



# **Rising Scholars Academy of South Texas ISD**

## **Student Handbook**

2019–20 School Year

If you have difficulty accessing the information in this document because of disability, please contact the district at [info@stisd.net](mailto:info@stisd.net) or call 800.217.8839.

# Table of Contents

<b><i>Rising Scholars Academy of South Texas ISD</i></b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b><i>Student Handbook</i></b> .....	<b>1</b>
Accessibility .....	9
<b>Section I: Parental Rights</b> .....	<b>11</b>
Consent, Opt-Out, and Refusal Rights .....	11
Participation in Third-Party Surveys .....	13
Removing a Student from Instruction or Excusing a Student from a Required Component of Instruction .....	14
Right of Access to Student Records, Curriculum Materials, and District Records / Policies .....	15
A Student with Exceptionalities or Special Circumstances .....	18
<b>Section II: Other Important Information for Parents and Students</b> .....	<b>23</b>
Absences / Attendance .....	23
Accountability under State and Federal Law .....	26
Bullying .....	26
Career and Technical Education (CTE) Programs .....	28
Celebrations .....	28
Child Sexual Abuse and Other Maltreatment of Children .....	28
Class Schedules .....	29
Communications—Automated .....	29
Complaints and Concerns .....	29
Conduct .....	30
Counseling .....	30
Course Credit .....	31
Credit by Examination <i>If a Student Has Taken the Course / Subject</i> .....	31
Credit by Examination for Advancement / Acceleration <i>If a Student Has Not Taken the Course / Subject</i> .....	32
Dating Violence, Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation .....	32
Discipline Chart .....	34
Discrimination .....	39
Distance Learning .....	39
Distribution of Literature, Published Materials, or Other Documents .....	40
Dress and Grooming .....	41
Electronic Devices and Technology Resources .....	42
End-of-Course (EOC) Assessments .....	44
English Learners .....	44
Extracurricular Activities, Clubs, and Organizations .....	44
Fees .....	45
Fundraising .....	46
Gender-Based Harassment .....	46
Grading Guidelines .....	46
Harassment .....	46
Hazing .....	47
Health-Related Matters .....	47
Homeless Students .....	51
Homework .....	51
Illness .....	51
Immunization .....	51
Law Enforcement Agencies (All Grade Levels) .....	52
Leaving Campus .....	53
Lost and Found .....	53
Makeup Work .....	53
Medicine at School .....	54
Nondiscrimination Statement .....	55

Pledges of Allegiance and a Minute of Silence.....	56
Prayer.....	57
Promotion and Retention .....	57
Release of Students from School.....	58
Report Cards / Progress Reports and Conferences .....	58
Retaliation.....	58
Safety .....	59
SAT, ACT, and Other Standardized Tests .....	60
Schedule Changes Students requesting a schedule change must submit their request to the counseling office within the first five days of instruction. Administrative approval will be required for any schedule change requests. ....	60
School-sponsored Field Trips.....	61
Searches.....	61
Sexual Harassment .....	62
Special Programs .....	62
Standardized Testing .....	62
Steroids.....	63
Students in Foster Care .....	64
Substance Abuse Prevention and Intervention.....	64
Suicide Awareness and Mental Health Support.....	64
Tardies .....	64
Textbooks, Electronic Textbooks, Technological Equipment, and Other Instructional Materials .....	65
Transfers.....	65
Transportation .....	66
Vandalism .....	66
Video Cameras.....	67
Visitors to the School.....	67
General Visitors .....	67
Withdrawing from School.....	68
<b>Glossary.....</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>Appendix: Freedom from Bullying Policy.....</b>	<b>71</b>
Student Welfare: Freedom from Bullying .....	71
<b><i>Bullying Prohibited .....</i></b>	<b><i>71</i></b>
<b>Examples .....</b>	<b>71</b>
<b><i>Retaliation.....</i></b>	<b><i>71</i></b>
<b>Examples .....</b>	<b>71</b>
<b><i>False Claim.....</i></b>	<b><i>71</i></b>
<b><i>Timely Reporting .....</i></b>	<b><i>71</i></b>
<b><i>Reporting Procedures .....</i></b>	<b><i>71</i></b>
<b>Student Report .....</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>Employee Report .....</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>Report Format.....</b>	<b>72</b>
<b><i>Notice of Report .....</i></b>	<b><i>72</i></b>
<b><i>Prohibited Conduct.....</i></b>	<b><i>72</i></b>
<b><i>Investigation of Report .....</i></b>	<b><i>72</i></b>

<i>Concluding the Investigation .....</i>	<b>72</b>
<i>Notice to Parents .....</i>	<b>72</b>
<i>District Action .....</i>	<b>72</b>
<b>Bullying .....</b>	<b>72</b>
Discipline.....	72
Corrective Action .....	73
Transfers .....	73
Counseling.....	73
<b>Improper Conduct.....</b>	<b>73</b>
<i>Confidentiality.....</i>	<b>73</b>
<i>Appeal.....</i>	<b>73</b>
<i>Records Retention .....</i>	<b>73</b>
<i>Access to Policy and Procedures .....</i>	<b>73</b>



South Texas ISD

## Rising Scholars Academy

GRADES 7-8 | SAN BENITO

### STISD Board Members

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Henry LeVrier, Secretary

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Abiel Cantu

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Homero Garcia

Margarita Garcia

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Hector Gonzales

Robert J. Lerma

Sylvia Lopez

Ramon Montalvo, III

Eduardo Roberto Rodriguez

Jamie Solis

Irma Perez-Treviño

Israel G. Quintanilla

Rebecca Villarreal

Rick Villarreal, D.D.S.

### Superintendent

Dr. Marco Antonio Lara

### Administration

Carrie Saucedo – Principal

Alma Q. Alvarez- Assistant Principal

Monica Chavez – Counselor

Amy Dominquez – Counselor

Fransico J. Hernandez - Counselor

Candace Guillen- Social Worker

Adan Montalvo – Wellness Specialist

### Office Staff

Monique Avila – Campus Secretary

Adela Perez- AP Secretary/Receptionist

Reynaldo Cantu - Bookkeeper

Marie Rodriguez-PEIMS/Attendance Clerk

Nora Garcia- Counselor's Secretary

### Teachers

Ambriz, Gabriel

Andrade, Fernando

Arriola, Brian

Balli, Enesto

Benavidez, Amy

Benavidez, Ricardo

Castaneda, Katherine

De la Fuente, Melissa

DeLaRosa, Debbie

DeLeon, Enrique

Galan, Nora

Galvan, Maria Rosario

Garcia, Victoria

Gonzalez, Amber

Gonzalez, Jeremias

Guajardo, Michele

Guzman, Delia

Hernandez, Edna

Hernandez, Isabella

Longoria, Corina

Marquez, Hilda

Martinez, Claudia

Martinez, Mary

Martinez, Sharai

McKinney, Jeanette

Ochoa, Denise

Pena, Amy

Perez, Jose

Perez, Juan

Ramirez, Gustavo

Ratliff, Andrea

Rivera, David

Rodriguez, Josey

Romero, Roberto

Saldivar, Monica

Vargas, Amaris

Vega, Dwayne

Whitworth, Khrystal

Wiley, Christopher

Wilson, Cynthia

### Librarian

Norma Sanchez

### Nurse

Diana Olivarez



South Texas ISD

# Rising Scholars Academy

GRADES 7-8 | SAN BENITO

## **Vision:**

Rising Scholars Academy will cultivate a powerful learning environment that will inspire our students to impact their communities through stewardship and leadership.

## **Mission:**

Rising Scholars Academy paves the foundation for academic excellence and leadership via a rigorous and innovative curriculum enhanced by a nurturing system of support, community, and opportunity for all.

## **Core Values**

<b>Stewardship</b>	We are entrusted and responsible for carrying out our school's mission and ensuring that student learning is our priority.
<b>Teamwork</b>	We work hand in hand to support one another and achieve our goals.
<b>Results</b>	We hold ourselves accountable for overcoming obstacles and achieving excellent results for all students.
<b>Integrity</b>	We act with honesty, respect, and responsibility
<b>Community</b>	We are unified by our shared vision, mission, commitments and culture.
<b>Perseverance</b>	We work hard and give 100% effort, never giving up on our goals.



South Texas ISD

# Rising Scholars Academy

GRADES 7-8 | SAN BENITO

## 2019-2020 Bell Schedule

**Teachers Report**

**8:15 a.m.**

**1st Period**

**8:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.**

**2nd Period**

**10:05 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.**

**7th Lunch**

**11:35 a.m. – 12:10 p.m.**

**8th AIME**

**11:35 a.m.- 12:20 p.m.**

**8th Lunch**

**12:25 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.**

**7th AIME**

**12:15 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.**

**3rd Period**

**1:05 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.**

**4th Period**

**2:35 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.**

**Teacher Dismissal 4:15 p.m.**





South Texas ISD

# Rising Scholars Academy

GRADES 7-8 | SAN BENITO

## Preface

### Parents and Students:

Welcome to the new school year!

Education is a team effort, and students, parents, teachers, and other staff members working together can make this a successful year.

The *Rising Scholars Academy* Student Handbook is a general reference guide that is divided into two sections:

**Section I: Parental Rights** will help you respond to school-related issues regarding curriculum and the school environment.

**Section II: Other Important Information for Parents and Students** is organized alphabetically by topic. Where applicable, it is divided by age and/or grade level.

**Section III: STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT** (separate document provided by district)

**Note:** Unless otherwise noted, the term “parent” refers to the parent, legal guardian, any person granted some other type of lawful control of a student, or any other person who has agreed to assume school-related responsibility for a student.

The Student Handbook is designed to align with board policy and the Student Code of Conduct, a board-adopted document intended to promote school safety and an atmosphere for learning. The Student Handbook is **not** meant to be a complete statement of all policies, procedures, or rules in any given circumstance.

In case of conflicts between board policy (including the Student Code of Conduct) and any Student Handbook provision, the district will follow board policy and the Student Code of Conduct.

Therefore, parents and students should become familiar with the *South Texas ISD* Student Code of Conduct. To review the Code of Conduct, visit the district’s website at <http://www.stisd.net>.

State law requires that the Code of Conduct be prominently displayed or made available for review at each campus.

A hard copy of either the Student Code of Conduct or Student Handbook can be requested at *Risings Scholars Academy 151 Helen Moore Road, San Benito, Tx*.

The Student Handbook is updated annually; however, policy adoption and revisions may occur throughout the year. The district encourages parents to stay informed of proposed policy changes by attending board meetings and reviewing newsletter and other communications explaining changes in policy or other rules that affect Student Handbook provisions. The district reserves the right to modify the Student Handbook at any time. Notice of revisions will be provided as is reasonably practical.

Although the Student Handbook may refer to rights established through law or district policy, it does not create additional rights for parents and students. It does not, nor is it intended to, represent a contract between any parent or student and the district.



South Texas ISD

# Rising Scholars Academy

GRADES 7-8 | SAN BENITO

For questions about the material in this handbook, please contact *Alma Q. Alvarez, Assistant Principal, Rising Scholars Academy*.

Complete and return to the student's campus the following forms (provided in the forms packet distributed at the beginning of the year or upon enrollment):

- Acknowledgment Form ***Or*** Acknowledgment of Electronic Distribution of Student Handbook,
- Notice Regarding Directory Information and Parent's Response Regarding Release of Student Information,
- Parent's Objection to the Release of Student Information to Military Recruiters and Institutions of Higher Education (if you choose to restrict the release of information to these entities), and
- Consent/Opt-Out Form.

[See **Objecting to the Release of Directory Information** on page 12 and **Consent Required Before Student Participation in a Federally Funded Survey, Analysis, or Evaluation** on page 13 for more information.]

**Note:** References to board policy codes are included for ease of reference. The hard copy of the district's official policy manual is available for review in South Texas ISD 100 Med High Drive, Mercedes, Tx. 78570, and an unofficial electronic copy is available at <http://www.stisd.net>.

## Accessibility

If you have difficulty accessing this handbook because of a disability, please contact the Amanda Odom, Public Relations, (956) 514-4255 or [amanda.odom@stisd.net](mailto:amanda.odom@stisd.net).



## **Section I: Parental Rights**

This section describes certain parental rights as specified in state or federal law.

### **Consent, Opt-Out, and Refusal Rights**

#### ***Consent to Conduct a Psychological Evaluation***

Unless required under state or federal law, a district employee will not conduct a psychological examination, test, or treatment without obtaining written parental consent.

**Note:** An evaluation may be legally required under special education rules or by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) for child abuse investigations and reports.

#### ***Consent to Display a Student's Original Works and Personal Information***

Teachers may display a student's work in classrooms or elsewhere on campus as recognition of student achievement without seeking prior parental consent. These displays may include personally identifiable student information. Student work includes:

- Artwork,
- Special projects,
- Photographs,
- Original videos or voice recordings, and
- Other original works.

However, the district will seek parental consent before displaying a student's work on the district's website, a website affiliated or sponsored by the district (such as a campus or classroom website), or in district publications, which may include printed materials, videos, or other methods of mass communication.

#### ***Consent to Receive Parenting and Paternity Awareness Instruction if a Student is under Age 14***

A student under age 14 must have parental permission to participate in the district's parenting and paternity awareness program. This program was developed by the Office of the Texas Attorney General and the State Board of Education (SBOE) to be incorporated into health education classes.

#### ***Consent to Video or Audio Record a Student when Not Already Permitted by Law***

State law permits the school to make a video or voice recording without parental permission when it:

- Is to be used for school safety,
- Relates to classroom instruction or a cocurricular or extracurricular activity,
- Relates to media coverage of the school, or
- Relates to the promotion of student safety as provided by law for a student receiving special education services in certain settings.

In other circumstances, the district will seek written parental consent before making a video or voice recording of a student.

#### ***Prohibiting the Use of Corporal Punishment***

Corporal punishment—spanking or paddling a student—may be used as a discipline management technique in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct and district policy FO(LOCAL).

However, in accordance with law, the district may not administer corporal punishment if a student's parent submits a signed, written statement prohibiting its use.

A parent who does not want corporal punishment administered to his or her child must submit a written statement to the campus principal stating this decision. This signed statement must be submitted each school year. A parent may revoke this prohibition at any time during the school year by providing a signed statement to the campus principal.

**Note:**

- District personnel may use discipline methods other than corporal punishment if a parent requests that corporal punishment not be used.

- If the district knows that a student is in temporary or permanent custody of the state (through foster care, kinship care, or other arrangements), corporal punishment will not be administered, even when the student's caregiver or caseworker has not submitted a signed statement prohibiting its use.

### ***Limiting Electronic Communications between Students and District Employees***

The district permits teachers and other approved employees to use electronic communications with students within the scope of professional responsibilities, as described by district guidelines.

For example, a teacher may create a social networking page for his or her class to relay information regarding class work, homework, and tests. A parent is welcome to such a page.

However, text messages sent to an individual student are only allowed if a district employee with responsibility for an extracurricular activity must communicate with a student participating in that activity.

The employee is required to send a copy of the text message to the employee's district email address.

A parent who does not want his or her child to receive one-to-one electronic communications from a district employee should contact the campus principal.

### ***Objecting to the Release of Directory Information***

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, or FERPA, permits the district to disclose appropriately designated "directory information" from a student's education records without written consent.

"Directory information" is information that, if released, is generally not considered harmful or an invasion of privacy. Examples include:

- A student's photograph (for publication in the school yearbook);
- A student's name and grade level (for communicating class and teacher assignments);
- The name, weight, and height of an athlete (for publication in a school athletic program);
- A list of student birthdays (for generating schoolwide or classroom recognition);
- A student's name and photograph (posted on a district-approved and -managed social media platform); and
- The names and grade levels of students submitted by the district to a local newspaper or other community publication (to recognize the A/B honor roll for a specific grading period.)

Directory information will be released to anyone who follows procedures for requesting it.

However, a parent or eligible student may object to the release of this information. Any objection must be made in writing to the principal within ten school days of the student's first day of instruction for this school year.

[See Notice Regarding Directory Information and Parent's Response Regarding Release of Student Information, included in the forms packet.]

As allowed by state law, the district has identified two directory information lists—one for school-sponsored purposes and a second for all other requests. For district publications and announcements, the district has designated the following as directory information: For the following school-sponsored purposes—all District publications and announcements—directory information shall include student name; address; telephone listing; electronic mail address; photograph; date and place of birth; major field of study; degrees, honors, and awards received; dates of attendance; grade level; most recent educational institution attended; and participation in officially recognized activities. If a parent does not object to the use of his or her child's information for these school-sponsored purposes, the school will not ask permission each time the district wants to use the information for these purposes.

For all other purposes, the district has identified the following as directory information: student name.

If a parent does not object to the use of the student's information for these purposes, the school must release this information when requested by an outside entity or individual.

**Note:** Review **Authorized Inspection and Use of Student Records** on page 16.

## ***Objecting to the Release of Student Information to Military Recruiters and Institutions of Higher Education***

Unless a parent has advised the district not to release his or her student's information, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires the district to comply with requests by military recruiters or institutions of higher education for the student's:

- Name,
- Address, and
- Telephone listing.

See a document in the forms packet for this purpose.

## **Participation in Third-Party Surveys**

### ***Consent Required Before Student Participation in a Federally Funded Survey, Analysis, or Evaluation***

A student will not be required to participate without parental consent in any survey, analysis, or evaluation—funded in whole or in part by the U.S. Department of Education—that concerns:

- Political affiliations or beliefs of the student or the student's parent;
- Mental or psychological problems of the student or the student's family;
- Sex behavior or attitudes;
- Illegal, antisocial, self-incriminating, or demeaning behavior;
- Critical appraisals of individuals with whom the student has a close family relationship;
- Relationships privileged under law, such as relationships with lawyers, physicians, and ministers;
- Religious practices, affiliations, or beliefs of the student or parent; or
- Income, except when the information is required by law and will be used to determine the student's eligibility to participate in or receive financial assistance under a program.

A parent can inspect the survey or other instrument and any corresponding instructional materials used in connection with such a survey, analysis, or evaluation. [For more information, see policy EF(LEGAL).]

## **"Opting Out" of Participation in Other Types of Surveys or Screenings and the Disclosure of Personal Information**

The Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA) requires that a parent be notified when a survey is not funded by the U.S. Department of Education.

A parent has a right to deny permission for his or her child's participation in:

- Any survey concerning private information listed above, regardless of funding.
- School activities involving the collection, disclosure, or use of personal information gathered from the child for the purpose of marketing, selling, or otherwise disclosing that information.
- Any nonemergency, invasive physical examination or screening required as a condition of attendance, administered and scheduled by the school in advance, and not necessary to protect the immediate health and safety of the student.

Exceptions are hearing, vision, or spinal screenings, or any physical examination or screening permitted or required under state law. [See policies EF and FFAA.]

A parent may inspect a survey created by a third party before the survey is administered or distributed to his or her child.

## **Removing a Student from Instruction or Excusing a Student from a Required Component of Instruction**

### ***Human Sexuality Instruction***

As a part of the district's curriculum, students receive instruction related to human sexuality. The School Health Advisory Council (SHAC) makes recommendations for course materials.

State law requires that the district provide written notice before each school year of the board's decision to provide human sexuality instruction.

State law also requires that instruction related to human sexuality, sexually transmitted diseases, or human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) or acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS):

- Present abstinence from sexual activity as the preferred choice in relationship to all sexual activity for unmarried persons of school age;
- Devote more attention to abstinence from sexual activity than to any other behavior;
- Emphasize that abstinence, if used consistently and correctly, is the only method that is 100 percent effective in preventing pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections and the emotional trauma associated with adolescent sexual activity;
- Direct adolescents to abstain from sexual activity before marriage as the most effective way to prevent pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases; and
- If included in the content of the curriculum, teach contraception and condom use in terms of human use reality rates instead of theoretical laboratory rates.

A parent is entitled to review the curriculum materials. In addition, a parent may remove his or her child from any part of the human sexuality instruction without academic, disciplinary, or other penalties. A parent may also choose to become more involved with the development of this curriculum by becoming a member of the district's SHAC. (See the campus principal for details.)

## **Reciting a Portion of the Declaration of Independence in Grades 3–12**

State law designates the week of September 17 as Celebrate Freedom Week and requires all social studies classes provide:

- Instruction concerning the intent, meaning, and importance of the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution, and
- A specific recitation from the Declaration of Independence for students in grades 3–12.

Per state law, a student may be excused from recitation of a portion of the Declaration of Independence if:

- A parent provides a written statement requesting that his or her child be excused,
- The district determines that the student has a conscientious objection to the recitation, or
- A parent is a representative of a foreign government to whom the U.S. government extends diplomatic immunity.

[See policy EHBK(LEGAL).]

### ***Reciting the Pledges to the U.S. and Texas Flags***

A parent may request that his or her child be excused from participation in the daily recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance to the U.S. flag and the Pledge of Allegiance to the Texas flag. The request must be made in writing. State law, however, requires that all students participate in one minute of silence following recitation of the pledges.

[See **Pledges of Allegiance and a Minute of Silence** on page 56 and policy EC(LEGAL).]

### ***Religious or Moral Beliefs***

A parent may remove his or her child temporarily from the classroom if a scheduled instructional activity conflicts with the parent's religious or moral beliefs.

The removal may not be used to avoid a test and may not extend for an entire semester. Further, the student must satisfy grade-level and graduation requirements as determined by the school and by state law.

### ***Tutoring or Test Preparation***

A teacher may determine that a student needs additional targeted assistance for the student to achieve mastery in state-developed essential knowledge and skills based on:

- Informal observations,
- Evaluative data such as grades earned on assignments or tests, or
- Results from diagnostic assessments.

The school will always attempt to provide tutoring and strategies for test-taking in ways that prevent removal from other instruction as much as possible.

In accordance with state law and policy EC, without parental permission, districts are prohibited from removing a student from a regularly scheduled class for remedial tutoring or test preparation for more than ten percent of the days the class is offered.

Under state law, students with grades below 70 for a reporting period are required to attend tutorial services—if the district offers these services.

[For questions about school-provided tutoring programs, see policies EC and EHBC, and contact the student's teacher.]

