

Houston Academy

Middle School Handbook

2024-2025



Houston Academy
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Houston Academy

HA STUDENT/PARENT HANDBOOK

Houston Academy is a student-centered institution that educates students within the Wiregrass Area. This handbook is intended to define the rights and responsibilities of school members, enabling all members to learn and function in harmony within the community. As such, this handbook is subject to change for the betterment of the community. Significant changes in the handbook or school policy will be communicated with our Middle School students and families

Mission, Vision, Philosophy, and Chain of Command

MISSION STATEMENT

To seek. To find. To share.

We seek to do our best. We find our greatest potential. We share what we have discovered.

VISION

Houston Academy's Middle School is a nurturing community that helps young learners develop the necessary skills needed to reach their highest potential and achieve academic and personal success.

PHILOSOPHY

Houston Academy is a college preparatory school. As such, the curriculum aims quite properly toward fine scholarship. The teachers who implement the course of study maintain high academic standards to insure the development of skills and the mastery of ideas requisite for matriculation at higher levels of learning. Driven by the ideals of the mission statement, Houston Academy seeks to prepare its students not merely to endure the world about them, but to thrive in it. We endeavor to develop students who enjoy thinking, analyzing, and expressing. We intend for them to make a significant difference in their community. The Academy strives to help individual students to develop their personal, intellectual, physical, artistic, and social selves to their utmost capability.

Admission to Houston Academy is without regard to race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, gender, handicap, or disability. Houston Academy does not discriminate on the basis of actual or perceived race, creed, color, religion, alienage or national origin, ancestry, citizenship status, age, disability or handicap, sex, marital status, veteran status, or any other characteristic protected by the applicable federal, state, or local laws. Houston Academy has zero tolerance for any such discrimination against students, faculty, and all other employees. With respect to the School's facilities, the School's athletic teams, and the education of the School's students, Houston Academy will identify each student based on the student's gender designated on the student's Birth Certificate. Houston Academy respects and honors the civil and privacy rights of all students, faculty, and other personnel.

Any person at Houston Academy who believes he/she has been discriminated against must report such discrimination to the Assistant Head of School or the Headmaster.

CHAIN OF COMMAND

Houston Academy establishes and communicates policies and procedures to ensure the effective administration of the school. Community members are required to use the established communication channels and to follow the chain of command. Should a community member get dissatisfied with Houston Academy in any way, that individual should strive to resolve the matter with the person(s) involved as privately and compassionately as possible, rather than spreading criticism and negativity verbally or through social media. Issues will be resolved as privately as possible and with the best interest of the student(s) at heart.

Middle school students and their parents are encouraged to speak directly to the appropriate teacher(s) when there is an academic or behavior/discipline issue in a specific class. Middle school students and parents are encouraged to speak to the Middle School Counselor or the student's Advisor if there is a general academic or behavior/discipline matter that requires attention.

If the student and parents are not satisfied with the attempted resolution of the matter, the Head of Middle School should be contacted and a meeting arranged that will include all relevant parties. If the students and parents remain unsatisfied with the outcome, a joint meeting between the Headmaster and the involved parties will be scheduled. **Neither the Head of Middle School nor the Headmaster will discuss a specific issue, matter, or incident with a parent if that parent has not followed the chain of command described above.**

The Board of Trustees exists to create plans, to set policies, and to make decisions that will ensure the viability of the school's mission for future generations. The Board is not involved with the day-to-day operations of the school as its authority exists only when a board meeting is in session and a quorum is present. It lives in the future, concerning itself with those issues that impact the future viability of the school. The Headmaster is the sole employee of the Board and is responsible for running the school and making operational decisions on a day-to-day basis. Therefore, issues or conflicts involving students and Houston Academy should NOT be addressed to the Board of Trustees but should, instead, be addressed to the appropriate teacher, Advisor, or counselor (as described in the paragraphs above depending upon the nature of the issue).

CORE VALUES AND BELIEFS

- We believe a **rigorous academic experience** is of high priority and helps students acquire skills needed to overcome adversity and thrive as they prepare for the demands of high school and beyond.
- We believe a **self-aware student** relentlessly strives to build skills in listening, organization, comprehension, and use of technology.
- We believe tasks requiring **creativity, innovation, and collaboration** are valuable and relevant.
- We believe the ability to **communicate clearly** both in written and verbal format is fundamental and worthy of attention across the curriculum.
- We believe it is the **responsibility of all adults within the community to work together to consistently nurture values** such as honor, diligence, and respect.

Middle School Faculty/Staff List

2024-2025

Name	Position	Contact (email)
Benton, Caroline	MS Learning Specialist Grade 5, 6 and 7	bentonc@houstonacademy.com
Bruner, Hannah	English Grade 6 and 7	brunerh@houstonacademy.com
Boisvert, Tiana	Spanish 1A/1B	boisvertt@houstonacademy.com
Braswell, Hannah	Art	braswellh@houstonacademy.com
Braswell, Holly	Science	braswellho@houstonacademy.com
Browning, Jerry	Athletic Director	browningj@houstonacademy.com
Cromer, Natalie	History Grade 6 and 8	cromern@houstonacademy.com
David, Sara	English Grade 7 and 8	davids@houstonacademy.com
Flowers, Patti	Learning Specialist	flowersp@houstonacademy.com
Gray, Alana	STEAM/ Technology 6	grava@houstonacademy.com
Griffin, Amy	Chorus and Drama	griffina@houstonacademy.com
Hart, Brian	Dean of Students	hartb@houstonacademy.com
Hart, Karrie	Geography/Print Design	hartk@houstonacademy.com
Holmes, James	Band	holmesj@houstonacademy.com
Howard, A. J.	Physical Education	howarda@houstonacademy.com
Janney, Vincent	Head of School / History Grade 8	janneyv@houstonacademy.com
Mack, Sonja	Latin	macks@houstonacademy.com
Maddox, Angie	Mathematics Grade 5 and 6	maddoxa@houstonacademy.com
McDonald, Brian	Digital Media	mcdonaldb@houstonacademy.com
Meadows, Caroline	MS Art	meadowsc@houstonacademy.com
Reyner, Cindy	Receptionist	reynerc@houstonacademy.com
Ryan, Jody	Physical Education Grade 5	ryanj@houstonacademy.com
Sieving, Angie	English Grade 5 and 7	sievinga@houstonacademy.com
Speed, Judy	Administrative Assistant	speedj@houstonacademy.com
Uible, Jenny	Head of Middle School/ Spanish	uiblei@houstonacademy.com
Uible, Sam	Social Studies Grade 5/ Science Grade 5 and 6	uibles@houstonacademy.com
Whigham, Jack	Mathematics Grade 7 and 8	whighamj@houstonacademy.com
White, Deidra	MS Counselor	whited@houstonacademy.com
Wilder, Ginger	French/ World Languages	wilderg@houstonacademy.com
Woodcock, Caleb	Learning Services Grade 8	woodcockc@houstonacademy.com
Woodcock, Melanie	Director of Technology	woodcockm@houstonacademy.com
Ziglar, Kathy	Mathematics Grade 7 and 8	ziglark@houstonacademy.com

Calendar of Important Dates

2024- 2025

Event/Occurrence	Date(s)
Faculty and Staff in Service Days	August 5-7
Grade 5 and 6 Student Orientation	August 1
NEW 7 th and 8 th Grade Student Orientation	August 1
First Day of School (full day) – Start of Semester 1	August 8
Middle School Open House	August 20
Labor Day – NO SCHOOL	September 2
Teacher Collaboration Day/Early Dismissal @ 12:00 (grades 5-8)	September 18
End of Quarter 1	October 10
Fall Break	October 11-14
Teacher Collaboration Day/Early Dismissal @ 12:00 (grades 5-8)	October 30
Veterans Day- NO SCHOOL	November 11
Thanksgiving Break- NO SCHOOL	November 25-29
End of Quarter 2	December 13
Semester 1 Exams (Grades 6-8)	December 16-18
Holiday Break	December 18
MS Holiday Party	December 19- January 6
School Resumes – Start of Semester 2	January 7
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day – NO SCHOOL	January 20
Faculty/Staff Professional Development Day – NO SCHOOL FOR STUDENTS	February 13
Winter Break	February 14-17
End of Quarter 3	March 14
Spring Break	March 24-28
Teacher Collaboration Day/Early Dismissal @ 12:00 (grades 5-8)	April 8
Good Friday- NO SCHOOL	April 18
MS Awards Ceremonies	May 15
End of Quarter 4	May 17
Semester 2 Exams (Grades 5-8)	May 20-21
Grade 8 Celebration	May 21

