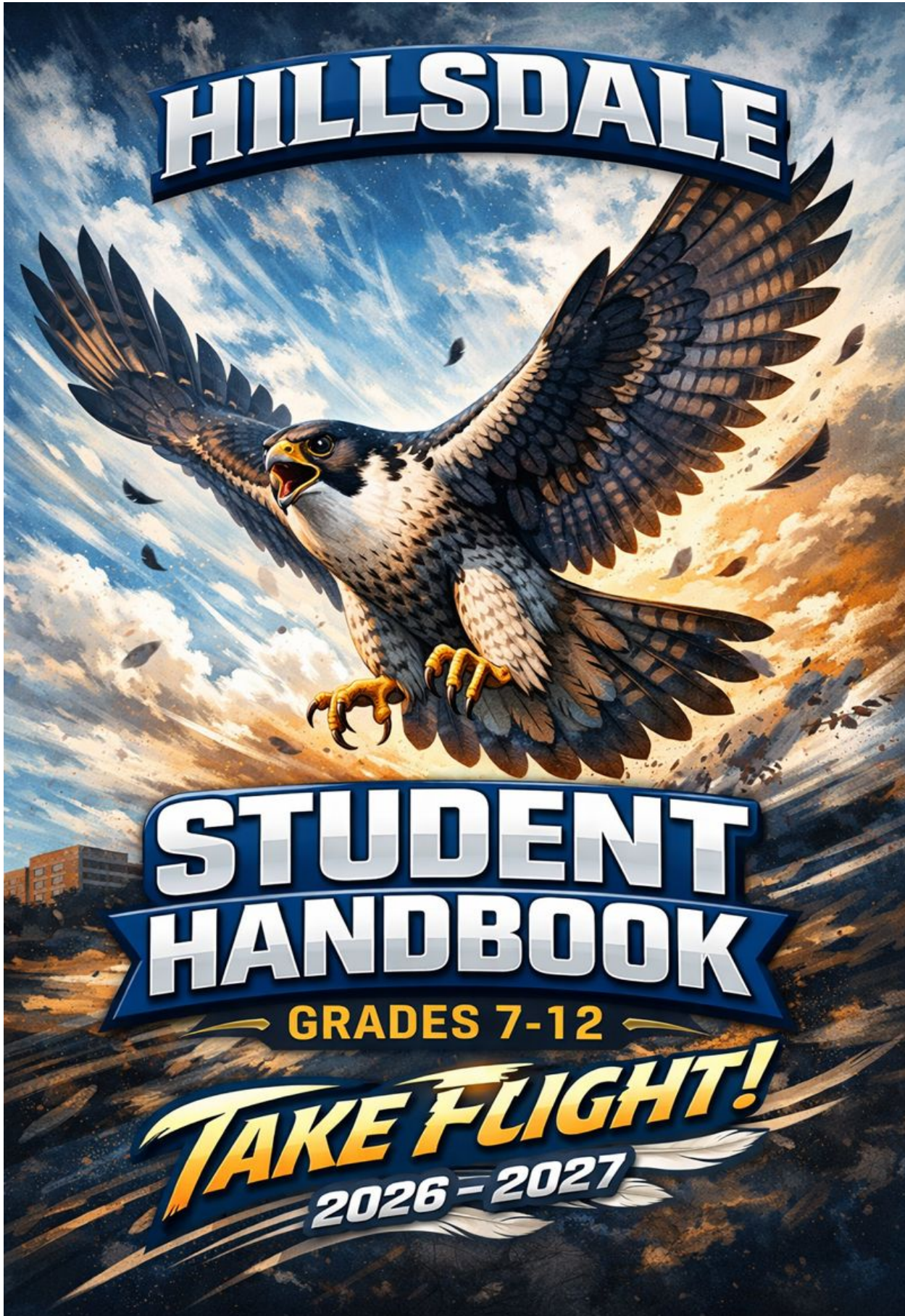




HILLSDALE

**STUDENT
HANDBOOK**

GRADES 7-12

TAKE FLIGHT!
2026-2027

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Welcome

Students and Families,

Welcome to a new school year at Hillsdale Local School District! It is a privilege to serve as part of a school community that values tradition, growth, and excellence, and I am excited to welcome our students in grades 7–12 as we begin the year 2026-2027 together.

