

University Charter School

INNOVATORS. LEADERS. TRAILBLAZERS.



Student Handbook 2025-2026

OUR MISSION

The mission of University Charter School is to be **an innovative**, rural, diverse K-12 school **that values collaboration with key stakeholders** to cultivate independent thought, promotes the building of character and civic responsibility, and is committed to preparing all students for personal and professional success through the discovery of individual learning pathways in a rigorous and integrated Science, Technology, Reading, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STREAM) focused, project-based and place-based curriculum.

OUR VISION

The vision of UCS is to become **the rural leader** for producing adaptable learners that have a strong sense of place and mission who recognize the value of collaboration within a school, across a community, and between diverse rural regions.

OUR CORE VALUES

Core Values are a group of shared beliefs that support every aspect of the educational experience at UCS.

Compassion – Integrity – Perseverance

UCS Executive Leadership

Dr. JJ Wedgworth – Head of School/Chief Executive Officer
Dr. Matt Johnson – Chief Innovation Officer
Ginger Lusty – Chief Financial Officer
Tracy Bryan – Strategic Partnerships Officer/CTE Director

UCS School Leadership

Meghan Dunn – PK-3 Administrator
Brandon Broach – Grades 4-12 Administrator
Libba Reed – Assistant Principal for Instruction
Crystal May – Director of Student Success
Lisa McHugh – Special Education Director & 504 Coordinator
Sam Mosley – Athletic Director

UCS Contact Information

University Charter School
UCS Lyon Campus
PreK - 3rd Grade
UWA's Lyon Hall
108 North Street
Livingston, AL 35470

University Charter School
UCS Smith Campus
4th - 12th Grade
134 University Drive
Livingston, AL 35470

Mailing Address:
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Livingston, AL 35470

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ucsinfo@universitycharterschool.org

Website:
www.universitycharterschool.org

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ACADEMIC HONOR CODE

Students who submit assignments that have been plagiarized, copied, misrepresented as their own work, or perform any act of dishonesty on academic work (including cheating) will receive a grade of "0" for the assignment and the teacher will notify a parent. If students are involved in school-related extracurricular organizations (such as clubs or sports teams), additional consequences as outlined by sponsoring staff members may be applicable.

ACADEMIC EXTRACURRICULAR OPPORTUNITIES & REQUIREMENTS

UCS provides numerous extracurricular opportunities for students that span across many grade levels. For this coming year, the following opportunities may exist for UCS students: Peer Helpers, Beta Club, National Honor Society, HOSA, FFA, FCCLA, DECA, TSA, UCS Singers, Robotics and FCA.

AFTER SCHOOL/EXTENDED DAY PROGRAM

UCS offers after school care for all enrolled students on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays from 3:00-5:30, and on Wednesdays from 1:00-5:30. More information about tuition, activities, and curriculum within this program can be found on our school website and in the UCS After School Handbook. UCS teacher, Mr. Christopher Dunn (cdunn@universitycharterschool.org), is the After School Director.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) USE IN SCHOOL – Refer to Policy 6116

UCS acknowledges the presence of artificial intelligence (AI) as a growing presence in the technological landscape. Just like with other technologies, responsible and appropriate use of AI is expected by its users. UCS has purchased access to safe and appropriate AI tools (such as Brisk AI) to teach students how to leverage this growing technology successfully. The use of open AI software may be blocked due to safety concerns and/or due to the design of the technology that can negatively impact the student's educational experience. Students who use AI in unacceptable ways that violate expectations regarding academic honesty and/or the acceptable use of the internet and other technologies are subject to appropriate disciplinary actions. Please see **Policy 6116** for full details regarding the overall acceptable use of AI.

ATHLETIC OPPORTUNITIES

For the 2025-2026 school year, all UCS students have the ability to participate in the following athletic opportunities as indicated below. Mr. Sam Mosley (smosley@universitycharterschool.org) is UCS's Athletic Director.

- FALL: Football, Volleyball, Girls Cross Country
- WINTER: Girls and Boys Basketball, Girls Cheerleading
- SPRING: Softball, Baseball, Girls and Boys Tennis, Girls and Boys Golf

ATTENDANCE – Refer to Policy 3005 for Attendance, Policy 3008 for Student Extended Leave and Policy 3030 for Blazer By Distance Attendance

It is the belief of University Charter School that regular school attendance is important to all students and to UCS. One of the most important things a parent or guardian can do for their child is to ensure that they are in school and on time every day. Attendance in school is key to their learning, success in school, and ultimately success in life. University Charter School students are expected to attend school daily. Learning opportunities are missed when students are absent from school, and cannot be replaced through make up work. In accordance with State policy, absences from school will be excused for the following reasons:

- Illness/injury
- Medical or Dental appointments
- Legal Quarantine
- Death of an immediate family member (parents, grandparents, siblings)
- Emergency conditions as determined by the principal including inclement weather which would be dangerous to the life and health of the child
- Court or Administrative Proceedings
- Religious Observance
- Pre-approved Educational Opportunity
- Other Administrative Approval-requires prior permission of the principal upon request of the parent or guardian

UCS will make every effort to promote regular attendance to students and solicit assistance from parents and guardians in accomplishing this objective. An absence is defined as non-attendance in a regularly scheduled class or activity regardless of reason for such non-attendance.

Unexcused Absences

Absences that do not fall under one of the “excused absence” categories are deemed unexcused. Absences will be deemed unexcused if the student fails to secure prior approval from the principal for administrative approved absences or out of town educational trips. Also, once a student has accumulated ten (10) parent excuse notes, all further absences will be deemed unexcused if the student fails to provide a medical/clinical excuse from a physician as documentation.

Excused Absences

An excused absence is a student’s absence from school for a reason recognized as valid under school policy and state law. To be considered excused, the absence must fall within one of the approved categories listed in this policy and should be documented appropriately within three (3) days of the student’s return. Documentation must be provided to the homeroom teacher or the front office. Notes must include dates absent, reason for absence and parent/guardian signature. A physician must certify all health related absences of three (3) or more consecutive days in duration.

Excessive Absenteeism

Excessive Absenteeism is a barrier to student success and will not be tolerated at UCS. UCS will make every effort to identify students with chronic attendance issues, and will work with families to create plans to address those issues.

- 5 Total Absences Per Year: Written Notification (via letter or email) will be provided by the school to the parent/guardian indicating a concerning number of absences once the student reaches the 5 th total absence (excused and unexcused) in an effort to correct the absence behavior and consequences of continued absences.
- 10 Total Absences Per Year: At the 10th total absence (excused and unexcused combined), the student is subject to loss of credit, if applicable, and the parent/guardian will be required to attend UCS Attendance Conference to discuss the critical absence behavior and methods for remediating the behavior.
- 15 Total Absences Per Year: At the 15 th total absence (excused and unexcused combined), the parent/guardian will be required to meet with the Principal and Head of School to discuss the absence behavior, consequences and methods for remediating the behavior. Also, students with 15 total absences are subject to retention (unable to proceed to the next grade level) and subject to failure of the grade level or course.
- 18 Unexcused Absences Per Year: UCS reserves the right to unenroll a student who reached 18 unexcused absences per year. Students who are unenrolled from UCS are not eligible to return during the current school year in which they are enrolled or for a probationary period of one school year following. If an unenrolled student wishes to return to UCS after the probationary period, they will be required to reapply for enrollment through the UCS student enrollment lottery.

UCS will implement the stated attendance interventions according to the thresholds below:

| Absence Threshold | UCS Intervention |
|--|---|
| 5 total (excused and unexcused) per year | Written Communication |
| 10 total (excused and unexcused) per semester* or year | Attendance Conference and Subject to Loss of Credit |
| 15 total (excused and unexcused) per year | Attendance Meeting & Subject to Retention and/or Loss of Credit |
| 18 unexcused | Unenrollment/Withdrawal from School |

*per-semester count only applies to students taking high school credit bearing courses.

Attendance Conference:

The Attendance Conference is a required meeting between the parent, guardian, or person responsible for the student and school officials (such as the principal, attendance officer, or their designee) that is scheduled after a student accumulates 10 total absences (excused and unexcused) in a school year. The purpose of the conference is to discuss the student's attendance record, explain Alabama's compulsory attendance requirements, review potential consequences of continued unexcused absences, and work together to develop a plan to improve the student's regular school attendance. Attendance at this conference is mandatory unless prior arrangements have been approved or an emergency prevents attendance.

Attendance Meeting:

An Attendance Meeting is a required meeting between the parent, guardian, or person responsible for the student and school and district administrators (Principal and Head of School or their designee) when a student accumulates 15 total absences (excused and unexcused combined) in a school year. The purpose of this meeting is to review the student's overall attendance, identify barriers to regular attendance, and develop or adjust a support plan to improve the student's school attendance going forward. Attendance at this meeting is mandatory.

