The School at Columbia University Family Handbook 2015–16
Information in this handbook is intended solely for the use of individuals and entities directly associated with The School at Columbia University. Unless authorized by The School, disclosing, copying, or distributing information contained in this handbook is strictly prohibited. The School reserves the right to change, add or remove information contained in this handbook at any time at The School’s discretion.
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About The School at Columbia University

2015-16: The Year of Innovation
Each year, The School selects one of its four core values—Community, Collaboration, Diversity and Innovation—to be the year’s theme, and 2015-16 will be the Year of Innovation. We identify innovation as taking thoughtful risks grounded in current research, putting new technologies to work in classrooms, and always seeking new approaches to learning to provide a meaningful 21st-century education to all students. We are an energetic community that consistently strives to learn, to do, to make, to solve, to explore, to educate, to reflect, and to grow in exciting and innovative ways. It is this spirit that will drive the projects and ideas of our upcoming school year together.

Mission
At The School at Columbia University, we work with a dynamic and diverse community drawn equally from the families of University employees and from the local community. We dedicate ourselves to fostering in our students personal resourcefulness and integrity, a sense of social responsibility, and a lifelong appreciation of learning through an innovative, socially and emotionally supportive, and academically challenging program. Our pedagogical and curricular philosophies embrace multicultural perspectives, which challenge educators and learners to examine their preconceived notions of race, gender, ethnicity, class, ability, religion, and sexual orientation. We adhere to a common code of civility among all constituents. We tailor our instruction so that the needs of the individual students are met. A committed faculty and administration strive to create a school that will stand as a model for what K-8 education can be, and serve as a genuine and enduring partnership between Columbia University and its neighbors.

Core Purposes:
• To serve as a cornerstone of Columbia University’s recruitment and retention strategy by offering a high-quality schooling option for families employed by the University
• To serve the neighborhood by offering a compelling educational alternative to local public and private K-8 schools
• To serve as a laboratory and model for innovative curriculum and pedagogy, supported by ongoing research and application of best practices

Core Beliefs:
• That preparing children to succeed in the 21st century necessitates an integrated, inquiry-driven approach to learning
• That all students benefit from learning to participate in a diverse school community
• That students learn in different ways, and that it is The School’s responsibility to support these learning differences
• That developing a passion for learning in our students requires a faculty that is passionate about teaching and dedicated to our collective mission
• That a safe, nurturing environment promotes student achievement
• That collaboration among all constituents is key to successful integration and program design
• That curriculum must focus not only on academic competencies, but also on issues related to self-exploration, identity, equity, interrelationships, and community involvement
• That our diversity can sometimes lead to conflict, but can also lead to learning, growth, and respectful understanding

Core Strategies:
• To explore effective collaborations with Columbia University’s departments, faculty and staff
• To employ a lottery-based, need-blind system for admitting students from the community to maintain need-blind admissions
• To look for opportunities to conduct research on what we are doing that is innovative, and to then bring the results of that research to the wider community
• To recruit and retain an outstanding faculty
• To have faculty work as members of grade-level teams rather than in isolated departments
• To find ways in which to promote collaboration among and between families
• To promote meaningful professional development and a professional culture at The School
• To promote reflection and personal growth for students and faculty by regular goal setting
• To be a leader in the integration of digital technology in the classroom
• To create a culture of common purpose, collaboration and widespread participation in decision-making
• To attend to the ongoing evaluation and assessment of our program
• To maintain open and continuous dialogue between all members of the community, including parents and students
Key Staff Contacts

The School at Columbia University
212-851-4215
212-851-4270 (fax)
www.theschool.columbia.edu

Attendance Hotline: 212-851-4201
Athletics Hotline: 212-851-4228
Student Health Office: 212-851-4408

Head of School
Amani Reed

Division Directors
Families should please communicate any questions about their child through the child’s Division Director.

Primary Division (Grades K-2)
Kathryn Kaiser
212-851-4273
kkaiser@theschool.columbia.edu

Intermediate Division (3-5)
Kevin Fittinghoff
212-851-4217
kfittinghoff@theschool.columbia.edu

Middle Division (6-8)
Belinda Nicholson
212-851-2703
bnicholson@theschool.columbia.edu

Administrative Coordinator to Division Directors
Grace Rodriguez-McNulty
212-851-4285
grodriguez@theschool.columbia.edu

Admissions Office
Families should please direct any questions regarding contracts, enrollment, sibling admissions, and leaves from school to the Admissions Office.

General Inquiries: admissions@theschool.columbia.edu

Rekha Puri, Director of Admissions and Enrollment
212-851-4220
rpuri@theschool.columbia.edu

Dana Greebel, Admissions Associate
212-851-4216
dgreebel@theschool.columbia.edu

Rebecca Litvin, Admissions Coordinator
212-851-4162
rlitvin@theschool.columbia.edu

After School Program (ASP) and External Programs Office
General Inquiries: asp@theschool.columbia.edu

Katy Saintil, Director of External Programs
212-851-2719
ksaintil@theschool.columbia.edu

Marla Powell, Assistant Director of External Programs
212-851-0733
mpowell@theschool.columbia.edu

Athletics Office
Athletics Hotline: 212-851-4228
Frank Colantuono, Athletics Director
212-851-4038
fcolantuono@theschool.columbia.edu
**Business and Financial Aid Office**  
*Families should please direct any questions regarding tuition, billing, payments and financial aid to the Business and Financial Aid Office.*  

General Inquiries: billingteam@theschool.columbia.edu

Etolia Fisher, Director of Finance and Budget  
212-851-4235  
efisher@theschool.columbia.edu

David Cornwell, Business Manager  
212-851-4176  
dcornwell@theschool.columbia.edu

Joseph Miller, Financial Assistant  
212-851-4054  
jmiller@theschool.columbia.edu

