our mission:

CUNY Prep is a collaborative effort between the Mayor’s Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO) and The City University of New York (CUNY). We offer two educational opportunities: a full-time day program for out-of-school youth between the ages of 16 and 18 and a part-time evening program (CUNY Prep at Night) for adults 19 and older who lack a high school diploma. Both programs offer academic courses of study that provide students with the educational skills necessary to earn their High School Equivalency Diploma and successfully enter college. Our mission is to develop learners who have the academic, personal, and social skills necessary for higher education. Our graduates have access to a greater range of opportunities and go on to become active participants in community and civic affairs.

about this book

If you’re reading this handbook, you are well on your way towards college. Since 2003, CUNY Prep has led the way in providing out-of-school youth with a unique path to college. Our students left traditional schools for a variety of reasons, but we at CUNY Prep recognize that every adolescent deserves a second chance. Many of our families have experienced frustration and anxiety over the possibility of a child not completing high school. We understand, and we encourage you to support your child in his/her quest for a college education.

While we value your desire to return to school, our experience has shown us that each of you must make a serious commitment if you want to achieve your educational goals. We must warn you that to be successful at CUNY Prep, you must work hard as well as make changes in your personal and social lives. We will work with you to ensure your personal, social, and academic success. Our school’s leadership, faculty, and staff are here to support your growth and development.

This family handbook is designed to inform you about how we work and explain what we expect from you. While there is no doubt that being a student at CUNY Prep is challenging, we hope it will ultimately be a rich and rewarding experience. We applaud our students for returning to school and choosing CUNY Prep as their pathway to college.
At CUNY Prep, we’re all about doing things differently. Most of our students come from traditional school settings, which were not structured to enable them to succeed. We believe that with the right mix of challenge and support, young people who have left school can get back on the path to college, and here at CUNY Prep, we are constantly reexamining ourselves to make sure our students are getting just that.

CUNY Prep is fully funded by the Center for Economic Opportunity. The CEO funds approximately 40 initiatives across some 20 sponsoring agencies aimed at reducing the number of working poor, young adults, and children living in poverty in New York City. Its funding of CUNY Prep has given us the stability we need to continually improve our program and maintain an exceptional instructional environment for our students.

We engage our students in experiences that will encourage them to be lifelong learners and give them the academic, personal, and social skills necessary to go on to higher education. We hope that their time here will lead them to better opportunities and encourage them to be active participants in the world around them. We do not judge our students on their past experiences, but ask them to reflect on the path that brought them here. In doing so, they are better able to identify and improve any behavior patterns that might stand in the way of their success. No matter what circumstances they came from, all CUNY Prep students get a clean slate when they enter our program and a new chance to reshape their future.

It was a novel idea in NYC: instead of just offering so-called high school dropouts another short-term and academically undemanding GED Prep program, why not hold these returning students to higher standards and dare them to expect more of themselves? This was the philosophy CUNY Prep was founded on in 2003. The goal of the program was not only to help out-of-school youth complete their High School Equivalency Diplomas (GEDs), but also to prepare them to enter college.

Ever since we opened our doors, first at a temporary location on the Grand Concourse and currently in our newly-renovated facility on White Plains Road, CUNY Prep has made the dream of higher education a reality for hundreds of young people from throughout the Bronx and the other boroughs of New York City. Our full-time day school program offers a rigorous curriculum with an in-depth focus on humanities, math, writing, and science.

In 2005, we added a part-time night school program for adult learners. Our faculty is second-to-none – a group of innovative educators who bring passion and creativity to their teaching.

For reflection:

- How is CUNY Prep funded?
- What are the core values of CUNY Prep?
- When did the school first open?
why are you here?

Having met with each of you during our selection process, we know that there are as many different answers to this question as there are students in this school.

Perhaps you’re here because personal situations kept you from doing as well in school as you had hoped. Maybe you’re here because you never thought of school as a place to build success. You might be here because you were unhappy with your previous school for personal or academic reasons. Or maybe you just never found the right school to meet your individual needs. Regardless of the path you took to CUNY Prep, the fact that you are here today demonstrates your commitment to starting fresh and building a future for yourself. The fact that you are here today reveals resilience – your ability to adapt to the challenges and obstacles that have come your way – and willingness to reflect on yourself and your learning as you move forward.

why are we here?