Important Houston Academy Web Links

- Houston Academy website: <http://www.houstonacademy.com>
- We Lunch It (Subs & More): <http://www.welunchit.com/>
- PowerSchool: <https://houstonacademy.powerschool.com/public/home.html>
- Uniforms: <https://zoghbyuniforms.com>

Academic Program

GRADING SYSTEM

In grades 5-8, students receive grades in all academic areas. The students receive letter grades based upon a numerical percentage utilizing the following scale:

A+	100 – 98	B	86 – 83	C-	72 – 70
A	97 – 93	B-	82 – 80	D	69 – 65
A-	92 – 90	C+	79 – 77	F	Below 65
B+	89 – 87	C	76 – 73		

All grades are derived from the required course of study. Students are encouraged to do their best academically and are supported in their efforts to achieve. Generally, teachers will not allow students to retake a test, nor will they give extra credit assignments to enhance a grade. In the event of a course failure for the semester, students will be allowed to attend summer school *held at Houston Academy* in order to potentially return to the school. If student performance during summer school is sufficient, the student may be re-enrolled for the upcoming school year. The Head of Middle School must approve any summer school work for credit. The Head of Middle School must approve any deviations from these guidelines. Any student who fails two or more subjects for the year is subject to release from HA.

SEMESTER EXAMS

Students in middle school begin to hone the skills to take comprehensive exams. In 5th grade students will take an ***End of Year Math*** exam, which will be used for math placement for 6th grade math. In 6th grade, students will take 1 exam each semester (English in winter and Math in Spring). The grades for these exams will count in the term in which they are taken.

In grades 7 and 8, students take 5 comprehensive semester examinations. Students will be given 3 exams (English, Science and History) the first semester and 2 exams (Math and Foreign Language) in the second semester. Semester grades are determined based upon the two previous quarters and the semester examination. The semester examination counts as 15% of the semester average.

NO exemptions will be allowed due to the reduced number of exams given each semester.

No tests will be scheduled the two days prior to exams to allow students the opportunity to focus on and prepare for the exams.

REPORT CARDS

Students receive report cards four times per year. Report cards are sent via email following the end of each grading period. These grading periods are posted on the Tandem Calendar. A printed copy of the final report card of the school year will be mailed home over the summer. Parents may check grades at any time on PowerSchool, Houston Academy's online grade book program.

COUNSELOR CONFERENCES

Counselors are available to meet with any students who have social or academic questions or concerns. Counseling conferences may also be scheduled *for* students throughout the year. Attendance at these conferences is required unless the student has a school conflict. In case of a conflict, the student is expected to see the counselor before the appointed time to reschedule the appointment.

After the quarter report cards are received, counselors will meet any students who are having academic difficulty. Plans for improving study habits will be discussed, and parents will be notified if tutoring is deemed necessary.

HONOR ROLLS

At the end of each semester, an Honor Roll will be announced and published for grades 5 through 8. To be eligible for the Headmaster's List, a student must have a 4.0 grade point average for the previous semester. For the Principal's List, a student must have between a 3.75 and 4.0. For Raider Honor Roll, a student must have a 3.52 grade point average for the previous semester. Please note that PE, chorus, journalism, band, driver education, drama, study hall, and technology courses do not count in the cumulative grade point average.

TESTING POLICY

Middle School students will have no more than two *major* tests/assessments on a single day. ***Students who are absent on a test day should be prepared to take the missed test immediately upon return to school*** unless other arrangements have been made with the teacher during the student's absence.

ACHIEVEMENT TESTS

Achievement tests can help a student understand academic strengths and weaknesses while also helping a school understand the relative efficacy of its program. There is also a benefit in students having multiple opportunities to sit through standardized testing experiences so that they are comfortable and relaxed when they take standardized tests (such as the PSAT, SAT and/or ACT) in high school that will comprise an aspect of their academic resume for college acceptance. Thus, each year, students in grades 5-8 will take standardized tests that may measure academic achievement in such areas of English, reading, mathematics, and science.

HOMEWORK

Homework is a significant and meaningful part of the curriculum at Houston Academy. It serves to instill in students the formation and development of good study habits and to reinforce the learned skills and concepts in all subject areas.

Each day's homework assignments will average a total 45 - 90 minutes in 5th and 6th grades and 60 – 120 minutes in grades 7 and 8. Because these times are averages, they may vary, depending on the assignment and the rate at which a student works. If a student is taking an agonizingly long time to complete homework on a regular basis, it is suggested that a parent chart the amount of time spent and share that information with the teacher(s) and Head of Middle School. This data is very important for teachers as they attempt to understand the relative mastery of the content and skill being covered while also considering the amount of homework given at a specific grade level. It is essential that students assume the responsibility of completing all homework.

MAKE UP WORK

Requests for missed assignments may be made by calling the school office or emailing the teacher by 10:00 a.m. on the day the assignments will be picked up. Teachers have limited time during the school day to compile work to be sent home, so homework assignments will not be ready to be picked up until 3:00 p.m. ***The student will be responsible for completing and turning in any work missed due to an absence.*** All makeup work should be completed and returned to the teacher in a reasonable amount of time.

Work missed due to an absence, including school connected activities, may be made up at school upon the student's return. It is, however, the student's responsibility to contact the teachers about make up work. ***Completion of work missed due to illness should take approximately the same time as the time missed from class (i.e. one day missed, one day to make up work).*** If work is missed for a school related event or sports function is not completed before the absence or event, grades may be affected.

DROP AND ADD

The counselor and the Head of Middle School must approve any changes in a student schedule. Students may be moved down to an on-grade level class from an honors level class due to excessive absences, grades, or other reasons deemed appropriate by the counselor, teacher, and/or Head of Middle School.

SCHEDULE

To help middle school students make a smooth transition to the Upper School, grades 5- 8 function on a six-day rotating cycle of seven periods, the same schedule used in grades 9 through 12. The first six classes meet in a different time slot each day. The seventh period does not rotate. This rotating schedule is consistent with brain research that suggests students will benefit from having different classes meet at different times of the day. Students have altered schedules on Special days such as Pep Rally schedule and Early Release days and these schedules will be sent to the students on Special Days. Below is the regular middle school schedule.

Grade 5-8 Daily Schedule

Period	Time	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
Advisory	8:00-8:10						
1 st	8:14-9:04	A	B	C	D	E	F
2 nd	9:08-9:58	B	C	D	E	F	A
MS Break	9:58-10:16						
3 rd	10:20-11:10	C	D	E	F	A	B
4 th	11:14-12:04	D	E	F	A	B	C
MS Lunch / Recess	12:04-12:35						
5 th	12:37-1:27	E	F	A	B	C	D
6 th	1:31-2:21	F	A	B	C	D	E
7 th	2:25-3:15	G	G	G	G	G	G
Tutorial	3:15-3:45						

The 5th Grade Schedule uses the exact same time 'blocks' as indicated in the table above, although their schedule rotates in a slightly different way. Fifth graders will receive their schedule on the first day of school and go through an orientation to help them understand the flow of the Middle School academic day.

TUTORIALS

Middle school teachers are available for tutorials before and after school daily. ***It is the responsibility of the student to make an appointment for a tutorial.*** Teachers also may require students to attend tutorial.

In addition, students earning a 75% or below in any class are ***required*** to attend tutorials at least one day per week. ***Required tutorial takes precedence over any/all extracurricular activities. Failure to meet this obligation may result in disciplinary action.*** Tardiness or absence from tutorial shall be treated as

tardiness or absence from a class, which may result in disciplinary action (including, possibly, detention).

LEARNING SERVICES

Learning Services are available to students that have a diagnosed learning issue based on a comprehensive battery of tests performed by an external, HA-approved practitioner. The Learning Services Department will develop an Academic Support Plan for students that have updated testing/diagnosis. Only students that have approved Academic Support Plans (ASPs) can receive accommodations in HA classes.

FAILED COURSES

No credit will be awarded if a student earns a grade below 65% in any class at Houston Academy. Students may recover a maximum of one full-year credit or two half credits during their career in the Middle School (grades 5-8). A student that has a cumulative GPA of greater than 2.0 may be afforded the opportunity to recover an additional 0.5 credits depending on the conditions of their Academic Probation. All credit recovery work must be completed within the timeline and in accordance with the parameters established by the school. Students may make-up failed courses.