**Communications Office**  
General Inquiries: communications@theschool.columbia.edu

Miriam Beyer, Communications and Community Liaison  
212-851-4204  
mbeyer@theschool.columbia.edu

**High School Placement Office**  
General Inquiries: hsp@theschool.columbia.edu

Fitima Pelaez, High School Placement Manager  
212-851-4055  
fpelaez@theschool.columbia.edu

**Parents Association**  
pa@theschool.columbia.edu

**Public Safety Office**  
General Inquiries: security@theschool.columbia.edu

Ron Hurley, Director of Public Safety  
212-851-4299 (front desk in Lobby)  
rhurley@theschool.columbia.edu

**Social Work Office**  
Tanya Suarez, School Social Worker  
212-851-4269  
tsuarez@theschool.columbia.edu

**Student Affairs Office**  
*Families should please direct any information or questions regarding attendance, dismissal changes, self-dismiss forms, student transportation, student contact information updates, and requests for letters of verification to the Student Affairs Office.*

Attendance Hotline: 212-851-4201

Yvelisse Viera, Student Affairs Coordinator  
212-851-4288  
yviera@theschool.columbia.edu

**Student Health Office**  
8 am to 5:30 pm  
212-851-4210 (fax)

Hilde Darre, R.N., School Nurse  
212-851-4408  
hdarre@theschool.columbia.edu

Connie Rubenstein, R.N., School Nurse  
212-851-4272  
crubenstein@theschool.columbia.edu

Samuel L. Seward, Jr., M.D., FAAP, FACP  
Associate Vice President and Medical Director, Columbia Health  
Associate Professor of Medicine at CUMC  
(Appplied Health Care/Public Health Sciences)  
Medical Director, The School at Columbia University  
212-854-3187  
212-854-8975 (assistant’s phone)  
212-854-3654 (fax)  
sls2109@columbia.edu  
www.health.columbia.edu

**Technology Office**  
Pablo Zatz, Director of Technology  
212-851-4292  
pzatz@theschool.columbia.edu
Key Policies and Procedures

Arrival
The building opens at 7:30 am, and students and families may enjoy breakfast in The School’s Main Cafe. The Main Cafe and adjoining Patio remain open for adults until 9:15 am. Adults must clean up thoroughly after themselves and leave promptly by 9:15 am, so cafe staff can prepare the spaces for lunch. Adults are not permitted anywhere in the school building after 9:15 am until dismissal, unless authorized for a teacher/staff meeting or visit.

Kindergarten: Students may go to classrooms starting at 8:25 am; class begins at 8:30 am.

Grades 1–8: Students may go to classrooms starting at 8 am; class begins promptly at 8:15 am.

Late Arrivals
A late pass is given to any child who arrives at The School entrance after 8:15 am (8:30 am in Kindergarten) by the Public Safety team. The late pass allows a child who was marked absent in the classroom to have his/her attendance corrected in the database. Additionally, any student who arrives in the classroom after 8:15 am (8:30 am in Kindergarten) is considered late regardless of whether they received a late pass from Public Safety. Families that are late must send children directly to classrooms from the Lobby and may not accompany them; Division Directors and/or teachers and staff will be called if students need help getting to classrooms. Adults may not be anywhere in The School except the Main Cafe, Patio, North or South Dining Room when classes begin.

In the Middle Division, late arrivals to each class throughout the day are recorded. Middle Division students will serve detention for five (5) or more late arrivals.

On occasion, the Head of School will excuse late arrivals for system-wide public transportation problems and in cases of extreme weather.

In cases where a student is late more than 10% of the year (more than 16 late arrivals, excused or unexcused), that student may not be eligible for reenrollment, regardless of whether a contract was issued. In cases where a student is late more than 20% of the year (more than 32 late arrivals, excused or unexcused), his or her ability to remain enrolled as a current student at The School will be in jeopardy, and the Division Director and Head of School will meet with the family to determine how best to proceed.

Dismissal
Kindergarten: Dismissal is at 3 pm from classrooms.

Grades 1–8: Dismissal is at 3:30 pm from the MPR on the second floor. For the safety of all students, adults may not arrange alternative dismissal meeting spots.

Grades 5–8: Students with permission to self-dismiss check out with the Public Safety team in the Lobby as they leave the building. Students with permission to self-dismiss may not self-dismiss before regular dismissal. Self-dismiss permission forms are available in the School Resources section of The School’s website (www.theschool.columbia.edu/school-resources).

Early Pickups
Early pickups are not encouraged and are recorded in the same manner, and subject to the same ramifications, as late arrivals (see Late Arrivals).

Late Pickups
If you are late picking up your child from regular school dismissal, please contact the ASP Office at 212-851-2719 or asp@theschool.columbia.edu.

If you are more than 10 minutes late (after 3:40 pm in Grades 1-8; after 3:10 pm in Kindergarten), a $20 fee is charged. After 4 pm, children not yet picked up will be placed in an After School Program class and the family will be charged $30.

Dismissal from After School Program (ASP)
Students enrolled in ASP are expected at each meeting of their ASP class even if they have permission to self-dismiss. All families are expected to pick up children promptly when ASP ends at 5:30 pm. If families are late, they will be charged a fee as indicated in ASP materials. Please email asp@theschool.columbia.edu (not Student Affairs Coordinator Yvelisse Viera) with any ASP drop-in requests or changes to ASP dismissal.

Dismissal from Cancelled Athletics Events
If an outdoor game or practice is cancelled, the Athletics Director will email affected families; families may also call the Athletics Hotline at 212-851-4228 at any time for updates. Students who have permission to self-dismiss may do so. Students not picked up by families will stay for Study Hall if they are in the Middle Division, or attend an After School Program class for a fee if they are in Grade 5.
Dismissal Plan Changes
The School will provide a contact form for all families to identify adults authorized to pick up their children. If there is a change in previously established dismissal plans, The School must receive written notification in advance as specified below.

