

# Middle School Handbook

## Houston Academy

2021-2022



Houston Academy  
901 Buena Vista Drive · Dothan, AL 36303 · (334) 794-4106

## Letter of Welcome from The Head of Middle School

Dear Middle School Students and Parents,

The Houston Academy Middle School Team is looking forward to another great year, partnering with you to help you and your child grow and develop. It is my hope that we will all embrace a growth mindset and attempt to improve our habits of mind, body, and spirit on a daily basis. Any day that we do not get better at something ... whether it be working to be a better student, a better parent, a better listener, a better problem-solver, a kinder person, a better athlete, whatever ... is a wasted day. Let's be sure not to waste a single day! Let's support and help one another as we strive to develop ourselves and to make our world a better place.

If I were to sum up the secret to a successful middle school experience, I believe that there are three simple rules. The first rule is to work hard. Students should be ready, *willing*, and able to work diligently. Students must pay attention to details, keep themselves and their materials organized, and devote time as an active learner to engage in classes and to complete all homework and projects to the best of one's ability. Parents, you must be prepared to *help* and to *guide* your child, but not to take full responsibility for your child's academics or do the work for your child.

While it is imperative that you and your child work hard to achieve full potential, it is also important that your child has fun. The second rule for a successful middle school experience, in fact, is to have fun. Students should work hard, and they should play hard. They should enjoy the academic work in which they are immersed but they should also make time to play outdoors, to pursue an interest or hobby, and to make memories with family and friends. It is my hope that some of this accomplished when a child is not tethered to technology or a device. Parents, be sure that you help ensure that your child maintains an appropriate work-life balance and takes some time to still be a kid.

The third rule for a successful middle school experience, interestingly, might be more important than the first and second rule. The rule is to be kind. Students should learn to have a generosity of spirit that allows them to see the good in people and things rather than defaulting to the negative, critical, and sarcastic. We want to develop people who focus on the beauty and possibility in the world and in themselves. We want to develop people who see the beauty rather than focusing on the wrinkles and the warts, who see the opportunity rather than the obstacle, who feel hope in the face of despair. Students should treat others, themselves, and their natural world with kindness, compassion, and respect. We want to develop people who actively seek out the lonely and befriend them, who are nice even when the world about them seems to thrive on negativity, who stop and help a turtle crossing the street, and who leave a place better than they found it. Parents, be certain that you help your child adopt a generous perspective and live a life marked by kindness and love. Model this for your child for, as the famous Hal David and Burt Bacharach song tells us:

“What the world needs now, is love, sweet love;  
It's the only thing that there's just too little of.  
What the world needs now, is love, sweet love;  
No, not just for some, but for everyone.”

This handbook is designed to serve as a helpful resource for navigating the school year. It provides a wealth of information about school policies, practices, and services available to support and enrich learning. Family involvement is a leading factor in academic success, and we value your collaboration in support of your child's learning. Your participation, feedback, and suggestions are always welcome.

I am looking forward to a wonderful, exciting, love-filled, and growth-producing year!

Dr. Vincent M. Janney, Head of Middle School

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# Houston Academy

## Mission, Philosophy, and Chain of Command

### MISSION STATEMENT

Houston Academy is an independent college preparatory institution. Our mission is to prepare all our students for the responsible participation in a global society by providing an excellent learning environment and opportunities to achieve their highest academic, social and creative potential.

