

Mark Twain Elementary School

Parent Handbook

2025- 2026

Michele Rawson, Principal

7500 Braes Blvd.
Houston, TX 77025
(713)295-5230
<http://houstonisd.org/twaines>



Welcome to Mark Twain Elementary

Mark Twain Elementary IB World School opened its doors on September 11, 1950. In 2005, we moved into the state-of-the art campus that we currently occupy and became the first elementary school in Texas to become an authorized International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program school. The Primary Years Program is our foundation and culminates in the Fifth Grade when students participate in the PYP Exhibition, a celebration of their years in the PYP program. Mark Twain continues to hold a Texas Education Agency (TEA) Accountability rating of an A.

Mark Twain teachers are committed to providing high quality instruction in an environment that encourages creativity and inquiry. As an IB World School offering the Primary Years Program, Mark Twain is committed to ensuring that the learning is engaging, relevant, challenging, and significant.

The International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program offers a comprehensive inquiry-based approach to teaching and learning for all children. The program focuses on the total growth of the developing child, affecting hearts as well as minds and addressing social, physical, emotional, and cultural needs in addition to academic welfare. In the PYP, a balance is sought between acquisition of essential knowledge and skills, development of conceptual understanding, demonstration of positive attitudes, and taking responsible action.

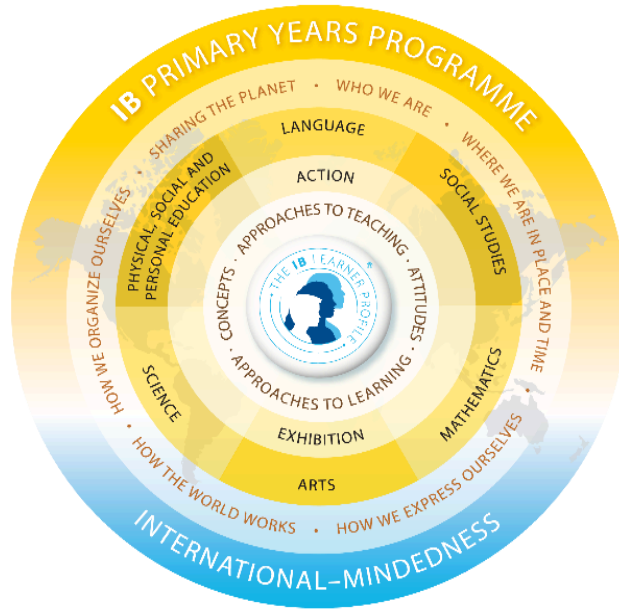
Mark Twain's faculty provides our Program of Inquiry, a curriculum framework that integrates the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills within the framework of PYP's six transdisciplinary themes: Who We Are, Where We Are in Place and Time, How We Express Ourselves, How the World Works, How We Organize Ourselves, and Sharing the Planet.

We aim to develop internationally-minded people who, recognizing their common humanity and shared guardianship of the planet, help to create a better and more peaceful world.

I'm looking forward to another wonderful year!

Michele Rawson

Principal



MARK TWAIN MISSION STATEMENT

Mark Twain Elementary is a community of life-long learners, built upon a collaborative spirit that fosters inquiry-based learning. Our purpose is to promote and develop responsible, active, and reflective citizens of the world.

IB MISSION STATEMENT

The International Baccalaureate (IB) aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect. To this end the organization works with schools, governments and international organizations to develop challenging programs of international education and rigorous assessment. These programs encourage students across the world to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right.

CURRICULUM

As an IB school offering the Primary Years Program (PYP), Mark Twain is dedicated to inquiry-based transdisciplinary teaching and learning. We develop a Program of Inquiry (POI), our comprehensive curriculum framework consisting of Units of Inquiry. Grade level teams work together to ensure that the Units are implemented with integrity to the IB standards. The Program of Inquiry is posted in the main hallway and on the school website.