Occasional Change
If a student has a change in previously established dismissal plans on a particular day, a written note or email from parent/guardian must be provided to the classroom teacher and Student Affairs Coordinator Yvelisse Viera (yviera@theschool.columbia.edu) by noon on that day. On half days, notifications must be made by 10:30 am (see also Playdates).

Long-Term Change
Any permanent, long-term change in dismissal plans (including changes to adults authorized to pick up children) must be communicated to the classroom teacher and Student Affairs Coordinator Yvelisse Viera (yviera@theschool.columbia.edu) in writing or via email.

Last-Minute Change
Call or email Student Affairs Coordinator Yvelisse Viera (212-851-4288, yviera@theschool.columbia.edu) with any last-minute changes to regular dismissal. Please do not email classroom teachers in these instances. Please email asp@theschool.columbia.edu with any last-minute changes to ASP dismissal.

Absences
If your child will be absent from or late to school, please call the Attendance Hotline at 212-851-4201 before 8 am. As a safety precaution, if The School has not heard from a family by 8:30 am, The School will consider that child unaccounted for and begin the process of trying to locate him or her.

Absences Due to Illness
If your child is sick, please keep him or her home during the early infectious stages of the illness. Notify the Student Health Office at 212-851-4408 if you think your child has a communicable disease such as strep throat, chickenpox, the flu, or pink eye.

Absences
It is TSC policy that your child must be free of any contagious symptoms (including fever, rash, contagious respiratory symptoms, vomiting, diarrhea, etc.) for at least 24 hours before returning to school; 48 hours is preferable. If your child has strep throat or another contagious bacterial infection, he/she must have had at least one full day (24-48 hours) of antibiotics and must be fever-free (and without the use of fever-reducing medications, such as Motrin or Tylenol) for at least 24 hours before returning to school. For certain contagious illnesses, the period before returning to school may be longer, as The School must consider the well-being of the entire community (see also Student Health).

Excessive Absences
In cases where a student is absent more than 10% of the year (more than 16 absences), the student will not be eligible for reenrollment, regardless of whether a contract was issued. In cases where a student is absent more than 20% of the year (more than 32 absences), his or her ability to continue as a student at TSC will be in jeopardy, and the Division Director and Head of School will meet with the family to determine how best to proceed.
The School at Columbia University’s Student Health Office, on the second floor to the west of the Main Cafe, is staffed and open every school day from 8 am to 5:30 pm.

Hilde Darre, R.N., School Nurse
212-851-4408
212-851-4210 (fax)
hdarre@theschool.columbia.edu

Connie Rubenstein, R.N., School Nurse
212-851-4272
crubenstein@theschool.columbia.edu

Samuel L. Seward, Jr., M.D., FAAP, FACP
Associate Vice President and Medical Director, Columbia Health
Associate Professor of Medicine at CUMC
(Applied Health Care/Public Health Sciences)
Medical Director, The School at Columbia University
212-854-3187
212-854-8975 (assistant’s phone)
212-854-3654 (fax)
sls2109@columbia.edu
www.health.columbia.edu

Physical Exams and Required Health Forms
All families should have received a packet of health forms from the school in June 2015, including an Annual Physical Form, which must be completed by your child’s primary healthcare provider, based on your child’s annual physical exam. The exam must be performed after Sept. 1, 2014.

All health forms must be completed and returned to the Student Health Office by Tuesday, Sept. 1, 2015 (by Monday, Aug. 3 for new families). Students will not be allowed to participate in school-related physical activities (including Wellness, Dance, recess, local or overnight trips, After School Program classes, and/or Athletics programs) until all health forms are completed and returned.

If you did not receive a packet of forms, please contact the Student Health Office or download the forms from the School Resources section of The School’s website (www.theschool.columbia.edu/school-resources). Families should inform the Student Health Office in a timely manner of any health changes throughout the year, including casts, crutches, splints, slings, or significant bandages that students must use.

Prescription Medication
Only the school nurses will administer prescription medication to a student when it is required. All medication must be in its original container, dispensed by a registered pharmacy. The container must be clearly labeled with the student’s name, name of medication, dosage, dates of issuance, expiration, and physician’s name. A parent/guardian must also include a signed and dated Medication Authorization Form, addressed to the Student Health Office, with the prescribed medication. Nurses will administer over-the-counter medications only if it has been indicated on the student’s health form by the student’s physician.

Becoming ill at School
Students who become ill at school are sent to the Student Health Office, and a school nurse is the first responder in all health matters. Injured students are escorted to the Student Health Office unless it is determined that a nurse needs to come to the injured student.

If a nurse determines that a student should be sent home due to illness, families are contacted and an authorized caregiver must pick up the student as soon as possible. Students will not be sent home from school due to illness unless their family is contacted and an authorized adult arrives to escort the student home, or to a doctor’s or dentist’s office.

A student who has not been at school, or who has been sent home from school for illness, may not participate in the After School Program, Athletics, or other school activities or clubs on the same day.

Not Feeling Well Before School
It is important The School maintains a healthy learning environment for all students, faculty and staff. Please keep children home at the first sign of any of the below:
- Persistent coughing, sore throat, headache; any illness that prevents student from participating and learning comfortably in school
- Fever (100.4°F or higher) in the last 24-48 hours; The School will send a student home immediately if he/she has a fever in school
- Vomiting or diarrhea in the last 24-48 hours
- Pink eye (conjunctivitis), unless it is known to be allergic conjunctivitis
- Contagious rash (chickenpox, impetigo, ringworm or scabies)
- Strep throat

Please call the Student Health Office as soon as your child is diagnosed with pink eye, strep throat, or a contagious rash. If your child needs medication for a potentially contagious illness in the morning, please keep him/her home.
If you are unsure whether your child should come to school on any day, please call the Student Health Office in the morning. If it is determined that your child should come to school, the lateness can be processed as excused, after a nurse speaks with you.

