



# Vertus Charter School

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*COURAGE, LEADERSHIP, RESPONSIBILITY*

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

## ***Student and Family Handbook 2015-16***

Vertus Charter School  
2 Austin St.  
Rochester, N.Y. 14606  
585-747-8911



## 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 VERTUS MEN



# Vertus Charter School

*COURAGE, LEADERSHIP, RESPONSIBILITY*

## Preparing leaders of character

Welcome to Vertus. Our mission is to **prepare leaders of character for the community and the workplace**. Our program is guided by three virtues: **courage, leadership, and responsibility**. We develop these virtues in our students. We also teach eight core character strengths: grit, optimism, interpersonal self-control, self-control with respect to schoolwork, social intelligence, curiosity, gratitude, and zest. Each of our young men is assigned to a small learning team with a full-time Preceptor who is responsible for teaching him character and helping him succeed.

## Year-round, personalized, mastery-based instruction

All of our students will earn a high school diploma. After high school, our students will go to college or begin a meaningful career. We expect that most of our students will earn tuition-free college credits during their final year with us, along with a career certificate or credential signifying workplace readiness.

Our innovative school is designed for student success based on the best current knowledge of educational psychology, student motivation, and successful inner-city school design. Our program is approved by New York State and meets all state law requirements.

Students earn their high school credits at Vertus by completing on-line and teacher led courses that meet them at their unique starting points. To advance, students must do the coursework and demonstrate that they have mastered the material. Each student moves at his own pace.

We do not have traditional grade levels. Students earn the 22 credits required to graduate from high school and prepare to pass the rigorous NY Regents Exams by completing courses throughout the year, rather than being “passed” or “failed” after the passage of 9 months, as in a traditional school. Our teachers help all students succeed through a combination of on-line courses, regular assessments, classroom instruction, and special projects.

## Real world experiences

Our goal is to provide a bridge to the real world through relevant experiences. We want every student to understand why he is spending so much time in school and to develop a compelling vision for what life after high school can be. Our students all participate in mandatory enrichment experiences, regular field trips, and community service. As our students grow and develop, they can earn opportunities for internship experiences and after school and summer employment based on their credit status and other criteria.

## 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 with families at least once every two weeks and often more. 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 7:00 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.

## The Non-Violence Pledge

Safety is an absolute priority at Vertus. Accordingly, all students must agree to sign and abide by the Non-Violence Agreement:

*I agree not to use violence for any reason whatsoever at Vertus, while representing Vertus, or with any member of the Vertus community. I understand that this non-violence pledge applies to all parties involved in any fight, no matter whether I am right or wrong, or whether another student started it. I understand that this pledge applies from the time I arrive in the morning until I reach home in the afternoon, including on the bus, at the bus stop, or in the Transit Center.*

*I understand that the likely consequences for violating this contract are mandatory counseling along with suspension or expulsion under the school's Discipline Code.*

## Student/ Family/ School Agreement

Students achieve their goals when students, guardians and the school all partner for student success. Our Student/Family/School Agreement sets forth the responsibilities of the student, the guardian and the school. Students, guardian and a school representative sign the contract at the start of every school year.

### Vertus Promises:

**Graduation:** Vertus promises to help each student to achieve all graduation requirements and to earn a career certificate or credential (including college credits at no cost to families). Our school will provide individualized coursework that meets the student where he is and allows him to progress at his own pace. The school will communicate graduation requirements and discuss progress toward graduation with students and guardians regularly.

**Communication:** Vertus promises to communicate with families in all the following ways:

- Preceptors will communicate about student progress at least once every two weeks (more if needed);
- The school office will call the guardian every day that a student has an unexcused absence;
- The school will call home when there is a major discipline incident;
- The school will send home quarterly Progress Reports showing credits earned, grades and attendance;
- The school will host mandatory family conferences three times a year, with both day and evening times available.

**Student Promises:**

**Attendance:** I will come to school on time every day unless I have an excused absence.

**Participation:** I will participate actively and willingly in the learning process. I will have my binder and pencil as required, sit in my assigned seat, take notes, follow all academic rules, pay attention to instruction, complete all assignments to the best of my ability, and request help when I need it.

**Behavior:** I will:

- Come to school in uniform and follow the dress code
- Turn in my cell phone and mobile devices every morning
- Follow the directions of staff members
- Use respectful language. I will not curse, “drill” or use the “n” word or ethnic slurs at any time with staff or with other students
- Refrain from play fighting
- Transition silently, single file, with my learning team unless I have a pass or have permission to go somewhere independently
- Follow the “one mike” rule so that only one person speaks at a time
- Engage in respectful discussion in class without name calling, shouting or interrupting others
- Respect and refrain from damaging school property
- Follow all academic rules
- Use technology in accordance with the Vertus technology policy

**Guardian Promises:**

**Attendance:** I understand that Vertus is a year-round school and that my student is expected to be here every day. I will do my best to send my student to school on time, every day, well rested and ready to learn. I will call the school when he is sick or needs to miss school for an emergency.

