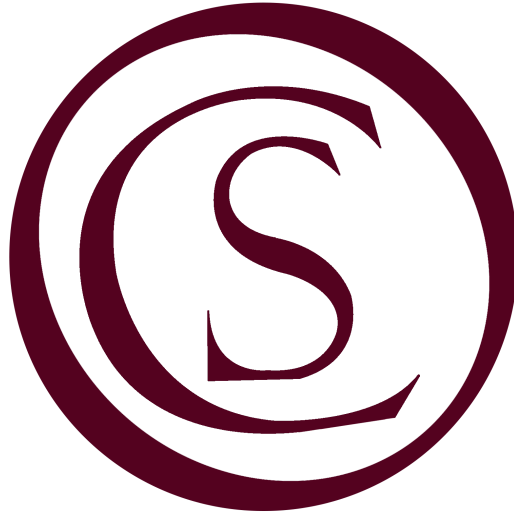


Opportunity Charter School



Parent and Student Handbook 2023-2024

**240 West 113th Street
New York, NY 10026
Main Number: 212-866-6137
Fax: 212-665-7436
Website: OCSNY.org**

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I. INTRODUCTION

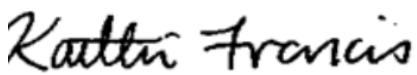
Message From Opportunity Charter School Principals

Dear Students and Families,

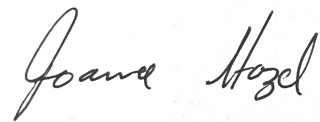
Welcome to yet another exciting year at Opportunity Charter School! We are honored that you have chosen Opportunity Charter School for your child's education, and we look forward to sharing this year with you.

This handbook contains essential information for reaching the highest levels of success at OCS. Please read it together as a family in its entirety and contact us with any questions. All students and families are responsible for complying with the policies and procedures outlined in this handbook.

Sincerely,



Kaitlin Francis
High School Principal



Joanne Hazel
Middle School Principal

II. SCHOOL OVERVIEW

A. Brief History of OCS

Founded in 2004 as a middle school, Opportunity Charter School (OCS) was created to meet the growing educational needs of the Harlem community, where access to a quality education for students faced with learning disabilities and socioeconomic barriers were unmet. Since its inception, OCS has been a model institution for providing innovative academic programming for both special needs and general education students, including those at risk of academic failure.

In 2006, OCS opened a high school and now serves approximately 420 students in grades 6 through 12.

B. Vision Statement

Opportunity Charter School (OCS) is a school that provides students, regardless of past academic success, the opportunity for a fresh start and the necessary academic skills for postsecondary success in college and work.

C. Mission Statement

To provide youth who struggle in traditional learning environments, including students with disabilities, with the tools needed to excel academically, emotionally, and socially in all aspects of life.

III. GENERAL PROCEDURAL INFORMATION

A. Student Admissions

Opportunity Charter School will not discriminate against any student based on race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, or disability or for any other basis that would be unlawful for a public school. The School shall be open to any student who is eligible under the [laws](#) of New York State. New students will be admitted each year without regard to prior achievement or aptitude, athletic ability, disability, ethnicity, race, gender, or religion.

B. Enrollment Period and Admissions Lottery

During the Fall, Opportunity Charter School will make available applications for admission for the following school year. Families can meet with staff to review the expectations of the school. In addition, interested

families can contact the admissions department for more information on application submissions and the lottery; please refer to the following link: [Admissions Procedures and Guidelines](#).

Contact: Krystal Vazquez, Admissions and Alumni Supervisor

Tel: 212-866-6137 ext. 4230 | Email: Krystal.Vazquez@ocsny.org

Regular attendance is mandatory and is important to a student's success in school; it establishes good work habits and self-discipline. Students who are not in attendance may not receive credit for their classes, may not be allowed to participate in extracurricular activities, and be placed on academic probation.

C. Absenteeism

To meet the instructional classroom time requirement established by the State, **students who have more than ten (10) unexcused absences within a semester in high school may fail the course. Administrators will determine which students are eligible to receive an appeal.** The parents of students who are consistently late or absent will be called in for an attendance meeting. Students who have missed more than ten consecutive days or 20 days per semester without a verified excuse may be reported to the Administration for Children's Services (ACS) for educational neglect. A meeting will be held with the administration.

Students absent due to a doctor's appointment must present a note on doctor's stationery signed by the doctor indicating the exact dates the student is to be excused. Please make every attempt to schedule appointments after school. It is the parent's responsibility to report a student's absence to the school office before 8:00 am on the day of the absence. The answering machine will be available before and after school hours for anyone who needs to leave a message. A written excuse signed by a parent must accompany the student upon return to school and be handed into the Main Office (room 406). Three or more unexcused consecutive absences will result in a referral to the appropriate social worker for further action.

Excuse notes must contain the following:

- Reason for lateness/absence
- Date and time the note was written
- Phone number where the parent can be reached at the time the student signs in
- Signature of a parent/guardian

All notes must be submitted the day the student returns to school.

If there is a death in the family or a hospital stay for the student due to illness, then a notification from the family must be submitted to the Main Office.

D. Tardiness

All students are expected to be at school by 8:00 am each day. If you know your child is going to be late, please notify the main office at 212-866-6137. Lateness deemed excusable due to extenuating circumstances by the Pupil Accounting Secretary will be excused.

Tardiness due to a verified family emergency or other circumstance, deemed acceptable by the Student Support Services Coordinator, will be excused with documentation. Students who are and have not been excused are expected to serve detention/accountability; parents will be notified.

E. Early Release Due to Illness/Release of Student to Adult

A sick student under 18 can only be signed out by a parent or guardian, identified on the emergency contact card, and must show proper identification when picking up the student from school. In addition, **a caregiver cannot give verbal permission over the phone for students to leave the building before the close of the school day for any reason.**

F. Extended Family Vacations

Extended family vacations are not permitted during the school year. All trips should be planned to coincide with days when school is not in session. Trips should never prevent a student from taking mandated State Tests or completing class assignments. In the event of an absence, it becomes the student's responsibility, along with the help of the parents, to complete all assigned work upon their return to school. Incomplete assignments will not receive credit.

G. Family Death or Serious Illness

If there is a death or traumatic situation in the family that may affect the student's attendance, please notify the Main Office immediately. Students will be granted excused absences for family emergencies on a case by case basis as reviewed by the Pupil Accounting Secretary and School Principal. Students who are absent as a result of a positive covid diagnosis will adhere to the Covid guidelines.