**Head Lice**

Head lice are most commonly found in children ages 3-12 and occur in every school in New York City. Transmission of head lice in the classroom is uncommon. Head lice infestation is a nuisance and burden to individuals and families, but does not pose a health hazard, transmit disease, nor serve as a sign of poor hygiene, child abuse or neglect. Nits are not equivalent to head lice, since nits cannot be transmitted from person to person.

The School at Columbia has adopted the following approach based upon 2015 guidance from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) as well as that from the National Association of School Nurses.

Head lice policies:

- No school-wide surveillance will be conducted.
- School nurses may conduct lice checks on suspected cases, if bothersome to the child, and ensure that parents of affected children are notified. Parents will be strongly encouraged to treat their child for head lice, in consultation with their family healthcare provider. (Note: This often requires two separate treatments.)
- Children will not be excluded from school or participation in school-related activities due to the presence of head lice or nits.
- In order to limit spread of head lice in The School, though uncommon, parents and guardians are encouraged to check for the presence of head lice in their children.
- Questions may be directed to the nurses in the Student Health Office and/or The School's Medical Director.
- Instruction and education about how to detect head lice will be provided by The School nurses to parents/guardians who request it.

**Nut-Aware Environment**

The School at Columbia University is a nut-aware environment. The School does not serve any kind of nut or nut oils (including sesame oil) in breakfasts, lunches and snacks it provides. Families are reminded that snacks, birthday treats, potluck offerings and bake sale goods should be nut- and nut oil-free as well; nuts and nut oils should not be brought into school on any occasion.

It is important for families to inform the Student Health Office if their child has a life-threatening allergy, or other dietary restrictions or needs. That information must be indicated on the health forms due to The School by Tuesday, Sept. 1, 2015; please note, forms must be completed and signed by student’s allergist or healthcare provider.
Re-enrollment
Families must sign an enrollment contract each year. Re-enrollment contracts will be offered to families who are current with their tuition payments and in good standing under all enrollment contract terms. Re-enrollment contracts will be issued in early January and are due back with non-refundable deposits within two weeks of issue date.

Financial Aid for 2016-17
Because financial aid grants are valid for only one year, families must apply for financial aid each year. The financial aid deadline for all families for the 2016-17 academic year is Friday, Nov. 20, 2015. This deadline is firm. Even for returning families, The School cannot award financial aid for 2016-17 if the financial aid application process is not completed by Friday, Nov. 20, 2015. For more information, please consult with the Business and Financial Aid Office.

Academic Honesty
The School expects all students and adults associated with The School to be honest in all matters, both academic and personal. The School places a great deal of trust in students and in their willingness to uphold the ideals and principles of the community. Dishonesty of any kind is considered a very serious matter.

Faculty and staff encourage all students to do their best and understand that making mistakes and asking for help are essential parts of learning. An unhealthy expectation of perfection, combined with easy access to online sources, has compounded the problem of plagiarism. Students need to understand why they must do original work and cite properly and accurately. There will be serious consequences for violating the expectation that all sources be properly acknowledged and credited, as well as for other forms of cheating. The Middle Division agendas will have more information on this topic.

Academic Probation
Faculty in Grades 6-8 work with students’ advisors to ensure all students are meeting academic and behavioral expectations throughout the year. Students may be placed on academic probation when progress has not been adequate. Regardless of when academic probation is instituted, once it begins, students must improve their performance. This means following a detailed plan of work and achievement overseen by the Division Director, which may include attending Study Hall and/or the Summer Cubs Program. While on academic probation, a student may receive a re-enrollment contract for the following year but only on the condition that an acceptable level of proficiency is achieved by a mutually agreeable date before the new academic year begins.

After School Program
The After School Program (ASP) is designed both to meet the needs of families for afternoon childcare and to provide enrichment activities that promote social, physical and academic development. Classes run during Fall and Spring semesters. Students receive a lottery number for each semester, which ensures equitable enrollment when demand is greater than capacity for a class. Fees are based on a sliding scale. Enrollment for a semester presumes a paid balance for previous semesters. Please review ASP materials for more information about program pickup and attendance, or contact Katy Saintil, Director of External Programs, at 212-851-2719 or asp@theschool.columbia.edu

Please email asp@theschool.columbia.edu (not Student Affairs Coordinator Yvelisse Viera) with any ASP drop-in requests or changes to ASP dismissal.
Assemblies
Assemblies at The School are held on alternate Fridays by faculty, students, and occasionally, visiting talent. Due to capacity limits, The School cannot invite families to assemblies. Photos and often video of assemblies are typically available on The School’s website shortly after the event.

Athletics
The School offers basketball, cross country, lacrosse, soccer, squash, track and field, and volleyball teams for students in Grades 5-8. TSC teams compete with peer schools, and The School aims for a well-rounded program where students learn about being part of a team. The School also works to ensure TSC athletes receive sufficient support so they may enjoy both academic and athletic successes. Frank Colantuono is the 2015-16 Athletics Director and primary contact for families with questions about teams, logistical concerns, and rules for student-athletes. Coach Colantuono can be contacted at fcolantuono@theschool.columbia.edu, and the Athletics hotline is 212-851-4228.

Bag and Package Searches
The School’s Public Safety team reserves the right to inspect any bags and packages that are brought into or out of the building. There may be times when students’ lockers or backpacks will be inspected as well.

Birthday Parties
Students’ birthdays may be celebrated in school with a simple treat (usually during snack or at the end of lunch) for classmates. Please let your child’s classroom teacher or advisor know in advance, and bring enough easy-to-serve fruits, cupcakes or cookies (no big cakes, please) for the entire class. The School provides milk, water or juice. Treats must be safe for all students; no nuts or nut oils of any kind.