**Partnership:** I will keep my contact information updated and let the school know when my phone number or address changes. I will answer calls from the school as promptly as possible and will come to school for requested conferences. I will let my student’s Preceptor or another staff member know of any concerns about my student’s wellbeing at school.

**Family conferences.** I will come to family conferences to review my student’s progress toward graduation. I understand that conferences will be held three times a year and that evening and daytime conference times will be available.

## School Day and School Year

Vertus is a year-round school. Our school year is divided into four quarters with time off in between. A school calendar is included as Appendix A.

Mandatory school hours are:

- September 8 through June 23:
  - 8:30 to 4:30 Monday-Thursday; 8:30 to 12:30 Friday
- July 11 through August 12:
  - 8:30 to 3:00 Monday-Thursday; 8:30 to 12:30 Friday

The school day begins with breakfast at **8:35**. 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**.

## Attendance

Students must arrive at school on time every day and stay for the whole day. Students cannot learn and succeed if they are not in school. Guardians must ensure that students attend school year round, arrive on time every day, and stay on campus for the full school day. Whenever possible, medical and other appointments should be planned for school breaks or outside of school hours.

If a student must be absent for illness or other emergency, a guardian must contact the Main Office before 8:00 a.m. If, in an emergency, a student must be signed out before the end of the day, the guardian must call the Main Office to let a staff member know. Guardians who are signing out a student should report to the Main Office.

A parent conference is required when a student has more than 5 unexcused absences. The school may file a PINS (person in need of supervision) petition if a student frequently misses school.

## Academics

### Graduation Requirements

To graduate, a student must:

- Earn 22 high school credits as specified in the New York State Diploma Regulations
- Pass all Regents Exams required by New York State regulations (currently 5 Regents Exams)
- Earn a Career Certificate or Credential as specified by the Vertus Board
- Demonstrate a success plan for one of three post-secondary options: 1) university; 2) community college or technical school; or 3) employment. The success plan will be scored according to a rubric approved by the Board. Students who go directly into the workplace must successfully complete a probationary job placement.

## **Course Placement and Credit**

Students will be given the national standardized NWEA test in September, January and June. This test, which is given to hundreds of thousands of students around the country, shows where students stand compared to students in the same grade throughout the United States. These results will be used to place students in the appropriate class and to measure academic progress. Course placement may change based on transfer credits or prior Regents Exams passed. Students will move to higher-level classes as they complete their courses. Students may have an opportunity to skip classes based on NWEA test results, Edgenuity “pre-testing,” and/or teacher judgment of student skill level.

Students do much of their learning on-line, progressing at their own pace. We generally divide on-line courses into short courses that are each worth .25 high school credit (four parts equal one full high school credit). Dividing courses into shorter intervals allows for greater student success and regular “fresh starts.” Students may not move up to the next on-line course until they pass quizzes and unit tests with a grade of 80% or higher. Students must earn 75% or higher in a course to receive credit and move forward. In addition to credit earned on-line, students earn additional course credit for Preceptor and Teacher-led instruction, including seminar-style instruction, workshops and PE.

## Promotion Requirements

Vertus is an innovative, mastery-based high school that does not have traditional grade levels. Because students progress toward graduation at their own pace, the school does not distinguish among “9<sup>th</sup>” graders, “10<sup>th</sup> graders, etc. Students are grouped as learners based on their skills and accomplishments. Students advance from Novice to Professional learners, earning greater independence and privileges as they advance. Students advance based on performance, not based on the amount of time they have spent in school.

Level	Description	Requirements to advance to the next level
Novice	New to high school or not yet able to manage their time and behavior. These students work in a highly structured and supervised setting and need more maturity to move to intermediate status.	Earn at least 5 credits, including credit for ELA I and Algebra I. Pass character seminar. Recommended for next level by Preceptor and teachers.
Intermediate	Follows all school rules. Can manage his time and behavior to learn and earn credits efficiently. More socially mature than a Novice but still needs oversight and structure over their learning, schedule and interactions. Takes on some leadership roles.	At least 10 credits, including ELA II and a second math credit. Pass at least one Regents exam. Pass character seminar. Recommended for next level by Preceptor and teachers.
Advanced	Very familiar with school culture and has proven to be an excellent self-manager and role model. Takes on team leadership roles. These students are given significant control over their learning and interaction processes. This student may not yet be prepared to enter independently into external internships and learning experiences but has significant freedom within the school and participates in self-managed group projects and other learning experiences.	At least 15 credits. Pass at least two Regents exams. Show acceptable performance on Character Benchmarks required to move to Professional level. Recommended for next level by Preceptor and teachers.
Professional	Has significant self-management skills and maturity. Has the privilege to attend courses on college campuses, in clinical settings and in self-directed project teams. Is a role model/mentor for other students and is turned to by faculty for advice in improving school operations. Paid internships, college-level courses and transition experiences in college, careers and community service are typical for this student.	Meets all requirements for graduation.