CREDIT RECOVERY

The student completes a credit recovery course through Houston Academy. If the student passes the credit recovery course, the credit recovery credit and grade will be placed on the HA transcript; however, the grade will not be factored into the student's GPA (7th and 8th graders only have GPA)

ADVISORY PROGRAM

According to the Association for Middle Level Education (formerly the National Middle School Association), one of the pivotal characteristics of an effective middle school program is the presence of an adult advocate to guide the personal and academic growth of each student. In other words, one of the fundamental needs of a middle school student as he or she navigates the challenges and changes that characterize the middle school years is to know and trust *at least* one adult while also being known and trusted by that adult. Since it is known that academic success and personal growth increase markedly when the affective needs of young adolescents are met, adults in a developmentally responsive middle school serve as advocates and mentors for the students.

At Houston Academy Middle School, students are assigned an advisor each year. Normally, the advisor is a teacher at the Middle School level and serves as the contact person for that student. Advisory provides the opportunity for teachers and students to build the relationships that make students comfortable in turning to their advisor with a problem, question, or just a need to talk. This Middle School Advisory Program is important as advocates help students transition from the type of support found in Lower School to the more independent learning environment of Upper School.

Among the purposes of the advisory program are to:

- ensure that each student is known well at school by at least one adult who is that youngster's advocate;
- provide a venue in which every student can find ways of being successful within the academic and social options the school provides;
- arrange for the student to meet with the Middle School Counselor to discuss an issue if warranted;
- promote communication and coordination between home and school.

STUDENT CLUBS AND ACTIVITIES

Houston Academy sponsors a variety of clubs and activities. Students are encouraged to participate in school activities as an important aspect of a well-rounded education. Some clubs may have dues. All clubs are asked to do a project for the school and for the community.

Some clubs and activities that have occurred in the past include spelling bees, field trips, Student Government Association, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Mathcounts, Junior Scholars' Bowl, archery, robotics, and world languages clubs. Due to such factors as student interest and sponsorship availability, certain clubs may not be offered any given year.

In addition, if there is an interest on behalf of a group of students to organize a club or activity at Houston Academy, those students should attempt to locate a sponsor and, with the sponsor, arrange a meeting with the Head of Middle School to discuss the possibility of offering it.

Houston Academy prohibits any clubs and organizations that are created or operated for the purposes of advocating or advancing sexuality and gender-based themes and any clubs or organizations to promote or participate in sexual activities or sexual discussions of any kind. This prohibition does not apply to the School's curriculum.

DANCES

School-sponsored dances may occur throughout the year and may be attended by students in grades 7 and 8. There is a **'no date' policy** in order to remove the pressure of dating at this young age. Each student is encouraged to attend the dances. Students from other schools are not permitted at these dances. Girls should wear nice pants or a dress (**NO cocktail dresses; appropriate length**). Boys should wear long pants and a collared shirt.

ATHLETICS

Students in grades 7 and 8 are eligible to participate in athletics at Houston Academy. Houston Academy is a member of the Alabama High School Athletic Association (AHSAA) which sets rules and guidelines for participation in interscholastic sports. **Specific requirements for participation in athletics can be found in the Houston Academy Athletic Handbook.**

GENERAL OVERVIEW

Dragonfly Max is the required eligibility program used to manage and certify all AHSAA student-athletes for participation. Parents of potential student-athletes must go to <https://www.dragonflymax.com/> and create a personal account which house all forms, releases and documentation for participation such as:

- Physical Form
- Concussion Consent Form
- Participation Consent Form
- Copy of Birth Certificate
- Sportsmanship Course Certification

The Concussion and Participation forms may be found on dragonfly for student and parental digital signatures. If you go through dragonfly, forms will be automatically uploaded in the

dragonfly eligibility program. Forms may also be accessed through the Houston Academy or AHSAA website where they can be printed, signed then uploaded to your Dragonfly Account. Copies of the required physical form may be found on the Houston Academy or AHSAA website. Copies of the physical form may also be picked up in the HA Athletic Directors Office. Physicals must be administered by a Medical Doctor or Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine on this specific AHSAA form and signed by student-athlete and parent or legal guardian to be considered valid.

SPORTSMANSHIP REQUIREMENT

If a student athlete has never taken the required AHSAA Sportsmanship Course, they must go to NFHSlearn.com and create an account in order to take this course through the NFHS Learn Program. After completion, print a copy of the completion certificate to upload in your dragonfly account. You are only required to take this course one time for your middle and high school eligibility. Students should go to www.nfhslearn.com and register as a student. You will take the (free) sportsmanship elective course for students. Make sure you print the completion certificate at the end and upload to your dragonfly account.

BASIC ACADEMIC RULE

Students entering the 7th grade for the first time are eligible for participation in athletics. Students entering the 8th grade must have passed at least five core subjects with a minimum composite numerical average of 70 in those subjects during the previous two semesters and summer school, if applicable.

AHSAA Requirements, Rules, Transfer Policies and Eligibility Guidelines may be found on the Houston Academy website in the new Student/Parent Athletic Handbook. Any specific questions may be directed to the Head Coach of your sport or contact Jerry Browning, Athletic Director, browningj@houstonacademy.com or cell # 334-676-9949.

TRYOUTS

School tryouts in all sports will follow AHSAA Guidelines. Students may contact coaches and/or the Athletic Director for specific tryout dates however, tryout dates will be posted a minimum of 3 weeks in advance on the School's Tandem Calendar. Coaches will in advance post information concerning the tryout process for their specific sport.

TUTORIALS

All student athletes must have an opportunity to attend a tutorial either before or after school without consequences from the coach. Coaches should communicate with the teacher and parents so that there are no conflicts of interest. The coach should, at all times, encourage the student athlete to attend the tutorial.

SPORTS

As a member of the Alabama High School Athletic Association the school offers a broad spectrum of organized programs in the following sports:

Sports Offerings		
Fall	Winter	Spring
Cheerleading (V, JV)	Archery (club)	Baseball (V, JV, MS)
Boys & Girls Cross Country (V, JV, MS)	Boys & Girls Bowling (V)	Boys & Girls Golf (V)
Volleyball (V, JV, JH)	Cheerleading (V, JV)	Boys & Girls Tennis (JV, V)
Football (V, JV, MS)	Boys & Girls Basketball (V, JV, MS)	Boys Soccer (V, JV, MS)
Boys & Girls Swimming (V)	Boys Wrestling (V, JV)	Girls Soccer (V, JV)
	Boys & Girls Indoor Track & Field (V)	Softball (JV, V)
		Boys & Girls Track & Field (V)

Any questions or concerns pertaining to participation in athletics at Houston Academy should be directed to Jerry Browning at browningj@houstonacademy.com , Parents are also welcome to call the Athletic Director at 334-676-9949 to schedule an appointment or come by the Athletic Director's Office

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

PE is an integral part of the instructional program at Houston Academy. If your child cannot participate on a particular day, please send a note to your child's teacher. Students are required to wear tennis shoes for physical education classes.

Students are required to wear an HA athletic shirt and shorts (which must be an appropriate length). As is the case with female skirts, there must be a significant separation between the shirt line and the bottom of the short. Students that do not dress in the appropriate PE uniform will not be permitted to participate in PE class and will therefore lose significant participation points. PE uniform violations will be reported as regular uniform violations (minor infractions) and an accumulation of infractions will result in a contract and potential school suspension.

EXCUSED ABSENCES DUE TO INJURY

1. If a student does not participate in Physical Education class due to illness/injury, he/she must bring a note from a parent/guardian in order for participation in that class to be excused;
2. If a student needs to be excused for more than 3 consecutive days, a doctor's note is required. That note must clearly indicate the dates that will be excused and when the student is eligible to start participating more fully in PE class again. A student that is excused with a doctor's note for an indeterminate amount of time will NOT return to participation until a doctor's note is submitted that states that the student has been 'cleared' to participate;
3. If a student's participation is limited, a doctor's note must explain the limitation clearly.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

ATTENDANCE POLICY:

A missed school day is a missed opportunity to learn. Research shows a strong link between school attendance and academic achievement. Each day a student is absent or late, it deprives the opportunity for students to interact with both teachers and fellow students. In particular, the rigorous nature of Houston Academy's college preparatory curriculum demands punctual, regular attendance. Additionally, regular attendance is a skill necessary for success in college and in life. Finally, Alabama state law requires regular school attendance and requires all independent and private schools to vigorously enforce compulsory school attendance laws.

Absences and tardies from class due to school-related activities (such as field trips, athletic events, or disciplinary action) will not be counted as absences as long as the student attends the class/event.