If your child is having an out-of-school birthday party, be sensitive to the feelings of classmates. If the whole class is not invited to a party, do not distribute invitations at school; mail or email them instead. Please, no birthday presents should be opened at school.

Building Access
For the protection and security of students, The School creates photo identification cards for families, caregivers and students, which must be displayed to gain entry to the school building (see ID Cards).

Adults who do not have a TSC-issued identification card must request a visitor’s pass. Valid photo identification is required in all cases. All visitors must check in and out of the building.

Families that need to bring something to a student during the school day should leave it at the Public Safety desk in the Lobby, and a staff member will make sure the item is delivered to the student. Families that need to collect their children during the school day for any reason must wait in the Lobby for their children.

Adults are not permitted anywhere in the school building after 9:15 am on school days until dismissal, unless authorized for a teacher/staff meeting or visit. Adults are not permitted to congregate or be in the school Lobby after 9:30 am on school days, until dismissal.

Child Abuse and Neglect
The state of New York requires immediate reporting of any suspected child abuse or neglect; the burden of proof does not rest with the person reporting. Medical confidentiality does not apply in such cases. No person may be sued for reporting a suspected case of child abuse, even if the suspicion proves to be unfounded. Failure to report suspicious circumstances is a misdemeanor and may render the non-reporting person liable for legal damages. A formal written report (Form DSS-2221A) to the Child Protective Services Department must follow within 48 hours. The Head of School and a school nurse will be informed by a faculty or staff member and consulted before any such reports are made.

Child Study Team (CST)
The Child Study Team is a group of faculty specialists committed to helping students reach their potential. The team includes a speech expert, an occupational therapist, psychologists, and learning specialists. They help to monitor MAPs, and sometimes they work with a class on the day’s lessons and projects, sometimes with small groups. When needed, they work with individual students and families. They perform routine and specialized screening and testing, and can assist with speech or occupational therapy. They are available to discuss enrichment work as well as compensatory strategies and remediation. For more information, please contact your child’s Division Director, who coordinates the work of these teams.

Class Assignments
Careful planning and thought goes into classroom assignments, with input from all faculty members. The School is committed to creating the best possible learning situation for the entire grade. Families may request a meeting with the Division Director to discuss specific learning environments they feel work best for their child; however, all final placement decisions rest with the Division Director.
Class Parents
There are Class Parents in each class in Kindergarten through Grade 5, and grade-wide Class Parents in Grades 6-8. A Class Parent’s role is to support faculty efforts to create a cohesive learning community in the classroom and across the grade. Class Parents work with faculty to determine the class or grade-wide activities they can support. The Class Parent Committee is a branch of the Parents Association; please see the PA Policies and Procedures Manual and the Class Parent Handbook for more information.

Class Parent communications to families should be school-related only; under no circumstances should Class Parents utilize families’ contact information for personal or professional purposes. Class Parents are asked to use discretion and be mindful of amount and frequency of communications, especially email, to families throughout the year.

Curriculum Nights
Early in the fall, families are required to attend to Curriculum Night as per their contract for an overview of the year’s curriculum, a discussion of student and family expectations, and conversations about how best to work together. The 2015-16 schedule:

Primary Division (Kindergarten, Grades 1 and 2): Monday, Sept. 21
Intermediate Division (Grades 3, 4 and 5): Wednesday, Sept. 30
Middle Division (Grades 6, 7, and 8): Thursday, Oct. 1

Curriculum Nights are 5:30 to 7 pm, in The School’s MPR.

Dress Code
Students’ hair and clothing should be appropriate for the classroom and not distracting. Outerwear should be suitable for the weather, and students should be equipped every school day for an active day outside, and for any planned activities (field trips, etc.). Sneakers are ideal for most students; open-backed or open-toed sandals should not be worn, and heels are not appropriate. Hats and caps should not be worn in the building, but may be worn in the Roof Play Area, or on field trips. The School expects families’ support in maintaining a safe and studious environment.

Elevator Use
Families are reminded that school elevators are intended for Kindergarten families at drop-off and pickup, and for persons with disabilities. Families should please be mindful and respectful of the diverse needs of our community, and model healthy and environmentally sensitive habits by taking the stairs if they are able.

Students in Grades 1 through 8 may not use elevators during the school day. If there are special circumstances that warrant elevator use by a student in Grades 1-8, that student must be accompanied by an adult in the elevator. Kindergarten students may use elevators during the school day with adult supervision.

Email Use by Students
Students receive school email accounts beginning in Grade 3. The School monitors email use and holds students accountable for respectful and appropriate behavior online. Violations of the Respectable Use Policy (see Internet Safety) will result in serious consequences, potentially including loss of school computer access.

Emergency Procedures
The Public Safety team at The School works closely with the New York City Police Department, Columbia University Public Safety, and other agencies to maintain the highest level of security at The School. The School rehearses safe building evacuation regularly. In the event you are in the building during an evacuation drill, please exit the building and remain until the drill is over (including if a drill occurs during dismissal).

In the event of an emergency requiring students to remain in the building, families will be notified as quickly as possible. Please keep all family contact information up to date; email Student Affairs coordinator Yvelisse Viera (yviera@theschool.columbia.edu) with any changes or updates.

Family Conferences
Parents/guardians are required to attend two conferences, per their enrollment contract, with their children’s teachers during the academic year. This year, conferences occur on Monday, Nov. 2 and Tuesday, Nov. 3; and on Thursday, Feb. 18 and Friday, Feb. 19. School is closed for regular classes on these days; however, students in Grade 1 and higher participate in their conferences.

Teachers are happy to schedule additional conferences; however, please arrange time to meet, rather than trying to catch a teacher in the morning when students are arriving, or at the end of the day when the teacher may already have an obligation. Parents/guardians who do not live together should attend the same conference.