Contact: Katherine Martinez
Student Support Services Coordinator
Tel: 212-866-6137 ext. 4211 | Email: kmartinez5@ocsny.org

IV. SCHOOL CULTURE AND STUDENT EXPECTATIONS

A. Scholar Dollars (Middle School)

Opportunity Charter School holds high expectations of all of our students. Those students that are following expectations and are going above and beyond will receive a Scholar Dollar. These Scholar Dollars can be redeemed at the school store to purchase school supplies and other knick-knacks. Each quarter, the grade with the most amount of Scholar Dollars earned will receive a prize.

B. Lunch

Middle School students do not go off-campus for lunch. Instead, students have a designated time and location for eating inside the building. Students are not allowed to eat their lunch or any food inside the classroom while class is in session. All food is to be discarded or stored in backpacks before class resumes.

Students in the 11th and 12th grades, and Honor students in 9th and 10th grade are permitted to leave the building for lunch, under the condition that they meet all school expectations for the day (i.e are in full uniform and have not received any write ups). Students who are consistently not in uniform, have received an excessive amount of write ups or who return late from lunch three (3) times will have their lunch privileges revoked for the semester.

C. Uniforms

Opportunity Charter School is a uniform school. OCS believes there are numerous benefits to wearing uniforms, such as improved behavior, increased security, and focusing on academics rather than apparel. Students should wear their uniforms with pride to represent OCS and respect its ability to prepare them to be productive citizens.

Students who abuse the uniform policy will be held accountable, and parents/guardians may be required to come to the school to bring in appropriate attire and/or attend a meeting. We do not allow hats, beads, gang flags, du-rags, low-hanging pants, see-through clothing, exposed undergarments, sweatshirts, sweatpants, jeans, or non-OCS colored sweaters or non-OCS shirts. **Additionally, students may not be allowed to participate in any school-related enrichment activities if they are not in uniform during the school day.** For more information, please see the section: Student Discipline.

OCS Middle School uniform:

Tops

- Burgundy shirt with embroidered OCS logo
- Non-logoed shirt with a collar in burgundy
- Burgundy sweater/hoodie with embroidered OCS logo or completely plain (no graphics)
- **Shirts MUST have a collar if there is no OCS logo on the shirt**

Bottoms

- Light color khaki or Black pants or shorts (**knee-length or longer**)
 - Light color khaki or Black skirts (**knee-length or longer**)
 - **NO** nylons, **Leggings** or jeans of any kind!
 - No Crocs or Slippers
 - **Sweatpants MUST have an OCS logo**
- Gym uniforms are allowed to be worn all day only when the student has physical education class. The only acceptable physical education uniform has an OCS embroidered logo on the shirt and pants. If they do not have PE class and wear their PE uniform, they will be considered out of uniform.

OCS High School Uniform

Tops

- Gray OCS Logo Embroidered Short Sleeve or Long Sleeve Polo Shirt
- White OCS Logo Embroidered Short Sleeve or Long Sleeve Oxford Shirt
- Gray OCS Logo Embroidered Pullover Sweaters
- Gray OCS Logo Sweatshirt/Sweatpants

Bottoms

- Black Pants (no cargo pants, jeans or shorts, no leggings)
- Black Skirt (no shorter than 2 inches above the knee)
- Gray OCS Logo Sweatpants
- Black Pants (no cargo pants, jeans, **leggings**, or shorts)
- No Crocs or Slippers

To order uniforms, please contact:

IDEAL Uniforms
1816 Flatbush Ave, Brooklyn, NY 11210
www.idealuniform.com/ocsny

******If there is a dress-down day for any reason; We will notify you before the day. If your child tells you there is a dress-down day and you have not received written notice of this event, please clarify with a school staff member before sending your child to school out of uniform.**

D. Code of Conduct

Students are expected to behave appropriately during the school day, except for reasonable play during recess. OCS defines appropriate behavior as a peaceful and calm demeanor that demonstrates respect to all and listens to and follows ALL OCS staff directives the first time given. Students are NOT demonstrating appropriate behavior if they disrupt the learning environment for themselves or others in any way, are violent or threatening in language and/or behavior, or cruel or rude to any persons attending, visiting, or employed at the school.

Students are not permitted to use or display any non-OCS electronics during the school day (with the exception of headphones at the teacher's request for academic purposes). Students are not permitted to eat or drink inside any OCS classroom, auditorium, or gym except for clear water in a clear water bottle or in the event of a teacher permitted class event.

Prohibited Conduct

Opportunity Charter School does not allow its students or parents to:

- Willfully cause physical injury to any other person, or threaten to use force which would result in injury
- Physically restrain or detain any other person
- Bully or harass another person
- Damage or destroy school property
- Steal school property
- Disrupt the learning environment, which prohibits other students from learning
- Threaten the safety of any person or persons on school property
- Possess, use or distribute alcohol, drugs, or drug paraphernalia
- Possess any firearms, knives, clubs or any item that the legal system would constitute a weapon
- Attempt to assault any student, staff member, or visitor
- Vandalize school property causing damage, even if minor
- Cheat on exams or quizzes, or commit plagiarism
- Use forged notes or excuses
- Steal, attempt to steal, or possess property known by the student to be stolen.
- Commit extortion
- Gamble
- Trespass on school property
- Engage in sexual harassment
- Make a false bomb threat or pull a false emergency alarm
- Possess tobacco or alcohol
- Possess a weapon

- Use any electronic device during school hours

E. Enforcement

Penalties for violations of these rules include, but are not limited to:

- The withdrawal of authorization to remain on school property.
- Arrest, student suspension, or other disciplinary action.
- Opportunity Charter School follows the NYC Department of Education Code of Conduct. Please refer to the attached Student Conduct Response Chart.

F. Student Searches

School lockers, desks, and other such items belong to the school and are not the private property of students. Students also should not expect privacy regarding any items they choose to bring into the school. Therefore, any item may be confiscated and inspected as deemed necessary by school officials. This includes the contents of electronic devices owned by OCS, the student, or the student's family/guardians. Students are issued lockers and issued a lock from OCS. Students are not allowed to bring in their own locks. All non-OCS issued locks will be cut off and replaced with an OCS lock. School Safety will search students if there is reasonable suspicion that a student possesses illegal property or substance or an item that directly violates the school code of conduct. School Safety officers, local authorities, and parents will then be notified.