Whenever possible, trips and dental or medical appointments should be scheduled so that students do not miss class.

All students returning to school following an absence, regardless of the reason, must report to the office with a note signed by a parent/guardian (not electronic) stating the reason for the absence.

All questions regarding attendance requirements should be directed to the Head of Middle School.

APPOINTMENTS:

Students arriving after 8:00 a.m. must sign in at the office upon their arrival at school, where they will receive a pass to enter class.

Students who must depart campus before 3:15 p.m. for an appointment must present a note from a parent or guardian confirming the appointment prior to 7:55 a.m. The student will be given a pass in order to be dismissed from class at the appropriate time. Class will not be disrupted to call for a student during instructional time. Students can be notified during passing times only. No middle school student may leave campus during the day without signing out in the office.

Parents are **strongly** encouraged to schedule appointments after school or during periods when Houston Academy is not in session. *Please remember that students that miss more than 9 classes in any given class in a semester or 18 for the year may not be awarded credit regardless of the reason for the absence.*

TARDINESS:

Students will be on time for all classes, meetings, and assemblies and are strictly prohibited from skipping such activities. For attendance purposes, if a student is more than 10 minutes late for a class without just cause and written explanation, he or she is considered absent from that class and if on campus, is considered “skipping school” (Major Infraction).

If a student arrives after 8:00 a.m., the student must sign in at the main office. The student will then walk him/herself to class. Students arriving after 8:00 a.m. will be counted absent; therefore, they must report to the office to sign in with an excuse. Persistent tardiness causes students to miss important announcements and class work. Their late entrance into the classroom causes a disruption to the learning environment of the entire class. Parents are encouraged to make every effort to have their child at school by 8:00 a.m.

The classroom and advisory teacher will record tardies within PowerTeacher. All such tardies will be counted as unexcused unless the student has a note from a teacher or an administrator. Students who are tardy to class will be required to make up any missed work that is graded before leaving school that day.

Students who accumulate 3 tardies in a single class or 5 total tardies in a Semester will be assigned a Minor Infraction, serve detention and sign an Attendance Contract. Failure to comply with the Attendance Contract will result in further disciplinary action and the assignment of a Major Infraction, which may include Saturday School, in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, or expulsion.

ABSENCES:

HA community members understand that excessive absences undermine the educational experience of a child and have a negative effect on academic performance. *Absences are no longer labeled as excused or unexcused; rather, the student is simply present or absent.*

In order for a student to receive credit for a course at Houston Academy, the student must NOT be absent from the class for more than nine (9) classes during a semester. If a student meets/surpasses these limits, they will be assigned a Major Infraction and will go before the Middle School Discipline Committee.

The MS Discipline Council will review the absence justifications provided by the parents at the time of the absence and make a recommendation to the Head of School as to whether or not a student will receive credit for a class in which he or she has exceeded the allowable number of absences and any other disciplinary consequences to be assigned in accordance with the rules and regulations established within the Student Code of Conduct.

Valid reasons for missing class include:

- personal illness;
- court appearances;
- family illness, medical emergency, or death in the family;
- scheduled healthcare appointments for which the Middle School office was previously notified;
- or other absences previously approved by the Head of Middle School.

If a family trip must be scheduled during school days, the student will be given the opportunity to make up essential assignments provided prior arrangements have been made through the Head of Middle School. Except in cases of emergency, such arrangements should be made *at least* one week before the expected absence.

Athletes, cheerleaders, and Raiderettes must attend school all day on game day to be eligible to participate.

Written warnings will be sent to the student and his/her parent as absences accrue during a semester of study. The first warning letter will be sent by the Dean of Students after a student has accumulated five (5) absences in a semester.

PRE-ARRANGED ABSENCES:

The school's vacations are generous in both number and length; therefore, Houston Academy expects parents and students to observe the dates specified on the school calendar. Exceptions, which are requested in advance, may be considered. Only absences for which a Pre-Arranged Absence Form has been completed will be considered.

The Pre-Arranged Absence Form may be obtained from the office. The form should be approved by all of the student's teachers and submitted to the Head of Middle School no less than one week (5 school days) prior to the absence. The student should request all assignments from the teachers and make arrangements to make up, or take prior, any missed tests or quizzes. **If a student's academic standing is in jeopardy, a pre-arranged absence may not be granted.**

DROP OFF AND PICK UP:

When picking up or dropping off students, cars must pull together as closely as possible and students should always unload and exit their vehicles on the right-hand side. Students are kindly requested to have their bags and materials organized and ready to go so that unloading and pick-up time can be done efficiently and effectively.

In an effort to move traffic more efficiently before and after school, we are asking **7th and 8th grade students** being dropped off and picked up to turn south off of Burbank on Buena Vista. Take the first entrance on the right. Follow the carline arrows through the upper school parking lot.

5th and 6th grade students being dropped off and may enter from Buena Vista. Please drop off students in front of the office area in the morning. In the afternoon, pick up students by entering in the parking lot on Buena Vista, drive around the school in the lane closest to the street to the lower school circle.

CHECKING IN/OUT:

Students may not leave campus for any reason during school hours without parental permission. Students arriving late or leaving early must have parent's permission and must sign in/out in the office. All spaces on the sign in/out sheet must be completed and someone in the office must initial the sheet.

INCLEMENT WEATHER:

In situations of early morning inclement weather, the school will send an emergency alert (email, text, and message) to all parents with as much advance notification as possible.

MEDICATION:

At no time should a student have any medication, prescription or over the counter, in his possession. Parents may administer medication to their child during the school day by arranging this with the Receptionist. If your child needs medication administered by school personnel, please follow these procedures:

- Complete a *Medication Authorization Form*, which is available in the school office or online. Prescription medication must have a Physician's signature on the form.
- Parent or guardian should give the medication and completed form to front office personnel.
- All medication must be in the original container or a labeled pharmacy bottle.

No medication will be administered to a student without a parent's written permission

STUDENT LANYARDS/ IDS AND ACCESS

All HA students in grades 5-12 are provided an HA lanyard and an integrated HA student ID/HA access card at the beginning of each academic year and/or upon their enrollment to HA (one card that will be referred to as "ID"). The ID serves as a way to identify students and also serves as an access card to open designated external doors during defined hours. IDs will also be required to attend HA events that are free to students on campus and externally (HA home games, matches, etc.).

Students must have their lanyard with the accompanying ID on them at all times. Failure to do so will result in a minor infraction. If a student forgets his/her card at home, he/she can request a temporary card from the Advancement Office. If the student fails to turn in the temporary ID, he/she will be assessed a \$10.00 fee. If a student loses his/her ID, he/she will be required to pay a \$20.00 replacement fee.

Students assigned an ID are required to sign a contract and agree to:

- Wear the lanyard/ID in a manner in which it is visible to all community members.
- ***Not to cover the student picture on the ID with anything so it can be visible to all.***
- Only use the ID for personal use and not loan the ID to anyone else including members of the community/family.
- Ensure all doors are closed after opening.
- Report to a faculty member if any unauthorized person has an ID or is on campus without a visitor ID.
- Report to a faculty member if any door remains open or a locking system is not functioning properly.
- Failure to comply with the above provisions will result in disciplinary consequences and places the members of our community in danger.

Violations of the Student Lanyard/ID policy will result in a disciplinary infraction.

LOCKERS:

Students in grades 5-8 must rent lockers at the beginning of the school year. If a student wishes to have a lock on their locker they must contact Mr. Hart, Dean of Students. The school will NOT be responsible for items taken from unlocked lockers. **Students should not deface the lockers in any way**, and they will need to return their lock and locker in good order at the end of the year. Failure to do so will result in a \$10.00 fine.

For security reasons, the locker area will be locked between the hours of 4:30 p.m. and 7:00 a.m. This will foster student responsibility and reduce vandalism. Students may not call school personnel to come to the school to open the locker area after school hours. No exceptions will be made. The school reserves the right at any time to search lockers on the school premises.

Students in grades 5-8 will be permitted to carry their backpacks between classes. In an attempt to foster organization and responsibility (while also limiting the weight of a backpack that a student must carry), students should only carry books for two classes at a time and their MacBook in its case.

TEXTBOOKS:

Tuition does not include the cost of textbooks and workbooks. Students may purchase their books from any Internet service that offers textbooks or from another student. The school supplies list and a list of textbooks required for each course offered are available on the website at www.houstonacademy.com.