Collaborative Planning. Grade levels meet bi-weekly throughout the year with school administrators to collaboratively plan and create curriculum in keeping with IB guidelines. This PYP collaborative planning is provided in addition to teachers' daily planning time and is critical to the continued improvement of our teaching and learning. Grade level teams also meet weekly to share information and align instructional practices.

Written Curriculum. The Units of Inquiry, created by grade level teams with the IB coordinator, are our primary curriculum documents. Texas standards (TEKS) are also referenced when developing weekly lesson plans. Incorporating the 5 E Model (engage, explore, explain, elaborate, evaluate) with other models of the Inquiry Cycle, ensures that the Units are implemented with fidelity and meet our goal of providing inquiry-based instruction. Thoughtfully integrating the TEKS into the Units of Inquiry provides relevance and authenticity to the State mandated objectives.

INSTRUCTION

The **International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program (IB PYP)** curriculum created and developed at Mark Twain provides depth and complexity, integrating and extending the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). A major tenant of IB is international-mindedness that encourages understanding of multiple perspectives of global issues through guided inquiry. All content areas include Reading, English Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies which are integrated into our planners.

Formative and Summative Assessments, developed by the teachers, are administered each year at Mark Twain. All students in grades K-5 will be administered a Beginning of the Year (BOY), Middle of the Year (MOY), and End of the Year (EOY) district assessment called the NWEA MAP assessment. This is an online assessment administered in math (kinder-5th grade), reading (2nd-5th grade), science (2nd-5th grade), and Spanish (2nd-5th grade dual language). Parent reports will be sent home in the Tuesday Folders. In addition, all kindergarten and 1st grade students are given a district reading fluency assessment called DIBELS three times a year to measure growth. In the spring of each year students in grades 3-5 will take the state STAAR assessment. These assessments are in addition to the classroom assessments aligned to the curriculum.

The **Dual Language Program** is an innovative program that provides a cohesive bilingual, bi-literate, and bi-cultural environment for an equal number of Spanish speaking and English speaking students in participating classrooms. There is an emphasis on literacy in Spanish for both groups, enrichment through a technological component and the encouragement of strong parental participation. Applications are available in the Fall of 2025 for the following school year. For more information, contact Gracie Martinez at gmartin6@houstonisd.org

ENRICHMENT/SUPPORT PROGRAMS

The International Baccalaureate curriculum developed by the teachers provides the depth and complexity as recognized by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and Texas Association for the Gifted & Talented (TAGT). All teachers and administrators are Gifted and Talented (GT) trained and provide differentiated instruction that meet the academic needs of all students. Our goal is for all students to acquire knowledge, master skills, understand concepts, develop attitudes, and decide to take action.

HISD uses four criteria for GT identification - cognitive abilities test, standardized test, report card grades, and teacher recommendation. Testing opportunities are scheduled according to the district testing calendar. For more information regarding policies and procedures, please contact Kathleen Blakeslee, IB & GT coordinator, KBLAKESL@houstonisd.org

Special Education Services at Mark Twain include speech therapy, resource, co-teach, Skills for Living and Learning, and Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE). Ms. Dani Aschman is our Special Education Chair.

Students having difficulty in the classroom can be referred to the Multi-Tiered Support System (MTSS). The MTSS committee will meet with teachers and parents to define the problem and develop a course of action. State Law and HISD policy requires schools adopt a three-tier approach known as Response to Intervention (RTI). Parents should work closely with the classroom teacher to identify and remediate any areas of concern whether they be academic, social, or behavioral. If you have questions about any of our support services, please contact Melissa Powers, MTSS chair, Mpowers1@houstonisd.org

The **elementary school counselor's** role is to develop a comprehensive program designed to meet students' unique social and emotional needs. The delivery of these services includes direct student services (short-term individual and group counseling, class lessons, student planning, student group activities, and responsive services) and indirect student services (referrals, collaboration, and consultation). Please contact our school counselor, Sylvia Harris at Sylvia.Harris@houstonisd.org for more information.

