



Vertus Charter School

COURAGE, LEADERSHIP, RESPONSIBILITY

*Preparing Leaders of Character for the Community
and the Workplace*

*Student and Family Handbook
2014-2015*

Vertus Charter School
2 Austin St.
Rochester, N.Y. 14606



THE VERTUS CREED

WE ARE:

Courageous

- *We do not falter in the face of fear or obstacles*
- *We face challenges without excuses*
- *We are strong enough to ask for help*
- *We never give up*

WE ARE:

Responsible

- *We keep our promises*
- *We work hard to accomplish our goals*
- *We help our families, friends and community*
- *We respect and care for women*

WE ARE:

Leaders

- *We live honestly, honorably, and nonviolently*
- *We respect ourselves and others*
- *We are role models in our community*
- *We are citizens who fight for justice*

WE ARE:

Our Brothers' Keepers

WE ARE:

Leaders Of Character

WE ARE:

We are Vertus Men



Vertus Charter School

COURAGE, LEADERSHIP, RESPONSIBILITY

*Welcome to Vertus. Our job is to prepare leaders of character for the community and the workplace. Our program is guided by three manly virtues: **courage, leadership and responsibility**. We believe that men with these virtues will succeed in life and become the leaders they are meant to be. We develop these virtues in our students.*

Partnership

Education is a partnership between students, families and school. The key to a good partnership is communication. Each student has an assigned preceptor who is responsible for communicating at least weekly with families. Preceptors are available to families to assist with their concerns and to answer questions (or when they don't know, to find out the answer). Families can also call our school office at 585-747-8911 or stop in between the hours of 7:30 and 5:30 whenever they have questions. We welcome families to visit classes or to volunteer. All school visitors must sign in at the Main Office when they arrive and receive a visitor badge.

Attendance

Students must be in school on time every day. Students cannot learn and succeed if they are not in school. Parents/guardians must ensure that students are in school, on time, every day, all day. Medical and other appointments should be planned for school breaks or outside school hours.

We have a closed campus. Students may not leave during the school day without a parent or guardian, unless for a school event.

If a student must be absent for illness or other emergency, parents/guardians must contact the Main Office before 8:00 a.m. indicating that the student will be absent for that day.

All students who miss instruction due to absence, tardiness or early dismissal will be required to make up the lost learning time and complete all their assignments in order to meet their weekly learning goals. Students will be given one week to make up the work. Failure to complete missed assignments will result in disciplinary action.

If, in an emergency, a student must be signed out before the end of the day, the parent/guardian must send a note to the Main Office indicating the time he will be signed out. Parents/guardians who are signing out a student should report to the Main Office.

Parents/guardians must notify us in writing whenever any individual other than a parent or guardian is authorized to pick up a student.

If a student has an unexcused absence from school, the student's parent/guardian will be contacted. The preceptor will work with the parent/guardian to determine the student's whereabouts. The Dean will develop an appropriate plan to remedy the harm his absence has caused to his learning and to the school community and take disciplinary action.

School Day and School Year

The school day begins with breakfast at **8:40**. Breakfast is free for all students. We expect all students to be here for breakfast, which is an important beginning to the school day. Our building is open to students beginning at **7:30**. Students generally dismiss at **5:30**, after our activity period. If a parents/guardian prefers that a student not engage in after school activities the student will be dismissed at 4:30.

Each student is assessed regularly and works with us to create an Individual Life Plan with his unique goals. Students earn their high school credits at their own pace as they master required academic content. In addition to academics, our day includes regular physical activity, a daily seminar, career programming and extracurricular activities, including sports and clubs.

We have four quarters throughout the year with breaks in between. A copy of our school calendar is included as Appendix A.

School Closures

We are closed whenever Rochester City Schools close for snow or other weather emergencies. Please check local news outlets for news of school closings.

Our Rules

Two important rules guide all we do:

- **Be responsible**
- **Be respectful**

We teach our young men how to be responsible and respectful. We expect this of them at all times. If a student is not responsible or respectful, he must remedy the harm he has caused to himself and others.

Respect and responsibility require that students:

- are always in dress code;
- speak and behave respectfully to staff, other students and visitors;
- engage actively in learning;
- never disrupt the learning environment;
- do not cheat;

- respect the property of the school and of others;
- conduct themselves as Vertus men in school and off campus.

Our full student discipline code is included as Appendix B.

In order to protect our students, staff and school culture, we have the right to search students' bags, lockers and clothing at any time.

We do not allow students to have cell phones or other personal electronic devices while inside the school. Cell phones and other devices will be collected by preceptors at the beginning of the school day, tagged, bagged and locked away. They will be returned to students as they leave the building at the end of the day. Parents/guardians who need to get a message to students during the school day should call the Main Office.

Uniform

Uniforms are an important part of our culture. The Vertus uniform signifies that:

- we are all members of one team
- we respect ourselves, our team and our school
- we have made a transition from home to school and are ready to learn
- we are preparing to take our place as leaders in the community and the world
- we pay attention to detail
- we are proud to be Vertus men

Students may not attend school out of uniform. If they arrive out of uniform in any respect, their parent or guardian will be called to bring the missing items. Students will not be able to participate in school until they are in full uniform.