LUNCH:

Students will eat lunch in the EDC Grand Hall. The EDC commons area is reserved for 8th grade students as an 8th grade privilege. All trash must be placed in the containers provided. If 8th grade students do not pick up their trash or otherwise fail to act responsibly during this time, the privilege of using the commons area may be lost for a period of time.

There are three lunch options for our Middle School students:

1. Students can bring lunch from home and can keep the lunch in their lockers in a cooler bag. Microwaves are available in the commons area to heat up food.
2. Students can pre-order lunch from the school-approved catering service: We Lunch It.
3. Students can purchase food using cash or their school account through Raider Retail.

In the interest of student safety and reducing the number of vehicles cluttering the school drives and parking lots, and also limiting the amount of foot traffic on campus, **delivery of food will NOT be allowed to the school at any time.** No food can be delivered to the school during the regular school day from any source. **(Delivery of food from a family member, friend, or any fast food restaurant is strictly prohibited).**

No open food or drink is permitted in classrooms, hallways, foyers, the library, locker room, the Main Office, or the gymnasiums during the school day. Water is the only exception. Students may only eat snacks before school, during MS Break, during MS Lunch, and after school. ***Students are discouraged from eating food while passing between classes or in a classroom. Exception-planned events.***

Grades 5 through 8 will eat lunch together in EDC Grand Hall. Each grade will sit in an assigned area, with 8th graders having the ability to sit in the commons area. Any student who wishes to leave the lunch area for any reason must get permission from one of the teachers on duty each day.

Our school lunch service, managed and catered by We Lunch It, provides an easy and nutritious lunch for students. Food from a variety of local restaurants can be ordered online and the choices change regularly. We encourage parents to take advantage of this wonderful service (orders can be placed from your phone or computer; information is available under the 'Parents' tab on the HA website) or to allow

their student to pack a lunch. This is an important step toward responsibility and helps the student maintain a sense of independence that is lost when parents bring lunch daily.

WATER BOTTLES:

Proper hydration is essential to efficient brain function and effective learning; therefore, students are strongly encouraged to drink water during the school day. Students may carry non-breakable water bottles. In order to be environmentally responsible, students are asked to use refillable bottles that can be refilled at water filling stations throughout the school, assuming that those stations are functioning and available for use. No glass water bottles will be allowed in classrooms.

RAIDER RETAIL:

Raider Retail (RR) is located in EDC Commons Area and is staffed by HA PTO volunteers. It is open Monday through Friday 9:30-1:30.

Snacks and drinks are sold during break and during all lunches. There are healthy options available such as yogurt, cheese, fruit, and water in addition to routine snacks. For convenience, parents may open accounts for the students, but cash is accepted as well. Checks should be made out to HA PTO, and the responsible parent's name and cell phone number should be provided. A record is kept of what is bought and can be reviewed if desired. A volunteer will contact you by text when your child's balance is depleted.

All proceeds from snack sales are donated back to school in various ways. RR is a great volunteer opportunity and a good way to meet fellow parents as well as become familiar with the students.

VENDING MACHINES

Vending machines are available in the EDC Commons. Vending machines should only be used before/after school and at break/lunch, understanding that food is not allowed in classrooms and that there is limited time to transition from class to class.'

RESTROOMS

Houston Academy provides three sets of Restrooms for all students, faculty, staff and visitors. "Boy's/Men's" restrooms are for use only by any student whose Birth Certificate designates him to be a male. "Girl's/Women's" restrooms are for use only by any student whose Birth Certificate designates her to be a female. The School's third set of restrooms are single-toilet restrooms, and any person for any reason may use the Unisex restrooms regardless of that person's Birth Certificate.

MORNING. BREAK, AND AFTER SCHOOL

Students must be in supervised areas at all times during the school day. Before school, at break, and after school, students may either be in the US Courtyard or the EDC Commons. Students may not be in the gym or any classroom at any time unsupervised

UNIFORM POLICY

Zoghby's was selected and announced as the official uniform provider for Houston Academy in the Spring of 2022. Uniforms can be purchased online or at the retail store located at 2943 Montgomery Hwy., Dothan, AL.

The most notable change that was made in the process of transitioning from Lands' End/Sandra Jean to Zoghby's in terms of the appearance, color choice and/or style of the different components of the uniform will be in the outerwear choices. Starting in 2024-25, all outerwear will be gray in color and HA has added a gray HA sweatshirt style outerwear piece to the regular uniform outerwear options.

Note – each student will dress in accordance to the gender assigned to that student on his/her birth certificate. Once students enter campus in the morning they are expected to be in proper uniform regardless of what time they arrive.

OUTERWEAR

The following items are considered part of the regular HA uniform outerwear:

- HA Half-Zip Pullover (gray)
- HA Soft Shell Jacket (gray)
- HA Pullover Sweatshirt (gray)
- HA Crewneck Cardigan (gray)
- HA Letterman's Jacket available for purchase through Herff Jones

Note - If outerwear is worn, students must still comply with all aspects of the dress code that includes wearing regular uniform attire underneath (collared shirt, belt, etc.). The collar of the HA polo shirt should be visible regardless of the outerwear item being worn.

HA apparel that does not meet the outerwear criteria above (sweat shirts, hoodies, warmups, etc.) that are sold by Raider Retail, HAraiderwear.com, or obtained through an HA team, club, or organization, may **ONLY** be worn on Raider Days (Fridays). Blankets, generic and/or HA, are never allowed during school days/hours.

On rainy days, HA students can wear the approved HA Raincoat. Non-HA raincoats, umbrellas, etc. must be left in the US locker room and cannot be worn to class.

Note - if outerwear is worn, students must still comply with all aspects of the dress code that includes wearing regular uniform attire underneath (collared shirt, belt, etc.). The collar of the HA polo shirt should be visible regardless of the outerwear item being worn.

HA apparel that does not meet the outerwear criteria above (sweat shirts, hoodies, warmups, etc.) that are sold by Raider Retail, HAraiderwear.com, or obtained through an HA team, club, or organization, may **ONLY** be worn on Raider Days (Fridays). Blankets, generic and/or HA, are never allowed during school days/hours.

On rainy days, HA students can wear the approved HA Raincoat. Non HA raincoats, umbrellas, etc. must be left in the MS locker room.

FEMALES, GRADES 5-8:

The following items are a part of Houston Academy's Uniform Dress Code for females:

- Fitted white, royal blue, or light blue HA polo shirt (long or short sleeve) *athletic or knit material OR the HA button-down white dress shirt.
- HA khaki short or pant of athletic or knit material.
- HA plaid skirt/skort* must meet the length requirement with a minimum separation of five inches between the skirt hem and the shirt tail. Females General Guidelines
- Uniforms must be neat and clean. Clothing with stains, holes, tears, fraying cannot be worn at school.
- Clothing should fit well, be modestly cut, and should not be too tight or too baggy.
- Matching socks of solid color (white, blue, grey, black) are required. If the brand is visible, it must be a single logo and may not include stripes, bands, etc.
- Matching athletic (tennis) shoes which are predominately white, black, blue or grey with no more than one accent color. Closed toe brown or black shoes (wallabee, deck/boat, saddle oxfords, etc.) are acceptable. No open toe shoes/sandals/flip flops, boots*, heels of any kind, etc. are allowed. (*Boots are NOT permitted on regular school days or Raider Days).
- Tights and leggings (seamless without visible brand names) that reach the ankle and are tight to the ankle must be solid in color (blue, grey, black or white). NO JOGGER PANTS.
- Skorts, skirts, and shorts must have a separation between the hem of the skirt and the shirt tail and skirts should be modest in length.*
- Any visible items worn under the regular uniform must be solid white, grey, or royal blue and may not contain any visible logos.
- The midsection must be fully covered by the shirt, even when the arms are raised.
- Hats, caps, sunglasses, or other headgear are not permitted on campus at any time from arrival until dismissal.
- Females may wear solid, undecorated headbands that are white, grey, black, or royal blue.
- No article of clothing worn at school at any time may advertise/promote/reflect drugs, alcohol, or contain any slogans or words that may be deemed inappropriate or offensive by the school administration.
- Distracting make-up, hair, or jewelry is not allowed. Hair must be a natural color.
- Visible tattoos are not allowed.
- Piercings must be confined to the ear and may not be distracting.
- All articles of clothing, especially outerwear, should be labeled with the student's name. The administration retains the right to determine if any article of clothing is inappropriate or distracting.

MALES, GRADES 5-8:

The following items are a part of Houston Academy's Uniform Dress Code for males and are available at Zoghby's.