Mark Twain Specials, our enrichment classes are listed below:

Spanish – Mrs. Desi Filis. Spanish instruction is offered to every child at Mark Twain. The objectives are to build vocabulary, improve listening skills, create meaning, and develop comprehension. It combines a child-centered, multi-sensory approach with an understanding of Hispanic culture.

Art – Mrs. Christine Cowan. The fine arts curriculum is made of the following components - creating, responding, and connecting. Through inquiry the students gain a well-rounded art experience which incorporates art history, creative thinking, aesthetics, and real world connections in a hands-on art activity.

Music – Dr. Miles Ward. The music curriculum includes four basic strands - perception, creative expression/performance, historical and cultural heritage, and critical evaluation. All students attend music and participate in a program during the school year.

Science Lab – Mrs. Krystal Carter. The Science Lab provides hands-on experiences designed to extend lessons learned in the classroom. The lab environment provides an opportunity for improving skills in observation, prediction, and compiling and analyzing data. These skills promote logical and critical thinking.

Outdoor Science - Dr. Stacey Grunke - All grade levels will attend our Outdoor Science classroom as part of their specials rotations. Dr. Grunke works with the students on developing an awareness of our environment through hands-on activities working with the plants within our garden area.

Librarian – Mrs. Sara Friesen. The combination of library and computer lab will help prepare the children for a 21st century learning environment.

Physical Education – Coach Paula Cesear. In Physical Education, students acquire the knowledge and skills for movement that provide the foundation for enjoyment, continued social development through physical activity, and access to a physically-active lifestyle. The student exhibits a physically-active lifestyle and understands the relationship between physical activity and health throughout the lifespan.

Maker Space provides several opportunities outside the classroom and Specials schedule. It is a hands-on environment where students explore their ideas to create tangible projects. They have access to various tools, materials, and technologies, enabling them to experiment, design and iterate. This encourages students to think “outside the box” and fosters creativity, cognitive development, spatial reasoning, and problem solving.

There are several **OPTIONAL PROGRAMS**, also listed below:

Strings Program. Violin and cello are available for a fee. Students receive both a private lesson and group lessons. Parents interested in having their child participate in strings lessons should contact Elizabeth Carbral at 713-295-5230 or ecabral@houstonisd.org

Extended Day Program. The Extended Day program offers after school care on campus. The enrollment forms are available in the school office. Spaces are limited. Contact mtafterschool@gmail.com if you have questions. Extended Day is offered until 5:30 p.m. Please make sure you are on time picking students up.

Activities/Events. In addition to core classes, many additional activities are offered to students. These programs are made possible through a coordinated effort between the staff, parent volunteers, and the community. Some activities include UIL, Odyssey of the Mind, Robotics, and Name that Book. There are numerous events throughout the year that include STEAM Night (science, technology, engineering, art, math), Book Fair, Spooky Spectacular, and grade level music programs, to name a few.

COMMUNICATION

Consistent communication is a cornerstone of a successful school community. *Please remember to check Parent Square, Tuesday folders, email, and read the Twain Times to stay current on Mark Twain news.*

The primary methods of communicating between the school and families will be the following:

First Day Packet. A packet is sent home with every child and the forms **must** be filled out completely and returned for every child. It is important that you take the time to read through the information that is contained in this packet.

Student Handbook. The student handbook is available on the Mark Twain website at www.houstonisd.org/twaines.

Twain Times. Weekly school e-newsletter that goes out every Tuesday. Sign up at www.marktwainpto.org using the “join mailing list” link. Contact twaintimes@gmail.com for more information.

HISD Parent Portal is an online service launched by HISD in September 2009. Parents must register each child separately. The service provides access to information that includes:

- Period and Daily Attendance
- Class Schedules and Assignments
- Student Grades
- Parent and Student Resources

Log in at www.houstonisd.org/psc or register at www.houstonisd.org/pscregister.