Family-Faculty Communications
A family’s first point of contact with The School should be their child’s classroom teacher or advisor. Email or the phone works well for quick questions; more involved issues should be handled in person. Please arrange time to meet, rather than trying to catch a teacher in the morning when students are arriving or at the end of the day. If further discussion is necessary, the Division Director and/or Head of School will be notified.
When contacting teachers, please remember they have very little free time during the day, so they may not respond until later. If your message is urgent, please contact Student Affairs Coordinator Yvelisse Viera (yviera@theschool.columbia.edu, 212-851-4288). If you contact a teacher by phone or email, you should expect to receive a response within 48 hours. Faculty members are advised to forward emails about students to relevant staff, so please be aware that emails to teachers are not confidential.

Field Trips
Field trips allow for powerful learning and connection with ideas that are not always possible in the classroom. The School is committed to using the resources of New York City, Black Rock Forest, and other local areas for field trips. Field trips are normally scheduled during school hours. In some cases, The School will ask families to sign permission forms for specific trips, and/or for overnight trips.

Firearms/Weapons
Article 265 of the New York Penal Law strictly prohibits the possession or use of any kind of weapon (including the use of an object or substance as a weapon) on school property.

Food Services
Breakfast is available for students and families in the Main Cafe on the second floor beginning at 7:30 am each school morning. The cafe remains open for adults until 9:15 am. Adults must clean up thoroughly after themselves and leave promptly at 9:15 am, so cafe staff can prepare the space for lunch. Please eat breakfast only in the Main Cafe, not in the North or South dining rooms or in the MPR. Please remember that the cafe is a community space, where we enjoy food and beverages together as a school. Cafe food is not intended for takeout.

Students are offered a fruit snack during the school day, and a different snack during the After School Program.

Students in all grades are served lunch by The School. Flik Independent School Dining is The School’s food service provider, and menu information is available in advance for families. Vegetarian, vegan, and gluten-free options are available every day. Nuts, nut oils, and shellfish are not served at The School.

The School and Flik tend carefully to student allergies and restrictions. If a student has a life-threatening allergy, or other dietary restrictions or needs, that information must be indicated on the health forms due to The School by Tuesday, Sept. 1, 2015; please note, forms must be completed and signed by student’s allergist or healthcare provider.

Gender and Sexuality Education (GSE)
The School seeks to foster a learning environment where students feel free to ask questions about human sexuality, and teachers are knowledgeable and able to provide respectful, developmentally and age-appropriate answers. Our Gender and Sexuality Education (GSE) team includes teachers and University professors who work in the field of public health. Families and The School share responsibility and have complementary roles in teaching children about sexuality. The School holds annual parent information sessions to review what and how sexuality is taught.

In Grades 5-8, GSE integrates Our Whole Lives (OWL), a nationally recognized curriculum recommended by sexuality education leaders, including Columbia University’s Mailman School of Public Health. OWL is an age-appropriate curriculum that can be integrated into all grades, covering six main subjects: human development, relationships, personal skills, sexual behavior, sexual health, and society and culture. In Grades K-4, these lessons are integrated into the Wellness, Social Studies, Science and Social Emotional Learning curricula.

Gifts to Teachers
The School recognizes that families may want to thank teachers or staff members at times during the school year. Please remember that The School is a diverse community; handwritten notes or homemade gifts from students or parents are a wonderful and appropriate way to express thanks. Students and parents are asked not to give purchased gifts to teachers or staff members.

Grade 8 High School Visits
Grade 8 students are urged to plan high school visits on Fridays or when The School is closed. The School will excuse a reasonable number of late arrivals and/or early dismissals for the purpose of visiting schools with prior notification from parents.

Homework and Families’ Role
Completing homework encourages students to work independently, accept responsibility, develop self-discipline and time-management skills, and be creative. Teachers work to coordinate homework assignments so that no student is unduly burdened on any given day. Students should expect to spend some time each weekday evening on homework, under these general guidelines:

Kindergarten: 15 minutes a day
Grade 1: 15-30 minutes a day
Grade 2: 30 minutes a day
Grade 3: 45 minutes a day
Grade 4: 45-60 minutes a day
Grade 5: 60-90 minutes a day
Grades 6, 7, 8: 90-150 minutes a day
While the amount and frequency of homework may vary, it should not take longer than the time indicated above. In addition, children are always encouraged to do independent reading outside of school.

These homework tips may be helpful:

- Don’t postpone work until late in the evening.
- Establish a consistent time and place for homework.
- Supervise homework when your child needs direction, but don’t do the work for him/her.
- Communicate with the teacher if there is a persistent problem with homework.

Homework is typically explained in class, so students should ask the teacher any questions. After school, the first step is to contact a classmate. If your child needs further explanation, encourage him/her to speak to the teacher the next school day.

ID Cards
For the protection and security of students, The School creates photo identification cards for parents, guardians and authorized caregivers; all teachers and staff; and students in Grades 5-8. Cards must be displayed to enter and leave the school building. Identification cards are not transferrable and should be used only by the person to whom the card was issued. ID cards remain the property of The School and are updated annually and as needed. There is a $20 replacement fee for a lost card.

Please keep all contact information current for authorized caregivers; email Student Affairs coordinator Yvelisse Viera (yviera@theschool.columbia.edu) promptly with any changes or updates.

Integrated Projects Week (IPW)
Integrated Projects Week, or IPW, is a hallmark of The School’s curriculum and occurs March 7-11 this year. During IPW, students leave regular classrooms and come together as new groups, spanning different subjects and grades. For four and a half days, these new groups pursue student-conceived and student-driven integrated projects that take them out of the building, onto Columbia University’s campus, into New York City and beyond. The final day is a showcase of projects for families.