### 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. 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).

## Houston Academy Middle School

### Vision and Core Values and Beliefs

#### 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.

#### 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

2021 – 2022

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Contact (email)</b>	<b>Room #</b>
Blumberg, Emily	English/Grade 6 and 7	<a href="mailto:blumberge@houstonacademy.com">blumberge@houstonacademy.com</a>	FH 301
Braswell, Hannah	Art	<a href="mailto:braswellh@houstonacademy.com">braswellh@houstonacademy.com</a>	DH 212
Braswell, Holly	Science and Math	<a href="mailto:braswellho@houstonacademy.com">braswellho@houstonacademy.com</a>	FH 304
Cromer, Natalie	History/Grade 6 and 8	<a href="mailto:cromern@houstonacademy.com">cromern@houstonacademy.com</a>	FH 302
David, Sara	English/Grade 7 and 8	<a href="mailto:davids@houstonacademy.com">davids@houstonacademy.com</a>	DC 524
Davis, Jeanne	Science/Robotics	<a href="mailto:davisj@houstonacademy.com">davisj@houstonacademy.com</a>	HH 406
Edge, Marc	Athletic Director	<a href="mailto:edgem@houstonacademy.com">edgem@houstonacademy.com</a>	Gym
Fleming, Kelley	Learning Specialist	<a href="mailto:flemingk@houstonacademy.com">flemingk@houstonacademy.com</a>	DH 200
Flowers, Patti	Learning Specialist	<a href="mailto:flowersp@houstonacademy.com">flowersp@houstonacademy.com</a>	DH 200
Gates, Brian	Art	<a href="mailto:gatesb@houstonacademy.com">gatesb@houstonacademy.com</a>	Villa 2
Griffin, Amy	Chorus and Drama	<a href="mailto:griffina@houstonacademy.com">griffina@houstonacademy.com</a>	DC 502
Griffin, Leigh	Physical Education	<a href="mailto:griffinl@houstonacademy.com">griffinl@houstonacademy.com</a>	Gym
Hart, Brian	Dean of Students	<a href="mailto:hartb@houstonacademy.com">hartb@houstonacademy.com</a>	Library
Hart, Karrie	Geography/Print Design	<a href="mailto:hartk@houstonacademy.com">hartk@houstonacademy.com</a>	DC 526
Hayes, Leisha	STEAM/Technology	<a href="mailto:hayesl@houstonacademy.com">hayesl@houstonacademy.com</a>	DH 204
Holmes, James	Band	<a href="mailto:holmesj@houstonacademy.com">holmesj@houstonacademy.com</a>	HH 415
Howard, A. J.	Physical Education	<a href="mailto:howarda@houstonacademy.com">howarda@houstonacademy.com</a>	Gym
Howell, Vanessa	Spanish	<a href="mailto:howellv@houstonacademy.com">howellv@houstonacademy.com</a>	DH 205
Jackson, Brian	Digital Media	<a href="mailto:jacksonb@houstonacademy.com">jacksonb@houstonacademy.com</a>	Library
Jacobs, Don	Physical Education	<a href="mailto:jacobsd@houstonacademy.com">jacobsd@houstonacademy.com</a>	Gym
Janney, Vincent	Head of Middle School	<a href="mailto:janneyv@houstonacademy.com">janneyv@houstonacademy.com</a>	Main Office
Jeffcoat, Natalie	Media Specialist	<a href="mailto:jeffcoatn@houstonacademy.com">jeffcoatn@houstonacademy.com</a>	Library
Johnson, Linda	Spanish	<a href="mailto:johnsonl@houstonacademy.com">johnsonl@houstonacademy.com</a>	Casa 1
Mack, Sonja	Latin	<a href="mailto:macks@houstonacademy.com">macks@houstonacademy.com</a>	KG 601
Angie Maddox	Math	<a href="mailto:maddoxa@houstonacademy.com">maddoxa@houstonacademy.com</a>	DH 202
Marshall, Lesley	Learning Specialist	<a href="mailto:marshalll@houstonacademy.com">marshalll@houstonacademy.com</a>	DH 200
Phillipps, Shelly	Latin	<a href="mailto:phillipssh@houstonacademy.com">phillipssh@houstonacademy.com</a>	DC 520
Pineda, Jessica	Grade 5	<a href="mailto:seligp@houstonacademy.com">seligp@houstonacademy.com</a>	FH 307
Reyner, Cindy	Receptionist	<a href="mailto:reynerc@houstonacademy.com">reynerc@houstonacademy.com</a>	Main Office
Ryan, Jody	Physical Education	<a href="mailto:ryanj@houstonacademy.com">ryanj@houstonacademy.com</a>	Gym
Savoy, Ashleigh	Grade 5	<a href="mailto:savoya@houstonacademy.com">savoya@houstonacademy.com</a>	FH 305
Sewell, Pamela	Global Explorations	<a href="mailto:sewellp@houstonacademy.com">sewellp@houstonacademy.com</a>	HH 402
Speed, Judy	Administrative Assistant	<a href="mailto:speedj@houstonacademy.com">speedj@houstonacademy.com</a>	Main Office
Walker, Cheryl	MS Counselor	<a href="mailto:walkerc@houstonacademy.com">walkerc@houstonacademy.com</a>	Library
Whigham, Jack	Mathematics	<a href="mailto:whighamj@houstonacademy.com">whighamj@houstonacademy.com</a>	Villa 1
Wilder, Ginger	French/Spanish	<a href="mailto:wilderg@houstonacademy.com">wilderg@houstonacademy.com</a>	FH 303A
Woodson, Lucia	Spanish	<a href="mailto:woodsonl@houstonacademy.com">woodsonl@houstonacademy.com</a>	Casa 2
Ziglar, Kathy	Mathematics	<a href="mailto:ziglark@houstonacademy.com">ziglark@houstonacademy.com</a>	HH 407