## **Right of Access to Student Records, Curriculum Materials, and District Records / Policies**

### ***Instructional Materials***

A parent has the right to review teaching materials, textbooks, and other teaching aids and instructional materials used in the curriculum, and to examine tests that have been administered.

A parent is also entitled to request that the school allow the student to take home instructional materials the student uses. The school may ask the student to return the materials at the beginning of the next school day.

### ***Notices of Certain Student Misconduct to Noncustodial Parent***

A noncustodial parent may request in writing that he or she be provided, for the remainder of the school year, a copy of any written notice usually provided to a parent related to his or her child's misconduct that may involve placement in a disciplinary alternative education program (DAEP) or expulsion. [See policy FO(LEGAL) and the Student Code of Conduct.]

### ***Participation in Federally Required, State-Mandated, and District Assessments***

In accordance with the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), a parent may request information regarding any federal, state, or district policy related to his or her child's participation in required assessments.

## ***Student Records***

### **Accessing Student Records**

- A parent may review his or her child's records. These records include:
- Attendance records,
- Test scores,
- Grades,
- Disciplinary records,
- Counseling records,
- Psychological records,



- Applications for admission,
- Health and immunization information,
- Other medical records,
- Teacher and school counselor evaluations,
- Reports of behavioral patterns,
- Records relating to assistance provided for learning difficulties, including information collected regarding any intervention strategies used with the child, as the term “intervention strategy” is defined by law,
- State assessment instruments that have been administered to the child, and
- Teaching materials and tests used in the child’s classroom.

## **Authorized Inspection and Use of Student Records**

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) affords parents and eligible students certain rights regarding student education records.

For purposes of student records, an “eligible” student is anyone age 18 or older or who attends a postsecondary educational institution. These rights, as discussed here and at **Objecting to the Release of Directory Information** on page 12, are the right to:

- Inspect and review student records within 45 days after the day the school receives a request for access;
- Request an amendment to a student record the parent or eligible student believes is inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of FERPA;
- Provide written consent before the school discloses personally identifiable information from the student’s records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent; and
- File a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning failures by the school to comply with FERPA requirements. The office that administers FERPA is:

Family Policy Compliance Office  
U.S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Ave., S.W.  
Washington, DC 20202

Both FERPA and state laws safeguard student records from unauthorized inspection or use and provide parents and eligible students certain rights of privacy.

Before disclosing personally identifiable information from a student’s records, the district must verify the identity of the person, including a parent or the student, requesting the information.

Virtually all information pertaining to student performance—including grades, test results, and disciplinary records—is considered confidential educational records.

Inspection and release of student records is restricted to an eligible student or a student’s parent—whether married, separated, or divorced—unless the school receives a copy of a court order terminating parental rights or the right to access a student’s education records.

Federal law requires that control of the records goes to the student as soon as the student:

- Reaches the age of 18,
- Is emancipated by a court, or
- Enrolls in a postsecondary educational institution.

However, the parent may continue to have access to the records if the student is a dependent for tax purposes and, under limited circumstances, when there is a threat to the health and safety of the student or other individuals.

FERPA permits the disclosure of personally identifiable information from a student's education records without written consent of the parent or eligible student:

- When district officials have what federal law refers to as a “legitimate educational interest” in a student's records. School officials would include:
- Board members and employees, such as the superintendent, administrators, and principals;
- Teachers, school counselors, diagnosticians, and support staff (including district health or medical staff);
- A person or company with whom the district has contracted or allowed to provide a specific institutional service or function (such as an attorney, consultant, third-party vendor that offers online programs or software, auditor, medical consultant, therapist, school resource officer, or volunteer);
- A parent or student serving on a school committee; or
- A parent or student assisting a school official in the performance of his or her duties.

“Legitimate educational interest” in a student's records includes working with the student; considering disciplinary or academic actions, the student's case, or an individualized education program for a student with disabilities; compiling statistical data; reviewing an educational record to fulfill the official's professional responsibility to the school and the student; or investigating or evaluating programs.

- To authorized representatives of various governmental agencies, including juvenile service providers, the U.S. Comptroller General's office, the U.S. Attorney General's office, the U.S. Secretary of Education, the Texas Education Agency, the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture's office, and Child Protective Services (CPS) caseworkers or, in certain cases, other child welfare representatives.
- To individuals or entities granted access in response to a subpoena or court order.
- To another school, district/system, or postsecondary educational institution to which a student seeks or intends to enroll or in which the student already is enrolled.
- In connection with financial aid for which a student has applied or has received.
- To accrediting organizations to carry out accrediting functions.
- To organizations conducting studies for, or on behalf of, the school to develop, validate, or administer predictive tests; administer student aid programs; or improve instruction.
- To appropriate officials in connection with a health or safety emergency.
- When the district discloses directory information-designated details. [To prohibit this disclosure, see **Objecting to the Release of Directory Information** on page 12.]

Release of personally identifiable information to any other person or agency—such as a prospective employer or for a scholarship application—will occur only with parental or student permission as appropriate. The principal is custodian of all records for currently enrolled students at the assigned school. The superintendent is the custodian of all records for students who have withdrawn or graduated.

A parent or eligible student who wants to inspect the student's records should submit a written request to the records custodian identifying the records he or she wants to inspect.

Records may be reviewed in person during regular school hours. The records custodian or designee will be available to explain the record and to answer questions.

A parent or eligible student who submits a written request and pays copying costs of ten cents per page may obtain copies. If circumstances prevent inspection during regular school hours and the student qualifies for free or reduced-price meals, the district will either provide a copy of the records requested or make other arrangements for the parent or student to review the records.

The address of the superintendent's office is *100 Med High Drive Mercedes, Tx., 78570*.

The address of the principal's office is: *151 Helen Moore Road, San Benito, Tx., 78586*.

A parent or eligible student may inspect the student's records and request a correction or amendment if the records are considered inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the student's privacy rights.

A request to correct a student's record should be submitted to the appropriate records custodian. The request must clearly identify the part of the record that should be corrected and include an explanation of how the information is inaccurate. If the district denies the request to amend the records, the parent or eligible student has the right to request a hearing. If after the hearing the records are not amended, the parent or eligible student has 30 school days to place a statement in the student's record.

Although improperly recorded grades may be challenged, contesting a student's grade in a course or on an examination is handled through the complaint process found in policy FNG(LOCAL). A grade issued by a teacher can be changed only if, as determined by the board of trustees, the grade is arbitrary, erroneous, or inconsistent with the district's grading guidelines. [See Finality of Grades at FNG(LEGAL), **Report Cards/Progress Reports and Conferences** on page 58, and **Complaints and Concerns** on page 29.] The district's student records policy is found at policy FL(LEGAL) and (LOCAL) and is available at the principal's or superintendent's office or on the district's website at [www.stisd.net](http://www.stisd.net).

Note: The parent's or eligible student's right of access to and copies of student records does not extend to all records. Materials that are not considered educational records—such as a teacher's personal notes about a student shared only with a substitute teacher—do not have to be made available.

## **Teacher and Staff Professional Qualifications**

A parent may request information regarding the professional qualifications of his or her child's teachers, including whether the teacher:

- Has met state qualification and licensing criteria for the grade levels and subject areas in which the teacher provides instruction,
- Has an emergency permit or other provisional status for which state requirements have been waived, and
- Is currently teaching in the field of discipline of his or her certification.

The parent also has the right to request information about the qualifications of any paraprofessional who may provide services to the child.

## **A Student with Exceptionalities or Special Circumstances**

### ***Children of Military Families***

The Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunities for Military Children entitles children of military families to flexibility regarding certain district and state requirements, including:

- Immunization requirements;
- Grade level, course, or educational program placement;
- Eligibility requirements for participation in extracurricular activities;
- Enrollment in the Texas Virtual School Network (TXVSN); and
- Graduation requirements.
- The district will excuse absences related to a student visiting a parent, including a stepparent or legal guardian, who is:
  - Called to active duty,
  - On leave, or
  - Returning from a deployment of at least four months.

The district will permit **no more than five** excused absences per year for this purpose. For the absence to be excused, the absence must occur no earlier than the 60th day before deployment or no later than the 30th day after the parent's return from deployment.

Additional information may be found at [Military Family Resources at the Texas Education Agency](#).

## ***Parental Role in Certain Classroom and School Assignments***

### **Multiple-Birth Siblings**

State law permits a parent of multiple-birth siblings (e.g., twins, triplets) assigned to the same grade and campus to request in writing that the children be placed in either the same classroom or separate classrooms.

Written requests must be submitted by the 14th day after the students' enrollment. [See policy FDB(LEGAL).]

### **Safety Transfers / Assignments**

A parent may:

- Request the transfer of his or her child to another classroom or campus if the district has determined that the child has been a victim of bullying, including cyberbullying, as defined by Education Code 37.0832.
- Consult with district administrators if the district has determined that his or her child has engaged in bullying and the board has decided to transfer the child to another classroom or campus.

Transportation is not provided for a transfer to another campus. See the principal for more information.

[See **Bullying** on page 26, and policies FDB and FFI.]

- Request the transfer of his or her child to a safe public school in the district if the child attends a school identified by the Texas Education Agency as persistently dangerous or if the child has been a victim of a violent criminal offense while at school or on school grounds.

[See policy FDE.]

- Request the transfer of his or her child to another district campus if the child has been the victim of sexual assault by another student assigned to the same campus, whether the assault occurred on or off campus, and that student has been convicted of or placed on deferred adjudication for the assault. In accordance with policy FDE, if the victim does not wish to transfer, the district will transfer the assailant.

### ***Student Use of a Service / Assistance Animal***

A parent of a student who uses a service/assistance animal because of the student's disability must submit a written request to the principal before bringing the service/assistance animal on campus. The district will try to accommodate a request as soon as possible but will do so within ten district business days.

### ***A Student in the Conservatorship of the State (Foster Care)***

A student in the conservatorship (custody) of the state who enrolls in the district after the beginning of the school year will be allowed credit-by-examination opportunities at any point during the year.

The district will grant partial course credit by semester when the student only passes one semester of a two-semester course.

A student in the conservatorship of the state who is moved outside the district's or school's attendance boundaries—or who is initially placed in the conservatorship of the state and moved outside the district's or school's boundaries—is entitled to remain at the school the student was attending prior to the placement or move until the student reaches the highest grade level at that particular school.

If a student in grade 11 or 12 transfers to another district but does not meet the graduation requirements of the receiving district, the student can request a diploma from the previous district if the student meets its graduation criteria.

For a student in the conservatorship of the state who is eligible for a tuition and fee exemption under state law and likely to be in care on the day preceding the student's 18th birthday, the district will:

- Assist the student with the completion of applications for admission or financial aid;
- Arrange and accompany the student on campus visits;
- Assist in researching and applying for private or institution-sponsored scholarships;
- Identify whether the student is a candidate for appointment to a military academy;

- Assist the student in registering and preparing for college entrance examinations, including (subject to the availability of funds) arranging for the payment of examination fees by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS); and
- Coordinate contact between the student and a liaison officer for students formerly in the conservatorship of the state.

[See **Credit by Examination for Advancement/Acceleration** on page 32, **Course Credit** on page 31, and **A Student in Foster Care** on page 64 for more information.]

### ***A Student Who Is Homeless***

Children who are homeless will be provided flexibility regarding certain district provisions, including:

- Proof of residency requirements;
- Immunization requirements;
- Educational program placement (if the student is unable to provide previous academic records or misses an application deadline during a period of homelessness);
- Credit-by-examination opportunities at any point during the year (if the student enrolled in the district after the beginning of the school year), per State Board of Education (SBOE) rules;
- Awarding partial credit when a student passes only one semester of a two-semester course;
- Eligibility requirements for participation in extracurricular activities; and
- Graduation requirements.

Federal law allows a homeless student to remain enrolled in the “school of origin” or to enroll in a new school in the attendance area where the student is currently residing.

If a homeless student in grade 11 or 12 transfers to another district but does not meet the graduation requirements of the receiving district, state law allows the student to request a diploma from the previous district if the student meets the criteria to graduate from the previous district.

A student or parent who is dissatisfied by the district’s eligibility, school selection, or enrollment decision may appeal through policy FNG(LOCAL). The district will expedite local timelines, when possible, for prompt dispute resolution.

[See **Credit by Examination for Advancement/Acceleration** on page 32, **Course Credit** on page 31, and **Homeless Students** on page 51 for more information.]

### ***A Student Who Has Learning Difficulties or Who Needs Special Education or Section 504 Services***

For those students who are having difficulty in the regular classroom, all school districts must consider tutorial, compensatory, and other academic or behavior support services that are available to all students, including a process based on Response to Intervention (RtI). The implementation of RtI has the potential to have a positive impact on the ability of districts to meet the needs of all struggling students.

If a student is experiencing learning difficulties, his or her parent may contact the individuals listed below to learn about the school’s overall general education referral or screening system for support services.

This system links students to a variety of support options, including making a referral for a special education evaluation or for a Section 504 evaluation to determine whether the student needs specific aids, accommodations, or services. A parent may request an evaluation for special education or Section 504 services at any time.

### **Special Education Referrals**

If a parent makes a **written request** for an initial evaluation for special education services to the director of special education services or to a district administrative employee of the school district, the district must respond no later than **15 school days** after receiving the request. At that time, the district must give the parent prior written notice of whether it agrees or refuses to evaluate the student, along with a copy of the Notice of Procedural Safeguards. If the district agrees to evaluate the student, it must also give the parent the opportunity to give written consent for the evaluation.

**Note:** A request for a special education evaluation may be made verbally; it does not need to be made in writing. Districts must still comply with all federal prior-written notices and procedural safeguard requirements

as well as the requirements for identifying, locating, and evaluating children who are suspected of having a disability and in need of special education. However, a verbal request does not require the district to respond within the 15 school-day timeline.

If the district decides to evaluate the student, it must complete the student's initial evaluation and evaluation report no later than 45 school days from the day it receives a parent's written consent. However, if the student is absent from school during the evaluation period for three or more school days, the evaluation period will be extended by the number of school days equal to the number of school days that the student is absent.

There is an **exception** to the 45-school-day timeline. If the district receives a parent's consent for the initial evaluation at least 35 but less than 45 school days before the last instructional day of the school year, it must complete the written report and provide a copy of the report to the parent by June 30 of that year. However, if the student is absent from school for three or more days during the evaluation period, the June 30 due date no longer applies. Instead, the general timeline of 45 school days plus extensions for absences of three or more days will apply.

Upon completing the evaluation, the district must give the parent a copy of the evaluation report at no cost. Additional information regarding special education is available from the school district in a companion document titled *Parent's Guide to the Admission, Review, and Dismissal Process*.

### **Contact Person for Special Education Referrals**

The designated person to contact regarding options for a student experiencing learning difficulties or regarding a referral for evaluation for special education services is *Carrie Saucedo* at 956.399.4358.

### **Section 504 Referrals**

Each school district must have standards and procedures in place for the evaluation and placement of students in the district's Section 504 program. Districts must also implement a system of procedural safeguards that includes:

- Notice,
- An opportunity for a parent or guardian to examine relevant records,
- An impartial hearing with an opportunity for participation by the parent or guardian and representation by counsel, and
- A review procedure.

### **Contact Person for Section 504 Referrals**

The designated person to contact regarding options for a student experiencing learning difficulties or regarding a referral for evaluation for Section 504 services is *Francisco Hernandez* at 956.399.4358.

[See **A Student with Physical or Mental Impairments Protected under Section 504** on page 22.]

Visit these websites for information regarding students with disabilities and the family:

- [Legal Framework for the Child-Centered Special Education Process](#)
- [Partners Resource Network](#)
- [Special Education Information Center](#)
- [Texas Project First](#)

### **Notification to Parents of Intervention Strategies for Learning Difficulties Provided to Students in General Education**

In accordance with state law, the district will annually notify parents if their child receives assistance for learning difficulties. Details of such assistance can include intervention strategies. This notice is not intended for those students already enrolled in a special education program.

### ***A Student Who Receives Special Education Services with Other School-Aged Children in the Home***

If a student is receiving special education services at a campus outside his or her attendance zone, state law permits the parent or guardian to request that other students residing in the household be transferred to the same campus—if the grade level for the transferring student is offered on that campus.

The student receiving special education services would be entitled to transportation; however, the district is not required to provide transportation to other children in the household.

The parent or guardian should contact the school principal regarding transportation needs prior to requesting a transfer for other children in the home. [See policy FDB(LOCAL).]

### ***A Student Who Speaks a Primary Language Other than English***

A student may be eligible to receive specialized support if his or her primary language is not English, and the student has difficulty performing ordinary class work in English.

If the student qualifies for these services, the Language Proficiency Assessment Committee (LPAC) will determine the types of services the student needs, including accommodations or modifications related to classroom instruction, local assessments, and state-mandated assessments.

### ***A Student with Physical or Mental Impairments Protected under Section 504***

A student with a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity, as defined by law—and who does not otherwise qualify for special education services—may qualify for protections under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

Section 504 is a federal law designed to prohibit discrimination against individuals with disabilities.

When an evaluation is requested, a committee will be formed to determine whether the student needs services and supports under Section 504 in order to receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE), as defined in federal law.

[See policy FB.]

[See **A Student Who Has Learning Difficulties or Who Needs Special Education or Section 504 Services** on page 20 for more information.]

## **Section II:**

### **Other Important Information for Parents and Students**

Topics in this section of the Student Handbook contain important information on academics, school activities, and school operations and requirements. Take a moment with your child to become familiar with the various issues addressed in this section. It is organized in alphabetical order to serve as a quick-reference when you or your child has a question about a specific school-related issue. Where possible, the topics are also organized to alert you to the applicability of each topic based on a student's age or grade level. Should you be unable to find the information on a particular topic, please contact *Alma Q. Alvarez* at 956.399.4358.

### **Absences / Attendance**

Regular school attendance is essential for a student to make the most of his or her education—to benefit from teacher-led and school activities, to build each day's learning on the previous day's, and to grow as an individual. Absences from class may result in serious disruption of a student's mastery of the instructional materials; therefore, the student and parent should make every effort to avoid unnecessary absences. Two state laws—one dealing with the required presence of school-aged children in school, e.g., compulsory attendance, the other with how a student's attendance affects the award of a student's final grade or course credit—are of special interest to students and parents. They are discussed below.

#### ***Compulsory Attendance***

##### **Age 19 and Older**

A student who voluntarily attends or enrolls after his or her 19th birthday is required to attend each school day until the end of the school year. If a student age 19 or older has more than five unexcused absences in a semester, the district may revoke the student's enrollment. The student's presence on school property thereafter would be unauthorized and may be considered trespassing. [See policy FEA.]

##### **Between Ages 6 and 19**

State law requires that a student between the ages of 6 and 19 attend school, as well as any applicable accelerated instruction program, extended year program, or tutorial session, unless the student is otherwise excused from attendance or legally exempt.

State law requires attendance in an accelerated reading instruction program when kindergarten, first grade, or second grade students are assigned to such a program. Parents will be notified in writing if their child is assigned to an accelerated reading instruction program as a result of a diagnostic reading instrument.

A student will be required to attend any assigned accelerated instruction program, which may occur before or after school or during the summer, if the student does not meet the passing standards on the state assessment for his or her grade level and/or applicable subject area.

##### **Prekindergarten and Kindergarten**

Students enrolled in kindergarten are required to attend school and are subject to the compulsory attendance requirements as long as they remain enrolled.

#### ***Exemptions to Compulsory Attendance***

State law allows exemptions to the compulsory attendance requirements for several types of absences if the student makes up all work. These include the following activities and events:

- Religious holy days;
- Required court appearances;
- Activities related to obtaining U.S. citizenship;
- Documented health-care appointments for the student or a child of the student, including absences for recognized services for students diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders, if the student comes to school or returns to school on the same day as the appointment. A note from the health-care provider must be submitted upon the student's arrival or return to campus; and
- For students in the conservatorship (custody) of the state,



- An activity required under a court-ordered service plan; or
- Any other court-ordered activity, provided it is not practicable to schedule the student's participation in the activity outside of school hours.

As listed in Section I at **Children of Military Families**, absences of up to five days will be excused for a student to visit with a parent, stepparent, or legal guardian who has been called to duty for, is on leave from, or immediately returned from certain deployments. [See page 18.]

### **Secondary Grade Levels**

In addition, a junior or senior student's absence of up to two days related to visiting a college or university will be considered an exemption, provided this has been authorized by the board under policy FEA(LOCAL), the student receives approval from the campus principal, follows the campus procedures to verify such a visit, and makes up any work missed.

An absence will also be considered an exemption if a student 17 years of age or older is pursuing enlistment in a branch of the U.S. armed services or Texas National Guard, provided the absence does not exceed four days during the period the student is enrolled in high school and the student provides verification to the district of these activities.

Absences of up to two days in a school year will also be considered an exemption for a student serving as:

- An early voting clerk, provided the district's board has authorized this in policy FEA(LOCAL), the student notifies his or her teachers, and the student receives approval from the principal prior to the absences; and
- An election clerk, if the student makes up any work missed.

An absence of a student in grades 6–12 for the purpose of sounding “Taps” at a military honors funeral for a deceased veteran will also be excused by the district.

### ***Failure to Comply with Compulsory Attendance***

School employees must investigate and report violations of the state compulsory attendance law. A student absent without permission from school; from any class; from required special programs, such as additional special instruction, termed “accelerated instruction” by the state; or from required tutorials will be considered in violation of the compulsory attendance law and subject to disciplinary action.

### **Students with Disabilities**

If a student with a disability is experiencing attendance issues, the student's ARD committee or Section 504 committee will be notified, and the committee will determine whether the attendance issues warrant an evaluation, a reevaluation, and/or modifications to the student's individualized education program or Section 504 plan, as appropriate.

### **Age 19 and Older**

After a student age 19 or older incurs a third unexcused absence, the district will send the student a letter as required by law explaining that the district may revoke the student's enrollment for the remainder of the school year if the student has more than five unexcused absences in a semester. As an alternative to revoking a student's enrollment, the district may implement a behavior improvement plan.

### **Between Ages 6 and 19**

When a student between ages 6 and 19 incurs unexcused absences for three or more days or parts of days within a four-week period, the school will send a notice to the student's parent, as required by law, to remind the parent that it is the parent's duty to monitor the student's attendance and to require the student to come to school. The notice will also inform the parent that the district will initiate truancy prevention measures and request a conference between school administrators and the parent. These measures will include a behavior improvement plan, school-based community service, or referrals to either in-school or out-of-school counseling or other social services. Any other measures considered appropriate by the district will also be initiated.