The Vertus uniform includes:

- Vertus black slacks (purchased from our uniform provider)
- Vertus white dress shirt (purchased from our uniform provider)
- Black belt (provided by families). The belt must be leather or leather-like. Cloth belts or belts with studs or designs are not permitted.
- Dress shoes (provided by families). Shoes must be solid black. Students may wear loafers or lace-up style shoes, which must be tied. Sneakers are never acceptable except during physical activity. Students may not wear boat shoes, moccasins or boots. (If they wear boots to school, they must change into acceptable shoes).

We provide a special class tie and blazer. Other approved uniform options, such as a Vertus sweater, may be available from time to time but are not required.

Students may wear a watch but no other jewelry. No gang insignia are permitted. Headgear/hats are limited to those required to be worn as a part of religious practice.

Students earn their Vertus blazer, which is paid for by the school, by demonstrating the self-mastery necessary to be a Vertus man. Blazers are awarded in a special fall ceremony where we

celebrate students' accomplishments with families and friends. Financial aid is available to families who need it in order to purchase school uniforms. Those needing assistance should contact our Chief Operating Officer, Ms. Anthony, at 585-747-8911 or panthony@vertusschool.org.

Frequently asked questions about uniforms are included as Appendix C.

Food

All our students are served a free and nutritious breakfast, lunch and snack. We do our best to ensure that students receive enough to eat. Students are encouraged to drink water throughout the day. Students who wish to do so may bring their lunch or healthy snacks.

Transportation

All Vertus students who live at least 1.5 miles from school are entitled to transportation on public city buses through RTS or through their home transportation district. We work with families to understand bus routes, answer questions about transportation and address transportation safety concerns. Frequently asked questions about transportation are included as Appendix D.

Student Health

Our school nurse maintains medical records on each student. We must have immunization records and emergency contact information for each student. All students must have Doctor's orders and necessary forms on file before medications may be administered. Parents/guardians should inform us immediately of any special health problems or concerns. If a student becomes ill during the day, he will be given immediate attention. If he cannot return to class, his parent/guardian will be called to come pick him up immediately.

Information and Concerns

We encourage families to raise any concerns about their student with their student's preceptor, then with the Dean of Students or the CEO. Our formal complaint policy, which is required by the state, is included as Appendix E.

We respect the privacy of our students and families. The Family and Educational Privacy Act (FERPA) provides important protection for student information. We comply with FERPA. Our FERPA policies and notice to families are included as Appendix F.

Copies of all Vertus policies are available on our website and in our office.

Vertus Charter School 2014-15 Calendar

June 2014					July					August				
M	T	W	Th	F	M	T	W	Th	F	M	T	W	Th	F
2	3	4	5	6		1	2	3	4					1
9	10	11	12	13	7	8	9	10	11	4	5	6	7	8
16	17	18	19	20	14	15	16	17	18	11	12	13	14	15
23	24	25	26	27	21	22	23	24	25	18	19	20	21	22
30	31				28	29	30	31		25	26	27	28	29
					4: Independence Day 7-31: Staff Training and Planning					1-29: Staffing Training and Planning				
September					October					November				
M	T	W	Th	F	M	T	W	Th	F	M	T	W	Th	F
1	2	3	4	5			1	2	3	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	6	7	8	9	10	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	13	14	15	16	17	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	20	21	22	23	24	24	25	26	27	28
29	30				27	28	29	30	31	11: Veterans Day 27-28: Thanksgiving				
1: Labor Day 15: Fall Quarter Begins					13: Columbus Day									
December					January 2015					February				
M	T	W	Th	F	M	T	W	Th	F	M	T	W	Th	F
1	2	3	4	5				1	2	2	3	4	5	6
8	9	10	11	12	5	6	7	8	9	9	10	11	12	13
15	16	17	18	19	12	13	14	15	16	16	17	18	19	20
22	23	24	25	26	19	20	21	22	23	23	24	25	26	27
29	30	31			26	27	28	29	30					
25: Christmas 12: Fall Quarter Ends 31: New Year's Eve					1: New Year's Day 5: Winter Quarter Begins 19: MLK Day					16: President's Day				
March					April					May				
M	T	W	Th	F	M	T	W	Th	F	M	T	W	Th	F
2	3	4	5	6			1	2	3					1
9	10	11	12	13	6	7	8	9	10	4	5	6	7	8
16	17	18	19	20	13	14	15	16	17	11	12	13	14	15
23	24	25	26	27	20	21	22	23	24	18	19	20	21	22
30	31				27	28	29	30		25	26	27	28	29
20: Winter Quarter Ends					1: Spring Quarter Begins					25: Memorial Day 29: Spring Quarter Ends				
June					July					August				
M	T	W	Th	F	M	T	W	Th	F	M	T	W	Th	F
1	2	3	4	5			1	2	3	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	6	7	8	9	10	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	13	14	15	16	17	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	20	21	22	23	24	24	25	26	27	28
29	30				27	28	29	30	31	31				
22: Summer Quarter Begins					3: Independence Day					21: Summer Quarter Ends				

	Student in session	First day for students:	September 15, 2014
	Student out of session	Last day for students:	August 21, 2014
	Quarter begins or ends	Days of instruction:	205

Student Discipline Code

This policy has been designed to create a safe learning environment. Rules are consistently enforced. Student disciplinary offenses are those actions or inactions that violate the policy or interfere with the delivery of educational services, jeopardize the health, safety, and welfare of any member of the school community, or threaten the integrity and stability of the school itself.