## Calendar of Important Dates

2021 – 2022

Event/Occurrence	Date(s)
Faculty and Staff in Service Days	August 9 - 16
Grade 6 and 7 Student Orientation	August 10
New HA Students Entering 8 <sup>th</sup> Grade Orientation	August 10
Grade 5 and 6 ‘Meet the Advisor’	August 16
First Day of School (full day) – Start of Semester 1	August 17
Middle School Open House	August 26
Labor Day – NO SCHOOL	September 6
Teacher Collaboration Day/Early Dismissal @ 12:00 (grades 5-8)	September 22
End of Quarter 1	October 8
Fall Break	October 11 – 12
Teacher Collaboration Day/Early Dismissal @ 12:00 (grades 5-8)	October 27
Veteran’s Day – NO SCHOOL	November 11
Thanksgiving Break	November 22 – 26
End of Quarter 2	December 10
Exam Review Day/Early Dismissal @ 12:15 (grades 5-8)	December 14
Semester 1 Exams	December 15, 16, and 17
Holiday Break	December 20 – January 2
School Resumes – Start of Semester 2	January 3
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day – NO SCHOOL	January 17
Faculty/Staff Professional Development Day – NO SCHOOL FOR STUDENTS	February 10
Winter Break	February 18 – 21
End of Quarter 3	March 11
Spring Break	March 21 – 25
Good Friday – NO SCHOOL	April 15
Teacher Collaboration Day/Early Dismissal @ 12:00 (grades 5-8)	April 27
MS Awards Ceremonies	May 18
End of Quarter 4	May 20
Exam Review Day Early Dismissal @ 12:15	May 23
Semester 2 Exams	May 24 – 26
Grade 8 Celebration	

### 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: <http://www.landsend.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		

Students in middle school begin to hone the skills to take comprehensive exams. In 5<sup>th</sup> grade, students will take 1 exam each semester, one in December and one in May. In 6<sup>th</sup> grade, students will take 2 exams each semester. The grades for these exams will count in a minimal way for the term in which they are taken.

In grades 7 and 8, students begin to take comprehensive semester examinations in each core class. Semester grades are determined based upon the two previous quarters and the semester examination. The semester examination counts as 14.3% (or 1/7<sup>th</sup>) of the semester average.

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 reenrolled for the upcoming school year. The Head of Middle School must approve any summer school work for credit. Summer school attendance is allowed only one time. 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 potential release from HA.

Credit toward high school graduation is given to every 8<sup>th</sup> grade student who successfully completes Algebra I. For this reason, the semester examination in this course will count as 20% (or 1/5<sup>th</sup>) of the semester grade. You may refer to the Upper School Handbook for the Grade Point Average associated with each letter grade.