The truancy prevention facilitator for the district is Candace Guillen. If you have questions about your student and the effect of his or her absences from school, please contact the facilitator or any other campus administrator.

A court of law may also impose penalties against a student's parent if a school-aged student is deliberately not attending school. A complaint against the parent may be filed in court if the student is absent without excuse from school on ten or more days or parts of days within a six-month period in the same school year.

If a student ages 12–18 incurs unexcused absences on ten or more days or parts of days within a six-month period in the same school year, the district, in most circumstances, will refer the student to truancy court.

[See policies FEA(LEGAL) and FED(LEGAL).]

### ***Attendance for Credit or Final Grade***

To receive credit or a final grade in a class, a student must attend at least 90 percent of the days the class is offered. A student who attends fewer than 90 percent of the days the class is offered will be referred to the attendance review committee to determine whether there are extenuating circumstances for the absences and how the student can regain credit or a final grade lost because of absences. [See policy FEC.]

All absences, whether excused or unexcused, must be considered in determining whether a student has attended the required percentage of days. In determining whether there were extenuating circumstances for the absences, the attendance committee will use the following guidelines:

- If makeup work is completed, absences for the reasons listed above at **Exemptions to Compulsory Attendance** will be considered extenuating circumstances for purposes of attendance for credit or the award of a final grade.
- A transfer or migrant student begins to accumulate absences only after he or she has enrolled in the district.
- In reaching a decision about a student's absences, the committee will attempt to ensure that it is in the best interest of the student.
- The committee will review absences incurred based on the student's participation in board-approved extracurricular activities. These absences will be considered by the attendance committee as extenuating circumstances in accordance with the absences allowed under FM(LOCAL) if the student made up the work missed in each class.
- The committee will consider the acceptability and authenticity of documented reasons for the student's absences.
- The committee will consider whether the absences were for reasons over which the student or the student's parent could exercise any control.
- The committee will consider the extent to which the student has completed all assignments, mastered the essential knowledge and skills, and maintained passing grades in the course or subject.
- The student or parent will be given an opportunity to present any information to the committee about the absences and to talk about ways to earn or regain credit or a final grade.

The student or parent may appeal the committee's decision to the board by following policy FNG(LOCAL).

The actual number of days a student must be in attendance to receive credit or a final grade will depend on whether the class is for a full semester or for a full year.

### ***Official Attendance-Taking Time***

The district must submit attendance of its students to the TEA reflecting attendance at a specific time each day. Official attendance is taken every day at 10:00 a.m., which is during the second instructional hour as required by state rule.

A student absent for any portion of the day, including at the official attendance-taking time, should follow the procedures below to provide documentation of the absence.

## ***Documentation after an Absence***

When a student is absent from school, the student—upon arrival or return to school—must bring a note signed by the parent that describes the reason for the absence. A note signed by the student, even with the parent’s permission, will not be accepted unless the student is age 18 or older or is an emancipated minor under state law. A phone call from the parent may be accepted, but the district reserves the right to require a written note.

**Note:** Unless the absence is for a statutorily allowed reason under compulsory attendance laws, the district is not required to excuse any absence, even if the parent provides a note explaining the absence.

## ***Doctor’s Note after an Absence for Illness***

Within 5 days of returning to school, a student absent for more than 3 consecutive days because of a personal illness must bring a statement from a doctor or health clinic verifying the illness or condition that caused the student’s extended absence from school. Otherwise, the student’s absence may be considered unexcused and, if so, would be considered to be in violation of compulsory attendance laws.

Should the student develop a questionable pattern of absences, the principal or attendance committee may require a statement from a doctor or health clinic verifying the illness or condition that caused the student’s absence from school to determine whether the absence or absences will be excused or unexcused.

[See policy FEC(LOCAL).]

## ***Driver License Attendance Verification***

For a student between the ages of 16 and 18 to obtain a driver license, written parental permission must be provided for the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) to access the student’s attendance records and, in certain circumstances, for a school administrator to provide the student’s attendance information to DPS. A verification of enrollment (VOE) and attendance form may be obtained from the office, which the student will need to submit to DPS upon application for a driver license.

## **Accountability under State and Federal Law**

*South Texas ISD* and each of its campuses are held to certain standards of accountability under state and federal law. A key component of the accountability requirements is the dissemination and publication of certain reports and information, which include:

- The Texas Academic Performance Report (TAPR) for the district, compiled by TEA, the state agency that oversees public education, based on academic factors and ratings;
- A School Report Card (SRC) for each campus in the district compiled by TEA based on academic factors and ratings;
- The district’s financial management report, which will include the financial accountability rating assigned to the district by TEA; and
- Information compiled by TEA for the submission of a federal report card that is required by federal law.

This information can be found on the district’s website at [www.stisd.net](http://www.stisd.net). Hard copies of any reports are available upon request to the district’s administration office.

TEA also maintains additional accountability and accreditation information at [TEA Performance Reporting Division](#) and the [TEA homepage](#).

## **Bullying**

Bullying is defined in state law as a single significant act or a pattern of acts by one or more students directed at another student that exploits an imbalance of power and involves engaging in written or verbal expression, expression through electronic means, or physical conduct that:

- Has the effect or will have the effect of physically harming a student, damaging a student's property, or placing a student in reasonable fear of harm to the student's person or of damage to the student's property;
- Is sufficiently severe, persistent, or pervasive enough that the action or threat creates an intimidating, threatening, or abusive educational environment for a student;
- Materially and substantially disrupts the educational process or the orderly operation of a classroom or school; or
- Infringes on the rights of the victim at school.

Bullying includes cyberbullying. Cyberbullying is defined by state law as bullying that is done through the use of any electronic communication device, including through the use of a cellular or other type of telephone, a computer, a camera, electronic mail, instant messaging, text messaging, a social media application, an internet website, or any other internet-based communication tool.

The district is required to adopt policies and procedures regarding:

- Bullying that occurs on or is delivered to school property or to the site of a school-sponsored or school-related activity on or off school property;
- Bullying that occurs on a publicly or privately owned school bus or vehicle being used for transportation of students to or from school or a school-sponsored or school-related activity; and
- Cyberbullying that occurs off school property or outside of a school-sponsored or school-related activity if the cyberbullying interferes with a student's educational opportunities or substantially disrupts the orderly operation of a classroom, school, or school-sponsored or school-related activity.

Bullying is prohibited by the district and could include hazing, threats, taunting, teasing, confinement, assault, demands for money, destruction of property, theft of valued possessions, name-calling, rumor-spreading, or ostracism.

If a student believes that he or she has experienced bullying or has witnessed bullying of another student, it is important for the student or parent to notify a teacher, school counselor, principal, or another district employee as soon as possible to obtain assistance and intervention. The administration will investigate any allegations of bullying or other related misconduct. The district will also provide notice to the parent of the alleged victim and the parent of the student alleged to have engaged in bullying. A student may anonymously report an alleged incident of bullying by visiting the Rising Scholars Academy anonymous bullying report at [risingscholars.stisd.net/for\\_students/bullying\\_policy/issue\\_or\\_concern\\_reporting](https://risingscholars.stisd.net/for_students/bullying_policy/issue_or_concern_reporting).

If the results of an investigation indicate that bullying has occurred, the administration will take appropriate disciplinary action and may notify law enforcement in certain circumstances. Disciplinary or other action may be taken even if the conduct did not rise to the level of bullying. Available counseling options will be provided to these individuals, as well as to any students who have been identified as witnesses to the bullying.

Any retaliation against a student who reports an incident of bullying is prohibited.

Upon the recommendation of the administration, the board may, in response to an identified case of bullying, decide to transfer a student found to have engaged in bullying to another classroom at the campus. In consultation with the student's parent, the student may also be transferred to another campus in the district. The parent of a student who has been determined by the district to be a victim of bullying may request that the student be transferred to another classroom or campus within the district. [See **Safety Transfers/Assignments** on page 19.]

A copy of the district's policy is available in the principal's office, superintendent's office, and on the district's website, and is included at the end of this handbook in the form of an appendix. Procedures related to reporting allegations of bullying may also be found on the district's website.

A student or parent who is dissatisfied with the outcome of an investigation may appeal through policy FNG(LOCAL).

[See **Safety Transfers/Assignments** on page 19, **Dating Violence, Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation** on page 32, **Hazing** on page 47, policy FFI, the district's Student Code of Conduct, and the district improvement plan, a copy of which can be viewed in the campus office.]

## Career and Technical Education (CTE) Programs

The district offers career and technical education programs in the following areas:

- Health Science.
- Gateway to Engineering

Admission to these programs is based on student's selection for course.

It is the policy of the district not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, or handicap in its vocational programs, services, or activities as required by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended; Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972; and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.

It is the policy of the district not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, handicap, or age in its employment practices as required by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended; Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972; the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended; and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.

The district will take steps to assure that lack of English language skills will not be a barrier to admission and participation in all educational and vocational programs.

[See **Nondiscrimination Statement** on page 55 for the name and contact information for the Title IX coordinator and ADA/Section 504 coordinator, who will address certain allegations of discrimination.]

## Celebrations

Maximizing instruction is a priority at Rising Scholars Academy therefore we do not allow birthday cakes or cupcakes to be delivered. Occasionally, the school or a class may host certain functions or celebrations tied to the curriculum that will involve food. The school or teacher will notify students and parents of any known food allergies when soliciting potential volunteers for bringing food products.

[See **Food Allergies** on page 49.]

## Child Sexual Abuse and Other Maltreatment of Children

The district has established a plan for addressing child sexual abuse and other maltreatment of children, which may be accessed at [stisd.net](http://stisd.net). have been or is being sexually abused. Sexual abuse in the Texas Family Code is defined as any sexual conduct harmful to a child's mental, emotional, or physical welfare as well as a failure to make a reasonable effort to prevent sexual conduct with a child. A person who compels or encourages a child to engage in sexual conduct commits abuse. It is illegal to make or possess child pornography or to display such material to a child. Anyone who suspects that a child has been or may be abused or neglected has a legal responsibility, under state law, for reporting the suspected abuse or neglect to law enforcement or to Child Protective Services (CPS).

Possible physical warning signs of sexual abuse could be difficulty sitting or walking, pain in the genital areas, and claims of stomachaches and headaches. Behavioral indicators may include verbal references or pretend games of sexual activity between adults and children, fear of being alone with adults of a particular gender, or sexually suggestive behavior. Emotional warning signs to be aware of include withdrawal, depression, sleeping and eating disorders, and problems in school.

A child who has experienced sexual abuse or any other type of abuse or neglect should be encouraged to seek out a trusted adult. Be aware as a parent or other trusted adult that disclosures of sexual abuse may be more indirect than disclosures of physical abuse and neglect, and it is important to be calm and comforting if your child, or another child, confides in you. Reassure the child that he or she did the right thing by telling you. Parents, if your child is a victim of sexual abuse or other maltreatment, the school counselor or principal will provide information regarding counseling options for you and your child available in your area. The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) also manages early intervention counseling programs.

[To find out what services may be available in your county, see [Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, Programs Available in Your County](#).]

Be aware that children and adolescents who have experienced dating violence may show similar physical, behavioral, and emotional warning signs. [See **Dating Violence, Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation (All Grade Levels)** on page 32.]

The following websites might help you become more aware of child abuse and neglect:

- [Child Welfare Information Gateway Factsheet](#) (pdf)
- [KidsHealth, For Parents, Child Abuse](#)
- [Texas Association Against Sexual Assault, Resources](#)

Reports of abuse or neglect may be made to:

The CPS division of the DFPS (1-800-252-5400 or on the web at [Texas Abuse Hotline Website](#)).

## **Class Schedules**

All students are expected to attend school for the entire school day and maintain a class/course schedule to fulfill each period of the day. Exceptions may be made occasionally by the campus principal for students in grades 9–12 who meet specific criteria and receive parental consent to enroll in less than a full-day's schedule. [See **Schedule Changes** on page 60 for information related to student requests to revise their course schedule.]

## **Communications—Automated**

### ***Emergency***

The district will rely on contact information on file with the district to communicate with parents in an emergency situation, which may include real-time or automated messages. An emergency purpose may include early dismissal or delayed opening because of severe weather or another emergency, or if the campus must restrict access due to a security threat. It is crucial to notify your child's school when a phone number previously provided to the district has changed.

[See **Safety** on page 59 for information regarding contact with parents during an emergency situation.]

### ***Nonemergency***

Your child's school will request that you provide contact information, such as your phone number and email address, for the school to communicate items specific to your child, your child's school, or the district. If you consent to receive such information through a landline or wireless phone, please ensure that you notify the school's administration office immediately upon a change in your phone number. The district or school may generate automated or pre-recorded messages, text messages, or real-time phone or email communications that are closely related the school's mission, so prompt notification of any change in contact information will be crucial to maintain timely communication with you. Standard messaging rates of your phone carrier may apply. If you have specific requests or needs related to how the district contacts you, please contact your child's principal. [See **Safety** on page 59 for information regarding contact with parents during an emergency.]

## **Complaints and Concerns**

Usually student or parent complaints or concerns can be addressed informally by a phone call or a conference with the teacher or principal. For those complaints and concerns that cannot be handled so easily, the board has adopted a standard complaint policy at FNG(LOCAL) in the district's policy manual, available on the district's website at [stisd.net](#). A copy of the complaint forms may be obtained in the principal's or superintendent's office.

Should a parent or student feel a need to file a formal complaint, the parent or student should file a district complaint form within the timelines established in policy FNG(LOCAL). In general, the student or parent should submit the written complaint form to the campus principal. If the concern is not resolved, a request for a conference should be sent to the superintendent. If still unresolved, the district provides for the complaint to be presented to the board of trustees.

## **Conduct**

### ***Applicability of School Rules***

As required by law, the board has adopted a Student Code of Conduct that prohibits certain behaviors and defines standards of acceptable behavior—both on and off campus as well as on district vehicles—and consequences for violation of these standards. The district has disciplinary authority over a student in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct. Students and parents should be familiar with the standards set out in the Student Code of Conduct, as well as campus and classroom rules. During any periods of instruction during the summer months, the Student Handbook and Student Code of Conduct in place for the year immediately preceding the summer period shall apply, unless the district amends either or both documents for the purposes of summer instruction.

### ***Campus Behavior Coordinator***

By law, each campus has a campus behavior coordinator to apply discipline management techniques and administer consequences for certain student misconduct, as well as provide a point of contact for student misconduct. The campus behavior coordinator is listed below:

- Alma Q. Alvarez

### ***Deliveries***

Except in emergencies, delivery of messages or packages to students will not be allowed during instructional time. A parent may leave a message or a package, such as a forgotten lunch, for the student to pick up from the front office during a passing period or lunch.

### ***Disruptions of School Operations***

Disruptions of school operations are not tolerated and may constitute a misdemeanor offense. As identified by state law, disruptions include the following:

- Interference with the movement of people at an exit, entrance, or hallway of a district building without authorization from an administrator.
- Interference with an authorized activity by seizing control of all or part of a building.
- Use of force, violence, or threats in an attempt to prevent participation in an authorized assembly.
- Use of force, violence, or threats to cause disruption during an assembly.
- Interference with the movement of people at an exit or an entrance to district property.
- Use of force, violence, or threats in an attempt to prevent people from entering or leaving district property without authorization from an administrator.
- Disruption of classes or other school activities while on district property or on public property that is within 500 feet of district property. Class disruption includes making loud noises; trying to entice a student away from, or to prevent a student from attending, a required class or activity; and entering a classroom without authorization and disrupting the activity with loud or profane language or any misconduct.
- Interference with the transportation of students in vehicles owned or operated by the district.

### ***Social Events***

School rules apply to all school social events. Guests attending these events are expected to observe the same rules as students, and a student inviting a guest will share responsibility for the conduct of his or her guest. A student attending a social event will be asked to sign out when leaving before the end of the event; anyone leaving before the official end of the event will not be readmitted.

Please contact the campus principal if you are interested in serving as a chaperone for any school social events.

## **Counseling**

### ***Academic Counseling***



The school counselor is available to students and parents to talk about the importance of postsecondary education and how best to plan for postsecondary education, including appropriate courses to consider and financial aid availability and requirements.

In either grade 7 or 8, each student will receive instruction related to how the student can best prepare for high school, college, and a career.

### ***Personal Counseling***

The school counselor is available to assist students with a wide range of personal concerns, including such areas as social, family, emotional or mental health issues, or substance abuse. A student who wishes to meet with the school counselor should visit the counseling office or complete a student counseling request form on line at [studentscounselingrequestform](#). As a parent, if you are concerned about your child's mental or emotional health, please speak with the school counselor for a list of resources that may be of assistance.

[See **Substance Abuse Prevention and Intervention** on page 64, **Suicide Awareness and Mental Health Support** on page 64, and **Child Sexual Abuse and Other Maltreatment of Children and Dating Violence** on page 28.]

### **Course Credit**

A student in grades 9–12, or in a lower grade when a student is enrolled in a high school credit-bearing course, will earn credit for a course only if the final grade is 70 or above. For a two-semester (1 credit) course, the student's grades from both semesters will be averaged and credit will be awarded if the combined average is 70 or above. Should the student's combined average be less than 70, the student will be required to retake the semester in which he or she failed.

### **Credit by Examination**

#### ***If a Student Has Taken the Course / Subject***

A student who has previously taken a course or subject—but did not receive credit or a final grade for it—may, in circumstances determined by the principal or attendance committee, be permitted to earn credit or a final grade by passing an examination approved by the district's board of trustees on the essential knowledge and skills defined for that course or subject. Prior instruction may include, for example, incomplete coursework due to a failed course or excessive absences, homeschooling, or coursework by a student transferring from a nonaccredited school. The opportunity to take an examination to earn credit for a course or to be awarded a final grade in a subject after the student has had prior instruction is sometimes referred to as “credit recovery.”

If the student is granted approval to take an examination for this purpose, the student must score at least 70 on the examination to receive credit for the course or subject.

The attendance review committee may also offer a student with excessive absences an opportunity to earn credit for a course by passing an examination.

[For further information, see the school counselor and policy EHDB(LOCAL).]



## **Credit by Examination for Advancement / Acceleration**

### ***If a Student Has Not Taken the Course / Subject***

A student will be permitted to take an examination to earn credit for an academic course or subject area for which the student has had no prior instruction, i.e., for advancement or to accelerate to the next grade level. The examinations offered by the district are approved by the district's board of trustees. The dates on which examinations are scheduled during the 2019–20 school year will be published in appropriate district publications and on the district's website. The only exceptions to the published dates will be for any examinations administered by another entity besides the district or if a request is made outside of these time frames by a student experiencing homelessness or by a student involved in the foster care system. When another entity administers an examination, a student and the district must comply with the testing schedule of the other entity. During each testing window provided by the district, a student may attempt a specific examination only once.

If a student plans to take an examination, the student (or parent) must register with the school counselor no later than 30 days prior to the scheduled testing date. [For further information, see policy EHDC.]

### ***Students in Grades 6–12***

A student in grade 6 or above will earn course credit with a passing score of at least 80 on the examination, a scaled score of 50 or higher on an examination administered through the CLEP, or a score of 3 or higher on an AP examination, as applicable. A student may take an examination to earn high school course credit no more than twice. If a student fails to achieve the designated score on the applicable exam before the beginning of the school year in which the student would need to enroll in the course according to the school's high school course sequence, the student must complete the course.

## **Dating Violence, Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation**

The district believes that all students learn best in an environment free from dating violence, discrimination, harassment, and retaliation and that their welfare is best served when they are free from this prohibited conduct while attending school. Students are expected to treat other students and district employees with courtesy and respect, to avoid behaviors known to be offensive, and to stop those behaviors when asked or told to stop.

District employees are expected to treat students with courtesy and respect.

The board has established policies and procedures to prohibit and promptly respond to inappropriate and offensive behaviors that are based on a person's race, color, religion, sex, gender, national origin, disability, age, or any other basis prohibited by law. A copy of the district's policy is available in the principal's office and in the superintendent's office [info@stisd.net](mailto:info@stisd.net). [See policy FFH.]

### ***Dating Violence***

Dating violence occurs when a person in a current or past dating relationship uses physical, sexual, verbal, or emotional abuse to harm, threaten, intimidate, or control the other person in the relationship. Dating violence also occurs when a person commits these acts against a person in a marriage or dating relationship with the individual who is or was once in a marriage or dating relationship with the person committing the offense. This type of conduct is considered harassment if the conduct is so severe, persistent, or pervasive that it affects the student's ability to participate in or benefit from an educational program or activity; creates an intimidating, threatening, hostile, or offensive educational environment; or substantially interferes with the student's academic performance.

Examples of dating violence against a student may include, but are not limited to, physical or sexual assaults; name-calling; put-downs; threats to hurt the student, the student's family members, or members of the student's household; destroying property belonging to the student; threats to commit suicide or homicide if the student ends the relationship; threats to harm a student's current dating partner; attempts to isolate the student from friends and family; stalking; or encouraging others to engage in these behaviors.

## ***Discrimination***

Discrimination is defined as any conduct directed at a student on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, gender, national origin, disability, age, or any other basis prohibited by law that negatively affects the student.

## ***Harassment***

Harassment, in general terms, is conduct so severe, persistent, or pervasive that it affects the student's ability to participate in or benefit from an educational program or activity; creates an intimidating, threatening, hostile, or offensive educational environment; or substantially interferes with the student's academic performance.

Examples of harassment may include, but are not limited to, offensive or derogatory language directed at a person's religious beliefs or practices, accent, skin color, or need for accommodation; threatening, intimidating, or humiliating conduct; offensive jokes, name-calling, slurs, or rumors; physical aggression or assault; graffiti or printed material promoting racial, ethnic, or other negative stereotypes; or other kinds of aggressive conduct such as theft or damage to property.

In addition to dating violence as described above, two other types of prohibited harassment are described below.

## ***Sexual Harassment and Gender-Based Harassment***

Sexual harassment and gender-based harassment of a student by an employee, volunteer, or another student are prohibited.

