusiastic to see students thrive in an inner-city environment with many supports.

**Math:** Great Minds' *Eureka Mathematics, Years 9-12*: Ember will continue to use the Eureka Math curriculum by Great Minds as the foundational material for our math instruction. Like ELA, Math will be integrated across the curriculum wherever it is most germane. The Eureka curricula was created by a group of education leaders who founded the non-profit Great Minds in 2008 to define and encourage content-rich comprehensive education for all American schoolchildren. In pursuit of that mission, Great Minds brought schoolteachers together in collaboration with scholars to craft exemplary instructional materials and share them with the field. Great Minds' Eureka Math curriculum has won accolades at the state and national levels, and is the only comprehensive math curriculum aligned to the Common Core State Standards at every grade. Using these materials as the foundational source for our IB instruction will enable Ember students to develop their mathematical understanding conceptually while ensuring a Common Core aligned cooperative and problem based approach where they implement, apply and practice standards multiple times across different contexts. The cooperative learning structure puts the learner at the center while the teacher provides structured guidance allowing students to authentically grapple with questions and use each other to gain understanding. Real world problems allow students to engage daily with the mathematical practices and deconstruct the mathematical process through their discourse with peers. Students should feel empowered to apply mathematical knowledge to address challenges and strengths within their communities.

We will deploy the Eureka curriculum through the International Baccalaureate Programme for Math. In particular, the IB's Math curriculum emphasizes schoolwide themes which align with Ember's interdisciplinary core value. The expectation is that Math units of study are connected to themes by simply making connections throughout the year between the content and core value. For example, during the functions unit, Ember imagines students working with a data set that is actually from their community (e.g. crime stats or train delays). NYS curriculum will build to student preparation for IB through reinforcing the NYS Standards:

- employ and refine their powers of abstraction and generalization
- communicate clearly and confidently in a variety of contexts
- develop logical, critical and creative thinking, and patience and
- persistence in problem-solving

**Language Other Than English:** While we will seek to add additional language progressions in the future, initially Ember students will continue to study Spanish and work to ensure they satisfy any NYS foreign language graduation requirements. While we certainly want our students to have a strong command of the English language both orally and written, we also want our students to have a strong foundation to support the learning of other languages. Furthermore, studies indicate that students who study a Romance language outperform their peers on college entrance exams, which are often gatekeepers blocking access to students of color (Alice DeVane, "Efficacy of Latin Studies in the Information Age" *Valdosta State University* 1997). Committed to each student accessing a high quality college education, Ember knows that learning Spanish



is a translatable skill to understanding and mastering language, in addition to providing a potential opportunity to communicate with the majority of our neighbors in the Western Hemisphere.

**Physical Education:** While Ember will continue to offer Yoga and martial arts as the cornerstone of our physical education program, we will also look to ensure we are aligning to the principles embedded in the *Physical Education for Lifelong Fitness* curriculum, a comprehensive, health-related fitness education program and resources created by the Society of Health and Physical Educators of America (SHAPE America), and the National Association of Sport and Physical Education (NASPE). *Physical Best* curriculum enables students to learn why activity is important, and how it benefits them today and for a lifetime. Emphasizing participation in a wide variety of enjoyable physical activities (traditional sports, non-traditional sports, and fitness activities), *Physical Best* promotes individual choice and making connections to real opportunities to remain active for lifelong health and wellness. Endorsed by the NYC DOE, Physical Best is Common Core and NYS Standards aligned.

**Integrated Arts:** Teachers will continue the practice of utilizing the arts, movement, etc. to enhance instruction in the core disciplines, students will explore the history, product, process and/or practice of the arts and cultural health and physical disciplines through their Arts, Health and Physical Education classes. Using the program “Blueprint for the Arts,” an evolving curricular framework aligned to the NY State standards, teachers will have a ready “blueprint” for engaging visual arts, dance, music (instrumental and choral), and theatre arts. Health will be taught in conjunction with both Science and Physical Education (as appropriate), and Family and Consumer Sciences will be taught in conjunction with Science.

While Ember plans to continue to offer high school students course work in integrated arts, students will also have the opportunity to design and pursue art-based independent study. Independent study will place an emphasis on creativity in the context of disciplined, practical research into the relevant genres. In addition, each subject is designed to foster critical, reflective and informed practice, help students understand the dynamic and changing nature of the arts, explore the diversity of arts across time, place and cultures, and express themselves with confidence and competence. Students will have an opportunity to pursue integrated and independent study across the following subjects and disciplines:

- Dance
- Music
- Film
- Theatre
- Visual arts
- Film/Media/Social Networks

### **Personalized Learning**

In addition to the above, Ember will also continue to utilize a comprehensive set of digital, web-based learning platforms to enable us to further differentiate and personalize learning for students. To support critical reading skills these platforms include “Ready Theory” “Flocabulary” and “MySciLearn”. To support math skills development, these platforms include “Dreambox” “Eureka” “iXL” and “Khan Academy”. To support foreign language skills development, these platforms



include “Rosetta Stone” and “Rockalingua”. To support executive functioning and logical reasoning skills, these platforms include “MySciLearn” and “Brain-it-On”. To support instruction, we use the dynamic student response systems of “Socrative” and “ClassFlow” in concert with our smart boards, tablets and laptops.