### 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.

## **EXAMINATIONS**

Taking lengthier, comprehensive examinations is a skill that will be required of all Houston Academy students in high school and in college. Therefore, students will learn the habits of mind, body, and spirit to be successful in such undertakings by being exposed to opportunities during the middle school program.

In grades 5 and 6, students will be exposed to the concept of semester exams by learning the organizational and preparation skills for and taking one or two exams. The exams will not be weighted separately, but will rather stand as a normal test grade for the quarter in which it is taken.

In grades 7 and 8, students must take semester examinations in each academic subject. Two hours are scheduled for each exam and students will be expected to take only two exams per day. Examinations count as 1/7<sup>th</sup> of the semester grade. For 8<sup>th</sup> graders taking Algebra I CP or Honors, because of the graduation credit given for these classes, the examination counts as 1/5<sup>th</sup> of the semester grade.

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

## **EXAM EXEMPTIONS**

Students in grades 7 and 8, who may take as many as 5 exams, will be allowed to exempt one final exam in the each semester with the following stipulations:

1. Academics: A student must have a 90 or above average at the end of each nine-week term to exempt an exam.
2. Discipline: No exemptions will be allowed for any student with a major discipline referral (Discipline or Honor Code Violation; including the accumulation of Minor Infractions).
3. Students will not be allowed to exempt the same class both semesters.
4. No exemptions will be allowed in a semester class.

5. A student that exceeds the number of acceptable absences for a semester will not be allowed to exempt any exam.

### **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 3 – 10 will take standardized tests that may measure academic achievement in such areas of English, reading, mathematics, science and writing.

### **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 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> 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, course teacher, and, finally, 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 6, 7, and 8 function on a six-day rotating cycle of seven periods, the same schedule used 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.

Grade 6, 7, and 8 Daily Schedule

Period	Time	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
1 <sup>st</sup>	8:00-8:50	A	B	C	D	E	F
2 <sup>nd</sup>	8:54-9:44	B	C	D	E	F	A
MS Break	9:44-10:00						
MS Advisory	10:03 – 10:20						
3 <sup>rd</sup>	10:24-11:14	C	D	E	F	A	B
4 <sup>th</sup>	11:18-12:08	D	E	F	A	B	C
MS Lunch	12:08-12:33						
5 <sup>th</sup>	12:37-1:27	E	F	A	B	C	D
6 <sup>th</sup>	1:31-2:21	F	A	B	C	D	E
7 <sup>th</sup>	2:25-3:15	G	G	G	G	G	G
Tutorial	3:15-3:45						

The 5<sup>th</sup> 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 tutorial before and after school daily. **It is the responsibility of the student to make an appointment for tutorial.** Teachers also may require students 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 will 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).

## 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 know 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;
- accompany the student in the proceedings resulting from any discipline or honor code infractions, serving as a source of support and guidance; and
- promote communication and coordination between home and school.

### **SHORT TERM**

At the end of the third grading period, students in the HA Middle School have traditionally participated in Short Term activities. During this time, all normal day-to-day academic activities cease. Students will participate in various activities provided by the faculty and members of the community. Additionally, students may opt to go on teacher sponsored educational trips. **(Given the current COVID pandemic, we will decide whether or not Short Term will happen for the Middle School grades during the school year.)**

### **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.

### **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 and to feel comfortable, or several students may wish to attend in a group. Students from other schools are not permitted at these dances. Girls should wear nice

pants or a dress (**NO cocktail dresses; appropriate length; NO strapless dresses**). Boys should wear long pants and a collared shirt.

## **ATHLETICS**

Students in grades 7 and 8 are eligible to participate in Athletics. Alabama High School Athletic Association (AHSAA) requires students to have a Dragonfly account with the following on file before they may start practice. All forms and paperwork should be entered into the DragonFly account. Any questions regarding HA Athletics or AHSAA transfer and eligibility rules please e-mail Athletic Director Marc Edge at [edgem@houstonacademy.com](mailto:edgem@houstonacademy.com) .