School Related Activities

The following school related activities will not be counted as absences from either class or school:

- University Charter School curricular activities
- University Charter School students who are rostered and competing in sanctioned AHSAA athletic competitions and games.
- Post Season AHSAA Contests that meet the criteria below, and students provide verified proof of attendance (ticket stub, digital copy of entry ticket), submitted to attendance@universitycharterschool.org.
 - Baseball, Softball, Volleyball, and Basketball Area or State Tournament Games
 - Tennis, Golf and Crosscountry Sectional Meets, or State Finals
- University Charter School curricular field trips
- Administration-approved extra-curricular activities requiring early dismissal from school
- Students in grades 9-12 may be excused for 2 college visits per year. Visits must be pre-approved by an administrator and properly documented.
- Administrator approved and documented job shadowing events.

Students will complete assignments missed for these reasons.

Tardiness and Check-Outs

Being late to school or checking out of school is excused or unexcused for the same reasons as absences.

- Illness/injury
- Medical or Dental appointments
- Legal Quarantine
- Death of an immediate family member (parents, grandparents, siblings)
- Emergency conditions as determined by the principal including inclement weather which would be dangerous to the life and health of the child
- Court or Administrative Proceedings
- Religious Observance
- Pre-approved Educational Opportunity
- Other Administrative Approval - requires prior permission of the principal upon request of the parent or guardian

A student is considered tardy if he/she is not in class when the tardy bell rings and/or the time as indicated on the class schedule list has been reached. Students are expected to arrive at school on time and must report to the office for an “admit to class” pass if tardy. Habitual tardiness greatly affects a child’s progress in school. Leaving early due to illness or to go to medical appointments will be excused. Students who exhibit excessive unexcused tardiness (5 or more per semester) and/or excessive unexcused check-outs (10 or more per semester) will receive appropriate disciplinary actions according to UCS Policy 1015, Student Code of Conduct.

UCS will implement the stated interventions according to the thresholds below:

| Tardy/Early Checkout Threshold | UCS Intervention |
|---|--|
| 5 unexcused tardies or early checkouts per year | Written Communication (via letter or email) notifying parent and reiterating policy |
| 10 total unexcused per year | Contact from Administrator and/or Discipline Interventions |
| 15 total unexcused per year | Meeting with Administrator and/or Discipline Interventions |
| >15 unexcused per year | Meeting with Head of School and/or discipline interventions, including possible retention/loss of credit |

Partial Attendance

Students must be in attendance for at least one half of the day in order to be counted present for the day. One half day is equivalent to 218 minutes or 158 minutes (early release days). Guidance of appropriate half-day check out times are outlined in the student handbook and determined by school start/end times. Late arrivals must be present 218 minutes of the school day to be counted as present. Exemption status for Secondary exams is determined on a per class attendance record and is outlined in the student handbook.

Make-up Work for Absences

Students are responsible for, and are permitted to make up all work missed during absences. Each individual teacher will determine when work will be made up. The student is responsible for finding out which assignments were missed and completing them within the specified time period. In the case where a teacher has not established and communicated a make up work policy, missed work must be made up within five (5) school days following the student’s return to school. The designated teacher or administrator may determine that extenuating circumstances support an extension of time. The student is responsible for finding out which assignments, quizzes, or exams were missed and completing them within the

specified time period.

The Importance of Attendance

Not only is healthy, routine attendance to school important for student learning, but it is also important for school accountability. Like all other public schools in Alabama, UCS receives a yearly report card score on a 0-100 scale. Attendance counts as a considerable percentage of this yearly score, with every student who has accumulated 18 or more absences negatively impacting this score. Please ensure that your child is present every day so that he/she can succeed, but also so UCS' report card reflects positively on the many great things going on at UCS!

CALENDAR

Below is the approved academic calendar for UCS for 2025-2026. This can also be found on the school website.

| July 2025 | | | | | | |
|-----------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| S | M | T | W | Th | F | S |
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 |
| 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 |
| 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | | |

| August 2025 | | | | | | |
|-------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| S | M | T | W | Th | F | S |
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| 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 |
| 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 |
| 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 |
| 31 | | | | | | |

| September 2025 | | | | | | |
|----------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| S | M | T | W | Th | F | S |
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| 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 |
| 28 | 29 | 30 | | | | |

| October 2025 | | | | | | |
|--------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| S | M | T | W | Th | F | S |
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| 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 |
| 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 |
| 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | |

| November 2025 | | | | | | |
|---------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| S | M | T | W | Th | F | S |
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| 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
| 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 |
| 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 |
| 30 | | | | | | |

| December 2025 | | | | | | |
|---------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| S | M | T | W | Th | F | S |
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| 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 |
| 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | | | |

| January 2026 | | | | | | |
|--------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| S | M | T | W | Th | F | S |
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| 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 |
| 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 |
| 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 |

| February 2026 | | | | | | |
|---------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| S | M | T | W | Th | F | S |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 |
| 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 |

| March 2026 | | | | | | |
|------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| S | M | T | W | Th | F | S |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 |
| 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 |
| 29 | 30 | 31 | | | | |

| April 2026 | | | | | | |
|------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| S | M | T | W | Th | F | S |
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| 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 |
| 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 |
| 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | | |

| May 2026 | | | | | | |
|----------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| S | M | T | W | Th | F | S |
| | | | | | 1 | 2 |
| 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 |
| 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 |
| 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 |
| 31 | | | | | | |



2025-2026 School Calendar

| | |
|--------------|------------------------------|
| August 4-12 | Pre-Planning for Teachers |
| Aug 13 | First Day for Students |
| Sept 1 | Labor Day Holiday |
| Sept 19 | UCS Homecoming Week |
| Oct 10-13 | Fall Break |
| Nov 11 | Veterans Day |
| Nov 24-28 | Thanksgiving Break |
| Dec 17-19 | Exams & Early Release |
| Dec 22-Jan 5 | Christmas & New Year's Break |
| Jan 5 | Teachers & Staff Workday |
| Jan 6 | Students Return |
| Jan 19 | M.L. King Holiday |
| Feb 16 | President's Day |
| Mar 23-27 | Spring Break |
| April 24 | Assessment Holiday |
| May 15 | UCS Graduation |
| May 19-21 | Final Exams & Early Release |
| May 22 | Last Day for Students |
| May 22 | Last Day for Teachers |

**UCS Board Approved 1/21/25

| |
|------------------------------------|
| Student Instructional Day |
| Teacher/Student Holiday |
| Teacher Pre-Planning (no students) |
| Teacher Work Day (no students) |
| Students Dismiss @1 PM/ Teacher PD |

| | Student Days | Teacher Days |
|---------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| 1 st Semester: | 84 | 91 |
| 2 nd Semester: | 91 | 92 |
| Total: | 175 | 183 |
| Employee Holidays: 28 | | |

- Mini Fall Break
- Full Thanksgiving & Christmas Break
- Full Spring Break
- Note Early Release Dates that are NOT on Wednesdays, 9/26, 12/18, 12/19, 5/21, 5/22
- Note, New Early Release Dates that are NOT on Wednesdays, 9/30, 12/16, 4/7 and 5/23.

CANCELLATION OF SCHOOL -- Refer to UCS Policy 3015 for Inclement Weather.

School will be canceled due to dangerous weather conditions, equipment failure, or when mandated by appropriate governmental agencies. News on school closings will be shared through the various social media and informational platforms of UCS which include the Blackboard Mass Communications, UCS website, UCS App, email, text messaging, and social media.