Examples of sexual harassment may include, but not be limited to, touching private body parts or coercing physical contact that is sexual in nature; sexual advances; jokes or conversations of a sexual nature; and other sexually motivated conduct, communications, or contact.

Sexual harassment of a student by an employee or volunteer does not include necessary or permissible physical contact not reasonably construed as sexual in nature, such as comforting a child with a hug or taking the child's hand. However, romantic and other inappropriate social relationships, as well as all sexual relationships, between students and district employees are prohibited, even if consensual.

Gender-based harassment includes harassment based on a student's gender, expression by the student of stereotypical characteristics associated with the student's gender, or the student's failure to conform to stereotypical behavior related to gender.

Examples of gender-based harassment directed against a student, regardless of the student's or the harasser's actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity, may include, but not be limited to, offensive jokes, name-calling, slurs, or rumors; physical aggression or assault; threatening or intimidating conduct; or other kinds of aggressive conduct such as theft or damage to property.

## ***Retaliation***

Retaliation against a person who makes a good faith report of discrimination or harassment, including dating violence, is prohibited. Retaliation against a person who is participating in an investigation of alleged discrimination or harassment is also prohibited. A person who makes a false claim or offers false statements or refuses to cooperate with a district investigation, however, may be subject to appropriate discipline.

Examples of retaliation may include threats, rumor spreading, ostracism, assault, destruction of property, unjustified punishments, or unwarranted grade reductions. Unlawful retaliation does not include petty slights or annoyances.

## ***Reporting Procedures***

Any student who believes that he or she has experienced dating violence, discrimination, harassment, or retaliation should immediately report the problem to a teacher, school counselor, principal, or other district employee. The report may be made by the student's parent. [See policy FFH(LOCAL) and (EXHIBIT) for other appropriate district officials to whom to make a report.]

Upon receiving a report of prohibited conduct as defined by policy FFH, the district will determine whether the allegations, if proven, would constitute prohibited conduct as defined by that policy. If not, the district will refer to policy FFI to determine if the allegations, if proven, would constitute bullying, as defined by law and that policy. If the alleged prohibited conduct, if proven, would constitute prohibited conduct and would also be considered bullying as defined by law and policy FFI, an investigation of bullying will also be conducted.

The district will promptly notify the parent of any student alleged to have experienced prohibited conduct involving an adult associated with the district. In the event alleged prohibited conduct involves another student, the district will notify the parent of the student alleged to have experienced the prohibited conduct when the allegations, if proven, would constitute a violation as defined by policy FFH.

### ***Investigation of Report***

To the extent possible, the district will respect the privacy of the student; however, limited disclosures may be necessary to conduct a thorough investigation and to comply with law. Allegations of prohibited conduct, which includes dating violence, discrimination, harassment, and retaliation, will be promptly investigated.

If a law enforcement or other regulatory agency notifies the district that it is investigating the matter and requests that the district delay its investigation, the district will resume the investigation at the conclusion of the agency's investigation.

During the course of an investigation and when appropriate, the district will take interim action to address the alleged prohibited conduct.

If the district's investigation indicates that prohibited conduct occurred, appropriate disciplinary action, and, in some cases, corrective action, will be taken to address the conduct. The district may take disciplinary and corrective action even if the conduct that is the subject of the complaint was not unlawful.

All involved parties will be notified of the outcome of the district investigation within the parameters and limits allowed under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

A student or parent who is dissatisfied with the outcome of the investigation may appeal in accordance with policy FNG(LOCAL).

### **Discipline Chart**

Rising Scholars Academy of South Texas will use a discipline chart for all students who have violated school rules or the Code of Conduct. The chart is an attempt to standardize as much as possible the consequences, which a student faces when he/she has violated rules or the Student Code of Conduct. Furthermore, it is a useful tool for the student and parent to visualize where the student is in the discipline process. As a student continues to violate policy, depending upon the assigned level of an infraction, the student will move into more serious stages of consequences. Hopefully, the student will alter his or her behavior upon realizing the current and future consequences. The goal, of course, is two-fold: a safer, more peaceful learning environment and a greater chance of success for the student. Research has shown that academic success for the individual and for the student body is closely tied to a student's behavior and the overall atmosphere of the school.

Following is a representation of the Student Discipline Chart. Parents are encouraged to go over it with their child and to encourage good behavior for his/her successes.

**South Texas ISD  
Student Discipline Chart**

<b><u>Level One</u></b>		
<p>— Student moves to Level Two after three infractions at Level One or committing a Level Two infraction.</p> <p>— Student does not return to this level after he or she is at Level Two.</p>		
<b>Possible Level-One Consequences</b>	<b>Level-One Infractions</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Detention (administrative discretion)</li> <li>- 1 – 3 days in-school suspension</li> <li>- Parent conference</li> <li>- Restitution</li> <li>- Confiscation</li> <li>- Behavior contract</li> <li>- Service</li> <li>- Grade reduction</li> <li>- Filing of charges</li> <li>- Combination of above</li> <li>- Other</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Failing to comply with directives (insubordination) (mild, administrator’s discretion)</li> <li>- Showing disrespect, rudeness (mild, admin.’s discretion)</li> <li>- Disrupting class (mild, administrator’s discretion)</li> <li>- Misbehaving</li> <li>- Using or having cell phone on when not allowed</li> <li>- Using any digital/electronic device when not allowed</li> <li>- Not following directions/refusing to cooperate</li> <li>- Violating dress code</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Engaging in inappropriate public display of affection</li> <li>- Horse playing</li> <li>- Cheating or copying</li> <li>- Leaving school grounds or activity without permission</li> <li>- Skipping class</li> <li>- Skipping detention</li> <li>- Skipping intervention</li> <li>- Behaving in any way that disrupts the school environment or educational process.</li> <li>- Violating safety rules</li> <li>- Making false accusations or hoaxes regarding school safety</li> <li>- Other</li> </ul>

**LEVEL TWO**

- Once at Level Two, student does not begin at or return to Level One.
- Student moves to Level Three after two Level Two infractions or committing a Level Three infraction.
- Student does not return to this level after he or she is at Level Three

Possible Level – Two Consequences	Level-Two Infractions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 4 –10 days in-school suspension</li> <li>- 1 – 3 days out-of-school suspension</li> <li>- Parent Conference</li> <li>- Restitution</li> <li>- Removal from activities, class, or transportation</li> <li>- Behavior contract</li> <li>- Service</li> <li>- Filing of charges</li> <li>- Combination of above</li> <li>Other</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Repeatedly violating Level One infractions</li> <li>- Disrupting class (serious, administrator’s discretion)</li> <li>- Misbehaving in in-school suspension or detention</li> <li>- Showing disrespect, rudeness (serious, admin.’s discretion)</li> <li>- Disobeying school bus rules</li> <li>- Being truant</li> <li>- Failing to comply with directives (insubordination) (serious, administrator’s discretion)</li> <li>- Refusing to accept consequences assigned by teacher</li> <li>- Falsifying school documents including paper records and computer records</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Scuffling</li> <li>- Using vulgar language or obscene gestures (not to staff)</li> <li>- Engaging in inappropriate verbal, physical, or sexual conduct (mild, administrator’s discretion)</li> <li>- Recording the voice or image of another without prior consent or in any way that disrupts</li> <li>- Damaging or vandalizing the property of another (under \$50.00)</li> <li>- Stealing or assisting in stealing the property of others (under \$50.00)</li> <li>- Possessing fireworks, stink or smoke bombs, or any pyrotechnic device</li> <li>- Possessing or using a laser pointer for other than school-approved use</li> <li>- Possessing matches or a lighter</li> <li>- Other</li> </ul>

## Rising Scholars Academy Student Handbook

### LEVEL THREE

— Once at Level Three, student does not begin at or return to lower levels.

Possible Level-Three Consequences	Level-Three Infractions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 10+ days in-school suspension</li> <li>- 1 – 3 days out-of-school suspension</li> <li>- Parent conference</li> <li>- Restitution</li>   <li>- Removal from class, activity or transportation</li> <li>- Behavior Contract</li> <li>- Service</li> <li>- Combination of above</li> <li>- Other</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Repeatedly violating Level-Two infractions</li> <li>- Refusing to accept consequence given by an administrator</li> <li>- Misbehaving on bus to the point of distracting the driver, drivers of other vehicles, or pedestrians</li> <li>- Bullying-name calling, ethnic or racial slurs, or derogatory statements that school officials have reason to believe will disrupt the school program or incite violence</li> <li>- Harassing</li> <li>- Using vulgar language to staff</li> <li>- Causing an individual to act through use of threat of force (coercion)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Distributing or sharing personal student contact/confidential information</li> <li>- Committing extortion or blackmail</li> <li>- Damaging or vandalizing the property of others (\$50-\$100)</li> <li>- Damaging or defacing school property, including using graffiti (including, but not limited to textbooks, lockers, furniture, equipment, walls) (under \$50.00)</li> <li>- Using fireworks, stink or smoke bombs, or any pyrotechnic device</li> <li>- Using matches or a lighter</li> <li>- Possessing any tobacco products</li> <li>- Possessing a razor, box cutter, pocketknife, any small knife, or similar item</li> <li>- Inciting/encouraging a fight or scuffle</li> <li>- Gambling</li> </ul>

# Rising Scholars Academy Student Handbook

## LEVEL FOUR

- Once a student completes Level Four consequences, he or she will resume at Level Two for all infractions lower than Level Three.

Possible Level –Four Consequences	Level-Four Infractions and Possible Length of District Alternative Education Program (DAEP) Placement	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Disciplinary hearing</li> <li>- Alternative Education Program (AEP) placement (to be determined at disciplinary hearing)</li> <li>- Expulsion hearing with superintendent or designee</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Repeatedly violating Level-Three infractions (15-30 school days)</li> <li>- Repeated misbehavior causing disruption of the normal bus activities or route (10-30 school days)</li> <li>- Using a razor, box cutter, pocketknife, small knife, or similar item in a way that threatens or inflicts bodily harm (First Offense 20-35 school days, Second Offense 36-60 school days, Third Offense 61-90 school days)</li> <li>- Possessing a look-alike weapon (First Offense 20-35 school days, Second Offense 36-60 school days, Third Offense 61-90 school days)</li> <li>- Possessing or using an air gun or bb gun (15-30 school days)</li> <li>- Possessing or using a stun gun (First Offense 20-35 school days, Second Offense 36-60 school days, Third Offense 61-90 school days)</li> <li>- Possessing or using pepper spray or mace (First Offense 20-35 school days, Second Offense 36-60 school days, Third Offense 61-90 school days)</li> <li>- Possessing ammunition (First Offense 20-35 school days, Second Offense 36-60 school days, Third Offense 61-90 school days)</li> <li>- Possessing or using any articles not generally considered to be weapons when the principal or designee determines that danger exists (15-30 school days)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Having or taking prescription drugs or over-the counter drugs at school or at activity other than as provided by district (First Offense 20-35 school days, Second Offense 36-60 school days, Third Offense 61-90 school days)</li> <li>- Threatening a student, employee, or volunteer (First Offense 20-35 school days, Second Offense 36-60 school days, Third Offense 61-90 school days)</li> <li>- Making hit lists (First Offense 20-35 school days, Second Offense 36-60 school days, Third Offense 61-90 school days)</li> <li>- Engaging in gang-like activity (First Offense 20-35 days, Second Offense 36-60 school days, Third Offense 61-90 school days)</li> <li>- Sexually harassing (also gender-based harassment) (First Offense 20-35 school days, Second Offense 36-60 school days, Third Offense 61-90 school days)</li> <li>- Engaging in conduct that constitutes dating violence (abuse) (First Offense 20-35 school days, Second Offense 36-60 school days, Third Offense 61-90 school days)</li> <li>- Engaging in inappropriate or indecent exposure of private body parts (First Offense 20-35 school days, Second Offense 36-60 school days, Third Offense 61-90 school days)</li> <li>- Participating in hazing (First Offense 20-35 school days, Second Offense 36-60 school days, Third Offense 61-90 school days)</li> <li>- Causing an individual to act through the use of threat or violence (coercion) (First Offense 20-35 school days, Second Offense 36-60 school days, Third Offense 61-90 school days)</li> <li>- Engaging in inappropriate physical or sexual contact (First Offense 20-35 school days, Second Offense 36-60 school days, Third Offense 61-90 school days)</li> <li>- Damaging or vandalizing property of another individual (\$100+) (First Offense 20-35 school days, Second Offense 36-60 school days, Third Offense 61-90 school days)</li> <li>-</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use or distribution of any tobacco product on school grounds, bus, or at any school activity (First Offense 20-35 school days, Second Offense 36-60 school days, Third Offense 61-90 school days)</li> <li>- Possessing, distributing, or using illegal drugs, alcohol, inhalants, vaping, paraphernalia, or look-alike drugs (First Offense 20-35 school days, Second Offense 36-60 school days, Third Offense 61-90 school days)</li> <li>- Possessing, distributing, or abusing prescription drugs (First Offense 20-35 school days, Second Offense 36-60 school days, Third Offense 61-90 days)</li> <li>- Being under the influence of over-the-counter drugs (First Offense 20-35 school days, Second Offense 36-60 school days, Third Offense 61-90 school days)</li> <li>- Fighting (First Offense 20-35 school days, Second Offense 36-60 school days, Third Offense 61-90 school days)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Damaging or defacing school property pertaining to the school dwelling (\$50.00+) (First Offense 20-35 school days, Second Offense 36-60 school days, Third Offense 61-90 days)</li> <li>- Stealing or assisting to steal property of another individual (\$50+) (First Offense 20-35 school days, Second Offense 36-60 school days, Third Offense 61-90 school days)</li> <li>- Aggressive, disruptive action or group demonstration that substantially disrupts or materially interferes with school activities (First Offense 20-35 school days, Second Offense 36-60 school days, Third Offense 61-90 school days)</li> <li>- Violating any local, state, or federal laws. (First Offense 20-35 school days, Second Offense 36-60 school days, Third Offense 61-90 school days)</li> </ul>
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## Discrimination

[See **Dating Violence, Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation** on page 32.]

## Distance Learning

Distance learning and correspondence courses include courses that encompass the state-required essential knowledge and skills but are taught through multiple technologies and alternative methodologies such as mail, satellite, internet, video-conferencing, and instructional television.

The distance learning opportunities that the district makes available to district students are Texas Virtual School Network (TXVSN).

If a student wishes to enroll in a correspondence course or a distance learning course that is not provided through the Texas Virtual School Network (TXVSN), as described below, to earn credit in a course or subject, the student must receive permission from the principal prior to enrolling in the course or subject. If the student does not receive prior approval, the district may not recognize and apply the course or subject toward graduation requirements or subject mastery.



## ***Texas Virtual School Network (TXVSN)***

The Texas Virtual School Network (TXVSN) has been established by the state as one method of distance learning. A student has the option, with certain limitations, to enroll in a course offered through the TXVSN to earn course credit for graduation.

Depending on the TXVSN course in which a student enrolls, the course may be subject to the “no pass, no play” rules. [See **Extracurricular Activities, Clubs, and Organizations** on page 44.] In addition, for a student who enrolls in a TXVSN course for which an end-of-course (EOC) assessment is required, the student must still take the corresponding EOC assessment.

If you have questions or wish to make a request that your child be enrolled in a TXVSN course, please contact the school counselor. Unless an exception is made by the school principal, a student will not be allowed to enroll in a TXVSN course if the school offers the same or a similar course.

A copy of policy EHDE will be distributed to parents of middle and high school students at least once each year. If you do not receive a copy or have questions about this policy, please contact Candice Guillen at 956.399.4358.

## **Distribution of Literature, Published Materials, or Other Documents**

### ***School Materials***

Publications prepared by and for the school may be posted or distributed, with the prior approval of the principal, sponsor, or teacher. Such items may include school posters, brochures, flyers, etc.

All school publications are under the supervision of a teacher, sponsor, and the principal.

### ***Nonschool Materials***

#### **From Students**

Students must obtain prior approval from the principal or designee before selling, posting, circulating, or distributing more than ten copies of written or printed materials, handbills, photographs, pictures, films, tapes, or other visual or auditory materials that were not developed under the oversight of the school. To be considered, any nonschool material must include the name of the sponsoring person or organization. The decision regarding approval will be made within two school days.

The campus principal has designated front office as the location for approved nonschool materials to be placed for voluntary viewing or collection by students. [See policy FNAA.]

A student may appeal a decision in accordance with policy FNG(LOCAL). Any student who sells, posts, circulates, or distributes nonschool material without prior approval will be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct. Materials displayed without approval will be removed.

[See FNG(LOCAL) for student complaint procedures.]

#### **From Others**

Written or printed materials, handbills, photographs, pictures, films, tapes, or other visual or auditory materials not sponsored by the district or by a district-affiliated school-support organization will not be sold, circulated, distributed, or posted on any district premises by any district employee or by persons or groups not associated with the district, except as permitted by policy GKDA. To be considered for distribution, any nonschool material must meet the limitations on content established in the policy, include the name of the sponsoring person or organization, and be submitted to the *the campus principal* for prior review. The campus principal will approve or reject the materials within two school days of the time the materials are received. The requestor may appeal a rejection in accordance with the appropriate district complaint policy. [See policies at DGBA or GF.]

The campus principal has designated front office as the location for approved nonschool materials to be placed for voluntary viewing or collection.

Prior review will not be required for:

- Distribution of materials by an attendee to other attendees of a school-sponsored meeting intended for adults and held after school hours.
- Distribution of materials by an attendee to other attendees of a community group meeting held after school hours in accordance with policy GKD(LOCAL) or a noncurriculum-related student group meeting held in accordance with FNAB(LOCAL).
- Distribution for electioneering purposes during the time a school facility is being used as a polling place, in accordance with state law.

All nonschool materials distributed under these circumstances must be removed from district property immediately following the event at which the materials are distributed.

## **Dress and Grooming**

The district's dress code is established to teach grooming and hygiene, prevent disruption, and minimize safety hazards. Students and parents may determine a student's personal dress and grooming standards, provided that they comply with the following:

**South Texas ISD** has determined that appropriate dress and grooming positively impacts the learning environment. The following dress and grooming provisions are established to instill discipline, prevent disruption, avoid safety hazards, and to provide and maintain a safe, secure, and stable school climate. Students and parents may determine a student's personal dress and grooming standards, provided that they comply with district and school guidelines.

Students are expected to adhere to the following standards of dress and grooming:

- Students should come to school well groomed and appropriately dressed. **Examples of inappropriate dress** would include: backless or semi-backless blouses, see-through or mesh apparel, low cut blouses, pajamas, pajama slippers, excessively baggy pants, leather jewelry and other accessories with metallic studs or spikes, blouses that expose the shoulders, excessively tight clothing, gang or cult-related clothing, absence of foundation garments, etc. This list is not meant to be all-inclusive.
- Caps may not be worn anywhere inside or outside the school building.
- Unnatural hair coloring is prohibited. Hair must not cover the eyes. Any hairstyle deemed a distraction by school personnel will not be permitted. Examples include but are not limited to mohawks, dreadlocks, spiked hair, and exaggerated braids.
- Students are not allowed to wear clothing that exposes their midriff area.
- Students are not allowed to wear sleeveless shirts or off the shoulder blouses.
- All students are required to wear appropriate footwear while on school premises. Due to safety reasons students may not wear shower shoes, flip-flops or sliders to school.
- Clothing with inappropriate advertising or statements that are lewd, offensive, vulgar, obscene or inflammatory (e.g. alcoholic beverages, sex, tobacco, drugs, gangs, death, satanic ideology etc.) are prohibited.
- Females may wear leggings with a dress, jacket/sweater or blouse that covers to below the hips.
- Males and females may wear shorts. The length of the shorts shall be no shorter than two inches above the knee. Students are not allowed to wear cut-off jeans.
- Males and females may wear earrings. Female earrings must be of modest size, and males may only wear stud earrings. Piercing in any other location of the body will not be permitted at school.

## **SUPPLEMENTAL DRESS CODE FOR RISING SCHOLARS ACADEMY OF SOUTH TEXAS**

**Rising Scholars Academy** has established additional dress code requirements, which supplement that of the South Texas Independent School District. The dress code is in effect anytime a student is on campus or at a school-related activity.

School administrators and/or designees may conduct checks to ensure dress code compliance. Judgment of dress code/grooming violation/compliance is determined by the administrator/designee. If an administrator/designee determines that a student's grooming, manner of dress, or accessories violates the dress code, the student will be given the opportunity to correct the problem immediately. If this is not immediately possible, the administrator/designee will assign the student to in-school suspension for the remainder of the day or until the violation is corrected. Also, a student may be removed from a school activity if he/she is in violation. Repeated offenses may result in more serious disciplinary consequences.

✦ **Finally, since styles and fads come and go, it is impossible to anticipate all changes before they appear in students' dress and grooming to be able to incorporate them into the dress code. It is, therefore, at the judgment of the administrator/designee to adapt the dress code at any time to these changes.**

**Students are expected to adhere to the following standards of dress and grooming:**

- The length of any skirt or dress cannot be more than two inches above the kneecap, nor may slits in clothing extend two inches or more above the knee.
- Torn, tattered and/or frayed clothing is not permitted (example- torn denim jeans).
- Chains attached at the waistline are not permitted.
- Undergarments may not be worn as outer garments nor may sleepwear (including slippers) be worn.
- Science and Technology classes will follow OSHA standards as it regards dress code and safety, including footwear.

If the principal determines that a student's grooming or clothing violates the school's dress code, the student will be given an opportunity to correct the problem at school. If not corrected, the student may be assigned to in-school suspension for the remainder of the day, until the problem is corrected, or until a parent or designee brings an acceptable change of clothing to the school. Repeated offenses may result in more serious disciplinary action in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct.

## **Electronic Devices and Technology Resources**

### ***Possession and Use of Personal Telecommunications Devices, Including Mobile Telephones***

For safety purposes, the district permits students to possess personal mobile telephones; however, these devices must remain turned off and not visible during the instructional day (may be used during lunch outside or in cafeteria only [privilege may be revoked by administration]), including during all testing, unless they are being used for approved instructional purposes. A student must have approval to possess other telecommunications devices such as netbooks, laptops, tablets, or other portable computers.

The use of mobile telephones or any device capable of capturing images is strictly prohibited in locker rooms or restroom areas while at school or at a school-related or school-sponsored event.