Periodically, the NYPD conducts random, unannounced school-wide electronic scans. All electronics and any other prohibited items will be confiscated during these scans by school officials or the NYPD. These confiscated items will be returned at the end of the day unless deemed dangerous or illegal, from the Principal's office or returned from the police precinct office.

G. Incidents that Occur Off-Site

Our primary concern is to keep all students safe while they are in school. OCS has policies and procedures to ensure that each student will be safe during school hours and while on school property. However, the school is not responsible for students who seek out harmful situations while offsite for lunch or at other times when they are not directly on school grounds. Students who fail to conduct themselves as positive representatives of OCS may be subject to disciplinary action if the incident creates disruptions in the school day, even if the incident occurs off school grounds. For instance, fights between students or between students and community members that occur off school grounds can seriously impact school safety. The school is within its right to discipline students for these incidents. OCS will always work in collaboration with parents on these matters.

H. Social Media Guidelines

- **Parents are responsible for closely monitoring their child’s social media accounts.**

Family members today have a new role: helping children behave safely and responsibly when they are using social media, whether for fun or learning. The New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) recently worked with our teachers, librarians, and students and partnered with Common Sense Media to develop guidelines for students 13 and older to use social media effectively. These guidelines focus on four areas created by NYCDOE students and teachers, which you may want to share with your child. You can find the policies and the infographics on the DOE website at schools.nyc.gov/SocialMedia.

I. Provision of Services during Suspension for All Students

Suspended students will be provided with alternative instruction throughout the school day in an alternate classroom or setting. Alternative instruction will be provided for

2 hours during the school day either in house or off site for Out of School Suspensions lasting more than one day. In addition, special education and related services will be provided, to the extent necessary, to enable the student to make appropriate progress in the general curriculum and in meeting the goals in his or her IEP.

Some students, whether they have an IEP or not, may pose a threat to the safety of students and staff and will be instructed off-site at a tutoring facility. When this happens either the Principal or Special Education Supervisor will call the parent/guardian to inform them of the alternate IAES plan and support them in scheduling their services. The school will provide the funding for the IAES plan but it is the parent/guardian's responsibility to ensure that the student attends scheduled sessions. The school will NOT compensate for missed sessions.

J. Additional Information Alternative Instruction for Students with Disabilities

The Learning Specialist, in collaboration with the student’s teachers and social worker, creates the procedures to determine alternative instruction. This will include related services, progress towards IEP goals, and appropriate special education services for students whose behavior has not been determined to be a pattern.

K. Long Term Suspension/Expulsions

Long term suspensions are reserved for very serious offenses, which are listed below. The Principal may take into account the student’s disciplinary record and the circumstance of the incident when deciding what type of suspension to impose. OCS may choose to refer the student to the police or to expel them when the principal determines the school culture and/or students and/or staff safety is at risk.

The following behaviors will result in a minimum of long term suspension and are subject to expulsion of a student, whether or not the student has an IEP, if he/she is found to:

- Possess, use, attempt to use, or give/transfer any firearm, knife, razor blade, explosive, mace, tear gas, or other dangerous object that a student would have no reasonable use for at school.
- Commit arson, or attempt to start a fire on school property.
- Possess, sell, distribute or use any alcoholic beverage, controlled substance, fake controlled substance, or marijuana on school property or at school-sponsored events.
- Assault student or staff member.
- Cause physical injury to another person.
- Vandalize school property in a way that causes major damage.
- Repeatedly bully and harass a student or staff member.
- Do anything which the school officials can reasonably decide deserves a long-term suspension.

L. Firearms

A student who brings a firearm to school, or found with one in their possession at school, will face expulsion. Also, school safety and the local law enforcement authorities will be notified. If a student is younger than 16 when they have the firearm, the Principal will refer the student to a “presentment agency” for a juvenile delinquency proceeding.

Any student who is 16 or over when they have the firearm will be referred to the appropriate law enforcement officials (this also applies to students who are 14 or 15 who qualify for juvenile offender status).

M. Expulsion

Very serious offenses warrant expulsions. These offenses include:

- Possession of firearm or weapon such as a knife
- Physically or sexually assaulting a staff member or student
- Possession or selling of drugs
- A pattern of behaviors deemed to create an unsafe environment for the school

N. Due Process

- The Principal will immediately send a written notice to the parent/legal guardian, stating that the student is to be suspended from school, describing the incident, and stating that a formal hearing will be held. This notice will be either personally delivered or sent certified or express mail to the family’s last known address within 24 hours. The AP or his/her designee will also notify the parent by telephone, which will be logged.
- At the formal hearing, the student has the right to be represented by a lawyer, question witnesses, and/or present evidence.

- The Principal has the right to either personally run the meeting or designate a school official to conduct it.
- A parent may challenge the decision by following the complaint process.
- The student may be found guilty at the hearing. If so, the Principal will determine the additional disciplinary consequence, which may be additional suspension or expulsion. If the student is determined not to be guilty, then the suspension ends and the school develops a behavior plan to help the student re-enter the school community.

O. Discipline of Students with IEPs

A student who has an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or a student for whom OCS is deemed to have knowledge of a disability prior to the behavior that results in a suspension, have certain protection and rights under IDEA (the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act). Parents are notified of the suspension through certified and regular mail with copies of the suspension letter detailing the incident and a copy of the procedural safeguards for students with IEPs.

- **Written Records:** OCS will keep written records of all suspensions and expulsions of students with disabilities, including the student’s name, a description of the behavior, the disciplinary action taken, and a record of the number of days the student has been suspended or removed.
- **Referral to the CSE:** As soon as a student has been suspended for a total of ten (10) days, we will contact the Committee on Special Education in Region 10 via written communication and by phone. OCS may not suspend a student with a disability for more than 10 days during a school year without involving the CSE, because on day 11 the suspension may be considered a change of placement.
 - Your notice and involvement: The CSE must follow its ordinary policies and procedures when notifying and involving the parent.
- **OCS will notify the CSE within 7 days if we learn that:**
 - A student with a disability was previously suspended for the maximum allowable number of days.
- **Due Process**

A meeting with the CSE (an MDR, or Manifestation Determination Review) is required when a student has been removed from OCS for more than ten days in a school year for disciplinary reasons, or when starting a removal that is a “change of placement.” In this hearing, the CSE determines whether or not the student’s behavior is due to his/her disability. If the CSE determines the incident is a manifestation of the disability, then the suspension will be expunged. If it is not a manifestation, then the child can be disciplined as a general education student.