### **Leadership: Character, Critical Thinking and Executive Functioning Skills**

As we do for grades K-8, Ember’s high school will continue to use instruction centered on our unique Leadership Index to deepen our work and focus on developing our students’ strong sense of: 1) positive self-identity as a person with full agency; 2) self-love; and 3) knowledge and practice of the habits of mind that drive an analytical mindset. Inspired in part by the University of Virginia’s Classroom Assessment Scoring System (“CLASS”), the Leadership Index is a socio-emotional, critical thinking and pro-social skills content framework and attendant rubric designed by our teacher-leaders to be both explicitly taught and integrated into instruction across all academic and non-academic domains. By using inquiry and mindfulness practice to teach mastery of the explicit behavior and thinking skills actions outlined in the Leadership Index, and integrating this instruction into and across the academic, creative and non academic curriculum, we have been able to help students in their ongoing development and strengthening of a growth-, culturally-competent, and analytical mindset necessary to achieve ever more positive academic and social-emotional health. Through ongoing tracking and quarterly measurement of students’ anecdotal progress along the developmental range from “Dormant” to “Developed” on our Leadership Index Rubrics (see example below), we court the increased student achievement outcomes discussed herein by attending to our target population’s oft ignored socio-emotional needs. Ember will adopt and build on our current instructional practice and pedagogical approach to commit at least 7.25 hours of instructional time per week to the focused and explicit instruction centered on these skills. For high school this will take place in the context of our internally created adolescent and young adult curriculum deployed through our Uhuru Ase program.

## **Promotion Policy**

Our primary commitment to our students and families is that we pledge to engage all students in authentic learning throughout the school year. As such, our assessment of their progress through the development of the knowledge and skills we endeavor to teach shall be similarly authentic, and thus our evaluation of student progress will be focused on a student’s mastery of the Core Subjects areas **AND** Leadership Index skills and attributes. Only students who achieve “Awakened” (On-Grade Level) or higher in all Core Subject and Leadership Index areas by the conclusion of the school year are guaranteed promotion to the next grade level. Any student who does not at least achieve Awakened in each of these areas shall be at risk for retention. Our retention analysis and decisions shall be conducted on a case by case basis, and will take into account a student’s reading level, growth and/or achievement in individual core academic knowledge/skills areas, growth and/or achievement in leadership index attributes, growth and/or achievement in any IEP goals, significant social-developmental concerns, etc. While no one area is alone determinative in each case, the most important question we will seek to answer is making retention decisions is whether or not a student can access the text and work at the upcoming grade level. Under circumstances where the answer to this question is that they cannot access the text and work at the upcoming grade level, retention will be more than likely to be determined to be the best and appropriate determination for a student.

Students who accumulate 10 or more absences in a school year shall be at risk for retention.



**Middle School Promotion & Appeal Process:** students who pass only one regent exam will be able to appeal for promotion according to the criteria of the exam that they failed. If they meet the course work requirement either through proficiency on the PBA or Case Study they pass the course and can matriculate to the next grade and/or graduate as the case may be. If they do not meet the course work requirement they will need to revise the assessment work or take the regents exam again, or they will need to repeat the grade.

Grade	Subject/Course	Promotion and Appeal Requirements
8th	<p><b>Living Environment Regents</b> *20 Lab Hours <b>Algebra I Regents</b></p> <p><b>Case Study T4 (Math)</b> <b>PBA (ELA, Social Studies and Science)</b></p> <p><b>ELA State Exam</b></p>	<p>Promotion: Students must pass all courses and at least the Algebra I Regents Exam</p> <p><b>Promotion Appeal Process:</b> <u>Living Environment-</u> PBA &amp; Lab re-evaluation or retake and pass the August Living Environment Regents</p> <p><u>Algebra I:</u> Pass Case Study or retake and pass the August Algebra I Regents</p> <p><b><i>ELA/Social Studies: must pass the PBA portion for both subjects</i></b></p>
7th	<p><b>ELA Regents</b> <b>Earth Science Regents</b></p> <p><b>Case Study (T4) (Math)</b> <b>PBA (ELA, Social Studies and Science)</b></p> <p><b>Math State Exam</b></p>	<p>Promotion: Students must pass all courses and at least the ELA Regent</p> <p><b>Promotion Appeal Process:</b> <u>ELA:</u> either pass the ELA portion of the PBA or retake and pass the August ELA Regent</p> <p><u>Earth Science:</u> either pass the Science portion of the PBA or retake and pass the August Earth Science Regent</p> <p><b><i>Math/Social Studies: must pass the PBA portion for Social Studies and Case Study for Math</i></b></p>
6th	<p><b>Case Study (T4) (Math)</b> <b>PBA (ELA, Social Studies and Science)</b></p> <p><b>Math State Exam</b> <b>ELA State Exam</b></p>	<p>Promotion: Students must pass all courses</p> <p><b>Promotion Appeal Process:</b> Redo and pass all portions of the PBA for ELA, Social Studies and Science, and the Case Study for Math</p>