If a student uses a telecommunications device without authorization during the school day, the device will be confiscated. The student/parent may pick up the confiscated telecommunications device from the principal's office for a fee of \$15.

Confiscated telecommunications devices that are not retrieved by the student or the student's parent will be disposed of after the notice required by law. [See policy FNCE.]

In limited circumstances and in accordance with law, a student's personal telecommunications device may be searched by authorized personnel. [See **Searches** on page 61 and policy FNF.]

Any disciplinary action will be in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct. The district is not responsible for damaged, lost, or stolen telecommunications devices.

### ***Possession and Use of Other Personal Electronic Devices***

Except as described below, students are not permitted to possess or use personal electronic devices such as MP3 players, video or audio recorders, DVD players, cameras, games, e-readers, or other electronic devices at school, unless prior permission has been obtained. Without such permission, teachers will collect the items and turn them in to the principal's office. The principal will determine whether to return items to students at the end of the day or to contact parents to pick up the items.

In limited circumstances and in accordance with law, a student's personal electronic device may be searched by authorized personnel. [See **Searches** on page 61 and policy FNF.]

Any disciplinary action will be in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct. The district is not responsible for any damaged, lost, or stolen electronic device.

### ***Instructional Use of Personal Telecommunications and Other Electronic Devices***

In some cases, students may find it beneficial or might be encouraged to use personal telecommunications or other personal electronic devices for instructional purposes while on campus. Students must obtain prior approval before using personal telecommunications or other personal electronic devices for instructional use. Students must also sign a user agreement that contains applicable rules for use (separate from this handbook). When students are not using the devices for approved instructional purposes, all devices must be turned off during the instructional day. Violations of the user agreement may result in withdrawal of privileges and other disciplinary action.

### ***Acceptable Use of District Technology Resources***

District-owned technology resources for instructional purposes may be issued to individual students. Use of these technological resources, which include the district's network systems and use of district equipment, is restricted to approved purposes only. Students and parents will be asked to sign a user agreement (separate from this handbook) regarding use of these district resources. Violations of the user agreement may result in withdrawal of privileges and other disciplinary action.

### ***Unacceptable and Inappropriate Use of Technology Resources***

Students are prohibited from possessing, sending, forwarding, posting, accessing, or displaying electronic messages that are abusive, obscene, sexually oriented, threatening, harassing, damaging to another's reputation, or illegal. This prohibition also applies to conduct off school property, whether the equipment used to send such messages is district-owned or personally owned, if it results in a substantial disruption to the educational environment.

Any person taking, disseminating, transferring, possessing, or sharing obscene, sexually oriented, lewd, or otherwise illegal images or other content, commonly referred to as "sexting," will be disciplined in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct, may be required to complete an educational program related to the dangers of this type of behavior, and, in certain circumstances, may be reported to law enforcement. Because engaging in this type of behavior can lead to bullying or harassment, as well as possibly impede future endeavors of a student, we encourage you to review with your child ["Before You Text" Sexting Prevention Course](#), a state-developed program that addresses the consequences of engaging in inappropriate behavior using technology. In addition, any student who engages in conduct that results in a breach of the district's computer security will be disciplined in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct, and, in some cases, the consequence may rise to the level of expulsion.

## End-of-Course (EOC) Assessments

[See **Graduation** on page **Error! Bookmark not defined.** and **Standardized Testing** on page 62.]

## English Learners

A student who is an English learner is entitled to receive specialized services from the district. To determine whether the student qualifies for services, a Language Proficiency Assessment Committee (LPAC) will be formed, which will consist of both district personnel and at least one parent representative. The student's parent must consent to any services recommended by the LPAC for an English learner. However, pending the receipt of parental consent or denial of services, an eligible student will receive the services to which the student is entitled and eligible.

To determine a student's level of proficiency in English, the LPAC will use information from a variety of assessments. If the student qualifies for services, and once a level of proficiency has been established, the LPAC will then designate instructional accommodations or additional special programs that the student will require to eventually become proficient at grade level work in English. Ongoing assessments will be conducted to determine a student's continued eligibility for the program.

The LPAC will also determine whether certain accommodations are necessary for any state-mandated assessments. The STAAR Spanish, as mentioned at **Standardized Testing** on page 62, may be administered to an English learner for a student up to grade 5. In limited circumstances, a student's LPAC may exempt the student from an otherwise required state-mandated assessment or may waive certain graduation requirements related to the English I end-of-course (EOC) assessment. The Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS) will also be administered to English learners who qualify for services.

If a student is considered an English learner and receives special education services because of a qualifying disability, the student's ARD committee will make instructional and assessment decisions in conjunction with the LPAC.

## Extracurricular Activities, Clubs, and Organizations

Participation in school-sponsored activities is an excellent way for a student to develop talents, receive individual recognition, and build strong friendships with other students; participation, however, is a privilege, not a right.

Participation in some of these activities may result in events that occur off-campus. When the district arranges transportation for these events, students are required to use the transportation provided by the district to and from the events. Exceptions to this may only be made with the approval of the activity's coach or sponsor. [See **Transportation** on page 66.]

Eligibility for initial and continuing participation in many of these activities is governed by state law and the rules of the University Interscholastic League (UIL)—a statewide association overseeing interdistrict competition. If a student is involved in an academic, athletic, or music activity governed by UIL, the student and parent are expected to know and follow all rules of the UIL organization. Students involved in UIL athletic activities and their parents can access the UIL Parent Information Manual at [UIL Parent Information Manual](#); a hard copy can be provided by the coach or sponsor of the activity on request. To report a complaint of alleged noncompliance with required safety training or an alleged violation of safety rules required by law and the UIL, please contact the curriculum division of TEA at (512) 463-9581 or [curriculum@tea.texas.gov](mailto:curriculum@tea.texas.gov).

[See [UIL Texas](#) for additional information on all UIL-governed activities.]

In addition, the following provisions apply to all extracurricular activities:

- A student who receives at the end of a grading period a grade below 70 in any academic class—other than an Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) course; or an honors or dual credit course in English language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, economics, or languages other than English—may not participate in extracurricular activities for at least three school weeks.

- A student who receives special education services and who fails to meet the standards in the individualized education program (IEP) may not participate for at least three school weeks.
- An ineligible student may practice or rehearse but may not participate in any competitive activity.
- An absence for participation in an activity that has not been approved will receive an unexcused absence.

## **Standards of Behavior**

Sponsors of student clubs and performing groups such as the band, choir, and drill and athletic teams may establish standards of behavior—including consequences for misbehavior—that are stricter than those for students in general. If a violation is also a violation of school rules, the consequences specified by the Student Code of Conduct or by board policy will apply in addition to any consequences specified by the organization's standards of behavior.

## **Offices and Elections**

Certain clubs, organizations, and performing groups will hold elections for student officers.

## **Fees**

Materials that are part of the basic educational program are provided with state and local funds at no charge to a student. A student, however, is expected to provide his or her own pencils, paper, erasers, and notebooks and may be required to pay certain other fees or deposits, including:

- Costs for materials for a class project that the student will keep.
- Membership dues in voluntary clubs or student organizations and admission fees to extracurricular activities.
- Security deposits.
- Personal physical education and athletic equipment and apparel.
- Voluntarily purchased pictures, publications, class rings, yearbooks, graduation announcements, etc.
- Voluntarily purchased student health and accident insurance.
- Musical instrument rental and uniform maintenance, when uniforms are provided by the district.
- Personal apparel used in extracurricular activities that becomes the property of the student.
- Parking fees and student identification cards.
- Fees for lost, damaged, or overdue library books.
- Fees for driver training courses, if offered.
- Fees for optional courses offered for credit that require use of facilities not available on district premises.
- Summer school for courses that are offered tuition-free during the regular school year.
  - A reasonable fee for providing transportation to a student who lives within two miles of the school. [See **Buses and Other School Vehicles** on page 66.]
  - A fee not to exceed \$50 for costs of providing an educational program outside of regular school hours for a student who has lost credit or has not been awarded a final grade because of absences and whose parent chooses the program for the student to meet the 90 percent attendance requirement. The fee will be charged only if the parent or guardian signs a district-provided request form.
  - In some cases, a fee for a course taken through the Texas Virtual School Network (TXVSN).

Any required fee or deposit may be waived if the student and parent are unable to pay. Application for such a waiver may be made to the principal or designee. [For further information, see policy FP.]

## **Fundraising**

Student groups or classes and/or parent groups may be permitted to conduct fundraising drives for approved school purposes in accordance with administrative regulations. [For further information, see policies FJ and GE.]

## **Gang-Free Zones**

Certain criminal offenses, including those involving organized criminal activity such as gang-related crimes, will be enhanced to the next highest category of offense if they are committed in a gang-free zone. For purposes of the district, a gang-free zone includes a school bus and a location in, on, or within 1,000 feet of any district-owned or leased property or campus playground.

## **Gender-Based Harassment**

[See **Dating Violence, Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation** on page 32.]

## **Grading Guidelines**

Grading guidelines for each grade level or course will be communicated and distributed to students and their parents by the classroom teacher. These guidelines have been reviewed by each applicable curriculum department and have been approved by the campus principal. These guidelines establish the minimum number of assignments, projects, and examinations required for each grading period. In addition, these guidelines establish how the student's mastery of concepts and achievement will be communicated (i.e., letter grades, numerical averages, checklist of required skills, etc.). Grading guidelines also outline in what circumstances a student will be allowed to redo an assignment or retake an examination for which the student originally made a failing grade. Procedures for a student to follow after an absence will also be addressed.

[See **Report Cards/Progress Reports and Conferences** on page 58 for additional information on grading guidelines.]

## ***Students with Disabilities***

Upon the recommendation of the admission, review, and dismissal (ARD) committee, a student with a disability who receives special education services may be permitted to graduate under the provisions of his or her individualized education program (IEP) and in accordance with state rules.

A student who receives special education services and has completed four years of high school but has not met the requirements of his or her IEP may participate in graduation ceremonies and receive a certificate of attendance. Even if the student participates in graduation ceremonies to receive the certificate of attendance, he or she may remain enrolled to complete the IEP and earn his or her high school diploma; however, the student will only be allowed to participate in one graduation ceremony.

[See policy FMH(LEGAL).]

ARD committees for students with disabilities who receive special education services will make instructional and assessment decisions for these students in accordance with state law and rules. To earn an endorsement under the foundation program, a student must perform satisfactorily on the end of course (EOC) assessments and receive no modified curriculum in the student's chosen endorsement area. A student may still be awarded an endorsement when the student fails to perform satisfactorily on no more than two EOC assessments but meets the other requirements for graduation under state law.

## **Harassment**

[See **Dating Violence, Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation** on page 32.]

## Hazing

Hazing is defined as any intentional, knowing, or reckless act occurring on or off campus directed against a student that endangers the mental or physical health or the safety of a student for the purpose of pledging, being initiated to, affiliating with, holding office in, or maintaining membership in any organization whose members are or include other students. Examples include:

- Any type of physical brutality;
- Any type of physical activity that subjects the student to an unreasonable risk of physical or mental harm, such as sleep deprivation, exposure to the elements, confinement to small spaces, or calisthenics;
- Any activity involving consumption of food, liquids, drugs, or other substances that subjects the student to unreasonable risk of physical or mental harm;
- Any activity that adversely affects the mental health or dignity of the student, such as ostracism, shame, or humiliation; and
- Any activity that induces, causes, or requires the student to violate the Penal Code.

Hazing will not be tolerated by the district. If an incident of hazing occurs, disciplinary consequences will be handled in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct. It is a criminal offense if a person engages in hazing; solicits, encourages, directs, aids, or attempts to aid another in hazing; or has firsthand knowledge of an incident of hazing being planned or having occurred and fails to report this to the principal or superintendent.

[See **Bullying** on page 26 and policies FFI and FNCC.]

## Health-Related Matters

### ***Student Illness***

When your child is ill, please contact the school to let us know he or she will not be attending that day. It is important to remember that schools are required to exclude students with certain illnesses from school for periods of time as identified in state rules. For example, if your child has a fever over 100 degrees, he or she must stay out of school until fever-free for 24 hours without fever-reducing medications. In addition, students with diarrheal illnesses must stay home until they are diarrhea-free without diarrhea-suppressing medications for at least 24 hours. A full list of conditions for which the school must exclude children can be obtained from the school nurse.

If a student becomes ill during the school day, he or she must receive permission from the teacher before reporting to the school nurse. If the nurse determines that the child should go home, the nurse will contact the parent.

The district is also required to report certain contagious (communicable) diseases or illnesses to the Texas Department of State Health Services (TDSHS) or our local/regional health authority. The school nurse can provide information from TDSHS on these notifiable conditions.

Contact the school nurse if you have questions or if you are concerned about whether or not your child should stay home.

### ***Bacterial Meningitis***

State law requires the district to provide information about bacterial meningitis:

#### **What is meningitis?**

Meningitis is an inflammation of the covering of the brain and spinal cord. It can be caused by viruses, parasites, fungi, and bacteria. Viral meningitis is common, and most people recover fully. Parasitic and fungal meningitis are very rare. Bacterial meningitis is very serious and may involve complicated medical, surgical, pharmaceutical, and life support management.



## **What are the symptoms?**

Someone with meningitis will become very ill. The illness may develop over one or two days, but it can also rapidly progress in a matter of hours. Not everyone with meningitis will have the same symptoms.

Children (over 2 years old) and adults with bacterial meningitis commonly have a severe headache, high fever, and neck stiffness. Other symptoms might include nausea, vomiting, discomfort looking into bright lights, confusion, and sleepiness. In both children and adults, there may be a rash of tiny, red-purple spots. These can occur anywhere on the body.

The diagnosis of bacterial meningitis is based on a combination of symptoms and laboratory results.

## **How serious is bacterial meningitis?**

If it is diagnosed early and treated promptly, the majority of people make a complete recovery. In some cases, it can be fatal, or a person may be left with a permanent disability.

## **How is bacterial meningitis spread?**

Fortunately, none of the bacteria that cause meningitis are as contagious as diseases like the common cold or the flu, and they are not spread by casual contact or by simply breathing the air where a person with meningitis has been. They are spread when people exchange respiratory or throat secretions (such as by kissing, coughing, or sneezing).

The germ does not cause meningitis in most people. Instead, most people become carriers of the germ for days, weeks, or even months. The bacteria rarely overcome the body's immune system and cause meningitis or another serious illness.

## **How can bacterial meningitis be prevented?**

Maintaining healthy habits, like getting plenty of rest, can help prevent infection. Using good health practices such as covering your mouth and nose when coughing and sneezing and washing your hands frequently with soap and water can also help stop the spread of the bacteria. It's a good idea not to share food, drinks, utensils, toothbrushes, or cigarettes. Limit the number of persons you kiss.

There are vaccines available to offer protection from some of the bacteria that can cause bacterial meningitis. The vaccines are safe and effective (85–90 percent). They can cause mild side effects, such as redness and pain at the injection site lasting up to two days. Immunity develops within seven to ten days after the vaccine is given and lasts for up to five years.

## **What should you do if you think you or a friend might have bacterial meningitis?**

You should seek prompt medical attention.

## **Where can you get more information?**

Your school nurse, family doctor, and the staff at your local or regional health department office are excellent sources for information on all communicable diseases. You may also call your local health department or Regional Department of State Health Services office to ask about a meningococcal vaccine. Additional information may also be found at the websites for the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#), particularly the CDC's information on [bacterial meningitis](#), and the [Texas Department of State Health Services](#).

**Note:** DSHS requires at least one meningococcal vaccination on or after the student's 11th birthday, unless the student received the vaccine at age 10. Also note that entering college students must show, with limited exception, evidence of receiving a bacterial meningitis vaccination within the five-year period prior to enrolling in and taking courses at an institution of higher education. Please see the school nurse for more information, as this may affect a student who wishes to enroll in a dual credit course taken off campus.

[See **Immunization** on page 51 for more information.]

## ***Food Allergies***

The district requests to be notified when a student has been diagnosed with a food allergy, especially those allergies that could result in dangerous or possibly life-threatening reactions either by inhalation, ingestion, or skin contact with the particular food. It is important to disclose the food to which the student is allergic, as well as the nature of the allergic reaction. Please contact the school nurse or campus principal if your child has a known food allergy or as soon as possible after any diagnosis of a food allergy.

The district has developed and annually reviews a food allergy management plan, which addresses employee training, dealing with common food allergens, and specific strategies for dealing with students diagnosed with severe food allergies. When the district receives information that a student has a food allergy that puts the student at risk for anaphylaxis, individual care plans will be developed to assist the student in safely accessing the school environment. The district's food allergy management plan can be accessed at [stisd.net](http://stisd.net).

[See policy FFAF and **Celebrations** on page 28.]

## ***Head Lice***

Head lice, although not an illness or a disease, is very common among children and is spread very easily through head-to-head contact during play, sports, or nap time, and when children share things like brushes, combs, hats, and headphones. If careful observation indicates that a student has head lice, the school nurse will contact the student's parent to determine whether the student will need to be picked up from school and to discuss a plan for treatment with an FDA-approved medicated shampoo or cream rinse that may be purchased from any drug or grocery store. After the student has undergone one treatment, the parent should check in with the school nurse to discuss the treatment used. The nurse can also offer additional recommendations, including subsequent treatments and how best to get rid of lice and prevent their return.

Notice will also be provided to parents of elementary school students in the affected classroom.

More information on head lice can be obtained from the DSHS website [Managing Head Lice](#).

[See policy FFAA.]

## ***Physical Activity Requirements***

### **Junior High / Middle School**

In accordance with policies at EHAB, EHAC, EHBG, and FFA, the district will ensure that students in middle or junior high school will engage in 30 minutes of moderate or vigorous physical activity per day for at least four semesters OR at least 225 minutes of moderate or vigorous physical activity within each two-week period for at least four semesters.

For additional information on the district's requirements and programs regarding junior high and middle school student physical activity requirements, please see the principal.

### **Temporary Restriction from Participation in Physical Education**

Students who are temporarily restricted from participation in physical education will remain in the class and shall continue to learn the concepts of the lessons but not actively participate in the skill demonstration.

## ***School Health Advisory Council (SHAC)***

During the preceding school year, the district's School Health Advisory Council (SHAC) held quarterly meetings. Additional information regarding the district's SHAC is available from the principal.

The duties of the SHAC range from recommending curriculum to developing strategies for integrating curriculum into a coordinated school health program encompassing issues such as school health services, counseling services, a safe and healthy school environment, recess recommendations, improving student fitness, mental health concerns, and employee wellness.

[See policies at BDF and EHAA. See **Human Sexuality Instruction** on page 14 for additional information.]

## ***Student Wellness Policy / Wellness Plan***

*South Texas ISD* is committed to encouraging healthy students and therefore has developed a board-adopted wellness policy at FFA(LOCAL) and corresponding plans and procedures to implement the policy. You are encouraged to contact the principal or designee with questions about the content or implementation of the district's wellness policy and plan.

### ***Other Health-Related Matters***

#### **Physical Fitness Assessment**

Annually, the district will conduct a physical fitness assessment of students in grades 3–12 who are enrolled in a physical education course or a course for which physical education credit is awarded. At the end of the school year, a parent may submit a written request to the coaching staff to obtain the results of his or her child's physical fitness assessment conducted during the school year.

#### **Vending Machines**

The district has adopted and implemented the state and federal policies and guidelines for food service, including the guidelines to restrict student access to vending machines. For more information regarding these policies and guidelines. [See policies at CO and FFA.]

#### **Tobacco and E-Cigarettes Prohibited**

Students are prohibited from possessing or using any type of tobacco product, electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes), or any other electronic vaporizing device, while on school property at any time or while attending an off-campus school-related activity.

The district and its staff strictly enforce prohibitions against the use of all tobacco products, e-cigarettes, or any other electronic vaporizing device, by students and all others on school property and at school-sponsored and school-related activities. [See the Student Code of Conduct and policies at FNCD and GKA.]

#### **Asbestos Management Plan**

The district works diligently to maintain compliance with federal and state law governing asbestos in school buildings. A copy of the district's Asbestos Management Plan is available in the superintendent's office. If you have any questions or would like to examine the district's plan in more detail, please contact the maintenance and transportation office, the district's designated asbestos coordinator, at 956.399.4358.

#### **Pest Management Plan**

The district is required to follow integrated pest management (IPM) procedures to control pests on school grounds. Although the district strives to use the safest and most effective methods to manage pests, including a variety of non-chemical control measures, periodic indoor and outdoor pesticide use is sometimes necessary to maintain adequate pest control and ensure a safe, pest-free school environment.

All pesticides used are registered for their intended use by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and are applied only by certified pesticide applicators. Except in an emergency, signs will be posted 48 hours before indoor application. All outdoor applications will be posted at the time of treatment, and signs will remain until it is safe to enter the area. Parents who have questions or who want to be notified of the times and types of applications prior to pesticide application inside their child's school assignment area may contact the maintenance and transportation office, the district's IPM coordinator, at 956.399.4358.

## Homeless Students

You are encouraged to inform the district if you or your child are experiencing homelessness. District staff can share resources with you that may be able to assist you and your family.

For more information on services for homeless students, contact the district's homeless education liaison, *Candace Guillen* at 956.399.4358.

[See **Students Who Are Homeless** on page 20.]

## Homework

Students can expect nightly homework, whether it is reading, studying, working on projects, etc. Because of the nature of the A-B block schedule, students are encouraged to do homework as soon as possible and not put it off so that they do not fall behind. Parents are expected to check on students' work routinely and encourage them to do their very best. Each student receives a planner in which to record assignments and deadlines. Parents should regularly check these planners. Before entering this school, students signed a compact in which they agreed to take on a number of commitments so that they can be successful. However, there are some who, for some reason, do not do so. Since student achievement is of primary importance, students who do not complete assignments are assigned intervention techniques and eventually disciplinary consequences. Not completing assignments is unacceptable at RSA. Not doing homework is considered insubordination and students will be disciplined according to the Student Code Of Conduct.

## Illness

[See **Student Illness** under **Health-Related Matters** on page 47.]