At this meeting, school staff is invited by the Special Education Supervisor, and will include the following people:

- Grade Level Social Worker
- Assistant Principal
- Special Education Supervisor
- Student
- Parent/Guardian of Student
- Any school staff member with knowledge of the incident

Following the MDR a PDR (Principal’s Determination Review) will take place if the student is facing expulsion due to being found with or in use of a weapon, illegal drugs, controlled substances, or having caused serious bodily harm or displaying a pattern of threatening and/or harmful behaviors. If a PDR is scheduled the parent/guardian of the student will be notified in writing at the same time they are notified of the MDR via certified mail and no less than 3 days advance notice of the hearing. The letter shall include an explanation of the charged misconduct in detail so the parent/guardian and/or student’s attorney or advocate can put on a defense.

At this meeting, school staff is invited by the Special Education Supervisor, and will include the following people:

- Grade level Social Worker
- Assistant Principal
- Principal
- Special Education Supervisor
- Student
- Parent/Guardian of Student
- Any school staff member with knowledge of the incident

This meeting may result in expulsion of the student if the charged misconduct is found to be in serious violation of the school’s code of conduct and NOT a manifestation of the student’s disability.

If the behavior is found to be a pattern which could result in further harm to the school, its students, or staff and is found to be a manifestation of the student’s disability, the student will be expelled regardless of the MDR determination.

P. Appeals Process

A parent may request a hearing to challenge the CSE’s findings about the connection between the student’s disability and the behavior. If a hearing is requested, the student will remain at OCS until the hearing is completed and a new determination is made. However, if your child’s suspension is due to weapons or drugs, OCS can suspend the student to our Interim Alternative Education Setting even during the appeals process either until the hearing or the term of the suspension is completed.

STUDENT ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN

To be used only when students do not respond to staff interventions given through the Guided Discipline approach or when behaviors are serious enough to warrant an immediate response from the chart. For minor infractions, Guided Discipline strategies should be utilized. If deemed unsuccessful, OCS will refer to the NYC Discipline Code of Conduct Chart. For detailed guidelines please refer to the information embedded in the student accountability sub-heading above.

Contact: Veronica Deshazor, Dean of All Students

Tel: (212) 866-6137 | Email: veronica.deshazor@ocsny.org

V. PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

A. Parental Involvement Policy

- Opportunity Charter School agrees to implement the following statutory requirements:
 - The school will put into operation programs, activities, and procedures for the involvement of parents in the school with Title I, Part A programs, consistent with section 1118 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Those programs, activities, and procedures will be planned and operated with meaningful consultation with parents of participating children.
 - Consistent with section 1118, the school will work to ensure that the required school-level parental involvement policies meet the requirements of section 1118(b) of the ESEA, and each includes, as a component, a school-parent compact consistent with section 1118(d) of the ESEA.
 - In carrying out the Title I, Part A parental involvement requirements, to the extent practicable, the school district and its schools will provide full opportunities for the participation of parents with limited English proficiency, parents with disabilities, and parents of migratory children, including providing information and school reports required under section 1111 of the ESEA in an understandable and uniform format and including alternative formats upon request, and, to the extent practicable, in a language parents understand.
 - If the LEA plan for Title I, Part A, developed under section 1112 of the ESEA, is not satisfactory to the parents of participating children, the school district will submit any parent comments with the plan when the school district submits the plan to the State Department of Education.
 - The school will be governed by the following statutory definition of parental involvement and will carry out programs, activities, and procedures in accordance with this definition: Parental involvement means the participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities, ensuring:
 - a. Parents play an integral role in assisting their child's learning;
 - b. Parents are encouraged to be actively involved in their child's education at school;
 - c. Parents are full partners in their child's education and are included, as appropriate, in decision-making and on advisory committees to assist in the education of their child;

- d. Parents carry out other activities, such as those described in section 1118 of the ESEA.
- The school will inform parents and parental organizations of the purpose and existence of the Parental Information and Resource Center in the State.
- Opportunity Charter School will take the following actions to involve parents in the joint development of its school's parental involvement plan under section 1112 of the ESEA:
 - Establishment of a Leadership Committee consisting of faculty members, school administrators, UFT chapter leader, parents, and students to foster and develop a successful, high achieving climate at the school that will work in conjunction with the PTA.
- Opportunity Charter School will take the following actions to involve parents in the process of school review and improvement under section 1116 of the ESEA:
 - Establishment of a Leadership Committee consisting of faculty members, school administrators, UFT chapter leader, parents, and students to foster and develop a successful, high achieving climate at the school that will work in conjunction with the PTA.
- Opportunity Charter School will provide the following necessary coordination, technical assistance, and other support to assist in planning and implementing effective parental involvement activities to improve student academic achievement and school performance:
 - Individual Access to OCS Social Workers.
 - Access to Highly Qualified Staff members through workshops and meetings to describe curriculum to parents.
 - Leadership Committee will communicate to parents at PTA meetings all future plans to improve school performance.
- Opportunity Charter School will build the schools' and parents' capacity for strong parental involvement to ensure effective involvement of parents and to support a partnership among the school involved, parents, and the community to improve student academic achievement through the following activities specifically described below:
 - The school district will, with the assistance of its Title I, Part A schools, provide assistance to parents of children served by the school district or school, as appropriate, in understanding topics such as the following, by undertaking the actions described:
 - a. the State's academic content standards,
 - b. the State's student academic achievement standards,
 - c. the State and local academic assessments, including alternate assessments,
 - d. The requirements of Part A,
 - e. How to monitor their child's progress, and

- f. How to work with educators:
 - Annual Title I Meeting
 - OCS Social Workers
 - Referrals to outside sources
- The school will provide materials and training to help parents work with their children to improve their children’s academic achievement, such as literacy training, and using technology, as appropriate, to foster parental involvement, by:
 - The PTA will poll their membership to find out their needs in this area and respond by providing appropriate parent workshops and outside resources.
- The school will, with the assistance of parents, educate its teachers, pupil services personnel, principals, and other staff, in how to reach out to, communicate with, and work with parents as equal partners, in the value and utility of contributions of parents, and in how to implement and coordinate parent programs and build ties between parents and schools, by:
 - Leadership Committee will conduct an annual parental survey.
 - Provide Professional Development to staff based on the result of the survey.
- The school will, to the extent feasible and appropriate, coordinate and integrate parental involvement programs and activities with Head Start, Reading First, Early Reading First, Even Start, and the Parents as Teachers Program, such as parent resource centers, that encourage and support parents in more fully participating in the education of their children, by:
 - Direct access to OCS Clinical and Guidance Departments
 - a. Such programs have included Parent/Family Life Workshops addressing the need for parents to advocate for the children’s education.
- The school will take the following actions to ensure that information related to the school and parent-programs, meetings, and other activities, is sent to the parents of participating children in an understandable and uniform format, including alternative formats upon request, and, to the extent practicable, in a language the parents can understand:
 - Information will be distributed through:
 - a. Mailings
 - b. “Backpacked” home with students
 - c. Automated phone calls / Email blasts
 - d. Posted on the school's website where appropriate