## **Attendance**

Attendance at school is the most basic, and most important requirement for learning. In order for students to reach for their personal best, they must show up ready to learn and make the most of school each and every day. Needless to say, regular and timely attendance is required and expected. Our curriculum is rigorous, and it is essential for students to be in attendance DAILY, and ON TIME.

***Student Attendance Tracking & Absences:*** Any day your child does not attend school is considered an absence. The school will keep records of all student absences. Student illness (with a doctor's note), a death in the family, religious holiday, are all considered absences at our school. While we still expect a call or note from a parent or doctor explaining the absence, the student is still considered and marked absent from school.

If a student misses school, a member from the Dean's Team will make reasonable efforts to contact family members by phone. Staff will explain the school's attendance policy and request the family's strong support in ensuring that the student be in school every day. This also helps ensure student safety so that no student ever gets lost and falls through the cracks. Like any educational institution we are mandated to contact the appropriate agencies when students are excessively absent.

1. Again, everyday that your child is absent, a member from the Dean's Team will be contacting a parent and/or guardian.
2. At the end of each month, if a student has missed 3 or more days of school, an attendance letter will be sent home indicating the number of days absent for the month, the students' attendance percentage for the month and Ember policy in conjunction with the DOE attendance policy.
3. If a student has missed 3 consecutive days of school and the parent/guardian had not contacted any school personnel (Teacher, Dean's Team, Partners or Ops), a member of the Dean's Team will conduct a home visit.

***Never Miss School for Appointments:*** Family members should schedule medical and dental appointments outside of school time (Fridays are particularly good under our schedule since we dismiss at 12:30pm every Friday). In the rare case when a student has a medical appointment during school, s/he should not be absent for the entire school day.

***Early Dismissal:*** Students are expected to stay in school until the very end of the day (4:00 pm). Early pickups are disruptive to the learning environment. Since we are intently focused on academic and character development toward excellence, we will not release students prior to the end of the school day without prior notification. Unless in cases of a true emergency, the school will not disrupt classes to get a student early, and students will not be allowed to leave until the end of the school day. Parents will need to wait until the end of the full school day to pick up students. Parents should wait outside the school building (Lewis Avenue side) until the doors open for 4:00pm (12:30pm Fridays) dismissal.

***Vacations.*** In order for us to accomplish our mission and prepare every student for success, they must first come to school everyday, ready to learn. This is not possible when they are often absent, or will be out of school for long periods of time. Thus it is our policy that it is not acceptable for a family to take a child on a vacation, etc. during the school year.

### ***Exams and Quizzes***

If a student is absent, he or she must make up any exams, quizzes, interim assessments, or other tests in a timely manner upon their return.



## **Pick-Up/Drop-off Policies and Procedures**

### **Morning Drop-Off Location: Lewis Avenue Side Entrance**

Students who do not ride the school bus are expected to be dropped-off to school on time every day. Doors on the Lewis Avenue side of the building will open promptly at 7:45am and will close by 7:55 am each day. Each student must be dropped off at the door by a grown up directly to a school staff member at the door, where you will be greeted with “Habari Gani!” or “Hetep”. Students will be monitored on their way up stairs to the third floor where they will go directly to their teachers in their classrooms. We take the safety of our students very seriously and these steps will ensure that no student ever gets lost on the way to school.

Students who arrive via the school bus, will be escorted off the bus and into the building by a school staff member. Attendance will be taken before students exit the bus. Each day students who ride the bus must have an approved adult take the child directly to the bus stop and put them on when it arrives. Students will not be permitted to enter the bus on their own. Buses are permitted a window of 30 minutes to be late or early to each bus stop, so we ask parents/guardians to always err on the side of caution and arrive early to your child’s assigned bus stop.

### ***Tardy Arrivals***

Definition of Tardy: Our doors open at 7:45 A.M. each morning. Students must arrive between 7:45AM and 7:55AM. Students arriving after 7:55AM are considered tardy. In cases when a school bus arrives late, those students arriving on that bus are not considered tardy.