CAR RIDERS ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL PROCEDURES

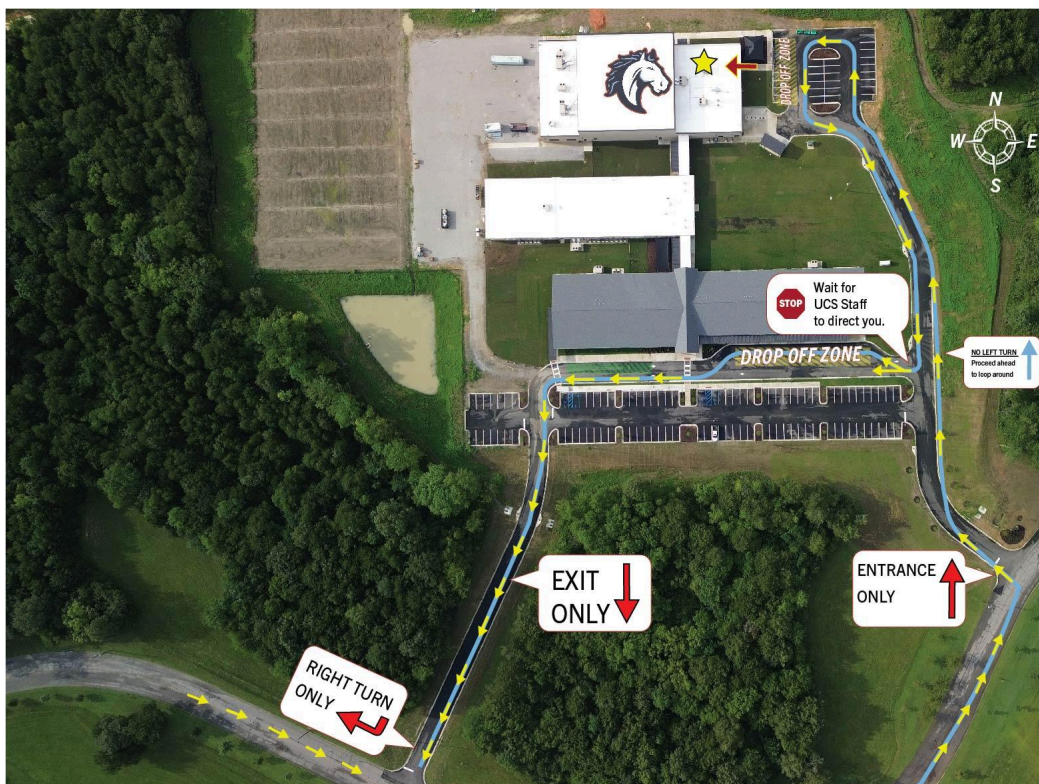
Due to our commitment to safety, all drivers (parents and students) should adhere to the directives given by UCS faculty and staff.

Arrival Procedures - Smith Campus (4th-12th Grades)

- Students are not allowed to arrive at school prior to 7:25 AM. School begins officially at 7:55AM.
- All students should be dropped off at the cafeteria entrance in the rear parking lot.
- Students will report to the cafeteria for breakfast or directly to their homeroom teacher's classroom beginning at 7:35 AM.
- **Students that arrive after school begins at 7:55 are considered tardy and must enter through the main entrance.**
- Students will receive a tardy slip at the front desk until 8:10 AM. After 8:10 AM, the student will need to be checked-in or out by a parent in the front office.
- Due to the number of students arriving to school by individual cars, parents are highly encouraged to routinely drop students off without escorting them into the building. This will help with safety and timely traffic flow for all patrons.
- Special needs students that require assistance may be dropped off at the front of the building after routing through the back parking lot. (Assisted Drop off Zone indicated in green in the map below.)

Carline Drop off Map and Procedures:

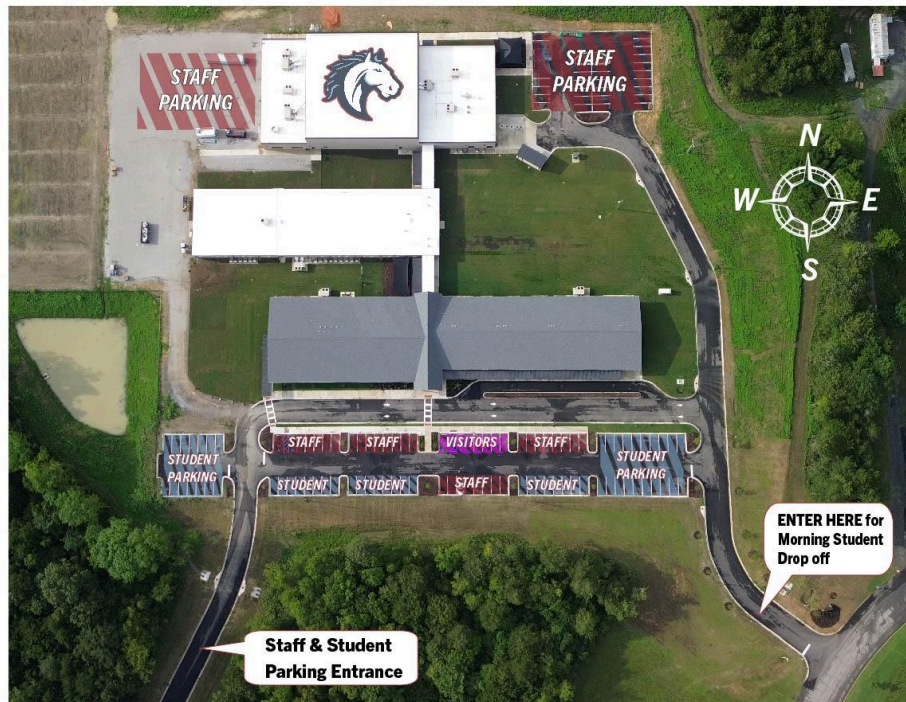
- Enter from the EAST entrance to the campus (closest to Hwy 11)
- Follow the traffic pattern to the back and around the loop
- Release students in the drop off zone at the cafeteria entrance
- Continue around the loop and exit campus via the EAST entrance



Student Driver Arrival Procedures and Parking Map

- Student drivers enter through the WEST entrance (closest to Tartt Field)
- Student drivers must park in 1 of 2 student parking zones
- Students must enter through the main entrance and proceed to the cafeteria (before 7:35AM) or directly to the classroom (7:35AM-7:55AM)

Proposed Parking - UCS New Campus



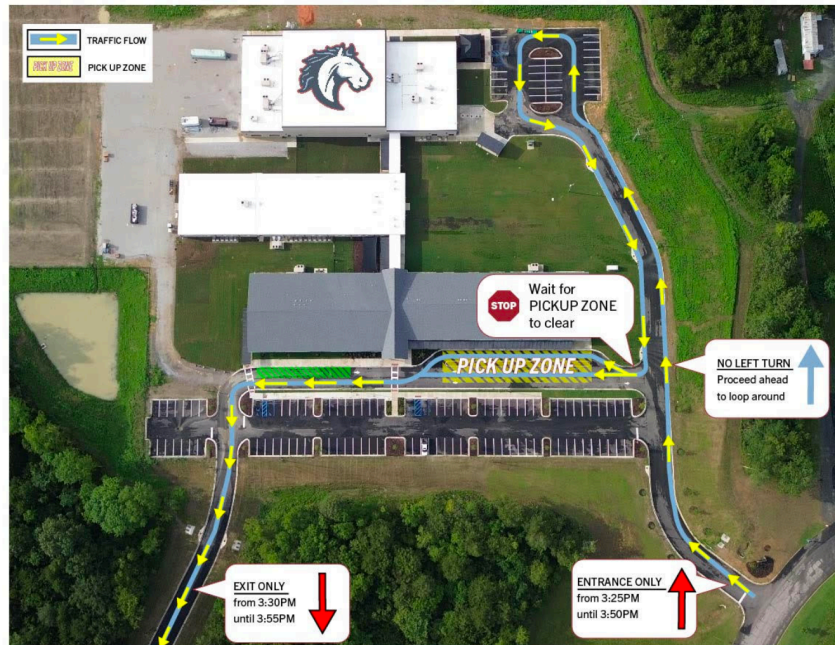
Dismissal Procedures - Smith Campus (4th-12th Grades)

- Dismissal in the afternoons begins at 3:30 PM daily and 1:10 PM on Wednesdays.
- All students will be picked up at the main entrance at the front of the building.
- Special needs students that require assistance may be picked up at the WEST end of the building in the Assisted Pick up Zone.
- No parents will be allowed on campus to line up for the carline until **3:25 PM on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday, and 1:05 PM on Wednesday.**
- As students' rides arrive onto UCS campus, UCS staff will radio into the classrooms to dismiss students to await their ride at the front entrance.
- Students will then walk down to the pick-up area to get into their car in the order in which it is lined up by UCS staff.
- In order to ensure safety for all students, students will only be allowed to enter vehicles that display the appropriate UCS-issued car rider identification tag(s).
- Please **DO NOT arrive early** or you will be asked to move.
- Please **DO NOT arrive early and park in a parking spot.**
- **Check-outs will not be allowed after 3:00 PM on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday and after 12:40 PM on Wednesday.** If you need to check out your child from school please arrive prior to those times.
- After you pick up your students, please turn **RIGHT as you exit campus.**
- Please **BE RESPECTFUL** to the school and public safety staff work carline to ensure that everyone is safe.
- Parents should share this information with family members and friends that pick up your students.