At Hillsdale, we are committed to helping every student grow academically, socially, and personally. Our mission, focused on success through innovation, empowerment, and collaboration, guides everything we do. In partnership with our families and community, we strive to build character, expect excellence, and provide a safe and challenging environment that prepares students for success in life.

This Student Handbook is designed to help students and families understand our expectations, procedures, and opportunities. It outlines important information about academics, behavior, attendance, activities, and daily school life. We encourage you to review it carefully and use it as a resource throughout the year.

These are important years of growth, responsibility, and discovery. At Hillsdale, students are encouraged to challenge themselves, get involved, and take ownership of their learning and choices. Whether through academics, athletics, fine arts, leadership, or service, there are countless opportunities for students to connect, contribute, and take flight every day.

We look forward to working together to make this a successful and rewarding school year. If you have questions or need support at any time, please do not hesitate to reach out. Thank you for being a valued part of the Hillsdale community.

Wishing you a fantastic year ahead,

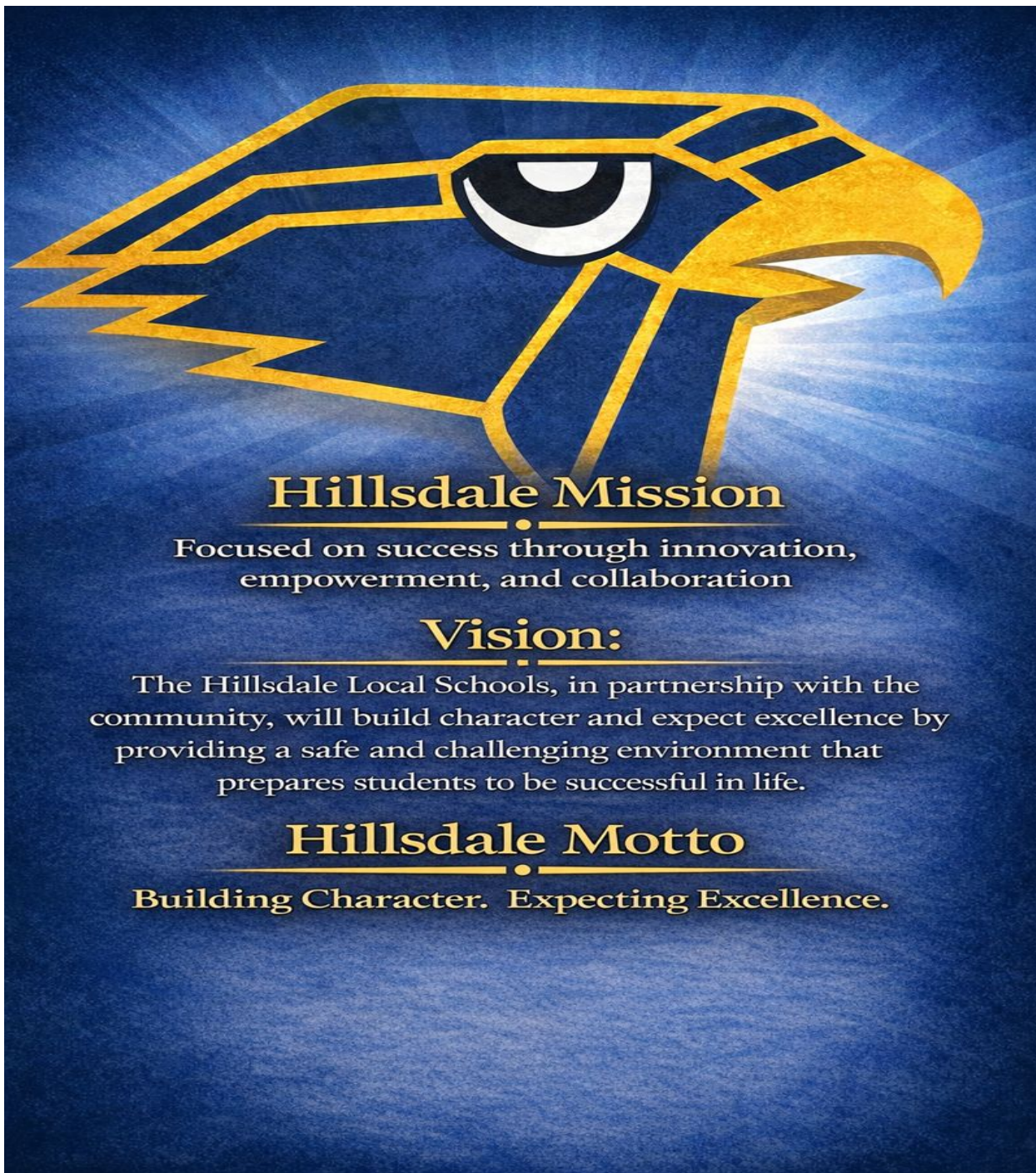
Mr. Keib

Grades 7–12 Principal



Welcome to Hillsdale Local Schools Grades 7–12, where a safe and caring environment emphasizes innovation, growth, and lifelong success and empowers students to take flight every day.

Mission, Vision, Motto



CONTACT INFORMATION

Hillsdale Grades 7-12 Main Office: 419-368-6841

479 Township Road 1902, Jeromesville, OH 44840

District Website: www.hillsdalelocalschools.org

Position	Name	Email Address
Principal 7-12	Mr. Tim Keib	tkeib@hillsdsalelocalschools.org
Athletic Director	Mrs. Jodi Long	jlong@hillsdalelocalschools.org
School Counselor	Mr. Scott Call	scall@hillsdalelocalschools.org
Community Liaison	Mrs. Anne Barrett	abarrett@hillsdalelocalschools.org
School Secretary	Mrs. Janet Mowery	jmowery@hillsdalelocalschools.org
School Nurse	Mrs. Char Patterson	cpatterson@hillsdalelocalschools.org