Parents will need the following information to complete registration:

- Student ID number (HISD)
- Student date of birth
- Last five digits of student's Social Security number if on file with HISD. If not on file, use the last five digits of the "S-Number" provided to your child by HISD.

Parent Square. Electronic messaging system that allows communication between all levels of the school community. Updating your information in HISD PowerSchool will link to Parent Square. Link to update information is [here](#). If you have questions or concerns, please contact Melissa Powers at mpowers1@houstonisd.org

Tuesday Folders. Folders go home every Tuesday and may contain both classroom notices and important school-wide communications. The folder will contain weekly conduct, student work, and graded papers.

School Messenger System. Telephone notification system which is primarily used when immediate notification is necessary (i.e. weather emergency, evacuation etc.). Please make sure we have current phone numbers on file for you in the office. If you are a working parent, please make sure we have a cell phone number and work number on file.

Shared Decision Making Committee. Advisory committee to the principal. Parents may submit items for the agenda by emailing Denise Rodriguez at drodrigu@houstonisd.org. Minutes of the SDMC meetings are available on the school website.

Parent-Teacher Conferences. The collaborative relationship between parents and teachers is an important facet of a child's education. Conferences can be scheduled with teachers on an as needed basis. Please remember that 7:30 a.m. is not an appropriate time to meet with teachers as it is the start of the instructional day. If you need to conference with a teacher, please contact them to arrange a time that is amenable to all parties. Teachers are committed to working with parents to accommodate work schedules and families that have more than one child attending Mark Twain. There will be two opportunities during the school year for formal parent-teacher conferences.

Student Led Conferences. Student Led Conferences are scheduled twice a year for students in all grades. This is a wonderful opportunity for the children to share their learning with parents and guardians.

Report Cards. Report cards are given out at the end of every six-week grading period, which indicates progress towards mastery of the grade level proficiencies. They are sent home per the HISD grading calendar. Progress Reports and Report Cards need to be signed and returned to the classroom teacher.

Progress Reports. Progress Reports are sent home in the third week of each six-week grading period. Progress Reports and Report Cards need to be signed and returned to the classroom teacher. They are sent home per the HISD grading calendar.

HOMEWORK

The assignment of homework is the decision of the classroom teacher. However, grade level teams work to develop general guidelines. It is the responsibility of all students to complete the homework assignments and meet all deadlines regarding homework. Teachers will provide parents with homework policies and expectations specific to their classroom during their Parent Information Night presentation. Questions regarding homework should be directed to the classroom teacher.

“Homework assignments should provide students with an opportunity to practice what they’re learning in the classroom. It is a tool in the learning process, not an instrument to measure understanding.” Grading Smarter Not Harder - Myron Dueck

ATTENDANCE

STUDENTS ARE REQUIRED TO MEET THE HISD ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS FOR PROMOTION.

Failure due to excessive absences can be appealed to the School Attendance Committee if the absences were due to extenuating circumstances.

Absences and Tardiness. The Texas Education Code (25.092) sets a minimum attendance requirement of 90 percent of class meetings for the award of credit based on the number of days enrolled. District promotion standards for grades 1-8 also require 90% attendance. Students that miss in excess of this amount may not be promoted.

If a student is not present at 9:00 a.m. he/she will be counted absent according to HISD attendance guidelines. Classroom instruction begins at 7:30 a.m. Parents should make every effort to have children in school and on time by 7:30am every day so that they can maximize their learning. Parents will receive an automated phone message from HISD every time a child is absent. There is no need to call the school if you receive this phone call.

The parent or guardian of a student who has been absent must present a written excuse within 3 days of the absence. Absences are excused for reasons such as personal illness, illness or death in the family, quarantine, or adverse weather or road conditions. Absences may also be excused when students are participating in school activities. Absences for family vacations are not excused. If an excuse is not submitted then the absence will be considered an unexcused absence. Please submit an excuse note for all absences.