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

The Physical Form, Concussion and Participation forms may be found on Houston Academy's website and also the AHSAA web site. The parent or legal guardian and student must sign the Physical Form, Concussion form and Participation form. If you are a new student you will be required to take the Sportsmanship course through the NFHS Learn Program. You will just need to take this course one time for your middle and high school eligibility.

Directions for Sportsmanship Requirement • Go to [www.nfhslearn.com](http://www.nfhslearn.com) And register as a student. You will take the sportsmanship elective course for students. The course is free. Make sure you print the completion certificate at the end and entre it on D.

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

**Transfer Rule:** Students transferring to HA and entering 7<sup>th</sup> grade for the first time are eligible. This is regardless of where they transfer from and where they live. Students transferring to HA and entering 8<sup>th</sup> grade will be ineligible for athletics for one calendar year unless they have made a bona fide move to within the Dothan City limits. If a student athlete has made a bona fide move to within the Dothan City limits, the student athlete must meet the following criteria to be eligible for participation in athletics:

1. Student must meet the course and grade requirements of the AHSAA; and
2. Student must not be receiving financial aid from Houston Academy.

A student transferring from a non-member school will be eligible at any grade level by proving they live within the Dothan City limits and meet the criteria listed above. All transfer students and bona fide moves must be pre-approved through the AHSAA.

**Tryouts:** Students are encouraged to contact coaches or the Athletic Director for tryout information. And dates for tryouts. Once tryout dates are established, they will be posted on the Tandem Calendar.

**School Attendance on Game Day and Practice Day:** Student athletes must be in school for a full day to be able to participate in any athletic game or match. The Athletic Director or Head of Middle School may grant permission on medical decisions that might determine if a student athlete may play or not play in a match that day. Student athletes must be in school for at least four class periods to be able to

practice after school. Any student that is sent home during the day because of illness or as discipline may NOT return to school to practice or play in a game or match.

**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.

**Summer Workouts:** All student athletes at Houston Academy must be pre-enrolled before they may start any summer workouts. Transfer students must be officially withdrawn from their previous school and be officially enrolled at Houston Academy. Transfers must meet all of the AHSAA eligibility criteria before they may participate in any summer team competition.

**Anticipated Athletic Teams for the 2021-2022 School Year**

Houston Academy recognizes and promotes the importance of interscholastic activities. As a member of the Alabama High School Athletic Association the school offers a broad spectrum of organized programs in the following sports:

Cheerleading (V, JV)	Archery (club)	Baseball (V, JV, MS)
Boys Cross Country (V, JV, MS)	Boys Bowling (V)	Boys Golf (V)
Girls Cross Country (V, JV, MS)	Girls Bowling (V)	Girls Golf (V)
Football (V, JV)	Cheerleading (V, JV)	Boys Tennis (JV, V)
Volleyball (V, JV, JH)	Boys Basketball (V, JV, MS)	Girls Tennis (JV, V)
Boys Swimming (V)	Girls Basketball (V, JV, MS)	Boys Soccer (V, JV, MS)
Girls Swimming (V)		Girls Soccer (V, JV)
		Softball (JV, V)
		Boys Track & Field (V)
		Girls Track & Field (V)

**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 approved HA PE Uniform that is comprised of an HA athletic shirt and short (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 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 AM 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. 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, the student must sign in at the main office. The student will then walk him/herself to class. Students arriving after 8:00 AM 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.

The classroom teacher will record tardies to classes from A to G periods 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, and the exam exemption privilege will be revoked.

#### **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 and the right to exempt exams, 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 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 must 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 will not be granted.

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#### **DROP OFF AND PICK UP:**

Due to the ongoing construction projects on campus, specific decisions about drop off and pick up will be made as details become evident. That information will be communicated in a timely manner, once things are finalized. We apologize, in advance, for the inconvenience and confusion that this may cause. We ask for your patience.

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#### **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.

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#### **INCLEMENT WEATHER:**

In situations of early morning inclement weather, the school will notify the radio station WOOF at 99.7 and WTVY TV regarding plans for the day. Please tune into one of these stations for instructions. The AlertNow Notification Service will also be implemented.