- White, royal blue or light blue HA polo shirt (long or short sleeve) * of athletic or knit material OR HA button-down white dress shirt.
- HA short or pant of athletic or knit material. Males General Guidelines
- Uniforms should fit properly and must be neat and clean. Clothing with stains, holes, tears, fraying should not be worn at school.
- Shirts must be tucked in at all times so that the belt is visible and shirts should not come untucked when the student's arms are raised.

- Belts (solid brown/black or the HA belt sold through HAriderwear.com) must be worn at all times if belt loops are on the uniform.
- Matching socks of solid color (white, blue, grey, black) are required. If the brand is visible, it must be a single logo and may not include stripes, bands, etc.
- Matching athletic (tennis) shoes which are predominately white, black, blue or grey with no more than one accent color. Closed shoes (wallabee, deck/boat, saddle oxfords, etc.) are acceptable. No open toe shoes/sandals/flip flops, boots*, heels of any kind, etc. are allowed. (*Boots are NOT permitted on Raider Days when worn with jeans or HA khaki pant).
- No article of clothing worn at school at any time may advertise/promote/reflect drugs, alcohol, or contain any slogans or words that may be deemed inappropriate or offensive by the school administration.
- No athletic/club jackets, sweatshirts, etc. may be worn except on Raider Days.
- Any visible items worn under the uniform must be solid white, grey, or royal blue and may not contain any visible logos.
- Hats, caps, sunglasses, or other headgear are not permitted on campus at any time from arrival until dismissal.
- Hair must be kept neat and out of the student's face. Hair may not cover the face or eyes at any time. Students may be asked to pull their hair back as not to be distracting. It must fall no lower than the top of the eyebrow. No "mohawks" or other distracting haircuts or hair colors are allowed.
- No visible body piercing or tattoos are allowed.
- Male students cannot remove their shirts on campus at any time.
- All articles of clothing, especially outerwear, should be labeled with the student's name. The administration retains the right to determine if any article of clothing is inappropriate or distracting

UNIFORM VIOLATIONS

Violations of the uniform policy will result in a disciplinary infraction and repeated violations will result in more severe disciplinary consequences. Discipline consequences include but are not limited to:

- First Offense in a Semester: Minor Infraction and Detention
- Second Offense in a Semester: Minor Infraction and Saturday School
- Third Offense in a Semester: Major Infraction = Internal Suspension and Behavior Contract. Additional Offenses will be managed in accordance to the conditions outlined with the Behavior Contract

PHYSICAL EDUCATION UNIFORM

Middle School students who take PE must wear any HA shirt and athletic shorts that are in the approved HA color scheme (royal blue, Columbia blue, grey, black, or white). The shorts should be of appropriate length (no short shorts); there must be a separation of a minimum of 5 inches between the shirt line and the bottom of the shorts. Students should also wear appropriate gym shoes. 20 Students that do not dress in the appropriate PE uniform will not be permitted to participate in PE class and will lose significant participation points. PE uniform violations will be reported as minor infractions and an accumulation of infractions will result in a contract and potential school suspension.

RAIDER DAY

Fridays are designated as “Raider Days”. On Raider Days, the dress code is relaxed; however, students are still held to high standards and a defined set of rules and regulations. On these days, students may wear any approved HA T-shirt, sweatshirt, or athletic jersey/jacket issued through clubs, teams, or PTO/Raider Retail sales. Students may wear blue jeans (long) with no holes or fraying; otherwise, they must wear regular uniform bottoms. ***MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS MAY NOT WEAR BOOTS ON RAIDER DAYS.***

Students must wear regular school uniforms if they elect not to participate in Raider Day. Regulation shoes are required on Raider Day for all students. SPIRIT DAYS Students are encouraged to participate in Spirit Days by dressing in the designated theme that is approved by the Head of Middle School.. Although uniforms are not required these days, student attire must still be appropriate and considered to be in “good taste.” No short shorts/skirts, tank tops, headwear, face paint, or other distracting objects are permitted unless specifically specified by the administrative team. In all cases, it is recommended that students seek clarification of the specific rules for theme days vs. interpreting the rules and regulations incorrectly. Students that do not participate fully in the designated spirit theme must wear regular uniform.

SPIRIT DAYS

Students are encouraged to participate in Spirit Days by dressing in the designated theme that is approved by the Head of the Middle School. Although uniforms are not required these days, student attire must still be appropriate, considered to be in “good taste,” and not distract from the learning environment or create conflict of any kind. *No short shorts/skirts, tank tops, headwear, face paint, or other distracting objects are permitted unless specifically specified by the administrative team.* In all cases, it is recommended that students seek clarification of the specific rules for theme days vs. interpreting the rules and regulations incorrectly. Students that do not comply with the above standards on theme days will not be permitted to enter class until they procure appropriate dress. Students that do not participate fully in the designated spirit theme must wear regular uniform and adhere to regular school policies.

HOUSE DAYS

The first Wednesday of every month is designated a “House Day” to promote House spirit. House Day attire is considered:

- Jeans (**blue** denim that reach the ankle) with no holes or fraying;
- The approved House Shirt.

Please note the following:

*If a student is not in House Day gear, then they are expected to be in compliance with all regular uniform policies.

* Only regular Uniform Outerwear may be worn on House Days. No hoodies, sweatshirts, etc.

DRESS FOR SCHOOL RELATED EXTRACURRICULAR EVENTS OFF CAMPUS

Students must wear regular uniforms to any school related extracurricular event that takes place off campus unless otherwise stipulated and approved by the event supervisor and the Head of the Middle School.

Visitors

Parents, guests, and visitors must check in at the main office and receive a name badge to be on campus. This badge should be worn for the duration of the visit. Unauthorized visitors are not allowed on the campus. For the safety of our students, we are limiting access to campus. Thus, lunch delivery (brought by a family member or fast-food service) will NO LONGER be allowed.

Technology

All Middle School students are provided with a school-issued laptop computer to use for educational purposes. The school uses filtering to limit student access to non educational-related content during the school day. It also blocks social media on all school-owned devices. Any student that uses their computer inappropriately will receive an infraction (Major or Minor) and disciplinary consequences. Students may only use audio earphones in classrooms when the teacher provides explicit permission to do so and audio earphones must be connected to the student's laptop.

The following general rules apply to the use of any electronic device by HA community members:

- Under no circumstance can a student use an electronic device to post or take a picture, video, or recording of any nature of any community member without his or her consent;
- Under no circumstance can a student use an electronic device to post or share any information that can be deemed as disrespectful or demeaning to any community member;
- HA is a mandatory reporter; therefore, the use of any electronic device to create, distribute, or promote content that may be construed as illegal will be reported to the proper authorities in addition to any consequences that are taken by the school.

While these rules and regulations have been designed to address the use of technology on campus, incidents of inappropriate use of technology off campus that cause any kind of disruption to the educational community or are disrespectful to a member of the community will not be tolerated and will result in the assignment of an infraction and disciplinary consequence in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct.

All students are expected to bring their laptop fully charged to all classes on a daily basis. Failure to do so will result in an infraction for not following school rules. All technology used on campus falls under the Acceptable Use Policy (AUP), which has been signed and agreed to by each student and his/her parent. HA will not be responsible for any loss or theft of personal electronic devices.

PERSONAL ELECTRONIC DEVICES / CELL PHONES / SMART WATCHES/ WEARABLE DEVICES

Houston Academy believes that the learning environment should not be interrupted at any time and that distractions within the classroom and school setting must be avoided. *For this reason, all personal*

*electronic devices including cell phones, smart watches, wearable technology, etc. **MUST** be turned off and stored out of sight. Cell phones should be stored in students' school bags or lockers.*

Access to personal electronic devices may also be restricted at school-related activities that take place off campus or before/after regular school hours (field trips, tutorials, etc.).

If any child or parent has an emergency and needs to communicate, they must do so through the main office.

Consequences for using or having a personal electronic device on your person while on campus during school hours or restricted times include:

- First Offense in a Semester: Minor Infraction = Detention and seizure of the device. The device will be returned to the student at the end of the school day.
- Second Offense in a Semester: Minor Infraction = Saturday School and seizure of the device. The device will be returned to the PARENT at the end of the school day.
- Third Offense in a Semester: Major Infraction = Referral to the MS Discipline Committee who will assign consequences and return the device to the student following the Discipline Committee meeting.
- Subsequent offenses will be managed in accordance with the ruling of the Discipline Committee.

The recommended consequence for a Major Infraction of this type includes but is not limited to: In School Suspension, loss of privilege and a Behavior Contract/Probation.