It is important for students to arrive at school by 7:20 a.m. to allow time to be settled before the instructional day begins at 7:30 a.m. Students can enter the cafeteria for breakfast at 7:10 a.m. They can enter the front door at 7:20 a.m. If students arrive after 7:30 a.m. parents are required to sign students in at the front desk for a tardy slip. It is important that every child arrives on time each day.

Parents must sign in their child every time their child does not arrive at school by 7:30 a.m. (Elementary School Guidelines XVI-30). The first minutes of the day are critical and every effort should be made for children to arrive at school before the 7:30 a.m. bell. Tardies affect student conduct each grading period, and possibly attending field trips.

3 tardies the highest conduct grade is an S

4-6 tardies the highest conduct grade is a P

7 plus tardies the highest conduct grade is an U

MORNING & AFTERNOON PROCEDURES

Arrival. Students report to classrooms at 7:20 a.m. Please be mindful that students need the beginning of the morning to prepare for the instructional day.

The circle drive in front of the school is closed to traffic at 7:05 am - please use the carpool lane for arrival. The carpool lane is closed to traffic at 7:30 a.m. Once the carpool lane closes, all parents must park and walk their child into the building to sign them in for a tardy.

Safety Patrol will arrive through the front doors between 7:00-7:05 a.m.

Dismissal

Dismissal for all students begins at 2:55 p.m. Parents either 1) drive through the car pool lane, 2) walk to the front of the building, or 3) walk to the Cottage Courtyard via the Garden Gate to receive their children. Parents need to display their student dismissal card for staff to see. **Any changes to a family's dismissal arrangements must be communicated to the classroom teacher 24 hours in advance.**

- Dismissal Areas for Student Walkers:
 - Kindergarten, SLL, and ECSE dismiss from the Kinder Hallway Back Door.
 - Third Grade dismisses in the Cottage Courtyard.
 - All other grade levels (1st, 2nd, 4th, 5th) dismiss through the front door.
- Dismissal for all Carpool Students is from the cafeteria.
- Dismissal for Students who go to the Y is supervised by staff who meet the Y staff at the gate.
- Dismissal for Students who attend private day care is supervised by staff who escort students to their respective bus.
- Dismissal for Students who ride HISD buses is supervised by staff who escort students to their respective buses.

Students **cannot** be checked out from the office after 2:30 p.m. If it is necessary to pick up your child early from school, please do so before 2:30 p.m.

Please make sure that your child understands the dismissal procedures and your family's after school plan. Parents are required to complete their After-School Plan form during our Meet the Teacher event OR on the first day of school.

- **When a child has parent permission to be an independent walker, the parents need to provide the teacher with an Independent Walker Form.**
- Children are not allowed to leave with anyone who is not listed on the emergency contact form. Please make sure that you list those authorized to pick up your child and supply reliable contact numbers for yourself and those individuals. Any change to this information must be updated to the office in writing.

Parking is available:

- Braes Blvd. parking lot by the ball fields.
- Braes Blvd. between Mark Twain and Pershing.
- Side streets around the school - please make sure that you leave ample space for our neighbors to access their homes and **do not block driveways.**
- Underwood parking lot is reserved for visitors and volunteers. It may **not** be used for drop off and pick up.
- The parking lot on Aberdeen is reserved for faculty and staff. **For the safety of your children, please do not drop off or pick up from this location.** Likewise, please do **not** park in these spots as they are assigned to specific staff members.
- Limited Library parking is available for brief periods only.
- **The front of the school is a fire zone. City of Houston fire code prohibits parking in fire zones.**