#### **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/guidance 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 the teacher, counselor, or 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.

#### **LOCKERS:**

Students in grades 7 and 8 must rent lockers at the beginning of the school year. Lockers should be locked during the day and after school. 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.

The locker area will be locked between the hours of 4:00 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.

The lockers for students in grade 6 are located in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms and do not require a lock.

Students in grades 6, 7, and 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](http://www.houstonacademy.com).

### **LUNCH:**

Students will eat lunch in Dunning Hall. The picnic tables outside the cafeteria are reserved for 8<sup>th</sup> grade students as an 8<sup>th</sup> grade privilege. All trash must be placed in the containers provided. If 8<sup>th</sup> grade students do not pick up their trash or otherwise fail to act responsibly during this time, the privilege of using the outdoor tables 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 Dunning Hall 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 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 in approved water bottles is the only exception. Students may only eat snacks before school, during MS Break, during MS Lunch, and after school. *At no time are students to be eating food while passing between classes or in a classroom except during the times indicated above.*

Grades 5 through 8 will eat lunch together in Dunning Hall. Each grade will sit in an assigned area in Dunning Hall, with 8<sup>th</sup> graders having the ability to sit at the picnic tables outside. Any student who wishes to leave the lunch area for any reason must get permission from one of the three teachers on duty in Dunning Hall each day. All students must be back in DH in time to hear the daily announcements.

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. Refillable “Camelback” bottles are available for purchase at Raider Retail. No glass water bottles or soft-sided water bottles will be allowed in classrooms.

### **RAIDER RETAIL:**

Raider Retail (RR) is located in Dunning Hall and is staffed by HA PTO volunteers. It is open Monday through Friday 9:30-12:30. HA T-shirts and shorts are a requirement for Middle School PE.

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. Since time is very limited during break and lunch, the student’s name and items purchased are written down, and after peak periods, it is deducted from the account card. For this reason, it is impossible for volunteers to follow any special instructions or know if a student reaches a negative balance. A volunteer will contact you by text when your child’s balance is depleted.

All proceeds from spirit wear and 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.

### **UNIFORM POLICY**

Lands End is the official uniform provider for Houston Academy. Some uniform pieces may also be purchased at Sandra Jean Uniforms in Dothan. All shirts, bottoms, and outerwear must have the HA logo and must be purchased from either Sandra Jean or from Lands’ End. Once students enter campus in the morning, they are expected to be in proper uniform regardless of the time that they arrive. Faculty will continuously review and report violations of the Uniform Policy to the Dean of Students. HA faculty may confiscate any items that are worn that are not part of the approved Uniform Policy and will return those items at the end of the academic day. Students that are not in uniform may be removed from class until the proper uniform is procured.

#### **Outerwear**

The following items are considered part of the regular HA uniform and are available through Lands End or Sandra Jean:

- HA Squall Parka or Lined Rain Jacket (navy or royal blue)
- HA Puffer Jacket (royal blue)
- HA Fleece Jacket or Vest (navy or royal blue)
- HA Cardigan (females)
- HA Blazer (males and females)
- HA Knit Sweater (males and females)

The HA Letterman Jacket purchased through Herf Jones is also approved outerwear.

If a student is wearing appropriate outerwear, Houston Academy reserves the right to ask the student to unzip or temporarily remove that outerwear to be certain that the student is wearing the appropriate uniform items *under* the outerwear.

HA apparel that does not meet the outerwear criteria above (sweatshirts, 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). Generic and/or HA blankets are never allowed during school days/hours.

### **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).
- Skorts, skirts, and shorts must have a minimum separation of 5 inches between the hem of the skirt and the shirt tail and be modest in length (no more than 2 inch above the knee cap). \*
- 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.

### Males, Grades 5-8:

The following items are a part of Houston Academy's Uniform Dress Code for males and are available through Lands End:

- 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 HARAiderwear.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 may be no longer than the top of the collar and must fall no lower than the top of the eyebrow. No "mohawks" or other distracting haircuts or hair colors are allowed. *Hair may not cover the face or eyes at any time.*
- 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.