Carline Pick Up Map and Procedures:

- Student dash tags should be made visible upon arrival to campus.
- Enter from the EAST entrance to the campus (closest to Hwy 11)
- Follow the traffic pattern to the back and around the loop.
- Wait at the STOP sign for a UCS team member to wave you into the pick up zone.
- Pull as far forward as possible in the pick-up zone and place your vehicle in PARK.
- Students will be called to their respective vehicles.
- Wait for a UCS Team member to release your line of traffic and slowly pull forward.
- Exit at the WEST entrance (closest to Tartt Field)

Afternoon Pick-up Procedures - UCS New Campus



Student Driver Dismissal Procedures:

- Student drivers will be released at 3:20.
- Student drivers should exit campus via the WEST entrance (closest to Tartt Field)

Work-based learning and Dual Enrollment student drivers must:

- Have a release form [Independent Student Driver Rider Form](#) on file with the Career Coach.
 - Sign in and out at the front office for each class meeting.
 - Walk, drive, or ride straight to the location of your class and straight back.
 - Do not bring outside food or drink into UCS when you return.
-

Arrival Procedures - Lyon Campus (PreK-3rd Grades)

- Students are not allowed to arrive at school prior to 7:15 AM. School begins officially at 7:45.
- ALL students will be dropped off in front of Lyon Hall in the drop off lane.
- Upon arrival, all students will enter through the lunchroom doors (Tutwiler Hall) at the playground.
- Students may proceed to the lunchroom for breakfast or to their homeroom teacher's classroom beginning at 7:25.
- **Students that arrive after school begins at 7:45, are considered tardy and must enter through the main Lyon Hall entrance.**
- Students will receive a tardy slip at the front desk until 8:00 AM. After 8:00 AM, the student will need to be checked-in or out by a parent in the front office.
- Due to the number of students arriving to school by individual cars, and due to the shared campus use with UWA, parents are highly encouraged to routinely drop students off without escorting them into the building. This will help with safety and timely traffic flow for all patrons.

Dismissal Procedures - Lyon Campus (PreK-3rd Grades)

- Dismissal in the afternoons begins at 3:20 PM daily and 1:00 PM on Wednesdays.
- ALL students will be picked up in front of UCS at the main entrance.
- No parents will be allowed on campus to line up for the carline until **3:15 PM on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday, and 12:55 PM on Wednesday.**
- Student dash tags should be made visible upon arrival to campus.
- As students' rides arrive onto UCS campus, UCS staff will radio into the teachers to dismiss students to await their ride at the front pick up zone.
- Students will then walk down to the pick up zone to get into their car in the order in which it is lined up by UCS staff.
- In order to ensure safety for all students, students will only be allowed to enter vehicles that display the appropriate UCS-issued car rider identification tag(s).
- **DO NOT arrive early** or you will be asked to move by UWA PD.
- **DO NOT arrive early and park in a parking spot.** You will be asked to move and ticketed.
- **Check-outs will not be allowed after 2:50 PM on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday and after 12:30 PM on Wednesday.** If you need to check out your child from school please arrive prior to those times.
- After you pick up your students, you must turn **RIGHT as you exit campus.**
- Please **BE RESPECTFUL** to the school and public safety staff that are working the carline to ensure that everyone's safety.
- Parents should share this information with all grandparents and other family members and friends that pick up your students.

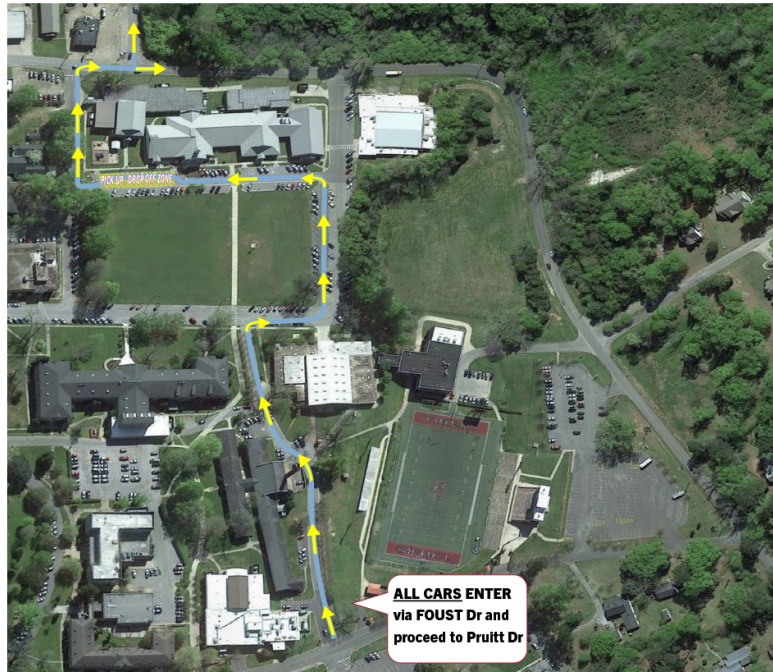
LYON CARLINE REMINDERS

- Do not attempt to enter the stadium before 3:10! Do not stop on Hopkins Street and wait for the barricades to be moved. This creates a dangerous situation forcing other drivers to pass in the curve. If you arrive early, keep circling.
- Do not wait in a nearby neighborhood or the entrance of the Homer Field House.
- The stadium is typically clear by 3:20. **Entering the carline at the stadium at or after 3:20 is encouraged to avoid traffic and lessen wait time.**

Carline Maps and Procedures

- All parents should enter carline from the WALLACE LOT via Foust Drive
- Proceed onto Pruitt Drive, go up the hill and turn Right onto Bibb Graves Drive.
- From Bibb Graves Drive, turn Left onto McConnell Drive and follow the traffic pattern in front of Lyon Hall.
- Students will only be allowed to enter cars in the designated pick up zone.
- Please wait until a UCS Team member releases your vehicle to leave the pick up zone.
- After you pick up your student(s), exit onto North Street by **turning RIGHT. NO LEFT TURNS.**

Drop Off / Pick Up - Lyon Hall Campus



- Turn onto Foust Drive from Stadium Drive, CAR TAGS DISPLAYED
- Continue onto Pruitt Drive, then turn RIGHT onto McConnell Drive
- Follow McConnell up to Lyon Hall, turn LEFT, and follow to "PICK UP / DROP OFF ZONE"
- Please wait until a UCS Team member releases your vehicle to leave the zone

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Please come by the office to complete the appropriate paperwork for any changes to your address or telephone number. It is very important that we have your current information available. Please provide proof of residency with any address changes.

CODE OF CONDUCT

UCS students are expected to uphold all expectations regarding the school's Code of Conduct. Full details can be found by reading Policy 1015 - Student Code of Conduct.

CONFERENCES with TEACHERS & ADMINISTRATORS

Conferences may be requested by parents, teachers, and administrators to discuss student progress and behavior. Parents may schedule conferences by contacting their child's teacher through email or by contacting the main office. Parents may also request conferences with school administrators through email or by phone. Due to the importance of teacher planning and the busyness of arrival and dismissal from school each day, please do not show up to request an immediate conference with your child's teacher. UCS will happily accommodate the need for conferences for all stakeholders and UCS Leadership asks that parents speak directly with teachers first to resolve issues or questions before going directly to school administration in applicable circumstances.

COURSE OPTIONS FOR STUDENTS

ACADEMICS:

- Students in Grades K-5 will receive a minimum of one hour of daily instruction in each of the areas of reading and mathematics. Additional instruction involving the sciences, social studies, and project-based learning occur throughout the day each day. Daily time for enrichment and acceleration are also included in the schedule.
- Middle school students (Grades 6-8) receive daily instruction in reading, mathematics, science, and social studies for the full year. Daily time for remediation and personalized learning will also occur
- High school students (9-12) will participate in a semester block schedule with five courses in August-December and five courses in January-May. This is a compilation of academic and elective courses, self-selected by students in collaboration with school administration. Daily time for personalized learning also occurs.

SPECIALS:

- Students in Grades K-5 will participate in special course classes that focus on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics), Visual Art, and Music/Band. Students will have the opportunity to experience multiple Specials courses during the regular school year at varying lengths, durations, and intervals.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION:

- All students in Kindergarten through Grade 9 participate in daily physical education for a minimum of 30-minutes on regular school days.
- Elementary students receive additional physical activity through recess opportunities.
- Students involved in athletics are required to participate in Athletes PE.

DELIVERIES

Student flowers and gifts must be delivered to the front office. Students will be called down to retrieve them at the end of the school day to avoid interrupting the instructional day. Lunch is not allowed to be delivered to the student once the school day has begun, except in an emergency situation as determined by the Principal.

DISCIPLINE

Discipline and disciplinary action will be handled on a case by case basis by the teachers and administrative team at UCS depending on the severity of each case. All students, parents, and guardians must read the **Student Code of Conduct Policy 1015** and sign an acknowledgement of having read the policy in its entirety. This policy can be found as an appendix to this handbook.

DISTINCTION FOR VALEDICTORIAN, SALUTATORIAN, & HONOR GRADUATES

UCS will recognize the distinguished academic performance of students at the conclusion of each academic year as part of formal graduation ceremonies. The graduating senior with the highest cumulative weighted grade point average (GPA) will be recognized as valedictorian. The graduating senior with the second highest cumulative weighted grade point average (GPA) will be recognized as salutatorian. In the event of a tie, UCS will use students' numerical GPA to determine valedictorian and salutatorian. UCS will determine the valedictorian, salutatorian, and honor graduate status using students' weighted cumulative GPA through the conclusion of the fall semester of students' senior year. Spring semester grades and GPA will not be included in the determination of valedictorian, salutatorian, or honor graduate distinction.