- A disciplinary offense may occur while the student is: at school and/or on, or adjacent to school grounds; participating in a school-sponsored activity; walking to or from school or a school-sponsored event; walking to or from, waiting for, or riding on school-provided transportation; or walking to or from, waiting for, or riding on public transportation to and from school or a school-sponsored activity conducted off school grounds.
- School-related disciplinary offenses may also include misconduct outside the school, such as the misuse of social media that could reasonably affect the school or learning environment. School administration will use their professional judgment in determining which disciplinary action(s) will be most effective in dealing with the student's misconduct.

Disciplinary Offenses

The following list of offenses is not exhaustive but provides examples of violations that may result in disciplinary action. The list may be modified from time to time and/or supplemented by Vertus staff with notice to students.

1. DISRUPTING THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

- 1.1** Arriving Late to School or Class: Student tardiness disrupts class, inconveniences others, and often results in academic difficulties. Students may not be late to school or class.
- 1.2** Inappropriate Language: Inappropriate language is not permitted. Use of inappropriate language may result in detention, caregiver conference, or suspension depending upon the severity.
- 1.3** Cutting School, Class, Detention, or Mandatory School Events: Students are required to attend all classes, assigned detention, and mandatory school events. Students are not permitted to have unexcused absences or to leave the school building without permission. In addition to other disciplinary consequences, these offenses may result in long-term suspension and/or expulsion. In addition to other disciplinary consequences, students may not be promoted to the next grade depending upon hours of class time missed.
- 1.4** Misbehaving on School-Provided Transportation: Students may not misbehave while walking to or from, waiting for, or riding on school-provided transportation, including the school bus. Please note that students are subject to temporary or permanent denial of school-provided transportation (in which case students and caregivers are responsible for travel to and from

school), suspension and/or other consequences, depending on the circumstances. Misbehavior includes, but is not limited to, using inappropriate language, making excessive noise, touching other students inappropriately, being disrespectful of others, and failure to follow the bus driver's instructions.

- 1.5** Blocking Access to Any Part of the School Building: Students are not permitted to block access to any room or part of the school building. In addition to other disciplinary consequences, this offense may result in suspension and/or other consequences, depending on the circumstances.
- 1.6** Violating the Uniform Rules: Caregivers must pick up students who are not properly dressed for school or bring the missing uniform items to the school, as students not in full uniform may be suspended or not be permitted to attend class. Violations of the uniform rules also may result in additional disciplinary consequences.
- 1.7** Gum, Food, and Beverages: Students may not chew gum, eat or drink at unauthorized times and places.
- 1.8** Talking in the Hallway: Students are not permitted to talk in the hallway during class time and must maintain a quiet voice level and professional tone during class transitions.
- 1.9** Disrupting Class and Preventing Teaching: Students may not disrupt class. In addition to other disciplinary consequences, this offense may result in suspension and/or other disciplinary consequences, depending on the circumstances.
- 1.10** Arriving to Class Unprepared: When class begins, students must be prepared and have all necessary materials (books, paper, pen, pencil, etc.).
- 1.11** Failing to Complete Homework: Students are expected to complete all assignments on time.
- 1.12** Cheating, Plagiarism, and Copying Other's Work: Cheating or copying the work of others (or allowing other students to copy work) is unacceptable. This offense may result in suspension and/or other disciplinary consequences, depending on the circumstances.
- 1.13** Failing to Submit a Required Signature: Students are required to secure the signature of a parent/guardian on homework assignments or school forms when requested.
- 1.14** Forgery: Students may not forge a signature. This offense may result in suspension and/or other disciplinary consequences, depending on the circumstances.
- 1.15** Lying to a Staff Member: Honesty is an essential component of personal character and is needed to build a community based on trust and respect. Students are not permitted to lie or attempt to conceal the truth. This offense may result in suspension and/or other disciplinary consequences, depending on the circumstances.
- 1.16** Being Disrespectful toward a Staff Member: Students may not be disrespectful toward a staff member or any other adult associated with the school. This includes failure to comply with staff directives. This offense may result in suspension and/or other disciplinary consequences, depending on the circumstances.

- 1.17** Being Disrespectful Toward a Student: Students may not disrespect other students. This offense may result in suspension and/or other disciplinary consequences, depending on the circumstances.
- 1.18** Possession of Inappropriate Property: Students may not possess prohibited electronic equipment or games, printed text or lyrics that are vulgar, profane, or sexually explicit, or any other items inappropriate for school. Such items will be confiscated. See also Student Supply Section. This offense may result in suspension and/or other disciplinary consequences, depending on the circumstances.
- 1.19** Gambling: Gambling or betting is not tolerated. This offense may result in suspension and/or other disciplinary consequences, depending on the circumstances.
- 1.20** Misbehaving Inside or Outside of Class: Misbehavior that violates this Code inside or outside of class (at school and/or on school grounds; participating in a school-sponsored activity; walking to or from school or a school-sponsored event; walking to or from, waiting for, or riding on school-provided transportation; or walking to or from, waiting for, or riding on public transportation to and from school or a school-sponsored activity) is not permitted. This offense may result in suspension and/or expulsion or other disciplinary consequences, depending on the circumstances
- 1.21** Sexting: A student may not send, receive, forward or distribute pictures, video, or text messages of sexually suggestive, nude or nearly nude images through the use of a cell phone or other electronic device. Students may not violate the Social Media Policy. This offense may result in suspension and/or expulsion or other disciplinary consequences, depending on the circumstances.
- 2. ASSAULT, BATTERY, BODILY HARM, INAPPROPRIATE TOUCHING, AND/OR THREATS**