B. Communication

We believe strongly that education is a team approach. We will support you and answer all questions and concerns within 24 hours or will let you know otherwise. Email is the preferred form of communication for our teachers and all families are expected to have at least one member with an Infinite Campus account. Please be sure to leave detailed messages that include your name, your student's name, and the best way to reach you. To ensure we are providing the strongest educational plan possible, we will also need to reach you many times throughout the year.

It is expected of all families to return calls and emails from the school promptly when the school requests a return call or email. It is also expected that all families keep up-to-date records. If your address or phone number changes, you must contact the supervisor for Admissions and Alumni at ext 4230 immediately to update your records. **Opportunity Charter School is not responsible for any information that does not reach families due to out-of-date records.** Failure to communicate effectively with the school can result in an educational neglect report made to Administration for Children's Services (ACS).

C. School Visits and Meetings

At Opportunity Charter School we practice an open door policy. This means that family members indicated on each student's account as primary caregivers may visit the school at any time to see what they are doing. All visitors to the school must sign in at the security desk and in the Main Office (room 406).

If you are visiting the school and need to meet with a staff member, you **MUST** make an appointment prior to arriving. When arriving for your scheduled appointment, please be prompt. In order to provide your child with the most enriching education possible, our staff members are required to keep very busy schedules; if you are more than 15 minutes late to a scheduled appointment, we may not be able to see you at that time.

D. Communication with Students During the Day

Cell phones and other non-OCS electronic devices are not permitted to be used during the school day. To assist with making our school a phone-free space to improve teaching and learning we will be using a system called [Yondr](#). The Yondr Program utilizes a simple, secure pouch that stores a phone. Every student will secure their phone in a personally assigned Yondr pouch when they arrive at school. Students will maintain possession of their phones and will not use them until their pouches are opened at the end of the school day. Students are required to bring their Yondr pouch to and from school each day and are responsible for their pouch at all times. As the students are expected to turn off/silence and store their devices for the entirety of the school day, including during lunch and recess, should parents need to contact their children during the school day, they may call the Main Office at 212-866-6137 ext. 4060.



E. Parental Notification of Medical Interventions

Emergency Room Visits

There are times when the school must make an immediate decision regarding a student's need for medical intervention. These times center around a student presenting with a physical or clinical crisis that has placed themselves or others in imminent danger. Please keep in mind OCS follows the governing laws & regulations outlined by the Department of Health & Hygiene and the New York City Board of Education.

If a student presents with a physical health crisis, the parent/legal guardian is notified by the school nurse (located on the 1st floor of the building in Room 118) and/or a representative of the OCS Clinical Department. The decision to call 911 is made following a medical assessment by the School Nurse. In the event that 911 is called and the student must go to the ER, the parent will be informed immediately and a school social worker will accompany the student to the hospital and wait for the parent/legal guardian to arrive. If this is an emergency, the school's expectation is that the parent/guardian come immediately or send a designated family representative over the age of 18 with appropriate identification to the hospital in their place. If a parent/legal guardian is able to arrive at the school prior to the ambulance, the school will not send the social worker with the student unless requested by the parent/legal guardian.

If a student presents with a clinical (mental health) crisis, a school clinician will conduct a clinical assessment to determine the level of the crisis. The decision to call 911 is made after the assessment is conducted and the level of severity is determined as a student being "in imminent danger/ or posing a threat of harm to self and/or others." Parents are immediately notified of this intervention. If a 911 call is not deemed necessary, the parent is notified by the school social worker of the crisis and the parent/legal guardian may be required to come to pick up the student, for future safety reasons, or to attend a school meeting facilitated by the clinical staff.

F. The Parent Association

We want your support in shaping and strengthening the school and therefore strongly encourage you to become an active member of our Parent Association (PA). Attending meetings will ensure that your voice is heard and also keep you up to date on school culture and events. In addition, PA meetings are also a great way to socialize and meet new people with common interests! We will do our best to keep these meetings entertaining and fun while also being informative and welcome any and all suggestions.

Tentative meeting dates are listed on the school calendar.

G. Complaints

Any individual or group may bring complaints to the Administration of the Opportunity Charter School or The Board of Trustees. Complaints can be submitted at any time. Emergency issues will be dealt with on an as-needed basis. Every effort will be made to respectfully address each matter to the satisfaction of the individual or group that presented the complaint.

- **How to make an informal complaint about a child's education:**

- If you have a complaint, which you would like to resolve informally, we encourage you to speak with your child's teacher, guidance counselor, assistant principal or principal. It's best to tell someone about your complaint as soon as possible so the appropriate staff members can work to address the issue in a timely manner.
- If the principal or other members of the school's staff are unable to resolve your complaint, or if you would like to file a formal complaint with the DOE, please follow the steps described below. Please note if the child is a student with a disability and you have an unresolved special education issue you may call 311 and request to speak to the Special Education Call Center. The Special Education Call Center staff will work with you to resolve your issue.
- If after contacting the school's leadership you are not satisfied with the outcome or decision pertaining to the complaint, you may appeal to the school's Board of Trustees. The Board meets publicly on a regular basis. Parents are encouraged to either contact the Board directly to schedule items on the meeting agenda or contact the school/parent committee that deals with such matters.

- **How to file a formal complaint:**

- If after your appeal you are not satisfied with the Board of Trustees' decision, and if your complaint involves a violation of either the school's policies or its charter, you may submit a formal complaint to the school's authorizer (NYCDOE) by completing the Charter School Complaint Form.

If you are still not satisfied with the outcome after going through the first three levels of the complaint process, you may write to:

The NY State Board of Regents
NY State Education Department

Charter School Office, Room 465 EBA
89 Washington Avenue,
Albany, NY 12234
518-474-1762

Or send an email to charterschools@mail.nysed.gov (Open external link) (subject line should include the name of the school and the word “Complaint”).