## 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.



## Closed Campus

Vertus is a closed campus. Once students arrive on campus, they must remain within the school grounds, unless signed out by an authorized party. Students should not be outside the school building for any reason, unless approved or escorted by a staff member.

## 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 do not judge each other based on our clothing
- We are proud to be Vertus men

Students may not attend school out of uniform. If a student arrives out of uniform in any respect, his guardian will be called to bring the missing items and he will serve lunch detention. If the guardian is not available we may loan a student the missing item from our uniform closet. Students who borrow uniform items must leave their bus pass or another personal item, which will be returned at the end of the day in exchange for return of the borrowed uniform item. Students will not be able to participate in school activities until they are in full uniform.

The Vertus uniform includes:

- Vertus white dress shirt with embroidered school logo (purchased from Stitchworks).
- Black dress slacks (no cargo pants, joggers, or athletic pants). Pants must be at the waist and no sagging is allowed.
- Black belt. The belt must be leather or leather-like. Cloth belts or belts with studs or designs are not permitted.
- Solid black tie for Novice students (straight or bow tie.) Vertus will provide special ties to signify Intermediate, Advanced, or Professional status.
- Dress shoes. 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.)
- No visible jewelry or earrings other than a watch. Students who get their ears pierced may wear clear studs but no other earrings are allowed.
- Other approved uniform options, such as a Vertus sweater, may be available from time to time but are not required.
- There are special rules for summer uniforms. Families will be notified of summer uniform rules at the start of the spring quarter.

No gang insignia are permitted. Headgear/hats are limited to those required to be worn as a part of religious practice.

Frequently asked questions about uniforms are included as Appendix B.

## Lockers

Every student is issued a locker at the beginning of the school year. The locker is for students to secure their personal belongings and valuables. Students may not leave their belongings in their team room. If a locker issued to a student malfunctions in any way, it is the responsibility of the student to inform a staff member. Personal belongings and valuables are the responsibility of the student. Students must monitor and care for their own belongings. Vertus is not responsible for lost or stolen belongings and valuables. We ask students to come to school with only what they need each day and to leave at home any items that they do not need at school.

## Cell phones and wireless devices

Students must turn in their cell phones and wireless devices to their Preceptor during breakfast. Students arriving late will turn them in to the Main Office when they sign in. If a student has a cellphone or wireless device during the school day, it will be confiscated and a guardian will be called to come pick it up. Guardians who need to get a message to students during the school day should call the Main Office or the student's Preceptor.

## Searches

In order to ensure safety at the school, Vertus retains the right to search any student, locker or objects brought onto school property at any time.

## School Rules

### **At all times, students must:**

- Come to school in uniform and follow the dress code
- Turn in cell phone and mobile devices every morning
- Follow the directions of staff members
- Use respectful language -- not curse, "drill" or use the "n" word or ethnic slurs at any time with staff or with other students
- Refrain from play fighting
- Transition silently, single file, with the learning team unless the student has a pass or has permission to go somewhere independently
- Follow the "one mike" rule so that only one person speaks at a time
- Engage in respectful discussion in class without name calling, shouting, making noises or interrupting others
- Respect and refrain from damaging school property
- Follow all academic rules
- Use technology in accordance with the Vertus technology policy

### **In classroom activities, students must:**

- Enter quietly and begin the "Do Now"
- Sit in assigned seats
- Have binder and pencil
- Take notes as required
- Follow the directions of the teacher/Preceptor/leader
- Participate in all activities
- Do all assigned work to the best of their ability

**In the learning labs, students must:**

- Enter quietly and go to assigned seat
- Sign onto the computer immediately
- Stay awake or ask a staff member for a “wake up” break
- Work silently unless otherwise instructed or given permission for group work or discussion
- Follow all directions from staff
- Refrain from bringing food or drink into labs