 - 2.1** Engaging in Shouting or Threatening Verbal Exchanges: Students may not engage in shouting or threatening verbal exchanges with another student, employee or another person. Students participating in verbal exchanges which require staff intervention, are mandated to meet with a Tutor to de-escalate the tension. Students will also be mandated to participate in a mediation session before returning to classes. Failure to adhere to the mediation agreement will result in disciplinary action.
 - 2.2** Causing Bodily Harm: Students may not cause physical injury to another student, school employee, or other person. Students are not permitted to harm or attempt to harm another student, school employee, or other person. This includes use of a weapon or other dangerous object. This offense may result in suspension and/or expulsion or other disciplinary consequences, depending on the circumstances.
 - 2.3** Committing Assault or Assault and Battery: Students may not commit assault, including sexual assault, or assault and battery on another student, school employee, or other person. Assault is an attempt or threat to physically harm another person; assault does not require physical contact. Battery is any unlawful touching of another person. This offense may result in suspension and/or expulsion or other disciplinary consequences, depending on the circumstances.

- 2.4** Fighting or Unwanted Physical Contact: Students may not fight with other students—from Vertus or any other school—or with any individuals. Harassing, pushing, touching, or any form of unwanted physical contact is not tolerated. This offense may result in suspension and/or expulsion or other disciplinary consequences, depending on the circumstances, including the student’s behavior and involvement in the conflict and the involvement of the student in prior conflicts.
- 2.5** Threatening to Bring Friends, Family Members, or Associates to Fight or Intimidate: Vertus students may not threaten to bring other individuals to school property or another place to fight or intimidate another student or staff member. This offense may result in suspension and/or expulsion or other disciplinary consequences.
- 2.6** Play Fighting and Threatening: Students may not play fight and/or threaten others. This offense may result in suspension and/or other disciplinary consequences, depending on the circumstances.
- 2.7** Hazing: Students may not, in the course of another person's initiation into or affiliation with any organization, intentionally or recklessly engage in conduct which creates a substantial risk of physical injury to such other person or a third person. This offense may result in suspension and/or expulsion or other disciplinary consequences, depending on the circumstances.
- 2.8** Engaging in Gang-Related Activity: Gang related activity/behavior is prohibited on the school’s campus and at all school events. This offense may result in suspension and/or expulsion or other disciplinary consequences, depending on the circumstances. Please see Gang-Related Activity below for further information.
- 2.9** Setting off a False Alarm or Making a Threat: Students may not intentionally set off a false alarm or make a destructive threat. This offense may result in suspension and/or expulsion or other disciplinary consequences, depending on the circumstances.
- 2.10** Engaging in Sexual Activity or Inappropriate Touching: A student may not engage in sexual activity of any kind or touch himself/herself or others inappropriately. This offense may result in suspension and/or expulsion or other disciplinary consequences, depending on the circumstances.
- 2.11** Engaging in Intimidating, or Bullying Behavior, Including Cyber-Bullying: Bullying is defined as a series of acts or a single negative act (depending on severity) that involve(s) a real or perceived imbalance of power, i.e., where a more powerful (whether real or perceived) group of students, or an individual student engages in harassment of another student or students who is/are less powerful or perceived to be less powerful. Bullying can take many forms, including but not necessarily limited to the following three forms: 1. Physical (including, but not limited to, hitting, kicking, spitting, pushing, and taking personal belongings); 2. Verbal (including, but not limited to, taunting, malicious teasing, name calling, making threats); and 3. Psychological (including, but not limited to, spreading rumors; manipulating social relationships; or engaging in social exclusion, extortion, or intimidation). Cyber-bullying takes many forms, and is defined as online social cruelty or electronic bullying that involves the use of information technology, including

e-mail, instant messaging, blogs, chat rooms, pagers, cell phones, and gaming systems, to deliberately harass, threaten or intimidate students. This includes but is not necessarily limited to sending mean, vulgar, or threatening messages or images; posting sensitive or private information about another person (including but not limited to “sexting”); pretending to be someone else in order to defame another. This offense may result in suspension and/or expulsion or other disciplinary consequences, depending on the circumstances.

3. POSSESSION OR USE OF FIREARMS, WEAPONS, AND/OR DANGEROUS OBJECTS

- 3.1** Possession or Use of a Firearm: Students may not possess or use a firearm. In compliance with Gun Free schools Act, 20 U.S.C. § 7151, the school will expel from school for a period of not less than 1 year a student who is determined to have brought a firearm to a school, or to have possessed a firearm at school, except that the CEO may modify such expulsion requirement for a student on a case-by-case basis if such modification is in writing.
- 3.2** Possession or Use of a Mock Firearm: Students may not possess or use a mock firearm. This offense may result in suspension and/or other disciplinary consequences, depending on the circumstances.
- 3.3** Using or Possessing a Weapon or Dangerous Object: Students are not allowed to bring a weapon of any sort to school, use any object in a dangerous or threatening manner, or have a weapon on him/her or in his/her property. This offense may result in suspension and/or expulsion or other disciplinary consequences, depending on the circumstances.
- 3.4** Arson: Students may not set a fire. This offense may result in suspension and/or expulsion or other disciplinary consequences, depending on the circumstances.