Any refusal to surrender the device will result in an additional referral for a Major Infraction for insubordination.

All technology falls under the Acceptable Use Policy (AUP), which is reviewed, read, and signed by each student and his/her parent at the beginning of the school year. The AUP establishes the standards and expectations for use of technology at Houston Academy.

ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY

Houston Academy seeks to place the latest technological advances into the hands of skilled, active learners. Providing Internet access to HA students promotes educational excellence by facilitating resource sharing, innovation, and research. Responsibilities come with the use of technology. It is, therefore, important that all parents and students are familiar with the school's policies regarding its use. Each year, as part of the completion of the required online Information Update Form, the Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) and Laptop Contract are signed electronically. Those documents give details of the policies and procedures concerning the use of technology by our students. Below are some of the most basic policies. Please see the Parent page of the Houston Academy website for the full AUP and Laptop Contract.

- During school hours, school computers are for educational use only. Students may not play games, listen to music, or watch videos except when part of a teacher's assignment (i.e. adding music to an iMovie or watching an assigned video). Use of social networking sites, including but not limited to, Snapchat, Instagram, TikTok, Pinterest, Twitter, and Vimeo, is prohibited during school hours.
- Instant messaging, emailing, blogging, and participating in chat rooms are prohibited on campus except as part of an assigned, in-class activity that is supervised by faculty or administration.

- Students may not install programs on a computer without specific permission from the Director of Technology or teacher. No games, utilities, or plug-ins should be downloaded without permission.
- Cyber-bullying is strictly prohibited and is subject to appropriate consequences including prosecution. This applies whether the cyber-bullying occurs on or off our school campus.
- Students may not use school printers to print invitations, flyers, campaign information, game cheat sheets, or any other material deemed non-educational or inappropriate.
- Students are not to open, read, or alter another student's work either on the computer or in the cloud. Any attempt to copy another student's work will be treated as cheating and/or plagiarism as addressed in this Student Handbook.
- If a student causes damage to the software configuration or the hardware of a computer, he/she will be liable for the cost of repair and/or replacement of the equipment.
- Students may not enter any area protected by a password unless authorized to do so.

Discipline

The concept of respect is at the heart of Houston Academy's expectations concerning the behavior of its students. As a college preparatory institution, Houston Academy wishes to create an environment in which all students may learn and in which students and teachers, regardless of their differences, feel comfortable. We are inclusive and welcoming of all people, regardless of religion, race, creed, national origin, or socio-economic status. At Houston Academy, we embrace the diversity of our community and attempt to learn from our differences and build on our students' and faculty's individual strengths. In short, respect for each other's civil and privacy rights and respect for our institution affirms the ethic central to our school's culture and ethos.

The discipline system is based on detentions, referrals, and recommendations from the Discipline Committee. The primary responsibility for classroom management lies with the teacher who may issue a detention for any violation of class guidelines. The issuing teacher will monitor the detention, and the Dean of Students will be notified. Detentions will be served before school, during break, or after school. A student will have one day's notice so as to arrange transportation or to notify coaches. For repeated behaviors or more serious rule violations, the Dean of Students will meet with the student and all involved parties. The Dean will determine an appropriate response or decide to call a meeting of the Discipline Committee. Parents will be notified should the situation warrant more than a conversation between a student and the Dean of Students. Should a meeting of the Discipline Committee be called, a recommendation of disciplinary action will be made to the Head of Middle School. The recommendation may include (in order of severity) detention, Saturday School, in-school suspension (ISS), out of school suspension (OSS), or a student's separation from Houston Academy.

There are no academic punishments for disciplinary offenses at HA. That is, academic work missed during a disciplinary-related suspension may be made up for full credit. Honor offenses, which violate the integrity of an assignment/assessment, may result in a zero or reduced credit being assigned for that assignment/assessment.

A student with a serious disciplinary infraction or with repeated disciplinary infractions may be placed on probation for a specified period of time. Probation means that further violations of the rules and/or Houston Academy Honor Code will more than likely result in that student's separation from school. Separation from the School also may occur when a student's behavior is so flagrant and/or repetitive as to be intolerable in the opinion of the Head of Middle School and the Headmaster.

RESPECT/BULLYING

As a school community, we aspire to maintain an environment where all members may work, study, and enjoy freedom from harassment, discrimination, hazing, and bullying of any kind. Harassment, bullying, and hazing include, but is not limited to verbal abuse (oral or written); obscene or suggestive remarks; display of sexually explicit, demeaning, or offensive materials; or comments which are demeaning with respect to race, religion, ethnic or national origin, physical characteristics or abilities, age, marital status, citizenship, disability, appearance, family or parental orientation, sex, sexual orientation, or gender. Actions considered to be bullying are any written, verbal, or implied communication that may be threatening, intimidating, or demeaning. Harassment, bullying, and hazing are prohibited, and violations will be considered major infractions resulting in discipline. These actions are prohibited at all times and in all circumstances (including communication on the internet, or social networking sites, via email, through text message, or on personal blogs), whether or not it originates on the Houston Academy campus.

DISCIPLINE SYSTEM

It is important that schools develop a discipline hierarchy to help students, teachers, and parents identify, understand, and effectively handle the different levels of negative behaviors or offenses that commonly occur in a middle school setting. The HA Student Code of Conduct is based on a tier system with all infractions classified as Minor or Major Infractions.

Students must be aware that they are representatives of Houston Academy on and off campus and as such are answerable to the school and held to high standards at all times.

MINOR INFRACTIONS

The primary responsibility for classroom and school management lies with the teachers, administrators, and adults on campus or supervising activities held off campus. Teachers will manage and assign discipline consequences for Minor Infractions of class/school rules and report the infraction to the Dean of Students. The Dean of Students will assign consequences for general violations of school rules (uniform, cell phone, tardies, etc.).

Minor Infractions include but are not limited to:

- Accumulation of tardies
- Minor classroom misbehavior/disruptions
- Minor disruptions of any school activity
- Not complying with general school/classroom rules
- Inappropriate language or gestures
- Minor misuse of technology
- Not being prepared for class (HW, appropriate materials/books, etc.)
- Not disposing of waste appropriately
- Dress code violation
- Food/drink violation
- Minor public display of affection (handholding, sustained embraces, sitting or standing with any part of the body draped on, around, or over another's, etc.)
- Being present in an unsupervised area or area off limits to students

- Minor violation of cell phone or Acceptable Use of Technology policy
- Failing to return any communication in a timely manner
- Failing to attend assigned tutorial
- Missing an assigned detention
- Other minor actions that are not consistent with the mission of the school

Consequences for Minor Infractions include but are not limited to:

- Detention(s)
- Saturday School
- Restitution
- Revoking privileges
- Application of a Contract (discipline, academic, uniform, attendance, etc.)
- Counseling
- Reflection papers or assignments

The teacher or the Dean of Students will assign one or more consequences from the list above depending upon the severity of the infraction. Please note that consequences will vary depending upon the infraction and/or extenuating/aggravating circumstances.

The student and the Dean of Students must be notified of all Minor Infractions. Detentions will be served before, during, after school, or on a Saturday.

In order to arrange transportation or to notify coaches, a student and their guardian will be given a minimum of one day's notice before the time of any detention to be served outside of regular school hours.

1. Minor classroom misbehavior
2. Missing assigned detention
3. Inappropriate language
4. Misuse of technology
5. Dress code violation
6. Chewing gum
7. Food/drink in a non-designated area
8. Misuse of cell phone

If the same Minor Infraction is repeated more than three times in a semester or if five or more Minor Infractions are accumulated in any given semester, it will be treated as a Major Infraction.

MAJOR INFRACTIONS

For repeated behaviors or more serious rule violations, the Dean of Students and Head of the Middle School will meet with all parties involved and complete a preliminary investigation into the incident. If the Administrative Team deems that a Major Infraction occurred, the student and the guardian will be informed and the case will be managed by the Administrative Team or sent to the Discipline Committee or Honor Council (depending upon the nature of the situation). A student may be suspended from regular schooling processes during the investigation and discipline process.