For more information and to obtain a copy of the Charter School Complaint Form, please go to:
<https://www.schools.nyc.gov/school-life/support/get-help-at-your-charter-school/file-a-formal-complaint-at-your-charter-school>

VI. INSTRUCTIONAL INFORMATION

STUDENT ACADEMICS

A. Overview of Curriculum

OCS provides a rigorous curriculum aligned with the Common Core Standards with a particular emphasis on individualizing education to meet students’ needs. We pride ourselves on providing students with an enriching curriculum through hands-on interactive learning with a focus on reading, writing, and discussion. Students are expected to be active participants in all classes.

B. Homework and Class Assignments

Students are given homework regularly in order to practice the necessary skills they are learning in their classes. Homework is collected each week and graded. Failure to spend time and effort completing class assignments and homework may result in a student falling behind regardless of the student’s intelligence, teacher’s ability, or strength of the curriculum. All OCS students are expected to complete all assignments given with vigor and in a timely fashion.

It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to check up on these assignments via Infinite Campus. If you struggle to get your child to complete his/her assignments in the manner that is expected at OCS, please contact your child’s teachers and/or social worker for support. It is imperative we work together!

C. Report Cards

Report cards are issued four times a year at the end of each of the four quarters and are available for view online via TeacherEase.com.

Parent/Teacher Conferences are an essential part of the learning process. They allow families to have a formal and individualized discussion about the student's progress. Please note the dates on the school calendar.

***Refer to the school calendar for report card release dates and parent teacher conferences.**

D. Grading

Below is a breakdown of the grading system.

A	95-100
A-	90-94
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D	65-69
F	Below 65

Any student that has earned less than a 65% has failed that class.

Students with an IEP and has Promotional Criteria:

- Students that have received less than 65% for the year based on the above mentioned and have an IEP will have their promotional criteria checklist reviewed, if applicable. If the student has reached their promotional criteria, then they will be promoted to the next grade. If they did not, then they would need to attend summer school and pass in order to be promoted to the next grade.

E. Infinite Campus/ Google Classroom

For your convenience, all student grades, attendance records, and behavioral referrals are posted in real-time on our online grading site, Infinite Campus. You can also email any OCS staff member through the system. If you do not already have an Infinite Campus account or you are unsure how to utilize the program to its fullest capabilities, please contact Ms. Zimmer (inka.zimmer@ocsny.org). We encourage families to check Infinite Campus or their child's [Google Classroom](#) a minimum of once a week to keep up with your student's progress. You can access Infinite Campus through the [Campus Parent App](#) or online at <http://infinitecampus.com>.

F. Academic Probation

Students failing two or more core content classes in a marking period will be placed on academic probation for the quarter. Parents and students will be notified by mail regarding their academic status. During academic probation, students are expected to arrange a time to meet the high school guidance counselor for a conference to create a plan for academic improvement. Students are then expected to follow this plan.

Students on academic probation will not be allowed to perform in athletics or school-sponsored performances and activities until they remove themselves from probation.

G. Setting Review

Setting reviews are done throughout the year to assess a student's placement. Continued placement at OCS is determined by adequate academic progress, attendance, and meeting behavioral expectations outlined in our code of conduct. The administration will request both parents/guardians and students to take an active role in these meetings if they are necessary.

VII. SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

Opportunity Charter School provides special education services to all qualifying students. Students with special needs have the right to a quality education appropriate to their needs, abilities, and interests. Our instructional staff will participate in the development and implementation of appropriate instructional and socialization strategies.

Our highly qualified staff, which includes teachers certified in Special Education, a Learning Specialist for every grade, and related service providers, help customize our instruction to meet the needs of our diverse student population. We offer inclusion classes, ICT classes, and self-contained classes (for ELA and Math only). Annual reviews are held at school (or via conference call) with the entire team to support students.

- Please see Appendix 1 for a copy of the Procedural Safeguards Notice

A. Request For Referrals

The following people can make a request to the Committee on Special Education (CSE) for an evaluation:

- A staff member of the school or school district
- The student's legal guardian/parent (new under IDEA 2004)
- A physician
- The school district or designee of a public agency who is responsible for providing education to a student with disabilities (new under IDEA 2004)
- A judicial officer

- The student him/herself, if over 18 years of age

Opportunity Charter School cannot decide on its own that a student needs special education services.

B. Individual Education Program (IEP)

An IEP is a written statement outlining an education program based on the unique needs of the student. The Committee on Special Education (CSE) in the student's school district has the responsibility for developing an IEP. It is the responsibility of OCS to ensure the IEP is implemented.

The school will comply with all legal requirements for students identified as having a disability. An Individual Educational Plan (IEP) will be provided, classifying the disability, specifying goals, level of service, related services, and the least restrictive placement for the student. Students with special needs will be educated within a general education setting and through one-on-one and small-group remediation as specified in a student's IEP. OCS will work with parents to ensure they are fully informed of their rights, procedures, and responsibilities under Special Education law.

C. Annual Reviews/Triennials

Students with IEPs are entitled to an annual review and a three-year re-evaluation with the Region 10 CSE. At these times, parents and teachers will evaluate the protocols appropriate for the student, as well as state recommended guidelines to produce the most desired educational outcome for the student. Parents are informed of their student's progress a minimum of four times per year at quarterly marking periods. Progress is also shared through telephone calls, written information/feedback, and personal contacts.

Contact: Nisa Bilal
Coordinator of Special Education
Tel: 212-866-6137 ext: 4233 | Fax: 212-665-7436
Email: nisa.bilal@ocsny.org

VIII. STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

A. High School Guidance Department

Eve Finger, High School Guidance Counselor
Phone: 212-866-6137 ext: 4217 | Fax: 212-665-7436
Email: Eve.Finger@ocsny.org

Students and families should reach out to the guidance department for academic support, including students' schedules, academic plans, grades, and academic progress, as well as college and career planning.

B. Clinical Department

Victoria Findley, School Psychologist

Phone: 212-866-6137 ext: 4216 | Fax: 212-665-7436

Email: Victoria.Findley@ocsny.org

This department is comprised of a school Social Worker for each grade (6-12). Since OCS recognizes that social/emotional well-being is an important part of a successful academic experience, social workers provide services that support the student's ability to perform and function in the academic setting. Social workers meet mandated counseling requirements, provide general counseling support to students and families, collaborate in the writing of educational plans, provide case management and referral services to students and families as needed and, in general, manage the health and wellness of the grade to which they are assigned. Social workers may conduct home visits periodically throughout the year.