4. POSSESSION, USE, OR DISTRIBUTION OF CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES, ALCOHOL, AND TOBACCO

- 4.1** Using or Possessing Drugs or Alcohol: Students may not use or possess any non-prescribed controlled substance, narcotic drug, hallucinogenic drug, amphetamine, barbiturate, marijuana, alcoholic beverage, or intoxicant of any kind. Prescribed and over-the-counter drugs must be delivered to the designated school staff person by the caregiver with a doctor-signed medication authorization form. Students may not be in possession of prescribed or over-the-counter drugs. This offense may result in suspension and/or expulsion or other disciplinary consequences, depending on the circumstances. In addition, the student will be enrolled in counseling and a group which supports adolescents struggling with drug-abuse.
- 4.2** Selling or Transferring Drugs or Alcohol: Students may not sell, distribute, or possess with intent to sell or distribute a prescribed or non-prescribed controlled substance. Nor should students carry paraphernalia related to drugs or alcohol (ex: pill bottles, etc.). This offense may result in suspension and/or expulsion or other disciplinary consequences, depending on the circumstances.
- 4.3** Using, Possessing, Selling or Transferring Tobacco Products: The use of tobacco is banned. Students may not use or possess cigarettes, chewing-tobacco, or other tobacco products. This offense may result in suspension and/or other disciplinary consequences, depending on the circumstances.

5. HARASSMENT AND VIOLATIONS OF CIVIL RIGHTS

- 5.1** Violating the Civil Rights of Others: Students may not violate the civil rights of others. This offense may result in suspension and/or expulsion or other disciplinary consequences, depending on the circumstances.
- 5.2** Engaging in Harassing Behavior: Students may not engage in any form of harassing behavior. Harassment is defined as the creation of a hostile environment by conduct or by verbal threats, intimidation or abuse that has or would have the effect of unreasonably and substantially interfering with a student's educational performance, opportunities or benefits, or mental, emotional or physical well-being; or conduct, verbal threats, intimidation or abuse that reasonably causes or would reasonably be expected to cause a student to fear for his or her physical safety; such conduct, verbal threats, intimidation or abuse includes but is not limited to bullying, cyber bullying, sexting or other conduct, verbal threats, intimidation or abuse based on a person's actual or perceived race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender or sex. In addition, students may not make unwanted sexual advances toward or commit sexual harassment of any members of the school community. This offense may result in suspension and/or expulsion or other disciplinary consequences, depending on the circumstances.
- 5.3** Abusive or Profane Language or Treatment: Students may not use abusive, threatening, vulgar, coarse, or degrading language (including racial epithets or sexist or homophobic remarks). This offense may result in suspension and/or expulsion or other disciplinary consequences, depending on the circumstances.
- 5.4** Engaging in Inappropriate use of Social Media: Students may not engage in conduct or communication that may harass or intimidate any members of the school community, or reasonably lead to a disruption of the educational environment. This offense may result in suspension and/or expulsion or other disciplinary consequences, depending on the circumstances.

6. THEFT OR VANDALISM

- 6.1** Theft, Loss, or Destruction of Personal or School Property: Students may not steal, lose, or damage someone else's property or school property. In addition to facing other consequences for violation of this rule, students are expected to return property to its rightful owner in its original condition or to reimburse the owner and/or the school for lost, damaged, or stolen property. This offense will typically result in a minimum of a three day suspension and/or expulsion or other disciplinary consequences, depending on the circumstances.
- 6.2** Mistreatment or Inappropriate Use of Technology or School Property: Students must treat computers, printers, and other technology with care. Vertus does not tolerate attempts to access the school's files or other inappropriate uses of technology or the Internet. Students do not have the right to use school computers to access chat rooms or email or to access web sites or files that contain profanity, sexually explicit language or pictures, excessively violent themes, and/or other material inappropriate for minors. Students must not mistreat other school property. This offense may result in

suspension and/or expulsion or other disciplinary consequences, depending on the circumstances.

7. **FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH SCHOOL-IMPOSED CONSEQUENCES:** Students must comply with school-imposed consequences. This offense may result in suspension and/or expulsion or other disciplinary consequences, depending on the circumstances.
8. **REPEATED VIOLATIONS OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT:** Progressively more serious disciplinary consequences shall be imposed upon any student who repeatedly commits one or more disciplinary offenses.

Consequences for Violations of Policy

Detention

A student may be issued a detention for violations of the Code, including but not limited to: disruption to the school environment, tardiness, off-task behavior in class, lack of preparation for class, excessive talking or any type of disruption in class, failure to follow school/classroom norms, insubordinate behavior, or obscene or abusive language or gestures. All Vertus staff members may issue detention for a student's misbehavior.

Suspensions

Suspensions are a severe form of disciplinary action. Important information regarding suspension is provided below.