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 & loss of privilege (Exam Privilege, Senior Privilege, NJHS/NHS, etc.) 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 short. Students should also wear appropriate gym shoes.

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 Days**

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 Middle School Head. 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.

### **School Related Events Off Campus**

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

### **Library Policy**

The library is a resource center for the school instructional program, and the students are encouraged to use it. In order to insure that students have equal access to the library facilities, guidelines must be followed.

1. Responsible care of library materials is stressed to all students.
2. Students may check out as many as 2 books for 2 weeks. This number may be increased for special assignments. At or before the end of the 2 weeks, the books must be returned to the library or renewed for another 2 weeks.
3. Students who have overdue books at the end of the year will not receive their report cards until the library obligation is cleared.
4. The library does not charge fines for overdue books, but it will assess students for damaged or lost books and/or media materials.
5. Books are checked out on an individual basis. The student who checks out a book is responsible for returning it to the library.
6. The computers in the library fall under the same guidelines as all other school computers.

### **Copy Machines**

Students may not use the school’s copy machines. The librarian has a copy machine that students may use at a cost of \$.25 per sheet.

## Chewing Gum

Middle School students are not allowed to chew gum on campus.

## 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 noneducational-related content during the school day. 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 causes any kind of disruption to the educational community or is 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 falls under the Acceptable Use Policy (AUP), which has been signed and agreed to by each student and each 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 may be stored in students' school bags BUT may not be on their person at any time between 7:55 AM and 3:15 PM. 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 (Exam Exemption Privilege, NJHS, etc.) 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 each parent at the beginning of the school year. The AUP establishes the standards and expectations for use of technology at Houston Academy.

## **DISCIPLINE**

### **Conduct**

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. In fact, at the core of our mission as an independent school that seeks to prepare our students for responsible participation in a global society, 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 Head of Middle School 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 Head of Middle School will meet with the student and all involved parties. The Head of Middle School 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 Head of Middle School. 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, on-campus isolation (OCI), in-school suspension (ISS), off-campus suspension (OCS), 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 PLAN**

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. Educational researchers R. Marzano, J. Marzano, and D. Pickering (2005) have identified three levels of offenses:

**Level 1 Offenses:** Also known as "Minor Infractions," these are offenses that occur when students violate the rules and procedures that have been established by the school and individual classroom teachers.

The teacher has primary responsibility for the classroom environment and the coach has primary responsibility for the athletic environment. Therefore, teacher and coaches should handle disciplinary actions for minor infractions while students are under their supervision. Minor infractions may include being tardy to class or school, failing to return notices or tests sent to parents, disobeying general classroom rules regarding behavior, disrupting class, congregating in the parking lot, sitting in cars during the school day, dressing out of uniform, or using cell phones/wireless electronics in unauthorized circumstances. Minor offenses may become major after repeated occurrences. The teacher who is referring the student for a minor infraction will handle detention. School service is utilized as the primary form of detention. Saturday School will be assigned when additional consequences are necessary to help students comply with rules and policies. Saturday School hours are from 8:00 a.m. until 12:00 p.m. on assigned dates. Discipline reports are sent to parents informing them of all infractions committed by their son/daughter.

#### Level 1 Offenses:

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

**Level 2 Offenses:** Also known as “Major Infractions,” these offenses are ‘serious misconduct’ offenses and may occur either outside of the classroom or inside the classroom. These offenses cause a major disruption in the classroom, undermine the sanctity of the learning community, and may be chronic and continuous. Such infractions may include harassment of any form, use of profane language, insubordination, theft, and vandalism.