Carpool Instructions

1. The carpool lane for drop-off and pick-up of all students in grades K-5 is located on Aberdeen (south side of school).
2. The carpool line forms on the southbound side of Braes Blvd. along the front of the school. Drivers can not enter the carpool line from Aberdeen or northbound Braes.
3. There are **no left turns** into or out of the carpool lane on Aberdeen.
4. There is no parking in the carpool lane; and parents cannot leave their cars. It is a fire zone.
5. Parents need to display their student dismissal card for school staff.
6. Students are called from the cafeteria and escorted to the cars by staff and/or Safety Patrol.
7. **Students exit and enter cars only from the passenger side of the car.** Entering the lane of traffic to get in the car is not safe!
8. **Cell phone use is prohibited in school zones** – including the carpool lane (per Texas Transportation Code - Section 545.425).
9. A parent/guardian may be asked to show identification if they are not recognized by the staff members assisting with dismissal. *Remember – students may be picked up only by those individuals listed on the enrollment card.*

Bicycles: Bike racks are located by the garden and cafeteria entrance. Students and parents who ride bicycles to school need to follow the traffic laws of all vehicles. Motorists should be particularly watchful of pedestrians and cyclists - especially during heavy traffic time.

Please remember students need parent supervision while playing on school grounds after school.

VISITORS

Houston Independent School District policy requires that all visitors to the school present their driver's license or other accepted form of identification to the office, register as a visitor and obtain a badge to be worn while in the building. This includes parent volunteers and HISD employees other than those assigned to Mark Twain. Parents wishing to eat lunch with their children must sign in and obtain a visitor's badge. (This opportunity is available October through April only.) Visitors do not include paid private tutors - private tutoring is not allowed on campus per HISD policy.

VIPS (Volunteers in Public Schools)

Volunteers in Public Schools (VIPS) recruits thousands of parents and community partners to donate their time, resources, and knowledge in support of the district's primary goal to increase student achievement. Volunteers contribute in areas such as mentoring, tutoring, fundraising, career education, enrichment programs, extracurricular and community service activities, field trips, and office and classroom assistance. **You must register online each school year at www.houstonisd.org/VIPSlogin.**

SAFETY & SECURITY

Building Access. In order to ensure that Mark Twain is a safe environment all school doors (including the kindergarten entrance) are locked at 7:30 a.m. Visitors after 7:30 am ring the bell at the front entry doors to gain entrance to the building. All visitors must check-in at the front desk and wear a visitor's badge when in the building.

- **Parents exiting the building need to pull gates and doors securely behind them.**
- **Perimeter gates must be kept closed at all times – please do not prop them open!**
- **Pets cannot be brought into the building and must remain on a leash outside the building.**
Dogs should not be left unattended.

Dropping Items off During the Day. Students need to bring all materials and supplies to school with them each day – including lunch. It is disruptive to the instructional day when items are dropped off. In the rare instance that you may need to deliver something for your child, it must be left at the front desk.

The **Mark Twain Safety Committee** meets monthly to review policies and procedures related to the safety and security of the campus community. Teachers and students are trained on emergency procedures and monthly safety drills are conducted. These drills include shelter in place, intruder drills and evacuation procedures. Campus emergency procedures are located in the main office, the teacher's lounge and all classrooms. In the event of an emergency, parents are contacted through HISD's School Messenger System and Parent Square. If you have any items to submit to the committee for review, please contact Kathleen Blakeslee at kblakesl@houstonisd.org

Electronic Devices. Cell phones, smart watches, and/or other personal electronic devices may not be used during the instructional day or during Extended Day per House Bill 1481. If a child brings a cell phone or smart watch to school, it must be turned off and left in their backpack.

LOST AND FOUND

All clothing, book bags, and lunch kits must be labeled. Unlabeled items will be donated monthly. The Lost and Found closet is located in the cafeteria by the main hall. It is cleaned out the last week of each month. When placing items in the closet, please either hang the item or place it neatly on a shelf.

STUDENT DRESS CODE

Mark Twain students **must come to school dressed according to the dress code.** On Fridays students may wear event shirts and the **last Friday of each month is Free Dress Day.** The school store has a wide array of Mark Twain shirts and jackets available for purchase.