- Before the student is permitted to return to school, a mandatory meeting must take place. The student, the caregiver, an administrator and the staff member involved in the dispute, and the student's Tutor must be present. Failure to attend the meeting results in an additional day of suspension.
- Depending on the nature of the suspension, a student may be placed on a Behavior Improvement Plan. This plan will outline specific behaviors that the student will address with their Preceptor/Teachers and work to improve.
- Throughout the duration of their suspension, students are not permitted on school grounds for any reason other than a pre-arranged meeting with Vertus staff. Failure to adhere to this policy will result in an additional day of suspension.
- Any student receiving a suspension will be offered alternate instruction either on school or at an alternate location throughout the duration of the suspension.

Short-Term Suspension

A short-term suspension refers to the removal of a student for a period of up to ten days. The CEO and/or his designee determine the duration of short-term suspension on a case-by-case basis. The CEO or his or her designee may impose a short-term suspension, and shall follow due process procedures consistent with federal case law pursuant to *Goss v. Lopez* (419 U.S. 565). Before imposing a short-term suspension, the CEO/designee shall provide notice to inform the student of the charges against him or her, and if the student denies the charges, an explanation of the evidence against the student will be provided. The student will also be provided with the opportunity to present his or her version of the events. Before imposing a short-term suspension, the CEO/designee shall immediately notify the caregivers, in writing, that the student may be suspended from school. Written notice shall be provided by personal delivery or express mail delivery within 24 hours of the decision to impose suspension. The delivery will be sent to the last known address(es) of the caregiver(s). Where possible, notification also shall be

provided by telephone. Such notice shall provide a description of the incident(s) for which suspension is proposed and shall inform the caregiver(s) of their right to request an immediate informal conference with the CEO/designee. Such notice and informal conference shall be in the dominant language or mode of communication used by the caregiver. Caregivers are encouraged to make an appointment with the CEO should they disagree with the CEO/designee's decision to impose a short-term suspension. In addition, the Complaint procedures are available to caregivers who want to challenge a short-term suspension decision.

Long-Term Suspension/Expulsion

A long-term suspension is the removal of a student from Vertus for a period of more than ten days. An expulsion is the permanent removal of a student from Vertus. A long-term suspension or expulsion may be imposed by a hearing officer ("Hearing Officer"). The Hearing Officer shall be the CEO, his or her designee, or a member of the school's Board. Students may receive long-term suspensions or expulsions for serious and/or repeated violations of the Code of Conduct. The Hearing Officer has the discretion to determine whether a long-term suspension or expulsion is warranted on a case-by-case basis, taking into account all relevant factors, and considering the evidence presented at a Formal Disciplinary Hearing.

Prior to the imposition of a long-term suspension or expulsion, students are subject to the following due process procedures, consistent general due process protections and with those laid out in Goss v. Lopez, 419 U.S. 565 (1975). If a student commits an offense that calls for long-term suspension or expulsion, the following steps are taken:

- If necessary, the student will be immediately removed from class and/or school.
- Upon determining that a student's action warrants a possible long-term suspension, the CEO/designee shall verbally inform the student that he or she is being suspended and is being considered for a long-term suspension (or expulsion) and state the reasons for such actions.
- The caregiver will be notified in writing by Vertus. Written notice shall be provided by personal delivery or express mail delivery within 24 hours of the decision to impose suspension. The delivery will be sent to the last known address(es) of the caregiver(s). Where possible, notification also shall be provided by telephone. Such notice shall provide a description of the incident or incidents which resulted in the suspension and shall indicate that a Formal Disciplinary Hearing will be held on the matter that may result in a long-term suspension or expulsion. The notification provided shall be in the dominant language used by the caregiver(s). At the Formal Disciplinary Hearing, the student shall have the right to be represented by counsel, to question witnesses, and to present evidence.
- The school will set a date for a Formal Disciplinary Hearing. The student's caregiver(s) will be notified in writing of the date and time, place, right to representation by legal counsel, right to present evidence and question witnesses, and right to request a record.
- The Hearing Officer shall have the authority to hear and render a decision on the matter. The Hearing Officer shall oversee the Formal Disciplinary Hearing and listen to both sides, asking clarifying questions as needed.
- A written decision shall be issued to the student by the Hearing Officer that indicates a finding of the facts on the charge(s) and the disciplinary decision reached. This written decision shall be sent to the student and caregiver(s) within seven days after the Formal Disciplinary Hearing.

The decision to impose a long term suspension or expulsion may be appealed to the Board of Trustees. A request for an appeal must be received by the Board of Trustees within two weeks

of the Hearing Officer's written decision. On appeal, the Board, or a Board appointed sub-committee, will review the record of the Formal Disciplinary Hearing and any exhibits presented there, and the student and the school will each have an opportunity to present a summary of their positions along with any additional documentary evidence they consider probative. The Board may elect to ask questions of the parties as well. The Board will provide the student with a written decision within seven days of the appeal hearing. The decision of the Board shall be final, except where violations of law or of the school's charter are alleged. In such cases, the matter may be further appealed to the school's authorizer, as discussed in the Formal Complaint Policy.