## Immunization

A student must be fully immunized against certain diseases or must present a certificate or statement that, for medical reasons or reasons of conscience, including a religious belief, the student will not be immunized. For exemptions based on reasons of conscience, only official forms issued by the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS), Immunization Branch, can be honored by the district. This form may be obtained by writing the DSHS Immunization Branch (MC 1946), P.O. Box 149347, Austin, Texas 78714-9347; or online at [Affidavit Request for Exemption from Immunization](#). The form must be notarized and submitted to the principal or school nurse within 90 days of notarization. If the parent is seeking an exemption for more than one student in the family, a separate form must be provided for each student.

The immunizations required are: diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis; rubella (measles), mumps, and rubella; polio; hepatitis A; hepatitis B; varicella (chicken pox); and meningococcal. The school nurse can provide information on age-appropriate doses or on an acceptable physician-validated history of illness required by TDSHS. Proof of immunization may be established by personal records from a licensed physician or public health clinic with a signature or rubber-stamp validation.

If a student should not be immunized for medical reasons, the student or parent must present a certificate signed by a U.S. registered and licensed physician stating that, in the doctor's opinion, the immunization required is medically contraindicated or poses a significant risk to the health and well-being of the student or a member of the student's family or household. This certificate must be renewed yearly unless the physician specifies a lifelong condition.

As noted at **Bacterial Meningitis**, entering college students must also, with limited exception, furnish evidence of having received a bacterial meningitis vaccination within the five years prior to enrolling in and attending

classes at an institution of higher education. A student wanting to enroll in a dual credit course taken off campus may be subject to this requirement.

[For further information, see policy FFAB(LEGAL) and the DSHS website: [Texas School & Child Care Facility Immunization Requirements](#).]

## **Law Enforcement Agencies (All Grade Levels)**

### ***Questioning of Students***

When law enforcement officers or other lawful authorities wish to question or interview a student at school, the principal will cooperate fully regarding the conditions of the interview, if the questioning or interview is part of a child abuse investigation. In other circumstances:

- The principal will verify and record the identity of the officer or other authority and ask for an explanation of the need to question or interview the student at school.
- The principal ordinarily will make reasonable efforts to notify the parents unless the interviewer raises what the principal considers to be a valid objection.
- The principal ordinarily will be present unless the interviewer raises what the principal considers to be a valid objection.

### ***Students Taken into Custody***

State law requires the district to permit a student to be taken into legal custody:

- To comply with an order of the juvenile court.
- To comply with the laws of arrest.
- By a law enforcement officer if there is probable cause to believe the student has engaged in delinquent conduct or conduct in need of supervision.
- By a law enforcement officer to obtain fingerprints or photographs for comparison in an investigation.
- By a law enforcement officer to obtain fingerprints or photographs to establish a student's identity, where the child may have engaged in conduct indicating a need for supervision, such as running away.
- By a probation officer if there is probable cause to believe the student has violated a condition of probation imposed by the juvenile court.
- By an authorized representative of Child Protective Services (CPS), Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS), a law enforcement officer, or a juvenile probation officer, without a court order, under the conditions set out in the Family Code relating to the student's physical health or safety.
- To comply with a properly issued directive from a juvenile court to take a student into custody.

Before a student is released to a law enforcement officer or other legally authorized person, the principal will verify the officer's identity and, to the best of his or her ability, will verify the official's authority to take custody of the student.

The principal will immediately notify the superintendent and will ordinarily attempt to notify the parent unless the officer or other authorized person raises what the principal considers to be a valid objection to notifying the parents. Because the principal does not have the authority to prevent or delay a student's release to a law enforcement officer, any notification will most likely be after the fact.

### ***Notification of Law Violations***

The district is required by state law to notify:

- All instructional and support personnel who have responsibility for supervising a student who has been taken into custody, arrested, or referred to the juvenile court for any felony offense or for certain misdemeanors.
- All instructional and support personnel who have regular contact with a student who is thought to have committed certain offenses or who has been convicted, received deferred prosecution, received deferred adjudication, or was adjudicated for delinquent conduct for any felony offense or certain misdemeanors.
- All appropriate district personnel regarding a student who is required to register as a sex offender.

[For further information, see policy FL(LEGAL).]

## **Leaving Campus**

Please remember that student attendance is crucial to learning. We ask that appointments be scheduled outside of school hours as much as reasonably possible. Also note that picking up a student early on a regular basis results in missed opportunities for learning. Unless the principal has granted approval because of extenuating circumstances, a student will not regularly be released before the end of the school day.

State rules require that parental consent be obtained before any student is allowed to leave campus for any part of the school day. The district has put the following procedures in place to document parental consent:

- For students in elementary and middle school, a parent or otherwise authorized adult must come to the office and sign the student out. Please be prepared to show identification. Once an identity is verified, a campus representative will then call for the student or collect the student and bring him or her to the office. For safety purposes and stability of the learning environment, we cannot allow you to go to the classroom or other area unescorted to pick up the student. If the student returns to campus the same day, the parent or authorized adult must sign the student back in through the main office upon the student's return. Documentation regarding the reason for the absence will also be required.
- If a student becomes ill during the school day and the school nurse or other district personnel determines that the student should go home, the nurse will contact the student's parent and document the parent's wishes regarding release from school. Unless directed by the parent to release the student unaccompanied, the parent or other authorized adult must follow the sign-out procedures as listed above. If a student is allowed to leave campus by himself or herself, as permitted by the student's parent, or if the student is age 18 or is an emancipated minor, the nurse will document the time of day the student was released. Under no circumstances will a student in elementary or middle school be released unaccompanied by a parent or adult authorized by the parent.

### ***At Any Other Time during the School Day***

Students are not authorized to leave campus during regular school hours for any other reason, except with the permission of the principal.

Students who leave campus in violation of these rules will be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct.

## **Lost and Found**

A "lost and found" collection box is located in the campus office. If your child has lost an item, please encourage him or her to check the lost and found box. The district discourages students from bringing to school personal items of high monetary value, as the district is not responsible for lost or stolen items. The campus will dispose of lost and found items at the end of each semester.

## **Makeup Work**

### ***Makeup Work Because of Absence***

For any class missed, the teacher may assign the student makeup work based on the instructional objectives for the subject or course and the needs of the individual student in mastering the essential knowledge and skills or in meeting subject or course requirements.

A student will be responsible for obtaining and completing the makeup work in a satisfactory manner and within the time specified by the teacher. A student who does not make up assigned work within the time allotted by the teacher will receive a grade of zero for the assignment.

A student is encouraged to speak with his or her teacher if the student knows of an absence ahead of time, including absences for extracurricular activities, so that the teacher and student may plan any work that can be completed before or shortly after the absence. Please remember the importance of student attendance at school and that, even though absences may be excused or unexcused, all absences account for the 90 percent threshold

regarding the state laws surrounding “attendance for credit or final grade.” [See **Attendance for Credit or Final Grade** on page 25.]

A student involved in an extracurricular activity must notify his or her teachers ahead of time about any absences.

A student will be permitted to make up tests and to turn in projects due in any class missed because of absence. Teachers may assign a late penalty to any long-term project in accordance with timelines approved by the principal and previously communicated to students.

### ***In-School Suspension (ISS) Makeup Work***

A student removed from the regular classroom to in-school suspension or another setting, other than a DAEP, will have an opportunity to complete before the beginning of the next school year each course the student was enrolled in at the time of removal from the regular classroom. The district may provide the opportunity by any method available, including a correspondence course, another distance learning option, or summer school. The district will not charge the student for any method of completion provided by the district. [See policy FO(LEGAL).]

## **Medicine at School**

Medication that must be administered to a student during school hours must be provided by the student’s parent. All medication, whether prescription or nonprescription, must be kept in the nurse’s office and administered by the nurse or another authorized district employee, unless the student is authorized to possess his or her own medication because of asthma or a severe allergy as described below or as otherwise allowed by law.

The district will not purchase nonprescription medication to give to a student. District employees will not give a student prescription medication, nonprescription medication, herbal substances, anabolic steroids, or dietary supplements, with the following exceptions:

Only authorized employees, in accordance with policy FFAC, may administer:

- Prescription medication, in the original, properly labeled container, provided by the parent, along with a written request.
- Prescription medication from a properly labeled unit dosage container filled by a registered nurse or another qualified district employee from the original, properly labeled container.
- Nonprescription medication, in the original, properly labeled container, provided by the parent along with a written request. **Note:** Insect repellant is considered a nonprescription medication.
- Herbal or dietary supplements provided by the parent only if required by the student’s individualized education program (IEP) or Section 504 plan for a student with disabilities.

Students whose schedules provide for regular time spent outdoors, including for recess and physical education classes, should apply sunscreen before coming to school.

For students at the elementary level, the student’s teacher or other district personnel will apply sunscreen to a student’s exposed skin if the student brings the sunscreen to school and requests assistance with the application of the sunscreen. Nothing prohibits a student at this level from applying his or her own sunscreen if the student is able to do so.

For students at the secondary level, a student may possess and apply sunscreen when necessary. If the student will need assistance with this application, please address the need for assistance with the school nurse.

Whether a student is at the elementary or secondary level, if sunscreen needs to be administered to treat any type of medical condition, this should be handled through communication with the school nurse so that the district is made aware of any safety and medical issues.

A student with asthma or severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) may be permitted to possess and use prescribed asthma or anaphylaxis medication at school or school-related events only if he or she has written authorization from his or her parent and a physician or other licensed health-care provider. The student must also demonstrate to his or her physician or health-care provider and to the school nurse the ability to use the prescribed medication, including any device required to administer the medication.



If the student has been prescribed asthma or anaphylaxis medication for use during the school day, the student and parents should discuss this with the school nurse or principal.

In accordance with a student's individual health plan for management of diabetes, a student with diabetes will be permitted to possess and use monitoring and treatment supplies and equipment while at school or at a school-related activity. See the school nurse or principal for information. [See policy FFAF(LEGAL).]

### ***Psychotropic Drugs***

A psychotropic drug is a substance used in the diagnosis, treatment, or prevention of a disease or as a component of a medication. It is intended to have an altering effect on perception, emotion, or behavior and is commonly described as a mood- or behavior-altering substance.

Teachers and other district employees may discuss a student's academic progress or behavior with the student's parents or another employee as appropriate; however, they are not permitted to recommend use of psychotropic drugs. A district employee who is a registered nurse, an advanced nurse practitioner, a physician, or a certified or credentialed mental health professional can recommend that a student be evaluated by an appropriate medical practitioner, if appropriate. [For further information, see policy FFAC.]

### **Nondiscrimination Statement**

In its efforts to promote nondiscrimination and as required by law, *South Texas ISD* does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, color, national origin, gender, sex, disability, age, or any other basis prohibited by law, in providing education services, activities, and programs, including CTE programs, and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups. The following district representatives have been designated to coordinate compliance with these legal requirements:

- Title IX Coordinator, for concerns regarding discrimination on the basis of sex, including sexual harassment or gender-based harassment: *Mr. Jeff Hembree, 956.399.2454 or 800.217.8839.*
- ADA/Section 504 Coordinator, for concerns regarding discrimination on the basis of disability: *Mr. Jeff Hembree, 956.399.2454 or 800.217.8839*
- All other concerns regarding discrimination: See the superintendent, *Dr. Marco Antonio Lara, 956.565.2454 or 800.217.8839*

[See policies FB, FFH, and GKD.]

### **Parent and Family Engagement**

#### ***Working Together***

Both experience and research tell us that a child's education succeeds best when there is good communication and a strong partnership between home and school. Your involvement and engagement in this partnership may include:

- Encouraging your child to put a high priority on education and working with your child on a daily basis to make the most of the educational opportunities the school provides.
- Ensuring that your child completes all homework assignments and special projects and comes to school each day prepared, rested, and ready to learn.
- Becoming familiar with all your child's school activities and with the academic programs, including special programs, offered in the district.
- Discussing with the school counselor or principal any questions you may have about the options and opportunities available to your child.
- Reviewing the requirements and options for graduation with your child in middle school and again while your child is enrolled in high school.
- Monitoring your child's academic progress and contacting teachers as needed. [See **Academic Counseling** on page 30.]



- Attending scheduled conferences and requesting additional conferences as needed. To schedule a telephone or in-person conference with a teacher, school counselor, or principal, please call the school office at 956.399.4358 for an appointment. The teacher will usually return your call or meet with you during his or her conference period or before or after school. [See **Report Cards/Progress Reports and Conferences** on page 58.]
- Becoming a school volunteer. [For further information, see policy GKG and **Volunteers** on page **Error! Bookmark not defined..**]
- Participating in campus parent organizations. Parent organizations include: *Parent Student Teacher Organization (PSTO)*.
- Serving as a parent representative on the district-level or campus-level planning committees, assisting in the development of educational goals and plans to improve student achievement. [For further information, see policies at BQA and BQB, and contact *Candance Guillen* 399.4358.
- Serving on the School Health Advisory Council (SHAC), assisting the district in ensuring local community values are reflected in health education instruction and other wellness issues. [See policies at BDF, EHAA, FFA, and information in this handbook at **School Health Advisory Council (SHAC)** on page 49.]
- Being aware of the school's ongoing bullying and harassment prevention efforts.
- Contacting school officials if you are concerned with your child's emotional or mental well-being.
- Attending board meetings to learn more about district operations. [See policies at BE and BED for more information.]

## **Physical Examinations / Health Screenings**

### ***Athletics Participation***

A student who wishes to participate in, or continue participation in, the district's athletics program governed by the UIL must submit certification from a health-care provider authorized under UIL rules that the student has been examined and is physically able to participate in the athletic program.

This examination is required to be submitted annually to the district.

### ***Spinal Screening Program***

School-based spinal screening helps identify adolescents with abnormal spinal curvature and refer them for appropriate follow-up by their physician. Screening can detect scoliosis at an early stage, when the curve is mild and may go unnoticed. Early detection is key to controlling spinal deformities.

All students who meet the Texas Department of State Health Services criteria will be screened for abnormal spinal curvature before the end of the school year. For information on spinal screening by an outside professional or exemption from spinal screening based on religious beliefs, see policy FFAA(LEGAL) or contact the superintendent.

Spinal screening is non-invasive and conducted following the most recent, nationally accepted and peer-reviewed standards for spinal screening.

## **Pledges of Allegiance and a Minute of Silence**

Each school day, students will recite the Pledge of Allegiance to the U.S. flag and the Pledge of Allegiance to the Texas flag. Parents may submit a written request to the principal to excuse their child from reciting a pledge. [See **Reciting the Pledges to the U.S. and Texas Flags** on page 14.]

State law requires that one minute of silence follow recitation of the pledges. Each student may choose to reflect, pray, meditate, or engage in any other silent activity during that minute so long as the silent activity does not interfere with or distract others. In addition, state law requires that each campus provide for the observance of one minute of silence at the beginning of the first class period when September 11 falls on a regular school day in remembrance of those who lost their lives on September 11, 2001.

[See policy EC for more information.]

## **Prayer**

Each student has a right to pray individually, voluntarily, and silently or to meditate in school in a manner that does not disrupt instructional or other activities of the school. The school will not encourage, require, or coerce a student to engage in or to refrain from such prayer or meditation during any school activity.

## **Promotion and Retention**

A student will be promoted only on the basis of academic achievement or demonstrated proficiency in the subject matter of the course or grade level, the recommendation of the student's teacher, the score received on any criterion-referenced or state-mandated assessment, and any other necessary academic information as determined by the district.

In addition, at certain grade levels a student—with limited exceptions—will be required to pass the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) if the student is enrolled in a public Texas school on any day between January 1 and the date of the first administration of the STAAR.

## **Middle / Junior High Grade Levels**

In grades 7–8, promotion to the next grade level shall be based on an overall average of 70 on a scale of 100 based upon course-level, grade-level standards (essential knowledge and skills) for all subject areas and a grade of 70 or above in three of the following areas: language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. Refer to *EIE(LOCAL)*.

To be promoted to grade 9, students enrolled in grade 8 must perform satisfactorily on the mathematics and reading sections of the grade 8 assessment in English.

If a student in grade 5 or 8 is enrolled in a course that earns high school credit and for which an end-of-course (EOC) assessment will be administered, the student will not be subject to the promotion requirements described above for the relevant grade 5 or 8 assessment. The student will instead take the corresponding EOC assessment.

If a student in grades 3–8 is enrolled in a class or course intended for students above his or her current grade level in which the student will be administered a state-mandated assessment, the student will be required to take an applicable state-mandated assessment only for the course in which he or she is enrolled, unless otherwise required to do so by federal law.

[See **Standardized Testing** on page 62.]

A student in grade 5 or 8 will have two additional opportunities to take a failed assessment. If a student fails a second time, a grade placement committee, consisting of the principal or designee, the teacher, and the student's parent, will determine the additional special instruction the student will receive. After a third failed attempt, the student will be retained; however, the parent can appeal this decision to the committee. For the student to be promoted, based on standards previously established by the district, the decision of the committee must be unanimous, and the student must complete additional special instruction before beginning the next grade level. Whether the student is retained or promoted, an educational plan for the student will be designed to enable the student to perform at grade level by the end of the next school year. [See policy EIE.]

Certain students—some with disabilities and some classified as English learners—may be eligible for exemptions, accommodations, or deferred testing. An admission, review, and dismissal (ARD) committee meeting will be convened if a student receiving special education services in grade 5 or 8 fails to meet satisfactory performance after the first STAAR administrations in reading or math. For more information, see the principal, school counselor, or special education director.

Parents of a student at or above grade level 3 who does not perform satisfactorily on his or her state-mandated examinations, will be notified that their child will participate in special instructional programs designed to improve performance. The student may be required to participate in this instruction before or after normal school hours or outside of the normal school year. Failure of a student to attend these programs may result in violations of required school attendance as well as the student not being promoted to the next grade level. A personal graduation plan (PGP) will be prepared for any student at the middle school or junior high level who did not perform satisfactorily on a state-mandated assessment or is determined by the district as not likely to earn a high school diploma before the fifth school year following enrollment in grade 9. The PGP will be designed and implemented by a school counselor, teacher, or other staff member designated by the principal. The plan will, among other items, identify the student's educational goals, address the parent's educational expectations for the student, and outline an intensive instruction program for the student. [For additional information, see the school counselor and policy EIF(LEGAL).] For a student receiving special education services, the student's IEP may serve as the student's PGP and would therefore be developed by the student's ARD committee.

## **Release of Students from School**

[See **Leaving Campus** on page 53.]

## **Report Cards / Progress Reports and Conferences**

Report cards with each student's grades or performance and absences in each class or subject are issued at least once every nine weeks.

At the end of the first three weeks of a grading period, parents will receive a progress report if their child's performance in any course/subject area is near or below 70, or is below the expected level of performance. If the student receives a grade lower than 70 in any class or subject at the end of a grading period, the parent will be requested to schedule a conference with the teacher of that class or subject. [See **Working Together** on page 55 for how to schedule a conference.]

Teachers follow grading guidelines that have been approved by the principal pursuant to the board-adopted policy and are designed to reflect each student's relative mastery of each assignment for the grading period, semester, or course. State law provides that a test or course grade issued by a teacher cannot be changed unless the board determines that the grade was arbitrary or contains an error, or that the teacher did not follow the district's grading policy. [See policy EIA(LOCAL) and **Grading Guidelines** on page 46.]

Questions about grade calculation should first be discussed with the teacher; if the question is not resolved, the student or parent may request a conference with the principal in accordance with FNG(LOCAL).

The report card or unsatisfactory progress report will state whether tutorials are required for a student who receives a grade lower than 70 in a class or subject.

Report cards and unsatisfactory progress reports must be signed by the parent and returned to the school within three days. The district may use an electronic program to communicate academic information about your child, including for report card and progress reporting purposes. An electronic signature of the parent will be accepted by the district, but you are entitled to request the option to provide a handwritten signature of acknowledgment instead.

## **Retaliation**

[See **Dating Violence, Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation** on page 32.]

## Safety

Student safety on campus, at school-related events, and on district vehicles is a high priority of the district. Although the district has implemented safety procedures, the cooperation of students is essential to ensuring school safety. A student is expected to:

- Avoid conduct that is likely to put the student or others at risk.
- Follow the behavioral standards in this handbook and the Student Code of Conduct, as well as any additional rules for behavior and safety set by the principal, campus behavior coordinator, teachers, or bus drivers.
- Remain alert to and promptly report to a teacher or the principal any safety hazards, such as intruders on campus or threats made by any person toward a student or staff member.
- Know emergency evacuation routes and signals.
- Follow immediately the instructions of teachers, bus drivers, and other district employees who are overseeing the welfare of students.

## Accident Insurance

Soon after the school year begins, parents will have the opportunity to purchase low-cost accident insurance that would help meet medical expenses in the event of injury to their child.

### ***Insurance for Career and Technical Education (CTE) Programs***

If the board purchases accident, liability, or automobile insurance coverage for students or businesses involved in the district's CTE programs, the district will notify the affected students and parents.

### ***Preparedness Drills: Evacuation, Severe Weather, and Other Emergencies***

Occasionally, students, teachers, and other district employees will participate in preparedness drills of emergency procedures. When the command is given or alarm is sounded, students need to follow the direction of teachers or others in charge quickly, quietly, and in an orderly manner.

### ***Emergency Medical Treatment and Information***

If a student has a medical emergency at school or a school-related activity when the parent cannot be reached, the school may have to rely on previously provided written parental consent to obtain emergency medical treatment, and information about allergies to medications, foods, insect bites, etc. Therefore, all parents are asked each year to complete an emergency care consent form. Parents should keep emergency care information up-to-date (name of doctor, emergency phone numbers, allergies, etc.). Please contact the school nurse to update any information that the nurse or the teacher needs to know.

### ***Emergency School-Closing Information***

Each year, parents are asked to complete an emergency release form to provide contact information in the event that school is dismissed early or opening is delayed because of severe weather or another emergency, or if the campus must restrict access due to a security threat.

The district will rely on contact information on file with the district to communicate with parents in an emergency situation, which may include real-time or automated messages. It is crucial to notify your child's school when a phone number previously provided to the district has changed.

If the campus must close, delay opening, or restrict access to the building because of an emergency, the district will also alert the community in the following ways:

Social Media  
District/Campus Website  
Email/Text Message  
Local News Media

[See **Communications-Automated, Emergency** on page 29 for more information.]

## **SAT, ACT, and Other Standardized Tests**

[See **Standardized Testing** on page 62.]