UCS will also recognize Honor Graduates as students who have demonstrated proficiency in advanced coursework opportunities throughout their tenure as a Trailblazer. Honor Graduates will be recognized in the following categories:

- Summa Cum Laude: Students graduating with a cumulative weighted GPA of 4.2+
- Magna Cum Laude: Students graduating with a cumulative weighted GPA of 4.0-4.19
- Cum Laude: Students graduating with a cumulative weighted GPA of 3.7-3.99

DISTRIBUTION OF LITERATURE

Students must have permission from the administration before posting signs, posters, announcements or advertisements in the school.

DRESS CODE -- *See Policy 6030 for full student dress code information.*

University Charter School requires uniforms for all students. The Uniform Policy is designed to provide students a safe and orderly learning environment. The Policy is in effect every school day, including field trips or any trip off campus. **All dress code violations will be documented in the discipline tiers.** Parent contact will be made with each occurrence of dress code violation. When a student has 3 documented dress code violations, it is considered “excessive” and documented as a Level 1 infraction. Each subsequent violation is entered as a Level 1 infraction in the tiers. All Outerwear, Every Day Attire, and Dress Attire must be purchased from the approved vendor. University Charter School is sensitive to the needs of families in meeting the uniform requirements. The parent or guardian should contact the Head of School regarding requirements for financial assistance for uniforms. Each Wednesday is reserved for the formal UCS uniform as well as other announced days throughout the year for special functions, visits, and other events. PE dress guidelines are in place for students in grades 7-12.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES – *See Policy 6032 for full information regarding electronic devices.*

The use of cell phones and wireless communication devices (WCD) has evolved into a significant distraction in the classroom that impedes a student's ability to learn. Pursuant to Alabama legislation, ACT #2025-368, UCS is committed to policies and procedures centered around creating more focused and intentional classroom environments.

Students in grades PK-3 are not permitted to bring, possess, or use cell phones or wireless communication devices while in the school building.

Students in grades 4 through 12 who choose to bring a cell phone, or other wireless communication devices (wireless earbuds, smart watches, etc.) to school will be required to securely stow their devices for the duration of the school day. These procedures will be specified by grade and are focused on limiting distractions and maximizing learning potential.

- A. Students in grades 4 and 5 will be required to securely stow their mobile phones, wireless earbuds, and smart watches in their classroom, in a specified WCD container, from the beginning of the school day (7:55 AM) until dismissal.
- B. Students in grades 6 through 12 who wish to bring a phone to school will be required to pay a cell phone pouch fee, and will be issued a secure, tamper-free pouch to stow their mobile electronic devices during the school day (7:55 AM until dismissal). Devices will be inaccessible, yet stored in the personal belongings of the student, and in their possession. If the student loses or damages the cell phone pouch, a replacement fee will need to be paid in order for the student to continue to bring their cell phone to school.

Students who would prefer not to stow their devices in the provided pouch may choose to either leave their devices at home or in their vehicle during the school day.

Students who violate this policy will be subject to disciplinary actions prescribed in 1015 - Student Code of Conduct Policy.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR HONORS RECOGNITIONS

For 1st-5th grade elementary students, the following awards can be earned and celebrated during Elementary Awards Ceremony in Spring 2026:

- Academic Mastery: For superior academic performance and at least 90% mastery of standards in all subject areas at UCS.
- Academic Proficiency: For superior academic performance and at least 80% mastery of standards in all subject areas at UCS.
- Trailblazer Award: Serves as a role model for all UCS students by consistently displaying our core values of compassion, integrity, and perseverance. This is a very special award, as the recipient is selected by his or her peers.
- Leadership Award: The student that receives this award is recognized by their teacher for being a leader of character and for exemplifying our UCS character traits each and every day. This student is a leader to their peers.
- Highest Growth Award: The students that receive this award are recognized for showing tremendous academic growth during the 2025-2026 school year.
- Perfect Attendance Award
- Special awards for competitions and events (Science Fair Awards, Beta State Convention, etc.).

For 6th-11th grade, the following awards can be earned and recognized during Middle/High School Awards Celebration:

- Academic Mastery: Students who maintain above 3.5 in all subject areas will be recognized for this distinction.
- Academic Proficiency: Students who maintain 3.0 to 3.5 in all subjects will be recognized for this distinction.
- Trailblazer Award: Serves as a role model for all UCS students by consistently displaying our core values of compassion, integrity, and perseverance. This is a prestigious award, as it is selected by the teachers and principal.
- Other awards include but are not limited to the following: BETA State Convention, Computer Science, Integrated Marketing and Communications (IMC), Science Fair, Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA), Evelyn Anderson, Student Government Association (SGA), ACT 25+, ACT Benchmark, Dual Enrollment; Yearbook.
- Students will be recognized for performance in each individual semester. A formal ceremony will be held in the spring.

12th grade students will have a Senior Night celebration. The evening ceremony will celebrate the senior class achievements and recognitions in scholarships, academic awards (see 6th-11th grade awards), involvement, and/or completion of certain programs at UCS.

EMERGENCY DRILLS

Emergency drills are conducted monthly at the school. These drills include fire and severe weather preparedness drills along with active shooter, intruder, bomb drills, and evacuation drills. Students and visitors will be instructed by staff and faculty of the procedures during a drill or actual emergency situation.

EXTRACURRICULAR OPPORTUNITIES

UCS emphasizes the importance of student participation in extracurricular opportunities both during and after the instructional day. Extracurricular opportunities will include options such as SGA (Student Government Association), Beta Club/Junior Beta Club, National Honor Society/National Junior Honor Society, Yearbook & Student News, Agriculture and Rodeo Club, The Kindness Club, Peer Helpers, FFA, FCCLA and other clubs that students will help create with the guidance of teacher sponsors. All UCS students are encouraged to participate in at least one club/extracurricular opportunity that will meet regularly throughout the school year.

FEES AND FINES

Student fees/fines must be paid each year in a timely manner. Student fees/fines are to be paid using the Titan portal. Below is the fee schedule for the 2025-2026 school year. General fees are **required** for all UCS students. For students opting into various programs and courses, the fees associated with these courses become required for students enrolled.

University Charter School 2025-2026 Student Fees

General Fees

| Grade | Fee | Amount | Description |
|----------------------|--|--------|--|
| K-3 (All Students) | Literacy Fee | \$27 | Covers the cost of reading support materials |
| K-6 (All Students) | Visual Arts Fee | \$27 | Covers cost of art supplies |
| 4-6 All Students) | Music Fee | \$27 | Covers cost of sheet music, basic equipment and supplies |
| K-6 (All Students) | STEM Fee | \$27 | Covers cost of STEM supplies |
| K- 12 (All Students) | 1-to-1 Technology Initiative Maintenance Fee | \$105 | Covers the cost of maintaining student-provided technology |
| 10-12 (All Students) | CTE Pathway Fee | \$27 | Covers the cost for supplies, consumables, and opportunities for all students. |
| 12 (All Students) | Senior Fee | \$210 | Covers the cost of diploma, graduation regalia and blazer |

Optional Participation Fees

| Optional Fees | Fee Description | Amount |
|--|--|-------------|
| 6-12 Cell Phone Pouch | Cost of initial pouch for cell phone. Required if a student brings a cell phone to school. | \$35 |
| K-3 Piano Lessons | Covers the cost of weekly 30 minute private piano lessons for one semester. | \$150 |
| K-6 (All Students) Elementary Field Day Fee | Covers the cost of a t-shirt | \$11 |
| 7-12 (All Students) Secondary Field Day Fee | Participation fee to cover cost of activities, rentals, and other event costs. | \$11 |
| Grades 7-12 Visual Arts Course Fee | Visual Arts Course Fee for participating students | \$27 |
| Grades 6-12 Band Course Fee | Band Course Fee for participating students | \$105 |
| Advanced Placement (AP) Course Fees | Per course fee (Science, Math, English, Social Studies, Computer Science) | \$53 |
| Driver's Education Fee | Driver's Education manuals and fuel supplement | \$105 |
| Athletic Fees | \$105 for each sport offered in 2025-2026 | \$105/sport |
| Record Duplication Fee | Per student record | \$5 |
| Field Trip Fees | Varies per field trip (\$5-\$100) | - |
| Club Fees (i.e., Beta Club, 4-H, Robotics, HOSA, etc.) | Varies based on club (\$10-\$50) | - |

FIELD TRIPS

Field trips are a part of the UCS curriculum in many classrooms. The students will receive a field trip form from the sponsor of the trip. The student must return the completed permission form before he/she may take part in the field trip. Class absences are excused, but the student is responsible for making up any missed work. A student will not be denied the opportunity to participate in a field trip due to his/her ability to pay; however, the trip may be canceled if the donations for the trip do not meet expenses. Field trip money will not be refunded due to student misbehavior and disciplinary actions. For transportation purposes in these events, students must be transported in a UCS school bus or by a parent with [Driver and Volunteer Clearance](#) and in accordance with UCS Policy 3120.