Gun Free Schools Act

Federal and State law require the expulsion from school for a period of not less than one year of a student who is determined to have brought a firearm to the school, or to have possessed a firearm at school, except that the CEO may modify such expulsion requirement for a student on a case-by-case basis, if such modification is in writing, in accordance with the Federal Gun-Free schools Act of 1994 (as amended).

Discipline for Students with Disabilities

In addition to the discipline procedures applicable to all students, the school will follow all applicable provisions of law relating to students with disabilities. A student not specifically identified as having a disability but whose school district of residence or charter school, prior to the behavior which is the subject of the disciplinary action, has a basis of knowledge—in accordance with 34 CFR 300.534—that a disability exists may request to be disciplined in accordance with these provisions. The school shall comply with sections 300.530-300.536 of the Code of Federal Regulations. The school shall maintain written records of all suspensions and expulsions of students with a disability including the name of the student, a description of the behavior engaged in, the disciplinary action taken, and a record of the number of days a student has been suspended or removed for disciplinary reasons. If a student identified as having a disability is suspended during the course of the school year for a total of eight days, such student will immediately be referred to the CSE of the student's district of residence for reconsideration of the student's educational placement. Such a student shall not be suspended for a total of more than ten days during the school year without the specific involvement of the CSE of the student's district of residence prior to the eleventh day of suspension, because such suspensions may be considered to be a change in placement. In considering the placement of students referred because of disciplinary problems, the CSE of the students' district of residence is expected to follow its ordinary policies with respect to parental notification and involvement.

Frequently Asked Questions About Uniforms

1. What does the Vertus uniform consist of?

Vertus slacks and Vertus embroidered long sleeve dress shirt:

These items will be available for ordering on Family Night, which will be from 5:00 to 6:30 p.m. on August 6, at the school. Uniform items may also be ordered at Stitchworks, 297 Culver Parkway, Rochester, NY 14609. Store hours are Monday through Friday from 9:00am– 5:00pm; Saturday 10am– 2pm.

Black belt, black shoes (no sneakers): Parents can provide any black belt and black dress shoes. No sneakers are allowed.

Freshman tie: This will be provided by Vertus at no cost to families.

Vertus blazer: The blazer will be provided by Vertus at no cost to families. Blazers will be awarded in a special ceremony later this fall, when students have earned them. All families will be invited to celebrate this special night marking our students' first steps toward becoming leaders of character.

Optional: Vertus sweater (available at Stitchworks), extra pants and shirts.

For Summer Quarter: Students will be allowed to wear a short-sleeved polo-style shirt during 4th quarter, in the summer of 2015. This shirt will be available for sale a few months prior.

2. What does the uniform cost?

Vertus Slacks

8-16.....\$22.00
Preps sizes..... \$26.00
Husky/Men's sizes.... \$26.00

Vertus Long Sleeve Dress Shirts

Youth L/S.....\$20.00
Adult\$20.00

Vertus Sweater (optional)

Youth.....\$24.00
Adult.....\$26.00

Vertus Polo-Style Shirt (summer only)

All sizes.....TBD

Stitchworks is offering 10% off all purchases for Vertus Students only of \$50.00 or more ordered at their shop before August 10, 2014.

3. Where can I order the uniform?

Stitchworks, 297 Culver Parkway, 585-654-7522. Representatives will also be at our Family Night Event on August 6 to measure the students and take orders.

4. Can I use layaway?

Yes, call Stitchworks for details - (585)654-7522

5. What if I need financial help for the uniform?

Let us know if you need financial assistance. You can talk with your son's preceptor, or e-mail Patricia Anthony at panthony@vertusschool.org.

6. What if my son comes to school not in uniform?

He will not be able to attend class. We will call home and ask that a family member bring missing uniform items to school.

Frequently Asked Questions About Transportation

How will my student get to and from school?

- If your student resides in the City of Rochester and lives at least 1.5 miles from school, your student will receive a Rochester City School District Smart Card ID, distributed by the Transportation Department of the Rochester City School District. Each pass contains the student's photo. If the student has a photo in the system, that photo will print on the pass. Students who don't have a photo on file can go to Student Placement at Central Office to have a photo taken or Vertus can take the picture and send it to the district. The passes will be delivered to Vertus prior to the first day of school. For further information on student transportation in the City of Rochester, please refer to the Transportation section on the District website: <http://www.rcsdk12.org>.

Will students have to travel through downtown Rochester?

- Depending on where a student resides, he may be required to travel on one bus (route) downtown and transfer to another bus (route) to Vertus. RTS is taking significant steps to improve order and safety during downtown transfers.

How safe will students be when they get off the bus at Vertus in the morning and get on the bus in the afternoon?

- The bus stop is at the corner across the street from the school. Vertus staff will be outside by the bus stop, which is in front of the school, when students arrive each morning and depart each afternoon.

What happens if a student gets on a bus that is not going to Vertus?

- Students should ask the bus operator for assistance if they happen to board the incorrect bus.

If a student's IEP dictates door-to-door pickup, will Vertus provide it?

- The application for transportation has an IEP check box. When RSCD receives the application, they confirm that a valid IEP exists. If one does not, the parent will be informed and must contact school to ensure that the information has been provided to the District Office of Special Education Services.

How do I arrange for busing if my child does not live within the City of Rochester?