**When working on Edgenuity (on-line coursework), students must:**

- Use only their own user name and password; passwords may not be shared with others
- Check their assignment calendar daily
- Wear headphones during lessons (unless staff gives permission for closed captioning)
- Take notes in their binders using the Vertus note taking system
- Keep notes in the appropriate section of the binder (students will not open quizzes or tests unless a student has acceptable notes)
- No quiz retakes will be given unless the assignment grade is 80% or higher
- Students will not receive answer checks on any Edgenuity assessment, including tests, quizzes and assignments
- Math problems must be solved on paper before answering multiple-choice questions
- Have only one tab or window open at once
- Work only on Edgenuity or other approved instructional system—no other on-line systems, websites, or applications may be accessed without permission. No storage or additional systems such as thumb drives may be used without written permission from a teacher
- Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated—no copying, using multiple tabs to see previous answers, or plagiarism (see the Academic Dishonesty section below)

**During meals, students must:**

- Sit at assigned tables unless the meal is “open” seating
- Line up quietly in the cafeteria line and not cut the line
- Refrain from playing with or throwing food or taking food from other students
- Use an inside voice
- Dispose of trash in the proper receptacles and assist teams in cleaning tables
- Stay in the designated and supervised areas

**Students who do not follow school rules will be subject to discipline.**

## Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty includes plagiarism and cheating. Copying the words, ideas, or opinions of someone else without giving credit to that person in the form of footnotes or references is plagiarism. Whether deliberate or accidental, plagiarism is a serious and punishable offense. Cheating involves using or providing answers or academic work that is not a student's own work. Students must always be responsible for their own work and not engage in any manner of cheating. Academic dishonesty will result in loss of credit and/or failure. Students will also receive consequences under the Discipline Code.

### **Deliberate plagiarism:**

- Copying of a phrase, sentence or a longer passage from a source and passing it off as one's own.
- Summarizing or paraphrasing someone else's ideas without acknowledging that the work is not one's own.
- Obtaining a paper or other schoolwork from an outside source and handing it in as one's own work.

### **Accidental plagiarism:**

- Forgetting to place quotation marks around another writer's words.
- Omitting a source citation for another's idea because one is unaware of the need to acknowledge the idea.

### **Cheating:**

- Obtaining a copy of tests answers.
- Copying another student's answers during a test.
- Providing another student questions or answers to, or copies of, actual test questions.
- Having or using non-permitted materials or devices during tests.
- Duplicating another student's project or work for submission as one's own work.
- Having someone other than the student prepare the student's answers, homework, paper, project, laboratory report or take-home test.
- Permitting another student to copy one's own answers, homework, paper, project, laboratory report, quiz or test.
- Giving another student a user name or password or using another student's user name or password.

## Technology Acceptable Use Policy

The goal of computer access at school is to build technology skills, information gathering skills, and communication skills. Students have the privilege to use computer workstations, electronic devices, the school network, e-mail, and the internet for school assignments only.

**Responsible students use technology carefully:** Students must return equipment in the same manner in which it was received. Purposely damaging technology or equipment will result in disciplinary consequences.

**Responsible students use the internet appropriately:** Students are responsible for all web pages accessed. Students must earn internet access by studying this technology acceptable use policy.

Students are not allowed to access, use or possess pornographic, gang-related, violent, illegal, or inappropriate material. Students may not access any social media, email, chats, or blogs on school devices without the consent of a staff member. Students are not allowed to access, use, or possess unauthorized or illegally obtained hardware, software, data, or files deemed dangerous to the integrity of the Vertus network system (e.g., viruses, worms, or other harmful programs designed to disrupt or alter a computer's functions). Students may not alter any network address or identifiers. Students must not attempt unauthorized entry to any area of the network or interfere with or disrupt any computer, network, source or equipment, regardless of who may own, operate or supervise it.

Students should not give out any personal information such as address, telephone number, parent's work address or telephone number, or any other person's address or telephone number without parental permission. Students should tell a staff member immediately if they experience an uncomfortable situation.

**Responsible students respect the privacy and rights of others:** Students must keep their computer account, user name and password private. Students may not access the records of other students. Students may not destroy or damage another person's files or messages. Students may not use school computers, the school network, or the internet to make inappropriate or negative comments about other students, teachers, administrators, or the school.

**Responsible students maintain the integrity of the school network:** Students are accountable for all e-mail sent or received under their user accounts. Students may not use the network or labs for wasteful or frivolous purposes including, but not limited to; playing games, social media, using chat programs, listening to music, watching videos unrelated to a school assignment, participating in "chain letters," writing blogs, participating in online chats, or engaging in any commercial activities including advertising or sales. It is the student's responsibility to follow all computer lab rules and obey supervisors of the labs.