FOOD SERVICES FOR BREAKFAST AND LUNCH

UCS operates the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP), which is a full breakfast, lunch, and after-school snack program.

- Student Pricing
 - For the 2025-2026 academic year, UCS is participating in the Community Eligibility Program (CEP), which allows all students to eat breakfast and lunch at no cost.
 - Students will be issued a reimbursable meal on their initial trip through the serving line. Students must enter their school issued 4-digit PIN in order to account for any meal received.
 - If a student wishes to purchase an additional meal or a la carte item, they must do so on a subsequent trip through the serving line and will be charged at the following rate:
 - lunch: \$4.25
 - breakfast: \$3.25
 - lunch entree only: \$2.50
 - juice or milk: \$0.50
 - other a la carte items (including but not limited to Smart Snack compliant ice cream, snacks and beverages) may be added during the year at the discretion of the CNP director.
- At Smith Campus only, students may purchase additional meals or a la carte items and deposit money into their account using cash. No change will be given on cash purchases, any excess funds over the item amount will be credited to the student's account.
- Families are encouraged to complete a free and reduced meal application each year to help UCS maintain accurate and up-to-date records for all students. In years when UCS is not participating in CEP, students are required to complete a free and reduced lunch meal application in order to maintain eligibility for free or reduced cost meals. The application is available on the CNP page of our website.

GIFTED EDUCATION

Gifted students are students who show the ability to perform at high levels of creativity, critical thinking, and complexity in academic fields when compared to students similar in age and experience. These students require additional services that are not usually provided in the regular instructional schedule. A UCS student can be referred for screening for gifted services by teachers, counselors, administrators, guardians, parents, peers, self, or other individuals who have knowledge of the student's abilities. UCS employs a Gifted Specialist who works with Gifted & Talented students each week. This teacher is Mrs. Jessie Johnson (jjohnson@universitycharterschool.org). Mrs. Johnson's daily schedule includes scheduled time to pull gifted students out of class at the elementary levels to complete project-based assignments, study current events, enrich current classroom learning, and to participate in accelerated learning opportunities. Students do not receive a separate grade for gifted activities as this additional time is meant to further refine and develop skills of this population of students.

GRADING POLICY & SCALES

UCS emphasizes the importance of assessing student learning through a standards-based approach to grading. Standards-based grading assesses what students know and are able to do relative to Alabama's Courses of Study. Whereas traditional grading practices may focus on a holistic assignment, cumulative assessment, or task overall to determine how much of the work overall is correct, a standards-based system looks more closely at individual skills and knowledge identified within the language of the standard to provide a more transparent and detailed update of progress to support continued improvement.

For students in Grades 1-5, UCS communicates student proficiency on a 1 to 4 scale, and the general criterion for each scaled score is as follows:

- 1 -- The student exhibits an entry-level understanding of the skills and knowledge required of the standard.
- 2 -- The student is approaching proficiency regarding the skills and knowledge required of the standard.
- 3 -- The student can demonstrate proficient understanding of the required skills and knowledge of the standard.
- 4 -- The student can demonstrate understanding or skills and knowledge that is above and beyond mastered expectations of the standard.

Students have multiple opportunities throughout the learning process to demonstrate a greater understanding of the skills and knowledge required of the standard in an effort to achieve a “proficient” scaled score of 3. Students who wish to further their application of the assessed skill can work toward additional, higher-level activities to earn a “mastery” score of 4.

For Grades 1-5, scaled scores are not averaged together to determine an overall percent proficient (or traditional “grade”), however a percentage of standards that have been met with proficiency will be provided for all parents and students. Minimum requirements for promotion to the next grade are based on the total percentage of proficiency of academic standards as outlined in this handbook.

For 6th-12th grades and all credit-bearing courses, student scores are currently still calculated and reported on a traditional 100 point scale.

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

In accordance with Alabama Administrative Code Rule 290-3-1-.02, Effective for students beginning in the 2025-2026 school year, all students shall earn the required credits for the Alabama High School Diploma.

In order to participate in the UCS Graduation Ceremony, a student must meet the following requirements:

- Completion of the Portrait of a Graduate Capstone Presentation.
- Participation in the graduation ceremony practice, held the morning of graduation.
- Completion of all other state mandated requirements to receive an Alabama High School Diploma:
 - a. Completion of all required coursework for either the [Option A](#) or [Option B](#) diploma as outlined by Alabama Administrative Code Rule 290-3-1-.02
 - b. Earn one or more of the following college or career readiness indicators before graduation:
 - i. Earning a benchmark score in any subject area on the ACT college entrance exam.
 - ii. Earning a qualifying score of three or higher on an advanced placement exam.
 - iii. Earning a qualifying score of four or higher on an international baccalaureate exam. (Only available for a UCS student that transfers from another school with a legitimate IB program.)
 - iv. Earning college credit while in high school.
 - v. Earning a silver or gold level on the ACT WorkKeys Exam.
 - vi. Completing an in-school youth apprenticeship program.
 - vii. Earning a career technical industry credential listed on the compendium of valuable credentials of the Alabama Committee on Credential Quality and Transparency (ACCQT).
 - viii. Being accepted into the military before graduation.
 - ix. Attaining career and technical education completer status.
 - x. Completing an ALSDE-approved computer science course.
 - xi. Any additional college and career readiness indicator approved by the State Board of Education.

UCS follows the Alabama State Department of Education’s minimum criteria for graduation. Course-specific information and required courses can be found at <https://www.alabamaachieves.org/graduation-requirements/>

Students who wish to pursue the Option B diploma must submit a written request to the school guidance counselor no earlier than completion of their 10th grade year. Approval for the Option B diploma route will only be granted after thorough advising and understanding of requirements by student, guardian(s), teacher of declared CTE program and principal.

HOMEWORK

Research indicates that homework can be an effective component of the comprehensive approach to educating each child. However, homework should be kept to a minimum and should be directly tied to the content, standards, and skills experienced in the classroom setting. UCS teachers are permitted to assign homework regularly as long as the total

amount of time required of students each evening does not exceed a manageable amount of time. Concerns regarding the amount of homework or design of homework should be directed to each individual teacher for clarification. Students can receive help with homework in our After School STREAM Extended Day Program.

HOURS OF OPERATION

- The student school day at the UCS Lyon campus is 7:45-3:00 except for Wednesday which is 7:45 - 1:00. The office will be open from 7:00-4:00. **Students may not be dropped off before 7:15AM.**
- The student school day at the UCS Smith campus is 7:55-3:10 except for Wednesday, which is 7:55-1:10. The office will be open from 7:00-4:00. **Students may not be dropped off before 7:25AM.**

ILLNESS OR INJURY

If a child becomes ill or injured at school, parents or guardians will be contacted by telephone to come and pick up their child. It is very important that current work numbers and emergency numbers are maintained on the child's information card. Students who are ill should not be sent to school. **Students must be fever free without medication for 24 hours before returning to school.** Students who have a communicable disease such as COVID-19, conjunctivitis "pink eye", chicken pox, ringworm, impetigo, or pediculosis (head lice) will be sent home from school and must remain at home until the condition or disease is corrected and no longer contagious. Students with pediculosis (head lice) will be sent home from school, should be treated promptly and should return the following day. Students not returning the following day will be marked with an unexcused absence. In some cases, a student must produce a valid doctor's excuse for treatment and/or medication before being allowed to re-enter school.

The school's lead nurse is Mrs. Kristen Beard and can be reached at kbeard@universitycharterschool.org or by calling the UCS Smith office.

IMMUNIZATION

Alabama law requires all children entering school in the state to present an original "Certificate of Immunization"/blue card to the central office. Immunization is required as follows: two doses of MMR, four doses of IPV, five doses of DTaP, one or two doses of Varicella or proof of Chickenpox (1 dose for <13 years of age or 2 doses for 13+ years of age, and Tdap Booster. Recommended doses are two doses of Hepatitis A, three doses of Hepatitis B, three doses of Rota, three doses of HPV, and three doses of MCV.

INTENT TO RETURN

Each year, UCS will distribute surveys to current families called an Intent to Return. Families must fill out this form to indicate that their child(ren) plans to return to UCS for the following school year. Filling out these forms are critical to UCS in accurately determining the number of available seats per grade level. Failure to complete this Intent to Return form could result in a student's loss of seat and unenrollment from UCS. All families should reach out to Mrs. Crystal May (cmay@universitycharterschool.org) for questions regarding enrollment and the Intent to Return process.