Internet Safety
The School does not filter Internet content. The School approaches the issue of appropriate online material as one of trust and individual responsibility. Expectations are discussed at the beginning of the year, usually when classroom charters of behavioral expectations are written, and periodic reminders are given throughout the year. In Grades 5-8, students and families sign an agreement accepting responsibility for appropriate use of technology called the Respectable Use Policy.

The School does filter email for spam. Since spam is typically unsolicited, it is treated differently than inappropriate content on websites.

Letters of Verification
To request a letter verifying your child’s enrollment status, attendance, good standing, or other school-related condition, please email Student Affairs Coordinator Yvelisse Viera (yviera@theschool.columbia.edu). Please allow 48 hours to process this request.

Lost and Found
If your child has misplaced a belonging at school, please check the lost-and-found bins at the southeast corner of the Main Cafe, near the Patio door. Three times a year (once before Winter Break, once before Spring Break, and once before the last day of school), all items currently in the bins will be displayed for families to claim. After these displays, all unclaimed items will be donated to a local service organization.

My Achievement Plan (MAP)
Every student has a My Achievement Plan (MAP) co-created by the student, their teacher and their family. The MAP is an individualized approach to goal setting, designed to nurture a student’s strengths and address areas in need of development. At any given time, each student’s MAP identifies one to three personal goals, along with strategies to reach those goals and comments about progress to date. The MAP reflects a child’s growth; as some goals are reached, others are updated and new goals and strategies are added. The MAP process helps students recognize strengths, and gives them practice in setting and meeting goals, both skills that contribute to long-term success.

Nondiscrimination Policy
In accordance with the policies of Columbia University, The School at Columbia University is committed to providing a learning environment free from unlawful discrimination and to fostering a nurturing and vibrant community founded upon the fundamental dignity and worth of all of its members. Consistent with this commitment and with applicable laws, it is the policy of The School not to tolerate unlawful discrimination in any form and to provide students who feel that they are victims of discrimination with mechanisms for seeking redress.

The School at Columbia University does not discriminate against any person in the administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, aid programs, and athletic and other School-administered programs or permit the harassment of any student or applicant on the basis of race, color, sex, gender, pregnancy, religion, creed, marital status, partnership status, age, sexual orientation, national origin, disability, military status, or any other legally protected status.
Nothing in this policy shall abridge academic freedom or The School’s educational mission. Prohibitions against discrimination and discriminatory harassment do not extend to statements or written materials that are relevant and appropriately related to the subject matter of classes.

**Parents Association (PA)**
The mission of the Parents Association is to build a sense of community among families, faculty and staff at The School through thoughtful programming, by acting as a voice for families, and by providing support for The School in achieving its educational goals. All parents and guardians, faculty and staff are members of the PA. There are no dues or membership requirements.

Class Parents (see **Class Parents**) connect faculty, families and the PA, and help to coordinate events. For more information or to volunteer to be a Class Parent, contact PA@theschool.columbia.edu

Throughout the year, the PA and its groups (Casa Latina, Kaleidoscope, Neurodiversity, Nutrition & Health) host events for families, including formal and informal conversations, game nights, cultural events and more. The PA must follow event policies and procedures as outlined by The School in the organization and execution of all events it hosts and/or co-hosts.

**Phones and Other Personal Electronic Devices**
The School recognizes that personal electronics may be useful during the commute to and from school, but students may not use them at school. Students who bring phones to school must keep them off during the school day. Please note that TSC lockers do not lock, and The School is not responsible for lost or stolen property.

**Playdates**
If a student is going home with, or bringing home, a classmate, an email should be sent to each child’s teacher and Student Affairs Coordinator Yvelisse Viera (yviera@theschool.columbia.edu) with all playdate information, by 12 pm (noon) on the day of the playdate. On half days, playdate notifications must be made by 10:30 am.

**Religious Holidays**
Families may arrange for an excused absence for observance of a religious holiday by sending a signed note or email to the child’s teacher and Student Affairs Coordinator Yvelisse Viera (yviera@theschool.columbia.edu). The School does not penalize any student who is unable to complete an assignment for religious reasons. Teachers will assist students in covering any material they may miss.

**School Closings**
In case of weather-related or other emergencies, the Head of School determines if classes will be canceled or postponed. Decisions will be made as early as possible. Information will be sent to families via email and phone, as well as posted on The School’s website (www.theschool.columbia.edu) and Twitter feed (www.twitter.com/The_School). If school is dismissed early for any reason, there will be no After School Program, Middle Division Clubs, Athletics, or Study Hall activities on that day.

**School Communications**
The School emails a weekly newsletter to all families each Friday, The Lion’s Share, that contains school news, events, information, and important dates and deadlines. Please check The School’s website (www.theschool.columbia.edu) and Twitter feed (www.twitter.com/The_School) for the most up-to-date information. Important announcements are also periodically emailed to families, so be sure email addresses The School has on file are current; please email Student Affairs Coordinator Yvelisse Viera (yviera@theschool.columbia.edu) with any changes or updates. Please also be sure spam filters are set to allow emails from The School’s domain (@theschool.columbia.edu).

The Community bulletin board in the Main Cafe is available for families to post information about neighborhood and city events not hosted by The School. Families should please refrain from posting fliers or signs in any other spaces at The School, without prior approval from the Communications Office.

A reminder to families that, as specified in 2015-16 enrollment and re-enrollment contracts, The School may use students’ names, images, likenesses and/or work in connection with the activities, research, curriculum development, and/or promotion of The School, and families release any proprietary right to such, understanding that these images and/or recordings shall remain the sole property of The School. The School does not identify individual children by publishing their name in connection with their image and/or likeness. Any images or video that identify individual students in such a way will be shared publicly only after a full explanation has been offered to the family, and a specific permission form is signed by the parent/guardian and returned to The School.