## **Schedule Changes**

Students requesting a schedule change must submit their request to the counseling office within the first five days of instruction. Administrative approval will be required for any schedule change requests.

## **School Facilities**

### ***Use by Students Before and After School***

Certain areas of the school will be accessible to students before and after school for specific purposes. Students are required to remain in the area where their activity is scheduled to take place.

The cafeteria is open to students before school, beginning at 7:30 a.m.

Unless the teacher or sponsor overseeing an activity gives permission, a student will not be permitted to go to another area of the building or campus.

After dismissal of school in the afternoon, unless a student is involved in an activity under the supervision of a teacher or other authorized employee or adult, or unless students are granted permission to remain on campus in accordance with policy FNAB, students must leave campus immediately.

### ***Conduct Before and After School***

Teachers and administrators have full authority over student conduct at before- or after-school activities on district premises and at school-sponsored events off district premises, such as play rehearsals, club meetings, athletic practices, and special study groups or tutorials. Students are subject to the same rules of conduct that apply during the instructional day and will be subject to consequences established by the Student Code of Conduct or any stricter standards of behavior established by the sponsor for extracurricular participants.

### ***Use of Hallways during Class Time***

Loitering or standing in the halls during class is not permitted. During class time, a student must have a hall pass to be outside the classroom for any purpose. Failure to obtain a pass will result in disciplinary action in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct.

## ***Cafeteria Services***

The district participates in the School Breakfast Program and National School Lunch Program and offers students nutritionally balanced meals daily in accordance with standards set forth in state and federal law. Free and reduced-price meals are available based on financial need or household situation. Information about a student's participation is confidential. The district may share information such as a student's name and eligibility status to help enroll eligible children in Medicaid or the state children's health insurance program (CHIP) unless the student's parent notifies the district that a student's information should not be disclosed. Participating students will be offered the same meal options as their peers and will not be treated differently from their peers.

See CO for more information.

Parents are strongly encouraged to continually monitor their child's meal account balance. When a student's meal account is depleted, the district will notify the parent. The student will be allowed to continue purchasing

meals according to the grace period set by the school board, and the district will present the parent with a schedule of repayment for any outstanding account balance and an application for free or reduced meals. If the district is unable to work out an agreement with the student's parent on replenishment of the student's meal account and payment of any outstanding balance, the student will receive a meal. The district will make every effort to avoid bringing attention to the student.

## ***Library***

The library is a learning laboratory with books, computers, magazines, and other materials available for classroom assignments, projects, and reading or listening pleasure. The library is open for independent student use during the following times with a teacher permit:

Monday- Thursday 7:30 am - 5:15 pm  
Friday 7:30 am - 4:00 pm

Students staying after school during Homework House days must stay until 5:15 unless arrangements are made with the office. Occasionally, the library will close after school for meetings/activities. Announcements are made prior so that students can prepare.

## ***Meetings of Noncurriculum-Related Groups***

Student-organized, student-led noncurriculum-related groups are permitted to meet during the hours designated by the principal before and after school. These groups must comply with the requirements of policy FNAB(LOCAL).

A list of these groups is available in the principal's office.

## **School-sponsored Field Trips**

The district periodically takes students on field trips for educational purposes.

A parent must provide permission for a student to participate in a field trip.

The district may ask the parent to provide information about a student's medical provider and insurance coverage, and may also ask the parent to sign a waiver allowing for emergency medical treatment in the case of a student accident or illness during the field trip.

The district may require a fee for student participation in a field trip to cover expenses such as transportation, admission, and meals; however, a student will not be denied participation because of financial need.

## **Searches**

### ***District Property***

Desks, lockers, district-provided technology, and similar items are the property of the district and are provided for student use as a matter of convenience. District property is subject to search or inspection at any time without notice. Students have no expectation of privacy in district property.

Students are responsible for any item—found in district property provided to the student—that is prohibited by law, district policy, or the Student Code of Conduct.

### ***Searches in General***

In the interest of promoting student safety and attempting to ensure that schools are safe and drug free, district officials may occasionally conduct searches.

District officials may conduct searches of students, their belongings, and their vehicles in accordance with law and district policy. Searches of students will be conducted without discrimination, based on, for example,

reasonable suspicion, voluntary consent, or pursuant to district policy providing for suspicionless security procedures, including the use of metal detectors.

In accordance with the Student Code of Conduct, students are responsible for prohibited items found in their possession, including items in their personal belongings or in vehicles parked on district property.

If there is reasonable suspicion to believe that searching a student's person, belongings, or vehicle will reveal evidence of a violation of the Student Code of Conduct, a district official may conduct a search in accordance with law and district regulations.

### ***Trained Dogs***

The district will use trained dogs to screen for concealed, prohibited items, including drugs and alcohol. Screenings conducted by trained dogs will not be announced in advance. The dogs will not be used with students, but students may be asked to leave personal belongings in an area that is going to be screened, such as a classroom, a locker, or a vehicle. If a dog alerts to an item or an area, it may be searched by district officials.

### ***Telecommunications and Other Electronic Devices***

Use of district-owned equipment and its network systems is not private and will be monitored by the district. [See policy CQ for more information.]

Any searches of personal telecommunications or other personal electronic devices will be conducted in accordance with law, and the device may be confiscated to perform a lawful search. A confiscated device may be turned over to law enforcement to determine whether a crime has been committed.

[See policy FNF(LEGAL) and Electronic Devices and Technology Resources on page 42 for more information.]

### **Sexual Harassment**

[See **Dating Violence, Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation** on page 32.]

### **Special Programs**

The district provides special programs for gifted and talented students, homeless students, students in foster care, bilingual students, migrant students, English learners, students diagnosed with dyslexia, and students with disabilities. The coordinator of each program can answer questions about eligibility requirements, as well as programs and services offered in the district or by other organizations. A student or parent with questions about these programs should contact the counseling office at 956.399.4358.

### **Standardized Testing**

#### ***Secondary Grade Levels***

#### **SAT / ACT**

#### **(Scholastic Aptitude Test and American College Test)**

Many colleges require either the American College Test (ACT) or the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) for admission. Students are encouraged to talk with the school counselor early during their junior year to determine the appropriate examination to take; these examinations are usually taken at the end of the junior year. The Preliminary SAT (PSAT) and ACT-Aspire are the corresponding preparatory and readiness assessments for the SAT and ACT, and more information can be obtained on these assessments from the school counselor.

**Note:** Participation in these assessments may qualify a student to receive a performance acknowledgment on his or her transcript under the foundation graduation program and may qualify as a substitute for an end-of-course testing requirement in certain circumstances. A student's performance at a certain level on the SAT or ACT also makes the student eligible for automatic admission to a Texas public institution of higher education.

## **STAAR**

### **(State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness)**

#### **Grades 3–8**

In addition to routine tests and other measures of achievement, students at certain grade levels are required to take the state assessment, called STAAR, in the following subjects:

- Mathematics, annually in grades 3–8
- Reading, annually in grades 3–8
- Writing, including spelling and grammar, in grades 4 and 7
- Science in grades 5 and 8
- Social Studies in grade 8

Successful performance on the reading and math assessments in grades 5 and 8 is required by law for the student to be promoted to the next grade level, unless the student is enrolled in a reading or math course intended for students above the student's current grade level. Exceptions may apply for students enrolled in a special education program if the admission, review, and dismissal (ARD) committee concludes the student has made sufficient progress in the student's individualized education plan (IEP). [See **Promotion and Retention** on page 57 for additional information.]

STAAR Alternate 2 is available for eligible students receiving special education services who meet certain state-established criteria as determined by the student's ARD committee.

STAAR Spanish is available for eligible students for whom a Spanish version of STAAR is the most appropriate measure of their academic progress.

#### **High School Courses—End-of-Course (EOC) Assessments**

STAAR end-of-course (EOC) assessments are administered for the following courses:

- Algebra I
- English I and English II
- Biology
- U.S. History

Satisfactory performance on the applicable assessments will be required for graduation, unless otherwise waived or substituted as allowed by state law and rules.

There are three testing windows during the year in which a student may take an EOC assessment, which will occur during the fall, spring, and summer months. If a student does not meet satisfactory performance, the student will have additional opportunities to retake the assessment.

STAAR Alternate 2 is available for eligible students receiving special education services who meet certain criteria established by the state as determined by the student's ARD committee.

An admission, review, and dismissal (ARD) committee for a student receiving special education services will determine whether successful performance on the EOC assessments will be required for graduation within the parameters identified in state rules and the student's personal graduation plan (PNP).

## **Steroids**

State law prohibits students from possessing, dispensing, delivering, or administering an anabolic steroid.

Anabolic steroids are for medical use only, and only a physician can prescribe use.

Body building, muscle enhancement, or the increase of muscle bulk or strength through the use of an anabolic steroid or human growth hormone by a healthy student is not a valid medical use and is a criminal offense.



## **Students in Foster Care**

In an effort to provide educational stability, the district will assist any student who is currently placed or newly placed in foster care (temporary or permanent custody of the state, sometimes referred to as substitute care) with the enrollment and registration process, as well as other educational services throughout the student's enrollment in the district.

Please contact Candance Guillen, who has been designated as the district's foster care liaison, at 956.399.4358 with any questions.

[See **Students in the Conservatorship of the State** on page 19 for more information.]

## **Substance Abuse Prevention and Intervention**

If you are worried that your child may be using or is in danger of experimenting, using, or abusing illegal drugs or other prohibited substances, please contact the school counselor. The school counselor can provide you with a list of community resources that may be of assistance to you. The Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) maintains information regarding children's mental health and substance abuse intervention services on its website: [Mental Health and Substance Abuse](#).

## **Suicide Awareness and Mental Health Support**

The district is committed to partnering with parents to support the healthy mental, emotional, and behavioral development of its students. If you are concerned about your child, please visit [Texas Suicide Prevention](#) or contact the school counselor for more information related to suicide prevention services available in your area. You may also contact the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255.

## **Summer School**

Depending upon the circumstance, students who fail English Language Arts, mathematics, science, or social studies may make up the courses during summer school or may fulfill a contract offered by a teacher if the student is eligible. Summer school is offered for four days per week during the session and it is held RSA.

## **Tardies**

The student must be completely inside the classroom before the tardy bell rings; otherwise, the student will be counted tardy. Ten minutes after the tardy bell rings, students not present will be considered "absent". If the student is considered "absent" they must bring an admittance slip from the attendance office in order to enter class.

The following situations will not be counted against students:

- For students who are tardy for off-campus medical reasons, the student must bring a note of verification to the attendance office for an admit slip. This slip must be presented to the teacher in order to get into class.
- For students who are tardy because they are detained by a teacher, counselor, nurse, or an administrator, the student must have a note from the staff member who detained the student. The note must be presented to the teacher in order to get into class.

- All other tardy situations will be recorded and counted against students. Teachers are responsible for accountability and should only accept students if issued an admit from attendance/tardy kiosk.

**Note:** A student who arrives at school and reports to class after 8:30 AM will be considered tardy. This student is to report directly to tardy kiosk and obtain an admit to class. However, if a parent escorts a student to the office and offers a reason for the late arrival, an administrator or designee can excuse the tardy if he or she considers the reason acceptable. Repeated occurrences of this type of tardy may be considered unacceptable.

## **Tardy/Detention Procedures**

### **Number of Tardy    Consequence**

4 <sup>rd</sup>	One hour of after-school detention
5 <sup>th</sup>	(2) One hour of after-school detention and parent call
6 <sup>th</sup>	(3) 40 minute of lunch detention and parent call
7 <sup>th</sup>	(4) 40 minute of lunch detention and parent call mandatory parent conference
8 <sup>th</sup>	One day of in-school suspension
9 <sup>th</sup>	Two days of in-school suspension and mandatory parent conference with administrator or counselor and the possibility of stricter consequences, including alternative school (persistent misbehavior), may be applied.

### **Detention**

Students may be assigned detention outside of school hours (for not more than an hour at a time) and lunch detention on one or more days if a student violates the school's code of conduct. The detention shall be assigned for the following day so that the teacher and student may notify his/her parents of detention. Failure to attend an assigned detention or violation of detention hall rules will result in further disciplinary action by an administrator.

For after school detention a student must be picked up no later than fifteen minutes after the detention is served. Students may ride the tutorial home if the buses are available.

## **Textbooks, Electronic Textbooks, Technological Equipment, and Other Instructional Materials**

Textbooks and other district-approved instructional materials are provided to students free of charge for each subject or class. Any books must be covered by the student, as directed by the teacher, and treated with care. Electronic textbooks and technological equipment may also be provided to students, depending on the course and course objectives. A student who is issued a damaged item should report the damage to the teacher. Any student failing to return an item in acceptable condition loses the right to free textbooks and technological equipment until the item is returned or the damage paid for by the parent; however, the student will be provided the necessary instructional resources and equipment for use at school during the school day.

## **Transfers**

The principal is authorized to transfer a student from one classroom to another.

[See **Safety Transfers/Assignments** on page 19, **Bullying** on page 26, and **Students Who Have Learning Difficulties or Who Need Special Education or Section 504 Services** on page 20, for other transfer options.]

## Transportation

### ***School-sponsored Trips***

Students who participate in school-sponsored trips are required to use transportation provided by the school to and from the event. As approved by the principal, a coach or sponsor of an extracurricular activity may establish procedures related to making an exception to this requirement when a parent requests that the student be released to the parent or to another adult designated by the parent. [See **School-sponsored Field Trips** on page 61 for more information.]

### ***Buses and Other School Vehicles***

The district makes school bus transportation available to all students living two or more miles from school. This service is provided at no cost to students.

Bus routes and stops will be designated annually, and any subsequent changes will be posted at the school and on the district's website. For the safety of the operator of the vehicle and all passengers, students must board buses or other vehicles only at authorized stops, and drivers must unload passengers only at authorized stops.

A parent may also designate a child-care facility or grandparent's residence as the regular pickup and drop-off location for his or her child. The designated facility or residence must be on an approved stop on an approved route. For information on bus routes and stops or to designate an alternate pickup or drop-off location, you may contact Eduardo Guerra, Facilities/Transportation manager at 399.4358.

[See the Student Code of Conduct for provisions regarding transportation to the DAEP.]

Students are expected to assist district staff in ensuring that buses and other district vehicles remain in good condition and that transportation is provided safely. When riding in district vehicles, including buses, students are held to behavioral standards established in this handbook and the Student Code of Conduct. Students must:

- Follow the driver's directions at all times.
- Enter and leave the vehicle in an orderly manner at the designated stop.
- Keep feet, books, instrument cases, and other objects out of the aisle.
- Not deface the vehicle or its equipment.
- Not put head, hands, arms, or legs out of the window, hold any object out of the window, or throw objects within or out of the vehicle.
- Not possess or use any form of tobacco or e-cigarettes in any district vehicle.
- Observe all usual classroom rules.
- Be seated while the vehicle is moving.
- Fasten their seat belts, if available.
- Wait for the driver's signal upon leaving the vehicle and before crossing in front of the vehicle.
- Follow any other rules established by the operator of the vehicle.

Misconduct will be punished in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct; the privilege to ride in a district vehicle, including a school bus, may be suspended or revoked.

## Vandalism

The taxpayers of the community have made a sustained financial commitment for the construction and upkeep of school facilities. To ensure that school facilities can serve those for whom they are intended—both this year and for years to come—littering, defacing, or damaging school property is not tolerated. Students will be required to pay for damages they cause and will be subject to criminal proceedings as well as disciplinary consequences in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct.

## **Video Cameras**

For safety purposes, video and audio recording equipment is used to monitor student behavior, including on buses and in common areas on campus. Students will not be told when the equipment is being used.

The principal will review the video and audio recordings routinely and document student misconduct.

Discipline will be in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct.

In accordance with state law, a parent of a student who receives special education services, a staff member (as this term is defined by law), a principal or assistant principal, or the board may make a written request for the district to place video and audio recording equipment in certain self-contained special education classrooms. The district will provide notice to before placing a video camera in a classroom or other setting in which your child receives special education services. For more information or to request the installation and operation of this equipment, speak with the principal, who the district has designated to coordinate the implementation of and compliance with this law.

[See EHBAF(LOCAL).]

## **Visitors to the School**

### **General Visitors**

Parents and others are welcome to visit district schools. For the safety of those within the school and to avoid disruption of instructional time, all visitors must first report to the main office and must comply with all applicable district policies and procedures. When arriving on campus, all parents and other visitors should be prepared to show identification.

Visits to individual classrooms during instructional time are permitted only with approval of the principal and teacher and only so long as their duration or frequency does not interfere with the delivery of instruction or disrupt the normal school environment. Even if the visit is approved prior to the visitor's arrival, the individual must check in at the main office first.

All visitors are expected to demonstrate the highest standards of courtesy and conduct; disruptive behavior will not be permitted.

### ***Unauthorized Persons***

In accordance with Education Code 37.105, a school administrator, school resource officer (SRO), or district police officer has the authority to refuse entry or eject a person from district property if the person refuses to leave peaceably on request and:

- The person poses a substantial risk of harm to any person; or
- The person behaves in a manner that is inappropriate for a school setting and the person persists in the behavior after being given a verbal warning that the behavior is inappropriate and may result in refusal of entry or ejection.

Appeals regarding refusal of entry or ejection from district property may be filed in accordance with FNG(LOCAL) or GF(LOCAL).

[See the Student Code of Conduct.]

### ***Visitors Participating in Special Programs for Students***

#### **Business, Civic, and Youth Groups**

The district may invite representatives from patriotic societies listed in Title 36 of the United States Code to present information to interested students about membership in the society.

### **Career Day**

On a designated day the district invites representatives from colleges and universities and other higher education institutions, prospective employers, and military recruiters to present information to interested students.

### **Withdrawing from School**

When a student under age 18 withdraws from school, the parent or guardian must submit a written request to the principal, specifying the reasons for withdrawal and the final day the student will be in attendance. Withdrawal forms are available from the principal's office.

A student who is age 18 or older, who is married, or who has been declared by a court to be an emancipated minor may withdraw without parental signature.

Please provide the school at least three days' notice of withdrawal so that records and documents may be prepared.

## Glossary

**Accelerated instruction** is an intensive supplemental program designed to address the needs of an individual student in acquiring the knowledge and skills required at his or her grade level and/or as a result of a student not meeting the passing standard on a state-mandated assessment.

**ACT**, or the American College Test, is one of the two most frequently used college or university admissions examinations. The test may be required for admission to certain colleges or universities.

**ACT-Aspire** refers to an assessment that took the place of ACT-Plan and is designed as a preparatory and readiness assessment for the ACT. This is usually taken by students in grade 10.

**ARD** stands for admission, review, and dismissal. The ARD committee convenes for each student who is identified as needing a full and individual evaluation for special education services. The eligible student and his or her parents are members of the committee.

**Attendance review committee** is responsible for reviewing a student's absences when the student's attendance drops below 90 percent, or in some cases 75 percent, of the days the class is offered. Under guidelines adopted by the board, the committee will determine whether there were extenuating circumstances for the absences and whether the student needs to complete certain conditions to master the course and regain credit or a final grade lost because of absences.

**CPS** stands for Child Protective Services.

**DAEP** stands for disciplinary alternative education program, a placement for students who have violated certain provisions of the Student Code of Conduct.

**DFPS** is the Texas Department of Family Protective Services.

**DPS** stands for the Texas Department of Public Safety.

**EOC (end-of-course) assessments** are state-mandated and are part of the STAAR program. Successful performance on EOC assessments are required for graduation. These examinations will be given in English I, English II, Algebra I, Biology, and U.S. History.

**ESSA** is the federal Every Student Succeeds Act passed in December 2015.

**FERPA** refers to the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, which grants specific privacy protections to student records. The law contains certain exceptions, such as for directory information, unless a student's parent or a student 18 or older directs the school not to release directory information.

**IEP** stands for individualized education program and is the written record prepared by the ARD committee for a student with disabilities who is eligible for special education services. The IEP contains several parts, such as a statement of the student's present educational performance; a statement of measurable annual goals, with short-term objectives; the special education and related services and supplemental aids and services to be provided, and program modifications or support by school personnel; a statement regarding how the student's progress will be measured and how the parents will be kept informed; accommodations for state or districtwide tests; whether successful completion of state-mandated assessments is required for graduation, etc.

**IGC** is the individual graduation committee, formed in accordance with state law, to determine a student's eligibility to graduate when the student has failed to demonstrate satisfactory performance on no more than two of the required state assessments.

**ISS** refers to in-school suspension, a disciplinary technique for misconduct found in the Student Code of Conduct. Although different from out-of-school suspension and placement in a DAEP, ISS removes the student from the regular classroom.

**PGP** stands for personal graduation plan, which is required for high school students and for any student in middle school who fails a section on a state-mandated test or is identified by the district as not likely to earn a high school diploma before the fifth school year after he or she begins grade 9.

**PSAT** is the preparatory and readiness assessment for the SAT. It also serves as the basis for the awarding of National Merit Scholarships.

**SAT** refers to the Scholastic Aptitude Test, one of the two most frequently used college or university admissions examinations. The test may be required for admissions to certain colleges or universities.

**SHAC** stands for School Health Advisory Council, a group of at least five members, a majority of whom must be parents, appointed by the school board to assist the district in ensuring that local community values and

health issues are reflected in the district's health education instruction, along with providing assistance with other student and employee wellness issues.

**Section 504** is the federal law that prohibits discrimination against a student with a disability, requiring schools to provide opportunities for equal services, programs, and participation in activities. Unless the student is determined to be eligible for special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), general education with appropriate instructional accommodations will be provided.

**STAAR** is the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness, the state's system of standardized academic achievement assessments.

**STAAR Alternate 2** is an alternative state-mandated assessment designed for students with severe cognitive disabilities receiving special education services who meet the participation requirements, as determined by the student's ARD committee.

**STAAR Spanish** is an alternative state-mandated assessment administered to eligible students for whom a Spanish version of STAAR is the most appropriate measure of their academic progress.

**State-mandated assessments** are required of students at certain grade levels and in specified subjects.

Successful performance sometimes is a condition of promotion and passing the STAAR EOC assessments is a condition of graduation. Students have multiple opportunities to take the tests if necessary, for promotion or graduation.