INTERNET USE -- UCS Internet Use Policy 6115 and UCS Use of Technology Policy 6110

UCS is on the cutting edge of new technology and has internet access in all classrooms. Students who have returned their Acknowledgement of Student Handbook and Code of Conduct form are allowed to use the Internet with direct supervision of a teacher or staff member. Misuse or abuse of the internet may result in a child losing the privilege to use the internet. Parents and guardians of minors are responsible for setting and conveying the standards that their children should follow when using media and information sources. The Board supports and respects each family's right to decide whether or not to allow their child access to the Internet and electronic mail.

INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNOLOGY

UCS is proud to provide Apple iPads and Laptops and Chromebooks to all students as part of our 1:1 initiative to enhance student instruction and 21st century learning. Although these devices are provided for student use, these devices are the property of UCS at all times and are subject to search, seizure, and inspection at any point without prior notice. Furthermore, misuse can result in suspension of privileges both temporarily and permanently. Improper use of devices can result in administrative discipline given the severity of misuse. *Please see Policy 1015 Student Code of Conduct, Policy 6110 Technology Policy, and Policy 6115 Internet Safety Policy for more information.*

LIBRARY INFORMATION

UCS provides students access to a full-time virtual library through myON Reader. Students have 24/7 access at home and at school to a wide selection of diverse texts. Additional platforms such as Accelerated Reader, CommonLit, and NewsELA provide students exposure to rich and diverse selections of texts. Additionally, UCS has partnered with the Ruby Pickens Tartt Public Library in Livingston to provide students access to the local library. All students are required to have a library card in order to check out books. Library cards are FREE to UCS students. UCS will schedule ongoing opportunities for elementary students to visit the public library, and students are encouraged to attend outside of school hours as well.

LOST AND FOUND

All items are placed in a Lost and Found Box located on each campus. All unclaimed items will be donated to a charitable organization at the end of the grading period and/or during holiday breaks. Please see the receptionist in each building if an item has been lost.

MEDICATIONS

UCS employs two full-time nurses. Our Lead Nurse is Mrs. Kristen Beard (kbeard@universitycharterschool.org). Mrs. Beard's nursing station is located in the main office of the Smith Campus. Mrs. Shannon Bryant's nursing station is located at Lyon Hall. UCS will administer any medications in accordance with UCS Policy 3125. Any student who must take prescription medications while at school can keep necessary medications at Mrs. Beard or Mrs. Bryant. Parents of students who must take medications at school will need to make an appointment with one of our nurses to talk more in depth about students' needs.

Self-Carrying Medications: Students may be allowed to self-carry certain medications, such as emergency inhalers, EpiPens, or other necessary medications, provided that prior arrangements and approval are made with Mrs. Beard. All other medications must be stored at the nursing station.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

University Charter School provides or sponsors the following mental health services:

- **Large group guidance** - includes school counselor or professional visiting the classroom to discuss topics such as bullying, class scheduling, stress management, test anxiety or guest speakers to discuss good choices, substance abuse prevention, etc.
- **Small group guidance** - includes small groups of students with school counselor or professional to discuss topics such as test anxiety, grief, healthy coping skills, etc.
- **Mentoring** - Peer Helpers, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, and/or Social Work Interns work with students in school on topics such as friendships, healthy relationships, anger management, and anxiety.
- **Assessments or Surveys** - includes questionnaires provided to students related to social behaviors, feelings, etc.
- **Crisis intervention** - short-term, immediate assistance by school counselor or professional for a specific situation.
- **School-Based Mental Health** - On-going counseling services by school professionals or private practitioners in the school setting. Parent or legal guardian's permission will be obtained during an intake meeting before services are provided.

- Review of Materials: You may request to review any materials used in the guidance and counseling programs available to students by contacting the student's principal.

Information Regarding How to Allow, Limit, or Prevent Your Child's Participation in Mental Health Services

- Under Alabama law, no student under the age of fourteen may participate in ongoing school counseling services including, but not limited to, mental health services, unless (1) the student's parent or legal guardian has submitted a written opt-in granting permission for the student to participate or (2) there is an imminent threat to the health of the student or others.
- Therefore, if your child is under fourteen, they will only be allowed to participate in mental health services if you opt-in. **If you would like University Charter School to be able to offer and/or provide mental health services to your child, you must opt-in for each service listed for them to participate in that service.**
- Even if you do not opt-in to mental health services, your child may be provided mental health services if there is an imminent threat to their health or others. School employees may determine in their discretion whether such an imminent threat exists and provide any mental health services they deem necessary under the circumstances.
- **Parents of students with disabilities:** Please note that the opt-in process is not applicable to any school counseling services or "mental health services" contained in a student's IEP or §504 plan. Consent for those services will be obtained and information regarding your child's mental health services will be provided through the usual special education process.

MORNING MEETING

The UCS school day begins each day with a Morning Meeting in each homeroom. This time engages students and staff in greetings morning activities to build classroom community, support social and emotional learning, and to provide a sense of routine and transition to the start of school and the beginning of the first class. UCS ends each day in an afternoon version of the Morning Meeting to reflect on the day's accomplishments, discuss important reminders and tasks, and to end the day positively before dismissal. These meetings are critical structures to foster inclusivity and connectedness for all students. These activities may be modified by grade level to meet the needs of the students.

PARENT TEACHER ASSOCIATION (PTA) & PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Our Parent Teacher Association (PTA) accepts new members throughout the school year. Please reach out to the PTA Executive Committee, ucspta@universitycharterschool.org to join. Ongoing opportunities for parent involvement are part of the UCS experience. UCS welcomes parent volunteers and places volunteering needs on social media as they arise. Parents are welcome to eat lunch with their child(ren), visit classrooms, and volunteer in classrooms as the desires or opportunities arise during the year.

PRIDE IN OUR PLACE

UCS embodies a hands-to-work concept titled Pride in Our Place that builds character and community amongst the student body and school staff. Students are expected to contribute in keeping UCS a clean environment that is conducive to learning and collaboration. Students will work to clean up at the end of lunch shifts and will end the day by assisting to tidy and sanitize classrooms. Teachers will work with students in this process at all times.

PROMOTION & RETENTION REQUIREMENTS -- Please reference the full policy for UCS Academic Standards Policy 6015.

UCS teachers and staff work continuously to ensure students are able to demonstrate growing proficiency of skills and standards across all classrooms. In accordance with state-wide expectations, UCS will expect students to demonstrate clear levels of proficiency in order to be eligible for promotion to the next grade. UCS will ensure that students who exhibit difficulty with academic concepts receive intervention, remediation, and support in a variety of approaches to support improved development. UCS students who do not meet the criteria below are subject to required summer school

and/or grade-level retention. In all cases, teachers will make informed, data-driven and observational decisions regarding the best interest of the child regarding his/her educational career.

In order to be eligible for promotion to the next grade level, students in Kindergarten through Grade 11 must demonstrate proficiency of at least 60% of the standards in each core academic course (English/reading, math, science, and social studies) and must benchmark (score on-grade level) in reading and mathematics. Students enrolled in high school credit-bearing courses must demonstrate a proficiency of at least 60% in each course in order to earn course credit.

High school students must accrue a minimum amount of course credits (or Carnegie units) to be promoted and classified as sophomores, juniors, and seniors according to the expectations outlined below:

- Tenth Grade – students who have earned five (5) Carnegie units will be classified as tenth graders.
- Eleventh Grade - students who have earned ten (10) Carnegie units will be classified as eleventh graders.
- Twelfth Grade – students who have earned seventeen (17) Carnegie units, three of which must be English, will be classified as twelfth graders.

RETESTING OPPORTUNITIES

All students will be provided additional opportunities to demonstrate proficiency on standards during the school year to support students in the school's focus on standard-based learning. These opportunities are handled in the classroom by individual teachers as needs arise after students have received additional instruction on targeted skills. Classroom teachers reserve the right to set a parameter on the deadline for reassessments. Please speak directly with classroom teachers concerning student performance.

SECLUSION AND RESTRAINT

As a part of the policies and procedures of UCS, the use of physical restraint is prohibited in the system and its educational programs except in those situations in which the student is an immediate danger to himself or others and the student is not responsive to less intensive behavioral interventions including verbal directives or other de-escalation techniques. Physical restraint is expressly prohibited when used as a form of discipline or punishment. The use of other physical restraint, chemical restraint, mechanical restraint, or seclusion is prohibited in UCS and its educational programs. The use of restraint may occur along with other emergency actions such as the school seeking assistance from law enforcement and/or emergency medical personnel which could result in a removal of the student by such personnel. Significant violations of the law including assaults on students and staff will be reported to the police. As soon as possible after the restraint or removal of a student (and no longer than one school day following the occurrence), the parent or legal guardian will be provided written notification. For more information, please refer to Policy 6013 in the UCS Board Policies located on our website.

SEMESTER EXAM PROCEDURES

Students in grades 7-12 who are enrolled in semester long classes will take end-of-semester exams for each class. Students enrolled in year-long classes will feature a mid-term exam. Students enrolled in year-long courses may only be exempt from the final exam. The protocols for exemption will be as follows.