Students should not expect that files stored on school-based computers or servers will be private. Electronic messages and files stored on school-based computers or stored outside the school using the school's internet account may be treated like school lockers. The school reserves the right to monitor any and all emails/messages sent on or within school property. All administrators, Preceptors and teachers have access to stored files and e-mail. Administrators, Preceptors and teachers may review files and messages at any time to maintain the integrity of the system, to ensure that students are acting responsibly, to conduct the business of the school, and to comply with legal requirements. School student email is school owned and as such students have no reasonable expectation of privacy to student email. Accordingly, student email accounts can be search without notice, consent or reasonable suspicion.

Failure to comply with the Technology Acceptable Use Policy may result in loss of computer privileges as well as other consequences under the Discipline Code. Students observing or knowing of any violation of these guidelines or of a security problem on the network/Internet must notify a staff member.

## Total Sports Experience (TSE)

Vertus has been given the use of Total Sports Experience (TSE) for PE and recreational use. It is very important that students do not abuse the privilege of using this facility. All applicable school rules, as well as the Discipline Code, apply at TSE. In particular, students must:

- Wear the required clothing and shoes for PE and recreation
- Use good behavior on the bus
- Follow all the directions of staff
- Stay in areas reserved for Vertus use
- Refrain from cursing or abusive language
- Show good sportsmanship
- No play-fighting, horse-play, threats or fighting
- Refrain from damaging or taking TSE property or the property of others at TSE

Students who abuse the privilege of using TSE will not be able to go to the facility and will receive consequences under the Discipline Code.

## Discipline Procedures

As appropriate, school staff will take actions to assist the student in improving his behavior, which may include but are not limited to:

- Counseling by school personnel
- Loss of privileges, such as TSE, field trips, etc.
- Lunch detention, end of day detention (“Dean’s Club”), or after school detention
- Parent conference
- Parent comes to school to provide in-school supervision to the student
- Restorative justice, taking actions to apologize or remedy the harm the student has caused
- Referral to counselor
- Referral to a building special services team for evaluation
- Referral for a health examination and evaluation
- PINS (“person in need of supervision”) court petition
- Recommended services of outside agencies, public or private
- Behavioral management plans/behavioral contracts
- Involvement in a school intervention program, such as gang intervention
- Suspension
- Expulsion

*NOTE: This list is neither exhaustive of all administrative discipline processes nor is it rank ordered.*

The Discipline Code is attached as Appendix C.

## Gang-Related Activity

Vertus is a neutral space. Gang related activity/behavior is absolutely prohibited on Vertus's campus and at all Vertus events. The school takes gang activity very seriously.

Vertus students may not demonstrate visible or audible gang identifiers. These include, but are not limited to the following:

- Flags, bandanas, clothing, jewelry or any other signal of gang involvement
- Handshakes of any kind
- Hand signs or signals of any kind
- Verbal signals of any kind
- Graffiti or writing of any kind

Vertus prohibits the following on school property and at Vertus functions and activities whether on or off school property:

Initiating, advocating, or promoting a gang or gang activities.

Tagging or defacing property with gang names, slogans and/or insignias.

Conducting gang initiations.

Threatening another in any way in connection with gang-related activity.

Inciting, soliciting, or recruiting others for gang membership or gang related activities.

Aiding or abetting any of the above activities by one's presence or support.

Any student found to have engaged in any of the above activities will be subject to consequences in accordance with Section 2.8 of the School's Code of Conduct, which include suspension or expulsion.

## Food

All our students receive free breakfast, lunch and snack.

Unless approved by a staff member, eating and/or drinking outside the cafeteria/multipurpose room is prohibited. Lunches brought by students should be stored in lockers and then taken to and eaten in the cafeteria/multipurpose room. Students may not bring in or consume snacks, candy, sodas or sugary drinks other than items sold at the school store or provided as treats by the school. Parents may provide treats to celebrate special events – please call or stop by the main office first to let us know. Gum chewing is prohibited in the building.

## Substance Abuse

Drug and alcohol abuse prevent students from achieving their potential. The school may refer students experiencing problems with drugs or alcohol for substance abuse counseling or treatment. If staff judges students to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol the student will be sent home and have disciplinary consequences. The school reserves the right to give a drug/alcohol test to any student exhibiting behavioral symptoms indicating alcohol or substance abuse.

## Field Trips

Field trips provide students rich opportunities to learn and interact outside the classroom environment and are an important part of our program. A field trip permission form is part of our enrollment package. Special trips out of town will require specific permission from parents or guardians. Students who do not meet the school behavioral or academic policy may be prohibited from attending field trips.

## Transportation

All Vertus students who live at least 1.5 miles from school are entitled to transportation services. Transportation is provided by the home district of the student. Families must complete and submit a transportation form for their district in order to receive these services. Special education students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) will be transported to school separately. We work with families to understand bus routes, answer questions about transportation, and address transportation safety concerns.

## 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. 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 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 D.