C. Medication

Only the school nurse can administer prescription or nonprescription medication during the school day once written permission is received from a parent. Students who are required to take daily medication must submit form *S504 signed by their physician. Students who have severe asthma must have form *S504 on file in the Main Office in order to carry their inhalers with them during the school day.

- Form S504 is available in the Main Office.

The school nurse is employed by the Department of Health and is not an employee of OCS. Students are issued passes to visit the nurse. The nurse gives the student a copy of the assessment to take home. The nurse will also contact the parents if she has concerns about how the student is feeling.

D. MetroCard Distribution

Students receive MetroCards based on the information provided on ATS. The address provided by parents will determine whether students receive a half-fare or full-fare card. Students receive cards on the first day of school and must sign for the card upon receipt. Students are not allowed to have multiple cards at one time. If a student loses a card, then a new card will be issued as quickly as possible. However, the school only receives a certain amount of cards and cannot supply cards for students who repeatedly lose their cards.

***The Department of Education will not provide MetroCards for students who receive mandated busing.

E. Student ID Cards

ID cards are issued to every student at the beginning of the year. Please make sure your child keeps the ID card on his/her person at all times. ID cards are used to identify students to school safety and as access to online school programs.

F. Field Trips

Whenever students are traveling away from school, they are subject to the same rules, regulations, and appropriate behavior as required at school. They are expected to fulfill the OCS expectations and represent the school at all times. Signed OCS permission slips must be on file with the teacher for each student for each field trip. We cannot accept verbal confirmation in lieu of the signed permission slip, and permission slips that are not completed in full will not be accepted. Walking trip forms for short walks around the community are signed at the beginning of the year. Students are to be in school uniform for all trips unless otherwise instructed. Field trip costs (if any) will be indicated on the field trip permission slip.

G. Hearing and Vision Screening

Our students receive special health services through the Health Department. These services include vision and hearing screenings.

H. Anti-Harassment Policy

OCS is committed to maintaining a learning and working environment that is free from unlawful harassment or retaliation based on race, color, religion, national origin, marital status, gender, sexual orientation, and/or disability. Any unlawful harassment or retaliation of a student or employee by a member of the school community is a violation of this policy. The administration will act to thoroughly and promptly investigate all complaints, formal or informal, verbal or written, of unlawful harassment based on color, race, religion (creed), national origin, marital status, gender, sexual orientation, and/ or disability. OCS will discipline or take appropriate corrective action against any member of the school community who is found to have violated this policy. If you encounter such actions, you should contact the Principal.

I. Immunization Requirements in New York

Students will not be allowed to attend school if proper health forms are not on file by the first day of school. In order to maintain the health and safety of our students, all children must have the required vaccinations. Parents may request in writing a medical exemption from immunization requirements (form

available in the Main Office). The Principal or Clinical Office will then seek to obtain the consent of The Health Department of NY to recognize the exemption. Students who have a history of having mumps, measles, chickenpox, and rubella will be accepted only if confirmed by a physician and submitted in writing at the time of enrollment. New York State Law requires a physical examination report to be on file in the Health Office for all students. Health Examination Forms can be picked up at OCS Main Office, Room 406. All health forms are mailed out to new and returning students during the summer and returned by the first day of school.

- Please note that a Tdap, which has a reduced dose of diphtheria and pertussis vaccines, is approved for adolescents starting at age 11. It is often called a booster dose because it boosts the immunity that wanes from vaccines given at ages 4 to 6. Please be sure that your child has received the Tdap vaccine once they reach 11 years of age.

IX. Important Documents

Bell Schedule

2023-2024

1st Period	8:00-8:57
2nd Period	9:00-9:57
3rd Period	10:00-10:57
4th Period	11:00-11:57
5th Period (Lunch)	12:00-12:57
6th Period (Lunch)	1:00-1:57
7th Period	2:00-2:57

XVI. Appendix

Opportunity Charter School Directory 2023-2024

L. Goldberg	CEO/Founder	Lgoldberg@ocsny.org
E. Samuels	Chief Operating Officer	Emily.Samuels@ocsny.org
J. Marcu	Head of School	Jessica.Marcu@ocsny.org
S. McCaw	Deputy Head of School	Sade.McCaw@ocsny.org
D. O'Brien	Chief of Staff	Donna.Obrien@ocsny.org
K. Francis	High School Principal	Kaitlin.Francis@ocsny.org
J. Hazel	Middle School Principal	Joanne.Hazel@ocsny.org
Middle School Teacher	Subject Area	Email address
A. Vera	SS 8	Angel.Vera@ocsny.org
C.Coardes	Math 6/7	Caroline.Coardes@ocsny.org
N. Faison	Science 6 and Science 7	Nicole.faison@ocsny.org
V. Sylvester	Math 6/ HS Algebra	Vannessa.Sylvester@ocsny.org
A.Brown	Math 7/HS Geometry	Alex.Brown@ocsny.org
L. Thomas	English 8	Latasha.Thomas@ocsny.org
G. Dolley	Math 7	Galvin.Dolley@ocsny.org
J. Henry - Newell	Science 8	JodyKay.HenryNewell@ocsny.org
A. Warmin	Math 8	Adam.Warmin@ocsny.org
D. Harmsen	SS 6/7	Douglas.Harmsen@ocsny.org
R. Borst	MS ELL	Rachel.Borst@ocsny.org
High School Teacher	Subject Area	Email address
T. Lee	English 9	Timothy.Lee@ocsny.org
B. Forrest	English 9	Breyanna.Forrest@ocsny.org
N. Seabrook	English 10	Natasha.Seabrook@ocsny.org
B. Mackey-Williams	English 11	Blanche.mw@ocsny.org
Y. Chittampalli	Geometry	Yadu.Chittampalli@ocsny.org
K. Kurrelmeyer	Global History	Kelley.Kurrelmeyer@ocsny.org
I. Zimmer	Technology	Inka.Zimmer@ocsny.org
L. Deacon	Living Environment	Latricia.Deacon@ocsny.org