Exam Exemption Criteria

- OPTION 1
 - *Academic: 90% Proficient or Better*
 - *Discipline: No more than 3 Level One offenses, and NO Level Two or Level Three infractions*
- OPTION 2
 - *Academic: 80% Proficient or Better*
 - *Semester Attendance: No more than 5 absences (in the class).
3 unexcused tardies (per class) = 1 absence for exemption purposes*

- *Discipline: No more than 3 Level One offenses, and NO Level Two or Level Three infractions*
- Any student may elect to take an exam in order to raise their proficiency or mastery level even if they are exempt.
- Student attendance will be recorded EXEMPT beginning on exam days if they are exempt from exams.
- A parent permission form will be sent home the week before exams for students to sign in and out once exam days start.
- A list of students with permission to sign in and out will be compiled and managed at the front desk.

SCHOOL DANCES AND FUNCTIONS

UCS will provide extracurricular activities throughout the year outside of the regular school day. In order for students to attend, students and parents must agree to any terms and conditions for participation to include any entrance fees, times for drop off and pick up, specialized dress code, chaperoning, restrictions for age groups, etc. Participation may be denied to those who do not agree to uphold the positive character and image of UCS and/or the parameters in place for attendance in the individual dance or function.

SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER

UCS employs (2) full time school resource officers (SRO) through the University of West Alabama's Police Department. Officer Ty Washington is located full-time on the Smith Campus. Officer Roosevelt Agee is located full-time on the Lyon Campus.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

UCS will provide free and appropriate educational and related services to students with disabilities who qualify under state and federal guidelines. Special education students include students determined by the school's multidisciplinary team, upon review of psychological, educational, and/or physical evaluation results, to have intellectual and developmental disabilities, hearing impairments, speech or language impairments, visual impairments, emotional disturbance, orthopedic impairments, autism, traumatic brain injury, other health impairments, or specific learning disabilities, and students who are classified as gifted. The plan for special programs and procedures for exceptional students includes screening procedures, pre-referral activities, referral procedures, eligibility criteria, program placement, program dismissal, and descriptions of program organization and operations.

The University Charter School special education program shall conform to the provisions adopted by the board and shall function in accordance with the provisions of state and federal law, State Board of Education rules, and other applicable provisions of board rules. Mrs. Lisa McHugh (lmchugh@universitycharterschool.org) is our Special Education Coordinator.

STUDENT DRIVERS

PERMITS AND PARKING PROCEDURES

- Students who wish to drive and park their vehicle at the UCS campus must complete a [2025-2026 Student Driver Application](#).
- Students who are selected to receive parking privileges will be notified via UCS email and informed of next steps.
- Vehicles parked on UCS property that do not have a valid decal will be subject to ticketing and fines from UWAPD.
- Students may only park in designated areas.

STUDENT DRIVER SAFETY AND SECURITY ASSUMPTIONS

- Per UCS Policy 1106, students are permitted to park on UCS Property as a matter of privilege, not of right. The school retains authority to conduct routine patrols by school administrators or their designee including School

Resource Officers, Law Enforcement Personnel, and K-9 units, of areas in which students park on UCS Property, including, but not limited to, inspections of the exteriors of students vehicles. The interiors of student vehicles may also be inspected and searched whenever a school authority has reasonable suspicion to believe that illegal or unauthorized materials are contained inside. Such patrols and inspections may be conducted without notice, without student consent, and without a search warrant.

- All UCS student drivers are subject to UWA Police Department's traffic rules and parking regulations.
- Substances and/or devices considered against the student code of conduct and other safety policies (UCS Policy 1015, 1030, and 1105) are not permitted in cars on UCS Property by drivers or passengers.
- Weapons or anything that can be used as weapons are prohibited in school and on UCS Property. This prohibition includes student vehicles on UCS Property.
- Students will not be permitted to retrieve forgotten items from their cars during the school day.

STUDENT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES – Please reference the full policy for UCS Harassment 1210.

The policy of the University Charter School is to maintain a safe, orderly and caring educational and professional environment that is free from harassment, bullying, and discrimination. Any type of harassment, bullying and discrimination is prohibited by this policy.

Violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination for board members and employees; sanctions up to and including suspension or expulsion for students; and appropriate school and legal action against parents or campus visitors.

Harassment may include, but is not limited to:

- 1 Verbal or physical conduct that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual because of his or her race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability or any other status protected by applicable law, or that of an individual's relatives, friends or associates;
- 2 Epithets, insults, jokes, slurs, negative stereotyping or threatening, intimidating or hostile acts that relate to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability or any other status protected by applicable law; or
- 3 Written or graphic material that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual or group because of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability or any other status protected by applicable law that is placed, disseminated or circulated in the workplace.

SUPPLIES

Students are encouraged to bring paper, pens, notebooks, a planner, and their UCS issued device to school every day. With the exception of the UCS issued device, it is the responsibility of the family to provide these supplies as well as a backpack for transporting these items. Backpacks should be sized appropriately for the child. Backpacks with wheels are prohibited as they are often difficult for students to maneuver across campus and pose a trip hazard in the hallways.

The following are provided as suggested guidelines for safe backpack use:

1. Wear both straps. Use of one strap causes one side of the body to bear the weight of the backpack. By wearing two shoulder straps, the weight of the backpack is better distributed across the shoulders.
2. Wear the backpack over the strongest mid-back muscles. Pay close attention to the way the backpack is positioned on the back. It should rest evenly in the middle of the back. Shoulder straps should be adjusted to allow the child to put on and take off the backpack without difficulty and allow free movement of the arms. Straps should not be too loose, and the backpack should not extend below the low back.
3. Lighten the load. Keep the load at 15% or less of the child's bodyweight. Carry only those items that are required for the day or find a new lightweight backpack. Organize the contents of the backpack by placing the heaviest items closest to the back.

Supply lists for all classes are made available to the public each July. Please see your specific teacher for any other class-specific needs of school supplies. Donations of Tissue, Hand Sanitizer, Liquid Soap, Clorox/Lysol Wipes, Lysol, and Band Aids are appreciated in homeroom classrooms. If you are unable to provide your child with needed supplies, please

let the counselor know. Additional school supply items may be requested by individual teachers throughout the year.

TESTING CALENDAR

All students at UCS in Grades 2-8 must participate in Alabama's standardized assessment (ACAP Summative) each spring. The ACAP Summative is meant to determine the level of proficiency for each individual student as measured to grade level and subject level expectations in reading and math (Grades 2-8) and science (Grades 4, 6, and 8 only). Specific days of in-class assessment will be shared with students and parents in advance of the assessment sessions. Other testing, both formal, school-based, and state-mandated, is also required for various populations. Mrs. Crystal May (cmay@universitycharterschool.org) coordinates all testing and ensures that all stakeholders are aware of required testing in advance of test administration throughout the year.

TOBACCO, DRUGS, AND WEAPONS

University Charter School is a tobacco, drug and alcohol-free campus. Any possession or use of these substances is strictly prohibited. Offenses of the rule may result in in-school suspension, out of school suspension or expulsion. This rule, as all school rules apply, for after school events and school trips. In addition to banning tobacco or other nicotine delivery devices (Vapes, e-cigarettes, etc.), we strive to maintain a safe school environment by strictly prohibiting the use or possession of drugs (or paraphilia) and weapons at UCS. More information regarding these policies can be found by reading Policy 1105 (Possession of Weapons and Toy Weapons), Policy 1015 (Student Code of Conduct). These policies may be found in the UCS Policy Manual.

VISITORS

UCS encourages visitors to visit and to take part in the place-based, community-based work we do every day. All visitors must enter through the main entrance doors and into the main office. No unauthorized person may visit any part of UCS without clearance from the UCS central office. Visitors must sign-in and provide proof of identification. If requesting a meeting with a teacher, visitors are asked to schedule these in advance to avoid interrupting the instructional day.

WEIGHTED GRADE POINT AVERAGES (GPAs)

When calculating the final average for a student taking an Advanced Placement (AP) or Dual Enrollment (DE) course, one point will be added to the 4.0 scale for a total weighted GPA calculated out of 5.0.



**Student Handbook Acknowledgement Form
2025-2026**

All parents and/or legal guardians must sign the form below acknowledging that they have read the student handbook and are aware of the contents and implications.

Students in grades 4 through 12 must also sign below as an acknowledgement that they have received and reviewed these contents and implications.

This part of the student handbook is to be used for the explicit purpose of obtaining an official signature of the parent or legal guardian and will be filed in the school office.

In signing this form, I certify that I have read the student handbook, and I am aware of the contents and implications. After having read the information in the handbook, I am thoroughly familiar with the contents.

Official Signature of Parent or Legal Guardian

DATE

Name of Student

DATE