At CUNY Prep, our aim is to help students set and accomplish both academic and personal goals, earn a High School Equivalency Diploma with the highest possible score, and eventually graduate from a post-secondary educational institution. Our school is proud to partner with college campuses of The City University of New York (CUNY) to ensure a smooth transition for those of you who choose to attend a college in the CUNY system. Our philosophy is based on three core values of resilience, reflection and success.

resilience

We view ourselves and ask students to view themselves as resilient. Being resilient opens us up to new ways of thinking and acting – whether in math class or in our personal lives. When we are resilient, we are able to envision ourselves differently, and more importantly, we are able to make decisions and take action to make visions a reality. In fact, resiliency inspired us to create the school the way we did. All of the staff and partners at CUNY Prep draw from a host of educational experiences, as teachers, administrators, case managers, and parents.

We have learned a great deal along the way. The mistakes we made and obstacles we overcame have strengthened our commitment to building a different kind of learning environment. As you begin your journey to college, we ask you to reflect on the following essential questions about resilience:

for reflection:

- In what ways have you been resilient in your life?
- How has resilience made you who you are today?
- How has resilience affected who you wish to be in the future?
- What does it look like to be resilient as a student?
We are reflective practitioners at CUNY Prep. This means that we stop, pause, and think about what we are doing and learning along the way. As a student, you will be asked to reflect during your first week here as you write your autobiography. Writing this story of your life serves two purposes. First, it gets you thinking about who you are, how you got here, and what you hope to achieve. Second, it allows us to learn more about who you are and how we can best meet your needs as a student and a young adult. As teachers and administrators, we take the time to think deeply about our work and our community, and we ask our students to do the same.

An emphasis on reflective practice has shaped our curriculum and instruction. All students are required to take courses in the key discipline areas of science, math, and humanities. But we don’t just teach you facts and figures. Our teachers put a lot of thought into developing curricula that engages students and pushes them to truly examine the world around them. This method of instruction enables you to think critically and deeply and allows you to apply the power of reflection to your own life. We developed this theory of teaching through our own reflection on our students, their ways of learning, and our own beliefs about good teaching and successful schools.

But being reflective practitioners doesn’t just apply to classroom instruction. Perhaps more importantly, it influences how we interact as a community and conceive of our own personal roles within it. It is essential that we examine and discuss the language we use when we communicate with one another, the manner in which we let others know that we care, and the consequences that we face when we make poor decisions. These aspects of our school are outlined in our “Respect Code,” included later in this handbook.

In what ways do you reflect upon your life? (Write in a journal or blog? Talk to friends? etc?)

What was your “moment” when you knew you needed to change your life?

How can reflection be helpful in achieving your goals?

Give some examples of how you can practice reflection during your time at CUNY Prep.
success

Success at CUNY Prep comes in many forms. We expect you to put forth your best effort to achieve not only the requirements for graduation but also the goals you set for yourself. The school is structured to support each student’s path to success by providing opportunities for academic and personal guidance, such as one-on-one tutoring and math and writing labs that offer specialized computer programs. We also offer opportunities for peer counseling, leadership training, college visits, and health and wellness workshops.

CUNY Prep’s mission is to inspire students to become lifelong learners. Our graduates are academically prepared to fully pursue their education through college and beyond. At CUNY Prep, we show you the options that are available to you after high school and work with you to strive for the very best possible future.

We encourage you to commit your time, energy, and determination as you work toward achieving success, both academically and in the larger community.

for reflection:

- How do you define success?
- Give some examples of people in your life who have achieved success? Why do you consider them successful?
- In what areas of your life do you think you’ve been successful?
- What supports do you need in order to be successful during your time at CUNY Prep?
**general information**

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**books/textbooks**

CUNY Prep provides books for students, which may be used as in-class textbooks or take-home books to read. Students are responsible for these books. If a book is lost, the student to whom it was issued must pay for it or replace it.

**electronic devices**

Students are not permitted to use electronic devices at any point during school hours. Those students who still choose to bring cell phones, Ipods, video games or other electronic devices to school do so at their own risk. CUNY Prep is not responsible for personal property that is lost, stolen, or damaged.

**emergency contact info**

Please report any changes to the student’s address and/or phone number or the parent or guardian’s work or home to the CARS department immediately. It is essential that this information be up-to-date at all times.

**field trips**

Field trips are considered part of the curriculum and are not extra-curricular. They are an extension of the classroom. Parents/guardians, administrators, and teachers hold the right to refuse a particular student’s participation in a field trip. In this case, the student is required to complete an alternate assignment.

**fire drills**

Students will be made aware of fire and evacuation procedures and drills will be conducted on a regular basis.