It is extremely important that students arrive to school on time every day, ready to learn. Our day begins with a focus on literacy and leadership development, two of the biggest drivers for academic success and achievement. Students who are chronically late (or worse, absent) will routinely miss out on this critical instructional period. Please do your best to ensure that your child makes it to school on time and ready to learn every day.

Students who arrive after 8:00 am will be officially “tardy” and will need a authorized grown-up to bring them up to our school’s section of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor. At this point they will need to use the main Quincy Street entrance, and will need to present a proper ID before being permitted to continue up to our school’s section of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor. Under no circumstances will the grown up be allowed to simply drop off the student at the main entrance at the security desk—the grown up will need to sign in at the main entrance and then bring the student up to our main office on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, where they will then sign our Tardy Log. This is the best way to ensure that all of our students arrive to us safely.

After dropping off a student, grown-ups will need to exit from the floor and the building directly. It is absolutely unacceptable and unauthorized for a grown up to go to any other area of the building without first checking in with security back at the security desk on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor. We understand that many of our families are alumni of PS308 and thus might feel the inclination to take an spur-of-the-moment tour of the building; however it is critically important that we advise against that as failure to follow this policy could result in a trespass violation and expose the grown up to criminal proceedings.

### ***Afternoon Pick-up***

Students who are picked-up by their parents or another authorized grown-up after school are expected to be picked up promptly at the end of the school day; pick up will happen directly from their child’s classroom on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor. Grown-ups





will use the Lewis Avenue entrance and will need to bring a valid ID to sign in in order to be authorized to continue up to our part of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor to pick up their child from their classroom. Our staff will be on hand to direct you. Doors on the Lewis Avenue side of the building will open promptly 4:15 pm Monday thru Thursday (12:30 pm Fridays).

At the classroom, grown-ups will enter in an orderly manner and check in with the classroom teachers to sign out their student. Again, we take student safety very seriously, and will only release students to grown-ups for whom we have written authorization on our Pick-up/Drop-off Authorization Form. Parents/Guardians should keep this list up to date with the main office.

In emergency situations where a parent/guardian cannot physically come into school to complete an updated Pick-up/Drop-off Authorization Form, parents will be allowed to email or fax in written authorization to the office. Only in the most extreme and urgent circumstances will parents/guardians be permitted to give such permission by phone, and even then they will be required to follow up and provide subsequent written authorization within 24 hours.

After picking up a student from their classroom, grown-ups will need to exit from the floor and the building directly. It is absolutely unacceptable and unauthorized for a grown up to go to any other area of the building without first checking in with security back at the security desk on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor. We understand that many of our families are alumni of PS308 and thus might feel the inclination to take an spur-of-the-moment tour of the building; however it is critically important that we advise against that as failure to follow this policy could result in a trespass violation and expose the grown up to criminal proceedings.

Each day students who ride the bus must have an approved adult meet the child directly at the bus stop when it arrives. Students will not be permitted to exit the bus on their own. Buses are permitted a window of 30 minutes to be late or early to each bus stop, so we ask parents to always err on the side of caution and arrive early to your child's assigned bus stop.

### ***Late Pick-ups***

We take late pickups seriously (all afternoon pick-ups that occur after 4:30pm will be considered late pick-ups). We are not a daycare facility, and when parents come late to pick up their children (or are not at the bus stop at the specified time), it makes the job of our already very hard-working teachers even harder. The school will log late pick-ups daily. Parents of students who have three or more late pick-ups in a trimester or six or more in a year may be required to have an in-person meeting with the Dean of Students. Students with excessive late pick-ups will be required to meet with the Partners Council and may lose out on the opportunity to participate in certain activities or exercise certain privileges. In general, late pickups are treated like tardies for awards, privileges, etc. An excessive and egregious pattern of late pick-ups may indicate abuse and neglect of the student and the school may have no choice but to engage its mandated reporting function to the appropriate social service agencies.

### ***Early Dismissal***

While it is critically important that students come to school on time and remain through until the end of the school day, we understand that from time to time there will be circumstances where a student needs to be picked up early. In such circumstances, families must call the main office prior to 11:00 am to notify us and arrange for the specific time for pick-up. No early dismissals will be permitted after 3:00pm.



Only authorized grown-ups will be allowed to pick-up students. When arriving to pick-up students, grown-ups will need to enter through the main Quincy Street entrance, present a proper ID and sign in at security. Grown-ups will then need to sign-out their student in the Early Dismissal log in the school main office or welcome desk on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor. Grown-ups will wait in the waiting area near the main office while a school staff member goes to the classroom to bring the student up to meet the grown-up.