- TOPS: red, white, navy shirts of any style
- BOTTOMS: navy, khaki, jeans, skirts, jumpers or shorts (mid thigh)
- SHOES: athletic shoes or other closed toed shoes. Flip flops, heelys, or cleats are not allowed.

STUDENT EXPECTATIONS

Student Code of Conduct. The Student Code of Conduct is available online at <https://www.houstonisd.org/codeofconduct>. Please review the contents of this booklet, sign the acknowledgement of receipt page and return to your child's teacher. A hard copy of the Student Code of Conduct is available at the front desk if needed. All students at Mark Twain are expected to abide by the guidelines contained in the Student Code of Conduct and the essential agreements outlined as part of our Primary Years Program. The teachers develop classroom expectations around the IB Learner Profile. This comprehensive approach to develop positive behaviors and actions focuses on developing the social and emotional aspects of the child. Our Behavior Management Plan further details expectations and consequences.

CAFETERIA INFORMATION

Breakfast is served between 7:10 – 7:30 a.m. each day Please enter the cafeteria doors. . A Federal Grant provides free breakfast for all students.

Lunch is served each day in the cafeteria. Lunch is free for all students. School meal accounts can be managed online at <https://www.schoolcafe.com>. HISD Food Services provides information on the HISD website under Food Services.

When providing lunch from home, please keep in mind that we are not equipped to heat lunches for students, nor are we equipped to handle student food deliveries, including delivery services such as DoorDash, Uber Eats.

Parents may meet their child for lunch during their lunch time from October - April. Parents must sign up through Parent Square for lunch meetings with their child on a first come first serve basis. In order to maintain an environment free of distractions and maintain test security, we do not allow volunteers in the classrooms or visitors for lunch on state or district test administration days. Due to limited space and time we ask that you comply with the following guidelines.

- *Due to limited space, parents **may not eat at the class table** but may enjoy lunch at a guest table. Parents must remain at the guest table and cannot enter the cafeteria at any point during the lunch.*
- ***Cell phone use is not permitted** in the cafeteria during lunch. If you need to make or accept a call, please step out.*
- ***In order to honor all parents' and students' confidentiality, videotaping or photographing students other than your own is strictly prohibited.***
- *Please remember to obtain a visitors pass when you join your child for lunch.*
- *If you bring small children please monitor them closely and keep them seated at the guest table.*

Nut Free Tables are designated for those students with nut allergies. Any student may eat at the table but no nut products are allowed. **If your child has a nut allergy or any type of allergy, you must notify the school nurse and the classroom teacher.**

GOOD HEALTH AND WELLNESS GUIDELINES:

Federal regulations do not permit foods with minimal nutritional value to be served in the cafeteria during mealtime. In an effort to fight childhood obesity, HISD guidelines align with the Foods of Minimal Nutritional Value Policy (FMNV).

Elementary campuses are restricted from serving these items throughout the entire school day.

- Soda – any carbonated beverage
- Water ices – frozen, sweetened water (....."sicles") with the exception of products containing fruit or fruit juices
- Chewing gum, hard candy, jellies & gummies, marshmallow candies, fondant, licorice, spun candy and candy coated popcorn

Competitive foods and snacks. Only food items provided by the school food service department may be served during the instructional school day. One nutritious snack per day is allowed under the supervision of the classroom teacher. **Snacks provided by parents must follow the nutritional guidelines. Prepackaged snacks must comply with the Texas Public School Nutrition Policy, visit www.squaremeals.org for more information.**

Birthday treats need to follow HISD nutritional guidelines. Parents are encouraged to bring healthy treats or non-food items for birthdays! Foods of minimal nutritional value are strongly discouraged. Birthday treats can only be provided after the scheduled lunch to be distributed in the classroom or on the back play area. **Balloons and other party supplies are not allowed during the instructional day.** Birthday Grams - part of a 5th grade fundraiser - are available for a small fee if a parent wants to send a birthday greeting to a child. Forms are available in the first day packet or at www.marktwainpto.org.