**illness or injury**

If a student becomes ill, s/he is to report first to the subject teacher and then to the office. If a student is too ill to remain in school, a staff member in the school office, not the student, will call the parent/guardian and get permission to send the student home. Students age 18 and older will be able to sign themselves out, although a parent/guardian will still be contacted. All injuries should be reported immediately to a teacher.

**telephone calls**

Students are not permitted to make or receive phone calls during school hours without exception. In the case of an emergency, the student may request permission to use the office phone. Parents/guardians who need to reach a student may call the main office.

**transportation**

The City of New York provides free MetroCards for students traveling more than 1.5 miles to school. All full-fare student MetroCards are valid on any public bus or train route in the city.
The primary focus for each student at CUNY Prep is to receive an education. An important part of this is learning to take responsibility, exercise self-control, and engage in appropriate behaviors. Every student and staff member at CUNY Prep will be expected to follow the Respect Code. Following the code of conduct is necessary to ensure a safe learning environment. This is your education! You will get as much from it as you are willing to put into it with regard to effort, time, thought, and energy.

**respect for yourself:**

- Rules and procedures on school grounds, in classrooms and hallways, and on school trips are designed for your safety and the safety of others. Respecting the rules enables everyone to have a safe and enjoyable school experience.

- This is your school. Please take care of it. Writing on the walls or sticking gum on the chairs makes your learning environment unpleasant.

- Using profanity or obscene gestures, not following directions, and wearing inappropriate clothing shows others that you are not serious about your education and your future.

- Be thoughtful and respectful of others by being helpful, cooperative, and considerate.

**respect for others:**

- Communicate politely with other students, teachers, parents/guardians, and members of the school community.

- Put-downs are oppressive and hurtful. Degrading someone for their ethnicity, sexual preference, style, way of speaking, or other personal attribute is disrespectful. Don’t do it!

- Pick appropriate times and places to express your concerns, thoughts, or feelings.

**respect for learning:**

- Come to class prepared and participate in all classroom activities. Be on time for each class period.

- Do not disrupt the learning environment for yourself or others.

- Refrain from using electronic devices during school time and on school property, unless permitted at certain times, such as during lunch.

- Take care of school materials, equipment, and property, including your own personal belongings.

If you choose to bring electronic devices to school, you must be responsible. CUNY Prep is NOT responsible for lost or stolen property anywhere in the building!
rights and responsibilities

students have the right:

- To learn in a supportive environment.
- To have their property and feelings respected.
- To have clean and safe surroundings.
- To be free from physical and verbal abuse.

staff has the right:

- To teach and learn in a supportive, clean and safe environment.
- To have their classroom code of conduct respected.
- To be free from physical and verbal abuse.
- To have their property and feelings respected.

student responsibilities

- Accept consequences for my own behavior.
- Respect and support the rights and feelings of others.
- Set goals and put forth my best effort.
- Help maintain a safe and clean environment.
- Respect school and other people’s property.
- Follow directions courteously and respectfully.
- Follow all school rules and policies.
- Share my ideas in an appropriate manner.
- Always possess (and make available upon request) school identification.

staff responsibilities

- Make decisions that are in the best interest of students’ learning and personal development.
- Act in the best interest of students and other staff – including speaking out about issues or events that threaten the safety or well-being of the school community.
- Help maintain a clean and safe environment.
- Respect school and other people’s property.
- Behave appropriately and professionally.
- Help our students develop skills, knowledge, and appropriate attitudes.
To insure consistency in the delivery of consequences, the following steps provide a general outline for student disciplinary action. In any case, we will attempt to notify parents/legal guardians by phone or in writing. A parent/guardian Conference may be required.

1) verbal warning: The teacher/staff member warns the student verbally that s/he has committed an infraction.

2) written referral: The teacher/staff member issues a written referral and gives it to the associate director. The referral documents the incident (date and time, occurrence, who was involved, and next steps. The referral is placed in the student’s permanent file and a phone call is made to the parent/guardian. More than five (5) referrals per cycle will result in dismissal from the program.

3) suspension for the cycle: A student who is suspended from school is suspended for the remainder of the cycle and may reapply the following cycle.

4) expulsion: The student is expelled from the school and will not be readmitted. No credit will be awarded for classes taken.
We require that all of our students follow a strict uniform policy and dress code. This is a very important part of establishing an environment of professionalism in our school. It’s also a visual representation of our commitment to excellence – just like you’d find in any elite private college preparatory school. We believe that our students deserve that same caliber of education.