G. Gunnings	Earth Science	GGunnings@ocsny.org
M. Claramunt	HS ELL	Maria.Claramunt@ocsny.org
Elliott Pollitt - Clay	Participation & Government Economy	Elliott.politt-clay@ocsny.org
S.Francis	History 9	Shannie.Francis@ocsny.org
MS & HS Teacher	Subject Area	Email address
D. Feliciano	Physical Education	Daren.Feliciano@ocsny.org
J.Medic	Physical Education	Jack.Medic@ocsny.org
V. Perruchot	Physical Education	Victor.Perruchot@ocsny.org
E. Anderson	Art	Erika.Anderson@ocsny.org
C. Escobar	Spanish	Christian.Escobar@ocsny.org
Special Education Department	Role	Email address
M. Breeden	Director of Special Education	Michael.Breeden@ocsny.org
Dr. Joy Harris - Smith	Learning Specialist - 6th Grade	Joy.Harris-smith@ocsny.org
M. Joseph	Learning Specialist - 8th Grade	Marceline.Joseph@ocsny.org
T. Cea	Learning Specialist-10th Grade	Tiffany.Cea@ocsny.org
W. Gomez	Learning Specialist-11th Grade	William.Gomez@ocsny.org
Clinical Department	Room 421	Email address
V. Findley	School Psychologist	victoria.findley@ocsny.org
J. Rosa	Social Worker –6th Grade	Judymarie.Rosa@ocsny.org
S. Jackson	Social Worker – 7 th Grade	Sherrie.Jackson@ocsny.org
R. Pinnock	Social Worker - 8th Grade	Rosaline.Pinnock@ocsny.org
M.Keenan	Social Worker - 10th Grade	Meghan.Keenan@ocsny.org
P. Lovell	Social Worker-11th Grade	Plovell@ocsny.org
S. Shelton	Social Worker-12th Grade	Shaniqua.shelton@ocsny.org
Guidance Department	Room 421	Email address
K. Martinez	Student Support Coordinator	Kmartinez5@ocsny.org
E. Finger	High School Guidance Counselor	Eve.Finger@ocsny.org

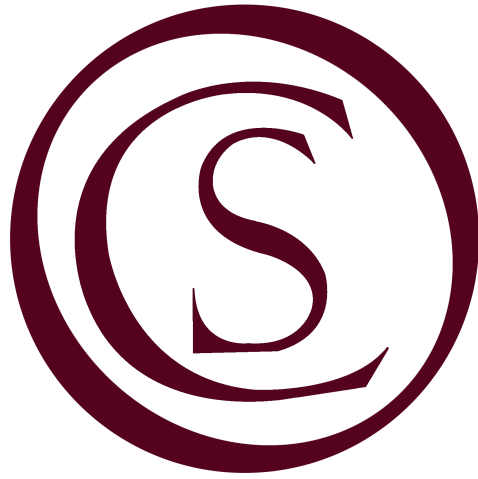
Admissions	Room 406	Email address
K. Vazquez	Admissions Supervisor	Krystal.Vazquez@ocsny.org
L. Coleman	School Aide	laura.coleman@ocsny.org
Supportive Discipline & Student Accountability (HS)		Email address
V. Deshazor	Dean	Veronica.Deshazor@ocsny.org
L. Willis	Assistant to the Dean	Linda.Willis@ocsny.org
D. Abney	School Culture Team Associate	Durell.Abney@ocsny.org
C. Haywood	School Culture Team Associate	Chris.Haywood@ocsny.org
X. Barnett	School Culture Team Associate	Xavier.Barnett@ocsny.org
K. Haraz	School Culture Team Associate	Khalil.Haraz@ocsny.org
C. Ramirez	School Culture Team Associate	Carlos.Ramirez@ocsny.org
D. Johnson	School Culture Team Associate	Desi.Johnson@ocsny.org

School Calendar

2023-2024

Sep 1, Fri	School Closed
Sep 4, Mon	Labor Day – School Closed
Sep 5, Tue	New Student Orientation (HS – 11am/ MS – 1pm)
Sep 7, Thur	First Day of School
Sep 21, Thur	Back to School Night (5pm – 7pm)
Sep 25, Mon	Yom Kippur – School Closed
Oct 9, Mon	Indigenous People’s Day – School Closed
Oct 10- Oct 13	MAP Testing (6-12)
Oct 16- Oct 20	MAP Testing (6-12)
Oct 26, Thur	PSAT – 11 th Grade
Nov 7, Tues	Election Day – Staff PD Day (No Students) , End Q1
Nov 13, Mon	Q2 Begins
Nov 22 – 24	Thanksgiving Recess – School Closed
Nov 30, Thur	Parent Teacher Conference 1pm – 4pm & 5pm – 7pm, Half Day for Students
Dec 25 – Jan 1	Winter Recess – School Closed
Jan 8 - 12	Map Testing
Jan 15 – 19	Map Testing
Jan 15, Mon	MLK Day – School Closed
Jan 23 – 26	Regents Exams
Jan 26, Fri	End Q2
Jan 29, Mon	Clerical Day – No Students, Beginning of Q3
Feb 8, Thur	Parent Teacher Conference 1pm – 4pm & 5pm – 7pm, Half Day for Students
Feb 19- 23	Midwinter Recess – School Closed
Mar 29 – Apr 1	Easter Weekend, School Closed
Apr 5, Fri	End of Q3
Apr 8, Mon	Beginning of Q4
Apr 8- May 17	8 th Grade Science State exam
Apr 10, Wed	Eid al Fitr – School Closed
Apr 11 – 12	Middle School ELA State exam (half day for Middle School)
Apr 18, Thur	Parent Teacher Conference 1pm – 4pm & 5pm – 7pm, Half Day for Students
Apr 19, Fri	Clerical Day, No Students
Apr 15 – May 24	NYSESLAT Exams
Apr 22 – 30	Spring Recess – School Closed
May 7 – 8	Middle School Math Exams (Half day for Middle School)
May 17, Fri	Cleric Day, No Students
May 13 – 17	MAP Testing
May 27, Mon	Memorial Day – School Closed
May 27 – 31	Map Testing
Jun 4, Tuesday	Algebra Regents
Jun 13, Mon	Last Day of School for High School, End Q4 for MS and HS

Jun 14 – 18	Regents Exams
Jun 17, Mon	Eid Al Adha – School Closed
Jun 19, Wed	Juneteenth – School Closed
Jun 20- 26	Regents Exams
Jun 25, Tue	Middle School Moving Up Ceremony
Jun 26, Wed	High School Graduation – Last Day of School



**240 West 113th Street
New York, NY 10026
Main Number: 212-866-6137
Fax: 212-665-7436
Website: OCSNY.org**