For more severe cases of misconduct during school activities, field trips, or athletic events, students may receive detention or other disciplinary action as deemed appropriate. In Level 2 Offenses, individual teachers refer the individual(s) involved to the appropriate discipline committee (see description/ explanation of the process below). The committee may impose a variety of types of consequences including but not limited to: detention, conversation with parents, in-school suspension, or out-of-school suspension. Suspensions may be academic or nonacademic. Students who are on any kind of suspension will not be allowed to participate in school functions or athletic events on suspension days. Students must be aware that they are representatives of Houston Academy on or off campus and as such are answerable to the school. *The Discipline Committee will maintain a list of infractions and interventions for each student.*

#### Level 2 Offenses:

1. Fighting
2. Willful destruction or vandalism of school, another student’s or school personnel’s property
3. Sexual harassment
4. Consistent minor infractions
5. Lack of respect for faculty, administration, or other students
6. Lying, forging, or stealing
7. Harassment/bullying of any kind
8. Leaving campus without permission
9. Skipping school or class
10. Any action deemed a Level 2 Offense by the Discipline Committee

**Level 3 Offenses:** These offenses are “Major Infractions” that are of sufficient magnitude that suspension or expulsion is mandatory. Such infractions may include such things as threats, illegal substance possession/ distribution, and weapons violations.

Level 3 Offenses should be reported directly to the Head of Middle School, who will document the incident, and after a consultation the Middle School Counselor, the student’s Advocate, and the Head of School, determine consequences and contact parents. *The Head of Middle School will maintain a list of infractions and interventions for each student.*

#### Level 3 Offenses:

1. Possession or consumption of alcohol, tobacco, or tobacco products
2. Possession or consumption of illegal or harmful drugs
3. Possession of weapons (firearms, knives, fireworks, etc.)

### **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 three faculty members who teach in the middle school. Depending upon the incident, as many as two students may also be called to serve on the Middle School Discipline Committee. The committee members 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 should 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 communicate the final decision to the students and parents.

### **COMPUTER USE POLICIES**

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 the Internet. It is, therefore, important that all parents are familiar with the school's policies regarding use of the computers, which also includes all policies and procedures listed, and sign by parents and students in the Acceptable Use Policy (AUP).

1. School computers are for educational use only. Students may not play games using the computers at any time. Music or videos may be played only when part of a teacher's assignment (i.e. music added to PowerPoint presentation).
2. Students may not send messages of any kind using school computers. This includes the use of ICQ, AIM, Microsoft Messenger, all other chat software, and console messages.
3. Food and drink are not allowed in the lab.
4. 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.
5. Students may not use school printers to print invitations, flyers, campaign information, game cheat sheets, or any other material deemed non-educational or inappropriate.
6. Students are not to open, read, or alter another student's work either on the computer or on the network. Any attempt to copy another student's work will be treated as cheating and/or plagiarism as addressed in the Student Handbook.
7. 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.
8. Students may not enter any area protected by a password unless authorized to do so.

### **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 Head of Middle School, 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 Head of Middle School 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 Head of Middle School will deal with the violations. Violations of the Honor Code include the following:

1. Plagiarism
2. Cheating on Examinations
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 Head of Middle School will contact parents, and a trial date will be scheduled. The students, and faculty advisors will work closely with the Head of Middle School to ensure confidentiality and to protect the rights of the student(s).

## 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.
- On-campus Isolation
- In-Campus Suspension
- Off-Campus Suspension
- Separation from the school

## COURSES

### 5<sup>th</sup> Grade

- English
- Reading
- Mathematics
- History
- Science
- Art/Chorus/Band/STEAM-Technology/Spanish/Physical Education/Guidance

### 6<sup>th</sup> Grade

- English
- Mathematics
- History
- Science

- Art/Chorus/Band/Technology/French/Latin/Spanish/Physical Education/Drama/ Robotics

### **7th Grade**

- English
- Pre-Algebra CP or Honors
- Life Science
- Geography
- Spanish Ia, French Ia, Latin Ia
- Art/Physical Education/Chorus/Band/Drama/Robotics/Global Exploration

### **8th Grade**

- English
- Pre-Algebra, Algebra I Honors or College Preparatory
- Physical Science
- World History I
- Spanish Ib, French Ib, Latin Ib
- Art/Physical Education/Chorus/Band/Drama/Print Design/Robotics/Global Exploration