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 E.

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



# APPENDIX A

## 2015-16 Academic Calendar



**Vertus Charter School**  
COURAGE, LEADERSHIP, RESPONSIBILITY

September				
	1	2	3	4
7	8	9	10	11
14	15	16	17	18
21	22	23	24	25
28	29	30		

7: Labor Day  
8: Fall quarter begins

October				
			1	2
5	6	7	8	9
12	13	14	15	16
19	20	21	22	23
26	27	28	29	30

12: Columbus Day

November				
2	3	4	5	6
9	10	11	12	13
16	17	18	19	20
23	24	25	26	27
30				

11: Veterans Day  
26: Thanksgiving recess

December				
	1	2	3	4
7	8	9	10	11
14	15	16	17	18
21	22	23	24	25
28	29	30	31	

18: Fall quarter ends  
25-31: Winter recess

January				
				1
4	5	6	7	8
11	12	13	14	15
18	19	20	21	22
25	26	27	28	29

1: New Year's Day  
4: Winter quarter begins  
18: MLK Day

February				
1	2	3	4	5
8	9	10	11	12
15	16	17	18	19
22	23	24	25	26
29				

15-19: Mid-winter recess

March				
	1	2	3	4
7	8	9	10	11
14	15	16	17	18
21	22	23	24	25
28	29	30	31	

24: Winter quarter ends  
25: Good Friday  
28-31: Spring recess

April				
				1
4	5	6	7	8
11	12	13	14	15
18	19	20	21	22
25	26	27	28	29

1: Spring recess  
4: Spring quarter begins

May				
2	3	4	5	6
9	10	11	12	13
16	17	18	19	20
23	24	25	26	27
30	31			

30: Memorial Day

June				
		1	2	3
6	7	8	9	10
13	14	15	16	17
20	21	22	23	24
27	28	29	30	

23: Spring quarter ends

July				
				1
4	5	6	7	8
11	12	13	14	15
18	19	20	21	22
25	26	27	28	29

4: Independence Day  
5: Summer quarter begins

August/September				
1	2	3	4	5
8	9	10	11	12
15	16	17	18	19
22	23	24	25	26
29	30	31	1	2
5	6			

12: Summer quarter ends  
September 5: Labor Day  
September 6: First Day of School

	Students in session
	Students off
	Quarter begins or ends



## APPENDIX B

### Frequently Asked Questions about Uniforms

1. What does the Vertus uniform consist of?

**Vertus long-sleeve, embroidered dress shirt**

The Vertus dress shirt with embroidered logo will be available for ordering on Family Night, which will be held at Vertus on August 19 from 5:00 to 7:00pm. You can also order the shirt directly from Stitchworks (297 Culver Parkway, Rochester, 585-654-7522). Store hours are Monday through Friday from 9:00am to 5:00pm; Saturday 10:00am to 2:00pm.

**Other required uniform items**

The following items can be purchased from any source and do not carry the Vertus logo:

- **Black tie** — straight or bow tie, must be plain black (no patterns or other colors)
- **Black dress pants** — must be plain black (no cargo or athletic pants)
- **Black belt** — must be leather or imitation leather (cloth belts or belts with studs or designs are not permitted)
- **Black dress shoes** — lace-up or loafer style, must be solid black (no sneakers)

**Optional:** Vertus sweater (also available from Stitchworks), extra pants and/or shirts.

**Summer quarter:** Students will be allowed to wear a short-sleeved polo shirt and shorts during summer only. This shirt will be available for sale a few months prior.

2. What does the uniform cost?

**Vertus long-sleeve dress shirt**

Youth (any size): \$20

Adult S, M, L, or XL: \$20

Adult 2XL: \$22

Adult 3XL: \$24

**Vertus sweater (optional)**

Youth (any size): \$24

Adult (any size): \$26

**Vertus short-sleeve polo shirt (summer only)**

\$16 + \$1-3 upcharge for plus sizes

3. Where can I order the uniform?

Stitchworks, 297 Culver Parkway, 585-654-7522.

4. Can I use layaway?

Yes, call Stitchworks for details.

5. Is financial help available for the uniform?

Financial assistance can be requested but is not guaranteed. Please speak with your son's preceptor or e-mail Josh Pincus at [jpincus@vertusschool.org](mailto:jpincus@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.



## APPENDIX C

### 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, guardian 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.
- 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 guardians 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: Guardians 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 follow school rules 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 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 Technology Use and 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 Technology Acceptable Use 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 may be mandated to participate in a mediation session before returning to classes or subject to other disciplinary action. Failure to adhere to a 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 guardian 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 may be enrolled in counseling and/or 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 guardian, and administrator must be present. The staff member involved in the dispute and the student's Preceptor may also 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 Contract. This contract 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, 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 guardian, 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 guardian(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 guardian(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 guardian. Guardians 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 guardians 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 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 guardian 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 guardian(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 guardian(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 guardian(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 guardian(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 ten 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.