Special events – restricted food items are allowed during the school day for no more than two different events per grade level each school year. These events are Winter and End of the Year Parties. These events are planned by teachers and parents. Further details will be provided at the time of the party.

HEALTH & MEDICAL INFORMATION

HISD Board of Education policy does not authorize HISD school personnel to give medication of any kind without authorization from a physician. That includes aspirin, similar preparation, or any other drugs. School nurses can give medication during school hours under the following restrictions:

- Pupils who are non-contagious, on long-term medication, on preventative medication, or for a prolonged period on medication that cannot under any arrangement be administered other than during school hours may take medication in school.
- A physician must stipulate in writing the type of preparation, color, quantity, and time of administration.
- The healthcare provider's statement must be accompanied by written permission of at least one parent.
- The required form for the administration of medication can be accessed on the HISD website under Health and Medical Services. This form must be properly filled out, signed by the physician and returned to the school nurse with the medication in the original container.

Physician orders cannot be altered by school personnel without written permission from the physician. Any medications must be brought to the school nurse by the parent or guardian. Students may not carry medication except in certain cases such as diabetes or asthma – this includes cough drops or sore throat lozenges. It is important for parents to communicate any health/medical issues that may impact the student while at school with the school nurse.

If a child is ill or not feeling well, the teacher will send the student to the school nurse, Andrea Hill. Nurse Hill will contact parents when a child is sick.

FOOD ALLERGIES. Mark Twain has developed plans to ensure that proper attention and care is provided to those students who have allergies. Parents are responsible for notifying our school nurse, Andrea Hill, and the classroom teacher regarding their child's allergies. Each class has a designated "nut free" table in the cafeteria to ensure that students will be able to eat at a table free of nuts and nut products.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS:

PYP	Primary Years Program, elementary level of International Baccalaureate
IB	International Baccalaureate
VIPS	Volunteer in Public Schools
PTO	Parent Teacher Organization, all parents are considered members
GT	Gifted and Talented – all teachers are GT certified, application process for identification process
IAT	Intervention Assistance Team – avenue to address academic/behavioral concerns
NWEA MAP	K-12 Assessment tool used to measure student growth and achievement
DIBELS	Early Literacy assessment tool to measure student growth and achievement
IXL	Software for students to practice and extend their math and reading skills
STAAR	State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (grades 3-5)
SDMC	Shared Decision Making Committee (advisory committee to principal comprised of parents, staff and community)

Huckleberry Bash - school fundraiser auction for parents – Saturday, February 26, 2026.

Spooky Spectacular - Fall carnival for all - Saturday, October 25, 2025

Spark Park - Our playground is open to the community after 5:30 pm at the end of Extended Day, weekends, and holidays. It is not open during evening school events.

CONTACTS:

Principal	Michele Rawson	mrawson1@houstonisd.org
Assistant Principal	Maria Garrett	maria.garret@houstonisd.org
IAT/504	Melissa Powers	mpowers1@houstonisd.org
IB/GT Coordinator	Kathleen Blakeslee	KBLAKESL@houstonisd.org
Counselor	Sylvia Harris	sylvia.harris@houstonisd.org
Office Manager	Denise Rodriguez	drodrigu@houstonisd.org
Special Education	Dani Aschman	Danielle.aschman@houstonisd.org
Dual Language	Gracie Martinez	gmartin6@houstonisd.org
Registration	Liz Lopez	Elizabeth.Lopez@houstonisd.org
Extended Day	Ilene Thomas	mtafterschool@gmail.com
PTO President	Sara Reader	president@marktwainpto.org
Building Manager	Karen Rodriguez	Karen.Rodriguez2@houstonisd.org