**Student Code of Conduct** is developed with the advice of the district-level committee and adopted by the board and identifies the circumstances, consistent with law, when a student may be removed from a classroom, campus, or district vehicle. It also sets out the conditions that authorize or require the principal or another administrator to place the student in a DAEP. It outlines conditions for out-of-school suspension and for expulsion. The Student Code of Conduct also addresses notice to the parent regarding a student's violation of one of its provisions.

**TAC** stands for the Texas Administrative Code.

**TELPAS** stands for the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System, which assesses the progress that English language learners make in learning the English language and is administered for those who meet the participation requirements in kindergarten–grade 12.

**TSI** stands for the Texas Success Initiative, an assessment designed to measure the reading, mathematics, and writing skills that entering college-level freshmen students should have if they are to be successful in undergraduate programs in Texas public colleges and universities.

**TXVSN** stands for the Texas Virtual School Network, which provides online courses for Texas students to supplement the instructional programs of public school districts. Courses are taught by qualified instructors, and courses are equivalent in rigor and scope to a course taught in a traditional classroom setting.

**UIL** refers to the University Interscholastic League, the statewide, voluntary nonprofit organization that oversees educational extracurricular academic, athletic, and music contests.

## **Appendix: Freedom from Bullying Policy**

**Note:** School board policies may be revised at any time. For legal context and the most current copy of the local policy, visit <https://pol.tasb.org>. Below is the text of South Texas ISD's policy FFI(LOCAL) as of the date this handbook was finalized for this school year.

### **Student Welfare: Freedom from Bullying**

Policy FFI(LOCAL) adopted on November 3, 2017.

<b>Bullying Prohibited</b>	The District prohibits bullying, including cyberbullying, as defined by state law. Retaliation against anyone involved in the complaint process is a violation of District policy and is prohibited.
Examples	Bullying of a student could occur by physical contact or through electronic means and may include hazing, threats, taunting, teasing, confinement, assault, demands for money, destruction of property, theft of valued possessions, name calling, rumor spreading, or ostracism.
<b>Retaliation</b>	The District prohibits retaliation by a student or District employee against any person who in good faith makes a report of bullying, serves as a witness, or participates in an investigation.
Examples	Examples of retaliation may include threats, rumor spreading, ostracism, assault, destruction of property, unjustified punishments, or unwarranted grade reductions. Unlawful retaliation does not include petty slights or annoyances.
<b>False Claim</b>	A student who intentionally makes a false claim, offers false statements, or refuses to cooperate with a District investigation regarding bullying shall be subject to appropriate disciplinary action.
<b>Timely Reporting</b>	Reports of bullying shall be made as soon as possible after the alleged act or knowledge of the alleged act. A failure to immediately report may impair the District's ability to investigate and address the prohibited conduct.
<b>Reporting Procedures</b>	To obtain assistance and intervention, any student who believes that he or she has experienced bullying or believes that another student has experienced bullying should immediately report the alleged acts to a teacher, school counselor, principal, or other District employee. The Superintendent shall develop procedures allowing a student to anonymously report an alleged incident of bullying.
Student Report	
Employee Report	Any District employee who suspects or receives notice that a student or group of students has or may have experienced bullying shall immediately notify the principal or designee.



Report Format	A report may be made orally or in writing. The principal or designee shall reduce any oral reports to written form.
Notice of Report	When an allegation of bullying is reported, the principal or designee shall notify a parent of the alleged victim on or before the third business day after the incident is reported. The principal or designee shall also notify a parent of the student alleged to have engaged in the conduct within a reasonable amount of time after the incident is reported.
Prohibited Conduct	The principal or designee shall determine whether the allegations in the report, if proven, would constitute prohibited conduct as defined by policy FFH, including dating violence and harassment or discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, gender, national origin, or disability. If so, the District shall proceed under policy FFH. If the allegations could constitute both prohibited conduct and bullying, the investigation under FFH shall include a determination on each type of conduct.
Investigation of Report	The principal or designee shall conduct an appropriate investigation based on the allegations in the report. The principal or designee shall promptly take interim action calculated to prevent bullying during the course of an investigation, if appropriate.
Concluding the Investigation	<p>Absent extenuating circumstances, the investigation should be completed within ten District business days from the date of the initial report alleging bullying; however, the principal or designee shall take additional time if necessary to complete a thorough investigation.</p> <p>The principal or designee shall prepare a final, written report of the investigation. The report shall include a determination of whether bullying occurred, and if so, whether the victim used reasonable self-defense. A copy of the report shall be sent to the Superintendent or designee.</p>
Notice to Parents	If an incident of bullying is confirmed, the principal or designee shall promptly notify the parents of the victim and of the student who engaged in bullying.
District Action	If the results of an investigation indicate that bullying occurred, the District shall promptly respond by taking appropriate disciplinary action in accordance with the District's Student Code of Conduct and may take corrective action reasonably calculated to address the conduct. The District may notify law enforcement in certain circumstances.
Bullying	
Discipline	<p>A student who is a victim of bullying and who used reasonable self-defense in response to the bullying shall not be subject to disciplinary action.</p> <p>The discipline of a student with a disability is subject to applicable state and federal law in addition to the Student Code of Conduct.</p>

## Rising Scholars Academy Student Handbook

### *Corrective Action*

Examples of corrective action may include a training program for the individuals involved in the complaint, a comprehensive education program for the school community, follow-up inquiries to determine whether any new incidents or any instances of retaliation have occurred, involving parents and students in efforts to identify problems and improve the school climate, increasing staff monitoring of areas where bullying has occurred, and reaffirming the District's policy against bullying.

### *Transfers*

The principal or designee shall refer to FDB for transfer provisions.

### *Counseling*

The principal or designee shall notify the victim, the student who engaged in bullying, and any students who witnessed the bullying of available counseling options.

### *Improper Conduct*

If the investigation reveals improper conduct that did not rise to the level of prohibited conduct or bullying, the District may take action in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct or any other appropriate corrective action.

### **Confidentiality**

To the greatest extent possible, the District shall respect the privacy of the complainant, persons against whom a report is filed, and witnesses. Limited disclosures may be necessary in order to conduct a thorough investigation.

### **Appeal**

A student who is dissatisfied with the outcome of the investigation may appeal through FNG(LOCAL), beginning at the appropriate level.

### **Records Retention**

Retention of records shall be in accordance with CPC(LOCAL).

### **Access to Policy and Procedures**

This policy and any accompanying procedures shall be distributed annually in the employee and student handbooks. Copies of the policy and procedures shall be posted on the District's website, to the extent practicable, and shall be readily available at each campus and the District's administrative offices.

## Index

### absences

- doctor's note, 33
- excused, 29
- extenuating circumstances, 31
- for college visits, 29
- for competition, 53
- for playing "Taps", 30
- for students in foster care, 29
- makeup work, 71
- military families, 22, 29
- parent's note, 32, 33
- unexcused, 30
- See also* attendance.

### academic programs

- nontraditional, 74
- parent involvement, 74

### accelerated instruction

- attendance, 28, 30
- failure to meet passing standards on state assessment, 28
- reading instruction, 28

### accident insurance, 79

### accountability of the school district, 33

### ADA/Section 504 coordinator, 73

### admission, review, and dismissal (ARD) committee, 59

### admissions

- college and university, 38
- University of Texas at Austin, 38

### Advanced Placement (AP) courses, 39

### anaphylaxis, 73

*See also* food allergies.

### Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery

test, 34

### asbestos, 66

### assistance animals, 23

### attendance, 28

- college visits, 29
- compulsory, 28, 29
- doctor's note, 33
- driver license, 33
- extenuating circumstances, 31
- for credit, 31
- for final grade, 31
- military families, 22

official attendance-taking time, 32

parent's note, 32

principal's plan, 31

students 19 or older, 28

students with disabilities, 30

truancy court, 31

truancy prevention measures, 30

unexcused absences, 30

warning letter, 30

attendance review committee, 31, 43

automatic admission, 38

awarding credit, 43

awards, 34

### **bacterial meningitis, 62**

communicability, 63

defined, 62

prevention, 63

symptoms, 62

***See also* contagious diseases.**

bilingual programs, 27, 51

### bullying, 34

counseling, 35

cyberbullying, 34

policy, 95

school safety transfer, 23

*See also* hazing.

bus rules, 88

### buses

hazardous route pickup, 88

pickup and drop-off locations, 88

required conduct, 88

routes and schedules, 88

Buses, 88

cafeteria, 81

campus behavior coordinator, 41

career and technical education (CTE), 35

college credit courses, 39

counseling, 42

nondiscrimination statement, 36

Celebrate Freedom Week, 16

celebrations, 36

cell phones, 50

certificate of attendance, 59

certificate of coursework completion, 59

child abuse, 36

- class changes, 87
- class rank**, 37
- class schedules, 38
  - partial vs. full-time, 38
  - schedule changes, 80
- classroom parties, 36
- clubs. *See* extracurricular activities.
- college
  - admissions, 38
  - credit, 39
  - University of Texas at Austin, 38
  - visits, 29
- communicable diseases
  - See* contagious diseases.
- communications, automated, 39
  - emergency, 39
  - nonemergency, 40
- complaints, 21, 40
- conduct, 40
  - at social events, 42
  - before and after school, 81
  - campus behavior coordinator, 41
  - disrupting school operations, 41
  - on school buses, 88
  - on school transportation, 41
  - use of hallways, 81
  - when school rules apply, 40
- contagious diseases, 62
  - bacterial meningitis**, 62
  - excluding from school, 62
  - leaving campus in case of illness, 70
- corporal punishment, 12
- correspondence courses. *See* distance learning.
- counseling
  - academic, 42
  - grades 7 and 8, 42
  - at elementary and middle/junior high school, 42
  - personal, 42
  - postsecondary education, 42
- credit
  - by exam, 43
  - for acceleration or advancement, 43
  - with prior instruction, 43
  - without prior instruction, 43
  - credit recovery, 43
  - for coursework, 43
  - partial credit, 43
- CTE insurance, 79
- dating violence, 44
- Declaration of Independence
  - excusing a student from reciting, 16
- deliveries, 41
- Department of Public Safety (DPS), 33
- diabetes, 73
- directory information, 10, 13
- disabled students, 27
- discrimination, 45
- distance learning, 47
- distribution**, 48
  - nonschool materials
    - by others, 48
    - by students, 48
  - school materials, 48
- doctor's appointments, 29
- dress code, 49
- driver license, 33
  - verification of enrollment form, 33
- drug testing, 84
  - See also* steroids.
- dual-credit programs, 39
- early mental health intervention, 86
- earning credit, 43
- e-cigarettes. *See* electronic cigarettes.
- elections for student clubs and organizations, 53
- electronic cigarettes, 66
- electronic media
  - contact between student and staff, 12
- end-of-course (EOC) assessments, 85
- English as a second language, 27, 51
- English learner, 27, 51
- exams. *See* tests.
- extracurricular activities, 52
  - conduct, 53
  - eligibility, 52
  - fees, 54
  - meetings, 82
  - offices and elections for student clubs and organizations, 53
- fees, 53

- graduation, 60
- waivers, 54
- field trips, 82
- fire drills, 79
- Fitnessgram. *See* physical fitness assessment.
- food allergies, 64
  - management plan, 64
  - See also* anaphylaxis.
  - See also* celebrations.
- foster care liaison, 86
- foster students. *See* students in foster care.
- foundation graduation program
  - distinguished level of achievement, 56
  - endorsements, 56
  - personal graduation plans (PGP), 58
  - See also* graduation programs.
- fundraising, 54
- gang-free zones, 55
- gender-based harassment, 45, 46
- grades, 55
  - classification by credits, 55
- grading guidelines, 55
- graduation, 56
  - activities, 60
  - certificates of coursework completion, 59
  - end-of-course (EOC) assessments, 56
  - expenses, 60
  - individual graduation committee (IGC), 56, 60
  - individualized education program (IEP), 59
  - personal graduation plan (PGP)
    - for middle school or junior high, 77
    - under the foundation graduation program, 58
- programs
  - advanced/distinguished level of achievement, 38
  - foundation program, 56
- requirements, 56
  - for automatic college admissions, 38
- student speakers, 60
- students with disabilities, 59
- See also credit; grades; standardized tests.**
- grants, 61
- grievances. *See* complaints.
- grooming standards, 49
- hall pass, 81
- harassment, 45
  - gender-based, 45, 46
  - investigation, 46
  - reporting, 46
  - retaliation, 46
  - sexual, 45
- hazing, 61
  - See also* bullying.
- head lice, 64
- health education
  - School Health Advisory Council, 74
- health instruction, 11
- health screenings, 75
- health-related matters, 62
  - asbestos, 66
  - electronic cigarettes, 66
  - food allergies, 64
  - pest management, 66
  - physical fitness, 64, 65
  - sunscreen, 72
  - tobacco, 66
  - vending machines, 66
- homeless students, 24, 67
  - diplomas, 24
  - school of origin, 24
- homework, 67, 74
  - electronic and social media, 12
  - See also makeup work.**
- honors, 34
- human sexuality instruction, 15
  - curriculum, 16
  - removing a child from class, 16
  - reviewing materials, 16
- illness
  - leaving campus, 70
  - See also* contagious diseases.
- immunization, 67**
  - exemptions for reasons of conscience, 67
  - medical exemptions, 67
  - required immunizations, 67
- individual graduation committee (IGC)
  - graduation, 56, 60

- individualized education program (IEP)
  - and eligibility for extracurricular activities, 53
  - graduation, 59
- instructional materials, 17, 18, 87
- International Baccalaureate (IB) courses, 39
- joint high school and college programs, 39
- laptops, 50
- law enforcement**, 68
  - notification of law violations, 69
  - questioning of students, 68
  - students taken into custody, 68
  - verification of officer's identity and authority, 69
- learning difficulties, 25
- leaving campus, 69
  - during lunch, 70
  - in case of student illness, 70
  - signing a student out, 69
- legal guardian
  - defined, 9
- liaison for homeless children and youths, 67
- liaison for students in conservatorship of the state, 86
- library, 82
- lice. *See* head lice.
- limited English proficiency (LEP). *See* English learner
- lost and found, 70
- makeup work, 71
  - during in-school suspension, 71
  - for absences, 71
  - in DAEP, 71
  - penalties, 71
- medical emergency, 79, 82
- medicine**, 72
  - allergies, 73
  - asthma, 73
  - diabetes, 73
  - herbal or dietary supplements, 72
  - insect repellent, 72
  - nonprescription, 72
  - prescription, 72
  - psychotropic drugs, 73
  - sunscreen, 72
- meditation, 76
- meetings of noncurriculum-related groups, 82
- mental health, 86
  - early intervention, 86
- mental health support**, 87
- metal detectors, 83
- Military Aptitude test, 34
- military recruiters, 14
- minute of silence, 17, 76
  - in observance of September 11, 2001, 76
- mobile phones, 50
- multiple birth siblings, 22
- National School Lunch Program, 81
- netbooks, 50
- newspaper (school newspaper), 48
- no pass, no play, 47, 53
- nondiscrimination, 73
- organizations, student. *See* extracurricular activities.
- parent
  - access to student records, 19
  - being involved**, 74
  - defined, 9
  - organizations, 74
  - rights, 11
  - volunteering, 74, 90
- parenting and paternity awareness, 11
- pediculosis. *See* head lice.
- personal appearance, 49
- personal graduation plan (PGP)
  - for middle school or junior high, 77
  - under the foundation graduation program, 58
- pest management, 66
- physical activity, 64
- physical examinations, 15
  - athletic participation, 75
- physical fitness assessment, 65
- pledges of allegiance, 76
  - excusing a student from reciting, 17
- police. See law enforcement.**
- police dogs, 83
- prayer, 76
- privacy
  - and personal telecommunications devices, 50

- during an investigation of prohibited conduct, 46
- on district-owned equipment and networks, 83
- student records, 19, 21
- programs
  - before and after school, 80
- progress reports**, 78
- prohibited conduct, 44
  - investigation, 46
  - reporting, 46
  - See also* bullying; dating violence; discrimination; harassment; hazing; retaliation; sexting; vandalism; video cameras.
- promotion and retention, 76
  - personal graduation plan (PGP) for middle school or junior high, 77
  - STAAR, 76
  - See also* credit; grades; standardized tests.
- protected information, 14
- psychological evaluation, 11
- published material
  - from outside sources, 48
  - from students, 48
  - school materials, 48
- recording
  - permission, 11
  - without parental consent, 11
- release of students from school. *See* leaving campus.
- religion
  - and immunization, 67
  - and surveys, 15
  - holy days, 29
  - nondiscrimination, 73
- religious or moral beliefs
  - and removal from the classroom, 17
- report cards**, 78
  - parent's signature, 78
  - parent-teacher conferences, 78
  - See also* grades.
- retaliation, 35, 46
- rights
  - parental, 11
  - student, 14
- safety, 79
  - emergency medical treatment and information, 79, 82
  - emergency preparedness, 79
  - emergency school closing, 80
  - fire, tornado, and severe weather drills, 79
  - football helmets, 52
  - insurance, 79
  - on campus, 79
  - on district vehicles, 79
  - preparedness drills, 79
  - student conduct, 79
  - UIL rules, 52
  - video cameras, 89
- SAT/ACT, 84
- schedules. *See* class schedules.
- scholarships, 61
- School Breakfast Program, 81
- school closings, 80
- school dances, 42
- school facilities, 80
  - before and after school, 80
  - cafeteria, 81
  - meetings, 82
- School Health Advisory Council, 15
  - SHAC, 65
- school nurse, 63, 67, 70, 72, 73
  - emergency medical treatment and information, 80
  - sending a student home in case of illness, 70
  - student exemption from immunization, 67
- searches, 83
  - desks and lockers, 82
  - district-owned equipment and networks, 83
  - drug testing, 84
  - metal detectors, 83
  - personal electronic devices, 50, 83
  - trained dogs, 83
- Section 504. *See* students with disabilities.,  
*See* students with disabilities.
- service animals, 23
- sex education. *See* human sexuality instruction.
- sexting, 51

- sexual abuse of a child, 36
  - counseling options, 37
  - reporting, 37
  - warning signs, 36
- sexual harassment, 45
- SHAC. *See* School Health Advisory Council.
- signing a student out. *See* leaving campus.
- special education, 25, 27
  - graduation, 59
- special programs, 84
  - coordinator, 84
- Spinal Screening Program, 75
- standardized tests, 84
  - end-of-course (EOC) assessments, 85
  - English learner, 52
  - SAT/ACT, 84
  - STAAR**, 85
  - TSI assessment, 84
  - tutoring, 17
  - See also* credit; grades; graduation; promotion and retention.
- State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR), 85
  - promotion and retention, 76
  - retaking, 77
  - STAAR Alternate 2, 85
- steroids, 86
  - See also* drug testing.
- Student Code of Conduct, 9, 18, 40, 48, 49, 50, 51, 53, 61, 66, 79, 81, 88, 89
- student groups, 53, 54, 82
  - See also* extracurricular activities.
- student illness
  - leaving campus, 70
  - See also* contagious diseases.
- student records, 18
  - accrediting organizations, 20
  - colleges and postsecondary schools, 20
  - confidentiality, 19
  - copies, 21
  - corrections, 21
  - court orders, 20
  - custodian, 21
  - directory information, 13
  - driver license attendance verification, 33
  - financial aid, 20
  - government agencies, 20
  - institutions of higher education, 14
  - military recruiters, 14
  - released with permission, 20
  - school officials, 20
  - students age 18 or older, 19
- student speakers, 86
  - See also* graduation, student speakers.
- student work
  - display of, 11
  - publishing, 11
- students in conservatorship of the state, 24
- students in conservatorship of the state. *See* students in foster care.
- students in foster care, 23, 86
  - diplomas for students in conservatorship of the state, 23
  - educational services, 86
  - enrollment assistance, 86
  - enrollment of students in conservatorship of the state, 23
  - exemptions to compulsory attendance, 29
  - foster care liaison, 86
- students with disabilities, 27
  - graduation, 59
  - nondiscrimination, 73
  - Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, 27, 73
- students with learning difficulties, 25
- substance abuse prevention and intervention, 86
- suicide awareness**, 87
- summer school**, 87
- surveys, 14
  - inspecting, 15
  - opting out, 15
- tablets, 50
- tardiness, 87
- teacher and staff qualifications, 21
- technology**, 50
  - acceptable use of district resources, 51
  - confiscated devices, 50
  - instructional use of personal electronic devices, 50
  - personal electronic devices, 50



- personal telecommunications devices, 50
- prohibited uses of district resources, 51
- recording still and video images
  - prohibited, 50
- searches of personal devices, 50
- unauthorized use, 50
- test preparation. *See* tutoring.
- tests, 17
  - confidentiality, 19
  - credit by exam, 43
  - exams for acceleration or grade advancement, 43
  - personal electronic devices, 50
  - scores, 18
  - See* also standardized tests.
- Texas Success Initiative (TSI) assessment, 84
- Texas Virtual School Network (TXVSN), 39, 47
- textbooks, 17, 87
- Title IX Coordinator, 73
- tobacco prohibited, 66
- top 25 percent, 38
- top ten percent, 38
- tornado drills, 79
- transfers, 87
  - multiple birth siblings, 22
  - safety reasons, 23
  - special education, 27
  - students who are victims of bullying, 35
  - students who engage in bullying, 23, 35
  - unsafe schools, 23
  - victims of bullying, 23
- transportation**, 87
  - school-sponsored trips, 87
- truancy, 30
  - prevention measures, 30
  - truancy court, 31
- tutoring, 17
  - removal from classroom, 17
  - school services, 17
- UIL. *See* University Interscholastic League.
- unexcused absences, 30
- university admissions. *See* college admissions.
- University Interscholastic League (UIL), 52
  - condition of football helmets, 52
  - safety rules, 52
- use of school facilities**, 80
- vandalism, 89
- vaping. *See* electronic cigarettes.
- vending machines. *See* health, vending machines.
- video cameras, 89
- visitors**, 89
  - business, civic, and youth groups, 90
  - career day, 90
  - classroom observation, 90
  - parents, 89
  - patriotic societies, 90
  - unauthorized persons, 90
- vocational education. *See* career and technical education (CTE).
- volunteers, 74, 90
- voter registration, 91
- withdrawing from school, 91
- yearbook, 48