### **Gang-related Activity**

Vertus is a neutral space. Gang related activity/behavior is absolutely prohibited on Vertus's campus and at all Vertus events. Vertus students may not demonstrate visible or audible gang identifiers. This includes, but is not limited to the following:

- Flags, bandanas, clothing, jewelry
- Handshakes of any kind
- Hand signs or signals of any kind
- Verbal signals of any kind
- Graffiti or writing of any kind

Vertus prohibits the following on school property and at Vertus related functions and activities whether they are on or off school property:

Initiating, advocating, or promoting a gang or gang activities.

Tagging or defacing school property with gang names, slogans and/or insignias.

Conducting gang initiations.

Threatening another in any way in connection with gang-related activity.

Inciting, soliciting, or recruiting others for gang membership or gang related activities.

Aiding or abetting any of the above activities by one's presence or support.

Any student found to have engaged in any of the above shall be subject to consequences in accordance with Section 2.8 of this Code of Conduct.



## **APPENDIX D**

### **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](http://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](mailto:charterschools@mail.nysed.gov) The subject line of the email should read: Complaint: [Name of School].



## APPENDIX E

### Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) Policy

The purpose of FERPA is to ensure that parents and guardians and students have meaningful access to their education records (and that those records are accurate) while at the same time limiting access and release of such records to others. FERPA carries out its purposes by requiring all schools that receive federal funds to:

- gain prior written consent of parents/guardians before releasing the education records of their children (or any personally identifiable information contained in those records), except in certain circumstances specified in the statute;
- allow parents/guardians to inspect, review, and obtain copies of the education records of their children;
- allow parents/guardians to challenge the contents of such records on the basis that they are inaccurate, misleading or in violation of the student's privacy rights; and
- allow parents/guardians to object to the publication of directory information by requiring a school to give parents/guardians notice and a reasonable time to object to publication.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act ("IDEA") requires additional safeguards for records relating to students with disabilities. Many of these safeguards overlap and are intertwined with the more general requirements of FERPA.

Education records will be stored in a central location with access limited to designated members of the administration. Exceptions to central storage include those records kept by individual teachers that are used by that teacher only, e.g., a grading book or required personal copy of an Individualized Education Program (IEP), IEPs kept by Special Education Coordinators and health records kept by the school nurse. These may be kept in individual classrooms or other areas as long as they are secured. All records covered by FERPA and the IDEA will be stored with Form V0006 – Record of Access for recording individuals who have had access to a student's education records. All employees will annually sign Form V0002 – Confidentiality Policy for School Employees.

The following Vertus Charter School Employees have complete access to student records and are exempt from signing Form V0006 – Record of Access:

- CEO
- Chief Operating Officer



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The following Vertus Charter School Employees have complete access to IEPs records and are exempt from signing Form V0006 – Record of Access:

- CEO
- Chief Operating Officer
- Special Education Coordinator

The following Vertus Charter School Employees have complete access to medical records and are exempt from signing Form V0006 – Record of Access:

- CEO
- Chief of External Affairs
- Chief Operating Officer
- Special Education Coordinator

## **A. Procedures for granting access to records to parents/guardians or their authorized representatives.**

Parents/guardians have the right to inspect and review all records relating to their child that the school collects, maintains, or uses regarding the identification, evaluation, and educational placement of the child. (20 U.S.C. § 1232g(a)(1)(A)). Parents/guardians of disabled children also have the explicit right to have a representative inspect and review the records. (34 C.F.R. § 300.562(b)(3)). In addition, parents/guardians of disabled children have the right to obtain explanations and interpretations of their children's education records, so long as such requests are reasonable. (34 C.F.R. § 300.562(b)(1)).

When a parent /guardian requests a record, it will be provided to him or her no later than 45 days from the date of request. If the request for a record is connected to a meeting of a committee on special education (CSE) or to an IDEA related due process hearing, the school must provide the requested record prior to such meeting or hearing, or within 45 days, whichever period is shorter. (34 C.F.R. § 99.10 and 34 C.F.R. § 300.562(a)).

The school may charge a reasonable fee for copying records requested, unless such fee would effectively prevent the parents/guardians from exercising his or her rights under FERPA and/or IDEA. The school may not charge a fee to search for or retrieve records. (34 C.F.R. § 99.11 and 34 C.F.R. § 300.566).