Major Infractions include but are not limited to:

- Repetition of minor infractions (3 of the same Minor Infraction or 5 total Minors in a semester)
- Safety and security breaches that endanger the school community
- Possession or consumption of alcohol, tobacco or tobacco products including electronic cigarettes
- Possession or consumption of illegal or harmful drugs or drug paraphernalia;
- Possession of weapons (firearms, knives, fireworks, etc.)
- Dishonesty/Lying/ Insubordination
Fighting or aggressive physical contact of any kind
- Stealing/Theft
- Vandalism/Willful destruction of property
- Disrespect
- Harassment/bullying/hazing/racism/intimidation of any kind
- Sexual harassment
- Inappropriate public displays of affection (kissing, inappropriate touching, etc.)
- Misuse of technology and or accessing inappropriate online content at school
- Taking still images, video/audio recording of a community member without their knowledge or consent
- Use of school logo without permission or the creation of fake school or community member social media accounts without permission
- Leaving campus without permission or skipping class
- Failing to report or intervene in a situation that causes harm to an HA community member
- Violation of any Contract (admission, attendance, uniform, discipline, probation, etc.) assigned by the school
- Violations of the Honor Code
- Any action that significantly disturbs the learning environment
- Any action that causes harm to an individual or the community's/school's integrity
- Any additional action that is deemed a Major Infraction by the Administration

Should the Head of School, Headmaster, Discipline Committee, or Honor Council conclude that a Major Infraction was committed, one or more consequences from the list below will be implemented taking into consideration extenuating and aggravating situations. Consequences for Major Infractions may include but are not limited to:

- Revoking of privileges
- Restitution
- External Counseling
- Saturday School
- Community Service
- In-School Suspension (ISS)*
- Out-of-School Suspension (OSS)*
- Suspension and or removal from extracurricular activities/teams
- Application of a Contract (discipline, academic, uniform, attendance, etc.)
- Disciplinary Probation
- Recommendation for Dismissal or Expulsion (must be approved by the Headmaster)

****Students that are suspended may not participate in any school related or extracurricular activities (practice/game/etc.).***

Please note:

- One or more consequences from the list may be assigned depending upon the severity of the situation.
- Consequences will vary depending upon the infraction and/or extenuating/aggravating circumstances.
- If a member of the National Junior Honor Society commits any Major Infraction (Student Code of Conduct or Honor Code), it will be reported to the NJHS Faculty Council. Upon review, the student may be separated from the Honor Society.
- Major Infractions will be reported to Coaches and they may apply additional consequences in accordance with the HA Athletic Code of Conduct.

DISCIPLINARY PROBATION/DISMISSAL/EXPULSION

All students that commit a Major Infraction will be placed on Disciplinary Probation for a specified period of time unless the act is so serious that the Discipline Committee recommends and the Headmaster approves dismissal or expulsion. Being on probation means that further violations of the Student Code of Conduct (Discipline or Honor) may result in the expansion of the existing contract for that student and/or his/her dismissal/expulsion from school.

If a student is expelled from the school or the family chooses to withdraw their child before the completion of an expulsion process, the family is not eligible to return to HA.

DISCIPLINE COMMITTEE

The Discipline Committee is the representative voice of the Middle School community on all disciplinary matters. When a violation of school rules has occurred, the Head of Middle School may refer the matter to the Discipline Committee. The Middle School Discipline Committee is comprised of the Dean of Students and three faculty members who teach in the middle school. The committee will interview individuals involved with and/or were witness to the incident in order to gather the data about the facts of the case, maintaining a written record of the proceedings. The committee may involve the student's advisor in the proceedings and may also communicate with the Middle School Counselor for input. Upon completion of the data gathering the committee will render a suggested, appropriate consequence(s) for the student and situation and communicate their opinion to the Head of Middle School. The Head of Middle School will then consider the opinion of the committee and the Dean of Students will communicate the final decision to the students and parents.

HONOR CODE

An Honor Code, drafted by Houston Academy students and faculty and regulated by an Honor Council, was approved and implemented since the 1998 school year.

Honesty is a fundamental principle upon which our society is based. It is required to create the atmosphere in which friendship, scholarship, and trust can grow. In the strictest sense, honor is a uniquely personal matter. The Honor System cannot and will not force the student to become honorable. It does, however, aid the student in realizing the benefits of integrity to the individual and to the academic community.

The Honor System embodies the concept of personal honor in a framework of law and practice. The result is a system of conducting examinations, writing papers, and performing other academic endeavors with regard to individual honor and without faculty proctoring. The system promotes trust between students and their teachers and peers. The responsibility for maintaining the validity of academic work is placed on all students. It is upon these goals and principles that the Houston Academy Honor Code is based.

All Houston Academy Middle School students are expected to uphold specific standards of conduct:

1. Students will exhibit honesty in all endeavors.
2. Students will encourage active participation in the spirit and ethics of the Honor Code.
3. At the end of each assignment, students will sign the following statement:

“My signature affirms my honor.”

Any infraction of the code will be referred to the Honor Council, which will serve as the mediator for the Honor Code.

TYPES OF OFFENSES

No document or set of procedures can cover every possible contingency, and not set of guidelines for conduct ensures that the standards of the school community will be upheld. In the final analysis, good will, compassion, kindness, respect for individuality, and common sense should guide in dealings with all students. Any honor violation witnessed by a faculty member or student should be reported to the the Dean of Students, who will then decide next steps. In grades 5 and 6, the teacher(s) in question, the 5th and 6th Grade Discipline Committee, and/or the Dean of Students will deal with the violations. In grades 7 and 8, the teacher(s) in question, the 7th and 8th Grade Discipline Committee, the Middle School Honor Council, and/or the Dean of Students will deal with the violations. Violations of the Honor Code include the following:

1. Plagiarism
2. Copying or cheating of any kind
3. Lying
4. Stealing
5. Sabotage
6. Falsification

The Honor Council will not regard claims of ignorance, unintentional error, or academic or personal pressures as an adequate defense for violations of the Honor Code.

ORGANIZATION OF THE MIDDLE SCHOOL HONOR COUNCIL

The Middle School Honor Council will operate independently of all other student organizations and will consist of the following:

- The Dean of Students
- 2 Faculty Members

Preliminary Procedures

Prior to any hearing, a preliminary investigation of any violation will be held. After the investigation, the Dean of Students will contact parents, and a trial date will be scheduled.

Student Rights

All students have been given notice of this Honor Code by virtue of its publication. Regardless of whether a student has actually read the handout or handbook, a student is charged with the knowledge of it. Ignorance of rules is never a defense. The Dean of Students will work with the Honor Council and the accused student to ensure confidentiality and to protect the rights of student(s), including civil and privacy rights.

Students who appear before the Honor Council will be granted certain rights:

- They will be provided written statements describing the charges against them and their rights and responsibilities.
- They will not have the nature or disposition of Honor Council proceedings appear on their transcripts. If found guilty, the student will have the infraction placed in an Honor Council file.

Trial

If the accused is found guilty, the Council through a majority vote will determine the consequences. All consequences will be presented to the Head of Middle School and the Headmaster for final approval. If there is a tie, the Head of Middle School will vote to break the tie. Consequences may include, but are not limited to:

- Detention: The Council will specify the number of days.
- Community service requirements: The Council will specify the type and number of hours.
- Alternatives: The Council may recommend another suitable consequence, e.g., an approved apology, revocation of senior privileges, or Saturday school.
- Academic consequences: could result in a zero for an assignment, test, etc.
- In-School Suspension
- Out-of-School Suspension
- Separation from the school

Courses

5TH GRADE

- English
- Reading
- Mathematics 5
- History
- Science
- Art/Chorus/Band/STEAM-Technology/Physical Education/Guidance/ Study Skills

6TH GRADE

- English
- Mathematics 6
- History
- Science
- Introduction to Languages
- Elective class options: Art/Chorus/Band/Technology/Physical Education/Drama/ Robotics

7TH GRADE

- English
- Pre-Algebra
- Life Science
- Geography
- Spanish Ia, French Ia, Latin Ia
- Elective class options Art/Physical Education/Chorus/Band/Drama/Robotics/Digital Media/Coding/ Robotics

8TH GRADE

- English
- Algebra I
- Physical Science
- World History I
- Spanish Ib, French Ib, Latin Ib
- Elective class options: Art/Physical Education/Chorus/Band/Drama/Print Design/Robotics/Digital Media/Coding

MATH PLACEMENT

The mathematics program at HA is designed to be rigorous and advanced. The middle school mathematics sequence is 5th grade math, 6th grade math, 7th grade Pre-Algebra and 8th grade Algebra 1, a high school level class. Students are placed in either on-level or honors-level classes. Each year the student placement recommendations are made by looking at the students' overall grades throughout the year, their standardized testing scores (ERB), their classroom effort and performances along with their end of year exam. In order to be placed in honors-level, students are evaluated each year to ensure continued appropriate placement. Future movement between levels is possible. These measures are meant to appropriately match the student's ability with the pace of the class.