***Updated Contact and Pick-up/Drop-off Authorization Information.***

It is very important that we have the most up to date contact information for you and the emergency contacts you've listed in your student's file. Please provide all updates in writing to the main office.

***Walking-Commuting Authorization***

***After much reflection, we have made the decision that 5<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> grade students will be allowed to commute to and from school on their own if they have authorization. Please note, this DOES NOT mean that your 5<sup>th</sup> - 7<sup>th</sup> grader can pick up and sign out their younger siblings or family members; students in grades K-4 will still need to be signed out by an adult or mature adolescent (15 years old or older) who is on the emergency contact form.***

***In order to authorize your student to commute on her/his own, please sign the safety pledge and authorization form at the end of the handbook. Please contact your student's teachers or dean team member if you have any questions or concerns.***

## **Communications**

Family members are our partners in supporting students toward excellence. In order to be effective partners, we must communicate well, and often. The school's main number is 718-285-3787; our email address is [info@embercs.org](mailto:info@embercs.org).

We will often send announcement or make important communications via phone calls, notes home through your child's take home folder. If you would like to visit your child's classroom, meet with a teacher, Operations staff member, or Dean of Students please arrange a time and date with that person directly. If you would like to meet with one or more of the Partners, you can either contact the Dean of Students or reach out to one of the Partners directly. If you are having trouble arranging a meeting time or date with anyone, please alert the Dean of Students by phone or in writing.

***"One-Call-Now"***

From time to time, we will utilize our automated calling system ("One-Call Now") to send group messages to families. When "One-Call" makes the call, the school's phone number will show up on your phone; when you answer you will hear a message that begins, "This is a message from Ember Charter School ..."

"One-Call" is a very useful way for us to get information to many families all at once and very quickly. For example, if a particular school bus is running behind schedule, we will send a message to contacts for students who ride that bus informing them of the delay. We will also use this service to inform families of school-wide events and announcements, from family-teacher report card conferences to Parents Council meeting days and times.





To the extent you want to remove a particular number from the “One-Call” automated system, you will be prompted to do so after a “One-Call” message has played. You may also contact the main office to request that a particular number be removed from the “One-Call” system (though keep in mind that at least one working contact number must be kept and updated for each student).

## **Nursing Services and Medication**

There are nursing services on site in both buildings where we are located. However, it is always best to have your doctor or health center look into any medical problem that your child is experiencing. The nurse is responsible for checking all health records to be certain that each student is properly immunized. If your child requires medication during the school day, either the school nurse or a first-aid certified staff member can assist in the administration of basic medication. However, medication cannot be administered without a completed 504 Form and the completion of the related “Administration of Medication” form required by the Department of Health. This applies to all medication, prescription and non-prescription.

### **Required Immunizations**

Except on authorized and approved religious grounds, all parents/guardians are required to provide written confirmation of compliance with the following immunizations for their student. Students for whom this information is not submitted by the first day of school can be excluded from attending school until these records have been submitted.

## **Student File Requirements**

All students are required to have the following information and documentation in their student files:

- Application Form (signed)
- Acceptance Form (signed)
- Birth certificate
- Proof of Address
- Immunization Records (completed and up to date)
- DOE Medical/Physical Examination Form
- 504 Form (for students with chronic conditions like asthma, diabetes, etc.) (if applicable)
- Emergency Contact Information (updated)
- New Student Questionnaire Form
- Pick-up/Drop-off Authorization Form (updated)
- Permissions Form (Field Trip, Community Directory, and Records Release)
- Home Language Questionnaire
- Receipt for Family Handbook (signed)
- Residency Questionnaire





## Student Transportation

### School Bus Transportation

Busing to and from Ember is provided by the NYC Department of Education. The Department of Education will generally provide busing for any student who lives between .5 miles and 3 miles from Ember (though these guidelines change for students as they get older).

- Our expectations for behavior on the bus are consistent with our expectations at school. Students who break with community expectations will face consequences, including being suspended from the bus and the potential of being expelled from the opportunity to ride the bus.
- If an adult caregiver/parent is late picking up a student **more than twice** during the school year, the student may be suspended from riding the school bus for the remainder of the school year. All such determinations shall be made in the context of the due process afforded to all students and as described under the “**Serious, Highly Disruptive or Unsafe Behaviors**” section outlined above.
- **All bus changes must be made by 2pm (Monday-Thursday), and by 10am on Fridays.**
- Each student is assigned only one designated bus stop. We will not permit or approve daily changes to their assigned bus stop.
- If a student exhibits any unsafe or dangerous behavior (including, but not limited to taking off their seat belts, getting out of their seats, throwing objects, hitting, disrupting the bus driver in any way, etc.), that student may be suspended from the bus.
- Three or more bus suspensions in a school year may be grounds for expulsion from the bus.