**School Readiness**
All children must be toilet-trained before they can begin Kindergarten at The School.

**Sexual Harassment**
In accordance with the policies of Columbia University’s Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action (EOAA), The School at Columbia University prohibits sexual harassment. Any student who feels he or she is being sexually harassed should immediately report the circumstances to a faculty or staff member.
Smoking
Smoking is not allowed on school property, at school events, or within 20 feet of the school’s main entrance.

Social Media
The curricular value of social media is rooted in the mission of The School. The School’s practice is guided by the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) Principles of Good Practice of Teaching and Learning in the Digital Age. Technology education at The School stems from the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) Standards for Teachers. From a developmentally appropriate perspective, with an emphasis on social responsibility and problem-solving, students at The School use social media for research, communication and productivity.

The School takes the safety and security of students and families very seriously. Tweets and posts are sent by teachers and staff with specific educational intentions in mind. The School does not identify individual children by publishing their name in connection with their image and/or likeness. If you have specific questions about social media in your child’s classroom, please speak with your child’s teacher or Division Director.

Standardized Testing
As part of student assessment, sections of the Educational Records Bureau (ERB) tests are administered to students in Grades 3 to 8. These tests are not The School’s primary basis for measuring student achievement. They are not used for class placement, or to diagnose any learning issues. They give families and The School an additional window through which to see students’ progress. In addition, some middle and high schools use these tests for admissions. The School sends home ERB tests results in the summer.

Strollers
All strollers must be left in the vestibule in the Lobby, except in cases where there is a medical need to transport a child by stroller.

Student Assessment
Students are assessed on their mastery of the curriculum. In general, The School uses performance-based assessment in a variety of formats, including:

- Assignments (quizzes, tests, listening exercises, and home enrichment activities)
- Projects (drafts and revisions of a piece of writing, science and math experiments, musical compositions, dramatic performances and public-speaking opportunities)
- Portfolios (reflective collections of completed and in-process work)
- Standardized testing (ERBs) and other screening measures, which may involve work with specialists

The School’s goal is to give a complete picture of each child as a learner in the many areas they work on at The School, including those areas that are important to social development. A fall checklist, in addition to the November family conference, is meant to keep parents and guardians apprised of their child’s experience and development at school, and to help establish goals for the coming months. Later in the school year, The School will share a portfolio of each child’s progress at the February family conference, and then a narrative summary of their learning year at The School in June.

Middle Division students receive grades. All Middle Division teachers use TeacherEase, an online grade book, to allow families to monitor students’ progress in the time periods between family conferences and reports.

Student Behavior Expectations
The School at Columbia University is committed to creating and maintaining a culture of civility among students and adults. This means having respect for oneself, for other people, and for physical surroundings. The School’s responses to instances of discourtesy or disrespect will be firm and fair.

The School works to create a culture of respect free of bullying (physical, verbal or electronic) or any other act that threatens a student’s sense of safety or ability to concentrate. The School will work with any student who may be targeted by bullying, engages in bullying, or witnesses bullying of any kind. Each situation is taken seriously and addressed individually. In most cases, the student(s) involved will have an initial conversation with the teacher and/or advisor, followed by a conversation with the Division Director. The School will determine the appropriate response, which could include the student(s) working with a Child Study Team (CST) member.

In cases of inappropriate behavior in which a Division Director or CST member is involved, families will be contacted. The Head of School will be involved in serious cases, and suspension or expulsion may result.

The School endorses a comprehensive substance abuse prevention program that includes instruction, intervention, student support, and enforcement and/or discipline. Age-appropriate education addresses the legal, social and health consequences of tobacco, drug and alcohol use, abuse and addiction. In addition to education, The School’s program includes referral for counseling with parental involvement, and reporting to law enforcement authorities the possession, use, or transfer of alcohol or illegal drugs on school premises or at school-sponsored events. A student found to be using, possessing, selling or giving away alcohol or drugs on school property or at school functions will be suspended and possibly expelled. It is the responsibility of every teacher and staff member to report such activities immediately to the Head of School.
Student Transportation

General education students in New York City must meet distance eligibility criteria, established by the Department of Education’s Office of Pupil Transportation, to receive free transportation to and from school. All eligible students will automatically receive their MetroCards during the first week of school. A Full-Fare (Free) Student MetroCard is good for three (3) trips on subway and bus lines each school day. A Half-Fare Student MetroCard is good for three (3) trips on bus lines only each school day.

Yellow bus service is available to eligible students in Grades 2 through 6 only. Students eligible for yellow bus service are not entitled to Student MetroCards. To be eligible, a student’s bus route can not exceed 5 miles one way, measured through all bus stops on the established route. Yellow bus service begins Tuesday, Sept. 15, 2015, and runs according to the New York City public school calendar. Families must make alternative drop-off and/or pickup arrangements for their children on the dates The School at Columbia is open but public schools are closed and there is no yellow bus service: Tuesday, Feb. 16, 2016 and Wednesday, Feb. 17, 2016.

For details and more information, please see the 2015-16 Student Transportation Information sheet mailed to all families in mid-August. Families may also contact Student Affairs Coordinator Yvelisse Viera (212-851-4288, yviera@theschool.columbia.edu) with any questions, or visit the Office of Pupil Transportation website, www.optny.org (school code 03-867).

Summer Program

The School runs a program, Summer Cubs, in July to support students who will benefit from additional work in reading, writing, and/or mathematics. Enrollment in the program is suggested for some students who may need additional enrichment and support to continue at The School.

Teachers as Parents

Some teachers and staff members have children enrolled at The School. Please do not ask these teachers and staff members to divulge sensitive school information.

Technology Devices

Students in Kindergarten through Grade 2 receive a tablet to use during the school day, and students in Grades 3 to 8 receive a laptop. Students may not take these devices home, except when a parent/guardian agrees to accompany their child and the device home and back again. Devices damaged out of school will be subject to a repair fee charged to the family.

Division educational technologists provide device passwords to students. Under no circumstances should students share their or anyone else’s password.