In order to ensure the confidentiality of records as well as a timely response to parental/guardian requests for review of records, the school will designate a member of the administrative staff to be in charge of handling all requests for education records (whether those requests come from parents/guardians or any other individual or entity). (34 C.F.R. § 300.572(b)).



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Parents/guardians may request access to their child's education records using Form V0001 – Request to Review Records. When access is requested, the school will take the following actions:

- grant the Operations Associate or staff member designated to oversee compliance with FERPA and the confidentiality provisions of the IDEA exclusive authority to handle requests and to consult as needed with the school's attorney;
- require that all requests for review of student records (by parents/guardians or anyone else) be appropriately received in writing;
- establish a master calendar (with a tickler system) to track each request in order to ensure that requests from parents/guardians are handled in a timely fashion and within the 45 day period allotted to schools;
- check that individuals who identify themselves as parents/guardians in fact carry such status; and
- make available to staff and others a supply of forms for use in requesting education records.

## **B. Procedures for obtaining parental/guardian consent for the release of education records or personally identifiable information**

With a number of limited exceptions, parents/guardians must give their consent before any education records or personally identifiable information can be disclosed by a charter school. (34 C.F.R. § 300.571). NOTE: “Personally identifiable information” means information that includes: (a) the name of the child, parent/guardian, or other family member; (b) the address of the child; (c) a personal identifier number (such as the child's social security number or student number); or (d) a list of personal characteristics or other information that would make it possible to identify the child with reasonable certainty. See, 34 C.F.R. 300.500(b)(3).

The situations in which a school need not obtain parental/guardian consent are specified under FERPA and are quite detailed (20 U.S.C. § 1232g(b)(1)-(2); 34 C.F.R. § 99.30-31). They include, but are not limited to, the following individuals or entities:

- to state and local educational authorities, (34 C.F.R. § 99.31(a)(3)(iii)), including, but not limited to the Charter Schools Institute and State Education Department, subject to the requirements of 34 C.F.R. § 99.35;
- to officials of another school in which the student seeks or intends to enroll (34 C.F.R. § 99.31(a)(2) if certain prior conditions are met as set forth in 34 C.F.R. § 99.34);





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- in response to a judicial order or subpoena (though a parent/guardian should be notified prior to disclosure in order to permit the parent/guardian to seek judicial relief) (34 C.F.R. § 99.31(a)(9)(i)); and
- to other school officials, including teachers, whom the school has determined to have legitimate educational interests. (34 C.F.R. § 99.31(a)(1)).

The Chief Executive Officer will review requests for access from anyone other than a parent/guardian before disclosing any education records or personally identifiable information.

Where parent/guardian consent is required, such consent will be requested in writing on Form V0003 – Consent for Release of Student Information.

## **C. Directory Information**

In contrast to general education records (which cannot be disclosed in most instances without the affirmative consent of a parent/guardian), FERPA permits the disclosure of certain categories of what is known as "directory information," i.e., name, age, address, etc., without specific permission from the parents/guardians having been obtained. (NOTE: The regulations to FERPA define "directory information" as that information contained in an education record of a student which would not generally be considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if disclosed. (34 C.F.R. 99.3).)

However, while permission is not required, the school must give a parent/guardian the opportunity to object or opt out. Parents/guardians are given the opportunity to object to disclosure using Form V0004 – Notice of Intent to Disclose Directory Information.

## **C. Annual FERPA notification**

Vertus Charter School will notify annually parents/guardians of their legal rights under FERPA, as well as the right to file a complaint for failure to comply with FERPA. (34 C.F.R. § 99.7). The required information to be provided to parents/guardians is found in Form V0005 – Annual Notification.

## **D. Requests for Amendments to Records**

If a parent/guardian believes the information in their child's records is inaccurate or misleading or that information in the records violates the child's right to privacy or other rights, the parent/guardian may request that the school amend it. The school must then decide, within a reasonable period of time, whether to amend the information. If the school decides to not to amend the information as requested, it must inform the parent/guardian of this decision, and advise of right to a hearing. (34 C.F.R. § 99.20 and 34 C.F.R. § 300.567).



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**Form V0001**

## **Request to Review Records**

Pursuant to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act and/or Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act, the following form must be completed whenever a person other than a school official with a legitimate educational interest makes a request to review student records. Persons required to complete this form include parents/guardians of students enrolled in the school.

Please note that unless otherwise provided by law, access to student education records will only be granted upon receipt of the written permission of a student's parent or legal guardian.

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### **To be completed by requestor:**

Date of request: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of student and/or ID number: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of requestor: \_\_\_\_\_

Requestor's affiliation or relationship to student: \_\_\_\_\_

Reason for request: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Description of records requested to be reviewed: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I hereby agree to keep the information disclosed to me confidential according to all applicable laws and regulations.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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