Apart from contributing to our school spirit and culture, wearing a CUNY Prep uniform shows that you are an active learner and fully dedicated to what we are doing here. Your time after school hours is your own and you can express yourself any way you choose. But just like you’d dress up to go to work each day, putting on the CUNY Prep uniform signals that you are serious about your current job of moving toward college.

### dress code

- CUNY Prep uniform shirt (provided by school).
- Solid color pants (no jeans) in any of the following colors: khaki, tan, beige, black, or navy blue.
- Young women are permitted to wear appropriate-length skirts (no miniskirts).
- No hats, do-rags, flags, beads or bandanas permitted.
- No tank tops permitted.
- Students who do not follow the dress code will not be admitted to school.

### computer guidelines

- Absolutely no food or beverages are allowed in the computer labs or on or near the computers in the classrooms.
- All computer users must leave their workplace clean and free of trash.
- The computers and computer labs may not be used without permission and staff supervision.
- Absolutely no personal e-mail activity or instant messaging is permitted in class.
- Any computer problems/missing accessories must be immediately reported to the teacher.
- No students are allowed to use the computerized whiteboards in the classroom without permission.

### internet guidelines

- The Internet is for class research only. No visits to inappropriate sites or emailing/downloading of inappropriate or obscene material will be tolerated.
- No student, unless directed by the teacher, may delete or empty a computer’s history list or temporary Internet files from the hard drive.
- Attaching and sending any known viruses or inappropriate material via email is strictly forbidden and will result in disciplinary action.
- No student may download games or other executable files.
humanities
Humanities combines three major academic disciplines: history, social studies, and language arts. Students will build upon their existing knowledge of social studies concepts and geography to begin a formal study of civilization throughout time. Students will work with primary and secondary sources to build their reading, interpretation, and analysis skills. Among other activities, students will read novels and poems, write journals and essays, and make oral presentations.

mathematics
Mathematics focuses on pre-algebra, algebra, and geometry, including geometric constructions and coordinate graphing. Students learn to apply math to everyday life using real-world applications and problem-solving strategies.

science
Science courses cover living environment, biology, chemistry, physics, and forensics. Students will understand and apply scientific concepts, principles, and theories utilizing the Scientific Method to explore topics such as cell dynamics, the human body, and ecology.

electives
In addition to our academic coursework, students at CUNY Prep get a chance to take elective classes in a variety of subjects. In the past, we’ve offered fashion club, origami, creative writing, photography, and even a student-run Internet radio station. Teachers are encouraged to offer electives in their areas of interest and we also solicit student ideas for classes.

college now
After successfully completing the GED at CUNY Prep, students may be eligible to take College Now courses, which offer the opportunity to earn college credits while still in high school.
**frequently asked questions**

**how long will I be here?**
This answer is different for every student. It depends on your commitment to the program and your skills when you enter.

**who is eligible to take the GED?**
Students who have earned ratings of proficient or above in all of their classes and who have had less than six absences are eligible to sit for the GED examination. Under normal NYC Department of Education guidelines, you must be at least 19 years old to take the GED, but CUNY Prep has an agreement with the city that allows some students as young as 16 to take the test. The CARS department will help individual students determine their eligibility.

**what happens if I fail the GED?**
If you fail the GED, you will be able to try again next cycle if you continue to earn proficiency in all of your classes and have a good attendance record.

**what happens if I pass the GED?**
If you pass the GED, you are eligible to become part of the College Transition Academy. As a CTA student, you’ll take classes to help you prepare for the college entrance exams and eliminate or reduce the need to take remedial classes in college. You may also take College Now classes, which allow you to earn up to nine college credits you can bank and transfer once you enter college. Also, you’ll take College Survival, which gives you help with some of the logistical and psycho-social challenges of college, like learning the vocabulary of college and essential skills like time management.

**what are college now classes?**
College Now is a program that allows you to earn college credits while you’re still in high school. In the past, we’ve offered such courses as Criminal Justice and American Government.

**what is the at home in college program?**
At Home in College classes prepare students to take the college entrance exams in writing and math. Students who do well on these exams can pass out of noncredit-bearing remedial classes, which saves time and money in college.

**what colleges am I eligible for when I pass the GED?**
All CUNY Prep graduates are guaranteed acceptance into one of the CUNY community colleges. Our graduates typically begin their college career at one of the two-year schools in the CUNY system, although some have opted for SUNY two-year schools. After graduating from the two-year schools, students can then transfer the credits they earned to a four-year university.