The Dean’s and Operations Team staff are the initial points of contact for any behavioral issues that occur on the school bus, making all such reports to the Dean. The Dean informs the Partners of all significant behavioral matters from the school bus. Under most circumstances the Dean will make the determination of whether to contact parents. When serious incidents occur, or there is a consistent pattern of a student’s unsafe choices, the Dean may determine whether a student may be suspended from the bus. Please note that under no circumstances will Ember make a determination to impermissibly restrict an IEP students access to mandated SPED bus services.

### Missing the Bus

Missing the bus is not an acceptable reason to miss an entire school day. Although students shouldn’t miss the bus, each student should have a back-up plan for getting to school. Families should call the school immediately after the student misses the bus so that the school knows the situation and can help problem-solve.

### Bus Complaints

Our school does not manage or control the school bus service—the contract with the bus company is managed and supervised by the NYC Department of Education, and as such, complaints about late pick-ups, drop-offs, driver behavior, bus conditions, etc. should be reported to both the main office at Ember and the NYC Dept of Education’s Office of Pupil Transportation. Their customer hotline number is 718-392-8855. When you call this number you will need to provide the Ember “OPT number” which is “84K406”.



## **School Closings**

In cases of inclement weather conditions (snow, tornado, etc.), public safety threat, etc., Ember will follow the NYC Department of Education closing announcements for its building. Please listen to local radio and television stations. If New York City announces a delayed opening or a closing for its school buildings; Ember will also be delayed or closed along the same conditions.

## **School Food**

### **School Lunch Program**

Both breakfast and lunch are available at Ember. Breakfast, Lunch and Snack will all be provided by Red Rabbit. Red Rabbit delivers healthy, made from scratch meals, daily. Each day students will be provided with fresh fruit or healthy snack. All families will need to complete our school lunch form. If this form is not completed, the school may not receive funding for our school food program.

Breakfast, Lunch and Snack will be provided to ALL of our students at NO COST.

**In order for us to continue to provide this healthy option to our students at no cost to our families, we need all families to fill out the Free/Reduced Lunch Application.**

If you do choose to send your child with lunch, please keep in mind that we will not be able to refrigerate or heat your child's lunch. We also ask that you heed our Healthy Foods policy when it comes to preparing your child's lunch, and that you send only nutritious foods. Processed junk food is strictly prohibited—any such items (cookies, donuts, candy bars, chips, etc.) will be sent back home.

All students will have at least one healthy snack provided to them in their classroom daily by our school. Please make sure to let your child's teacher know if your child has any food allergies.

Families are also free to send a snack with their child if they like—however the snack still needs to comply with our Healthy Snack policy and consist 100% of real food, etc., like fresh fruits, vegetables, 100% fruit juice (not "fruit drink"), or Water (of course!). All unauthorized snacks will be returned home with the student unopened.

### **Healthy Food and Snacks Program**

All students will have at least one healthy snack provided to them in their classroom daily by our school. Please make sure to let your child's teacher know if your child has any food allergies as fruit and vegetables change regularly to ensure students are getting the freshest, healthiest snacks possible. Some student favorites include apples, strawberries, carrot/celery sticks, pineapple, etc.

Families are also free to send a snack with their child if they like—however the snack still needs to comply with our Healthy Snack policy and consist 100% of real food, etc., like fresh fruits, vegetables, 100% fruit juice (not "fruit drink"), or Water (of course!). All unauthorized snacks will be returned home with the student unopened.



## Uniforms

All students must come to school in Ember's uniform **every day, Monday through Friday**. If a student arrives to school out of uniform, the family will be called and asked to bring in a uniform. We have a required school uniform for several very important reasons:

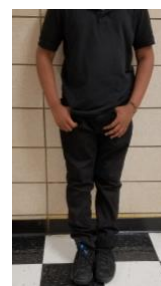
- 1) Uniforms unite us as a community.
- 2) Uniforms reduce distractions and clothing competition.
- 3) Uniforms make us all equal.
- 4) Uniforms make a statement about school being a very important and special place.



### *Uniform Guidelines (School Year 2018-2019)*

Our uniform will consist of the following:

1. Khaki pants/shorts/skort (Khaki-colored only; see attached picture for specific color; any brand is acceptable); **Middle school students only** have the option to wear black pants/ shorts/ skorts).
2. Black or Gold Polo Shirt (see picture for specific color; any brand is acceptable);
3. Black **sneakers** (see picture for specific color; any brand is acceptable).
4. In cool weather students have the option to wear a V-Neck sweater or a hoodie. Sweaters and/or hoodies must be Black or gold. (Any brand is acceptable).