- Transportation must be arranged through the school district where the student resides (i.e. Greece Central, Rush-Henrietta, Gates-Chili, etc.) Parents must fill out the appropriate form, which is available at the transportation office of their home school district. Parents should confirm that transportation is in place by calling their home district's transportation office no later than August 31.

Complaint Policy

Vertus is committed to resolving concerns and complaints in a manner in which all parties feel respectfully heard and understood. We encourage those with concerns to first contact the individual involved to give him/her an opportunity to respond or resolve the concern informally. If the issue is not resolved, there are two procedures outlined below. The first procedure is for informal complaints regarding the instruction, operations or administration of the school. The second procedure is for formal complaints involving a belief that the school has violated a term of its charter or the law. In all cases, the school prohibits retaliation against complainants. The school will attempt to keep information about complainants confidential, except where it is necessary or appropriate to disclose it.

Informal complaints

Informal complaints are issues that arise which do not involve the belief that Vertus Charter School has violated a term of its charter or the law. The following process will be followed to resolve informal complaints:

- If complaints are regarding treatment of students by staff or fellow students, the complainant should contact the Dean of Students.
- If complaints are regarding daily services, such as transportation, food or facilities, the complainant should contact the Chief Operating Officer.
- If complaints are about student grades or other instructional concerns, the complainant should contact the Teacher or Lead Teacher.
- If the concern is still unresolved, the complainant should contact the Chief Executive Officer.
- If after speaking to the Chief Executive Officer, the complaint remains unresolved, the complainant may issue a written appeal addressed to the Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Vertus Charter School {address to come}. The complainant may also attend a Board meeting and speak during the regularly-scheduled public comment period. Board meeting times and locations are posted on the school's website at VertusSchool.org.

Formal complaints

Formal complaints are defined according to section 2855 (4) of the NYS Charter Schools Act, which explains that any individual, including parents, who believe that a charter school has violated a term of its charter or the law may complain formally to the school's Board of Trustees and seek relief. If an individual issues a formal complaint about the school, the following process will be followed:

1. All complaints must be issued in writing and addressed to the Chairman of the Board of Trustees, {address}.
2. Complaints may not be anonymous; there must be an individual or group who signs the complaint and is responsible for providing relevant information regarding the complaint.
3. The Chairman of the Board can investigate the complaint or can delegate an unbiased board member, staff person or outside person to investigate the complaint.
4. During the investigation, the investigator will gather all relevant evidence (including first person statements from staff, parents and students as necessary, copies of any documents at issue, and pursuing all other leads) to fairly assess the situation and develop an understanding of what happened.
5. At the conclusion of the investigation, the investigator will prepare a report for the Chairman, who will, in turn, propose action steps. The Chairman will present the recommended action steps to the Board, which will be responsible for approving or denying the Chairman's recommendations. Should the Board not approve the recommendations, members may suggest and vote on alternative action steps for resolving the complaint. All complaints will be acted upon by the Board within 30 days of receiving the formal written complaint, or by the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Board, whichever is longer, unless extenuating circumstances outlined in the complaint require an expedited review.
6. The Chairman will send written notification to the complainant in writing within 15 business days of the decision regarding the action steps approved by the Board of Trustees.
7. If the complainant believes that the Board has not adequately addressed the complaint, s/he may present the complaint to the New York State Education Department Charter School Office, either via mail at: Charter School Office, NYS Education Department, 89 Washington Avenue, Albany, NY 12234, or via email to: charterschools@mail.nysed.gov The subject line of the email should read: Complaint: Vertus Charter School.

Notification of Rights under FERPA

Vertus Charter School

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

(1) The right to inspect and review the student's education records within 45 days of the day the School receives a request for access. Parents or eligible students should submit to Vertus Charter School a written request that identifies the record(s) they wish to inspect. The school will make arrangements for access and notify the parent or eligible student of the time and place where the records may be inspected. The School will make copies available to parents for free.

(2) The right to request the amendment of the student's education records that the parent or eligible student believes are inaccurate or misleading. Parents or eligible students may ask the school to amend a record that they believe is inaccurate or misleading. They should write the school's Chief Operating Officer, clearly identify the part of the record they want changed, and specify why it is inaccurate or misleading. If the school decides not to amend the record as requested by the parent or eligible student, the school will notify the parent or eligible student of the decision and advise them of their right to a hearing regarding the request for amendment. Additional information regarding the hearing procedures will be provided to the parent or eligible student when notified of the right to a hearing.

(3) The right to consent to disclosures of personally identifiable information contained in the student's education records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent. One exception, which permits disclosure without consent, is disclosure to school officials with legitimate educational interests.

A school official is a person employed by the School as an administrator, supervisor, instructor, or support staff member (including health or medical staff and law enforcement unit personnel); a person serving on the School Board; a person or company with whom the School has contracted to perform a special task (such as an attorney, auditor, medical consultant, or therapist); or a parent or student serving on an official committee, such as a disciplinary or grievance committee, or assisting another school official in performing his or her tasks.

A school official has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record in order to fulfill his or her professional responsibility. Upon request, the School discloses education records without consent to officials of another school district in which a student seeks or intends to enroll. [NOTE: FERPA requires a school to make a reasonable attempt to

notify the parent or eligible student of the records request unless it states in its annual notification that it intends to forward records on request.]

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

Family Policy Compliance Office
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202-4605