All students should wear black sneakers every day; students may not change shoes for recess or physical education. The uniform must be worn every day, regardless of weather, unless parents and students have been advised otherwise in writing. Any student not wearing a uniform will be changed into whatever uniform we have available.

### Extra Clothes

All kindergarten and first grade students must have a clean set of clothes at school (with this age group, it is always better to be prepared for bathroom accidents). Please bring the following on the first day of school: underwear, socks, uniform pants/shorts/skort, and a black or Yellow-Gold polo shirt (see uniform pictures above). All clothes must have the scholar's name in the tag, and placed inside of a ziploc bag, also with the child's name on it. This change of clothes will be kept in each student's cubby.

### Cell Phone Policy

We understand that some families may want their children to travel to and from school with a cellular phone. When students arrive at school their cell phones should be secured and away. If a student is seen accessing their phone or other



communication device without authorization from a staff member (including during lunch and recess) it will be confiscated and only returned to a parent or guardian. In the situation of an emergency a staff member will make any necessary calls.

## **Photo Opt-Out Procedures**

For families who do not wish their children to be included in school photos, please see the main office for a “Photo Opt-Out Form”.

## **Hours of Operation**

School operates from 7:45 am to 4:15 pm Monday through Thursday. School is dismissed at 12:30pm every Friday so that teachers have time to meet, plan, and receive training. This weekly staff development time is critically important and helps us to improve our skills as teachers and the school program as a whole.

## **Non-Academic Materials**

Students should not bring to school anything unrelated to school. If a teacher or staff members sees a student with unauthorized, non-academic material, the item will be taken (“second chances” or warnings will not be given) and given to the item to the main office staff with a note saying which student had the item, what staff member took it, and the date it was taken. The main office staff will label items and keep them in a locked area. To get the item back, a parent will need to come to the office to pick it up during the hours of 8:00 AM to 4:15 PM. Items will not be returned directly to students.





## Student Self-Commuting

Peace Ember Charter Families,

We are excited about how much our children have developed and will continue to develop this school year. After much reflection, we have made the decision that 5th – 7th grade students will be allowed to commute to and from school on their own if they have authorization. Please note, this DOES NOT mean that your 5th - 7th grader can pick up and sign out their younger siblings or family members; students in grades K-4 will still need to be signed out by an adult or mature adolescent (15 years old or older) who is on the emergency contact form.

In order to authorize your student to commute on her/his own, please take and sign the below safety pledge and authorization form. Please contact your student’s teachers or Sister Nutakor (917.568.5572) if you have any questions or concerns.

Please tear below and return to school.

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I \_\_\_\_\_, authorize my child \_\_\_\_\_ to commute to and from school independently. I pledge to make every effort to ensure that my child comes directly to school and makes no other stops along the way. I pledge that I will communicate with my child about travelling to and from school safely on their own, including and especially to be wary of strangers, negative interactions with the police or law enforcement, and any other potentially dangerous circumstances. I also pledge to communicate the importance of carrying oneself in such a way that reflects the best of the values of my family, and the principles and leadership expectations of Ember Charter School to my child. I pledge to ensure that my child has any and all emergency contact numbers and information for me as well as their teachers and staff at Ember Charter School. Finally, I acknowledge that if my child is not conducting themselves in accordance with the principles and leadership expectations of Ember Charter School, my child can lose this privilege and will be required to be escorted to and from school by an adult.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



[CALENDER]

Attitudes	Reflective	Self-confidence	Empathy: Respectful communication & interaction	Focused	Inquirer Explorer	Principled
Framework	1-Cultural Relevance	2-Verbalization	3-Visualization	4-Mindfulness/Integration	5-Inquiry	6-Neuropedagogy/Econ. Rel.
Symbol	Sankofa: Adinkra symbol of a bird 'go back and take' (Sankofa go back, fa take)  Associated Akan proverb, "Se we were fira wosanjofo a jensky," which translates "It is not wrong to go back for that which you have forgotten."	Tama: Talking Drum 	Banyan Tree 	Djed: The Spine as Energy Center 	Her-em-akhet: Sphinx 	 Feather/heart on Scales of Ma'at: Method for weighing souls after death
Symbolic Meaning	Importance of Learning from the past	Own and wield one's Word-Sound-Power	Divided we fall, together we stand, just as roots support a tree	Facility in accessing one's Mind-Body Connection	Human head, animal body, ability to control one's nature as well as call on its power	Maintaining morality leaves one's heart light as a feather
Kemetic Concept	Memory	Syllabic-logic	Connection	Self-control	Experimentation	Integrity
Character/Leadership Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>develop Point of View: express points of views about likes/dislikes</li> <li>express more conflicting thoughts and feelings.</li> <li>courtesy/civility-forgiveness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>develop positive self image, differentiate and compare points of view,</li> <li>explore identity components</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>learn to take different points of view, appreciate diversity, friendship,</li> <li>creativity-artistic expression</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>connect situations-actions-emotions, control emotions,</li> <li>self-motivation,</li> <li>explore ways to deescalate conflicts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>seek understanding of the use of power in society,</li> <li>seek to practice and advocate for about civil/human rights</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>respect for the environment,</li> <li>sense of equality-fairness,</li> <li>explore ways to take action against social injustice,</li> <li>explore responsibilities of group membership</li> </ul>
Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>identifies mistakes, listens without interrupting,</li> <li>repeat accurately what they previously heard (instructions from teacher, what a fellow student said, etc.),</li> <li>recall and describe accurately what they previously did,</li> <li>recall and describe accurately what they previously observed,</li> <li>accurately reenact previous action performed or observed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>uses phrases like, "I will try," "I can...," expresses pride in self,</li> <li>family,</li> <li>community and cultural heritage,</li> <li>greet others with confidence,</li> <li>makes eye contact when speaking and listening,</li> <li>projects voice,</li> <li>firm posture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>shares personal feelings and opinions with others,</li> <li>positively comments or affirms the feelings and opinions of others in the schoolhouse,</li> <li>shares and expresses support for another's ideas, perspectives, opinions within schoolhouse,</li> <li>takes turns,</li> <li>makes space for others to participate in conversation,</li> <li>participates enthusiastically in class discussions,</li> <li>uses words like friend, brother, sister, and connecting phrases,</li> <li>expresses gratitude for the participation, help, support of others,</li> <li>being positive, affirming and supportive of others,</li> <li>acts as peacemaker</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>takes responsibility for actions and choices,</li> <li>uses choice language like "I chose to...I am stomaching",</li> <li>uses connecting phrases,</li> <li>identifies disconnecting behaviors and words in themselves and used by others,</li> <li>uses breathing techniques to calm, soothe, and regulate emotions,</li> <li>exhibits actions highlighted in other spheres of the leadership index,</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>takes risks,</li> <li>attempts and perseveres during challenging tasks,</li> <li>observes, listens to and analyzes others points of view and experiences,</li> <li>identify and explore multiple ways of overcoming obstacles,</li> <li>asks questions for clarity and understanding,</li> <li>expresses alternative viewpoints and ideas,</li> <li>uses tools and process for collecting data</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>tells the truth in spite of potential consequences,</li> <li>makes choices that are fair,</li> <li>keeps promises,</li> <li>serves/generous with others,</li> <li>resolves conflicts peacefully,</li> <li>"reflect, choose, act",</li> <li>does the right thing even when no one is looking,</li> <li>makes choices that show honor,</li> <li>apologizes and forgives others,</li> </ul>
TransD Skills	observing, listening, remembering, comprehension	affirming self expression, expresses pride in self and capacity	respecting the opinions and views of others, developing and maintaining friendships, developing positive relationships with others, confidently sharing one's viewpoint and traditions with others	choosing positive behavior or strategy, visualizing Quality world, gross/fine motor skills, breathing/control of tension, practice connecting behaviors	analysis, scientific method, courage, imagination, predicting, comparing contrasting, cause and effect, problem solving	synthesis, Codes of conduct, mediating and resolving conflict, reflection and forecasting
TransD Theme	Where are we in place and time?	Who are we?	How do we express ourselves?	How do we regulate our behavior?	How does the world work?	How do we share our world?
Knowledge: Dominant Thought Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Memory/reflection on specific actions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Knowledge of personal, family, and community culture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Affirming positive relationships</li> <li>Congregative thinking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The only behavior we can control is our own (the only person who can make you do anything is you);</li> <li>Every action/behavior comes from a choice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Infinite potential and capacity of the mind,</li> <li>Questions,</li> <li>Failure and mistakes are necessary for learning and growth,</li> <li>The experience of others is a source for learning and growth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Our thoughts, words, and actions have an impact on the feelings of ourselves and others,</li> <li>Your character manifests whether or not others are around,</li> <li>Positive leaders have "good character"; character is defined by how we treat ourselves &amp; others, our school-house, community, &amp; planet</li> </ul>
Leadership Profile: "Kid Language"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shows sensitivity towards the needs and feelings of others.</li> <li>Reflects on personal thoughts and choices.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Knowledgeable of themes that have global relevance.</li> <li>Knows and expresses confidence in self and personal/cultural history.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Respects the views, values, and traditions of other cultures.</li> <li>Considers a range of point of views.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understands the importance of physical and mental balance and well-being</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approaches unfamiliar situations with courage and has the independence to explore new ideas and strategies.</li> <li>Defends beliefs in actions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has a sound grasp of the principles of moral reasoning.</li> <li>Has integrity and honesty.</li> </ul>