(Additional contacts such as teachers, support staff, and board office contacts can be found on the district website or by request.)

ACADEMICS

Academic Honors and Awards

We love to recognize student achievement. Honors include:

- Honor Roll Certificates or Celebrations after each quarter.
- Academic Letter “H”: High school students (9–12) can earn an academic letter for maintaining honor roll over multiple quarters (criteria explained each fall). This letter is similar to a varsity athletic letter but for academics.
- Annual Awards Ceremony (Scholastic Reception): In the spring, there is an academic awards night where underclassmen may receive departmental awards, and seniors earn scholarships and honors.
- National Honor Society (NHS): National Honor Society is a prestigious recognition for qualifying juniors and seniors.
- Other awards such as Perfect Attendance, Citizenship awards, contest recognitions (e.g. science fair, art show winners) are given as appropriate.

We encourage students to strive for these honors; not only for the accolade but because they reflect meaningful hard work and excellence.

Awards

Underclass Academic Awards: Underclassmen (grades 9–11) may be eligible for awards in specific subjects (e.g., Outstanding Achievement in Algebra II, or Excellence in World History) presented at the end-of-year ceremonies. Teachers select these based on performance, improvement, attitude, etc. There may also be awards like “Most Improved Student” or “Principal’s Award” for overall contributions. Middle school (7–8) also typically have year-end awards within their team or grade.

Honors Diploma

The State of Ohio offers an “Honors Diploma” for students who exceed core graduation requirements. For Academic Honors Diploma, benchmarks include: 4 credits of math including higher-level math, 4 credits science including advanced sciences, 3 credits one foreign language or 2 each of two languages, 1 credit fine art, plus criteria like GPA 3.5+ and ACT 27/SAT 1280+. There are also Career Tech Honors Diplomas, STEM, Arts, Civic, etc., each with their own criteria. Our counselors identify seniors who meet these and will submit the info to the state so the Honors Diploma is indicated on transcripts and you get the special seal on your diploma. If you aim for an Honors Diploma, discuss with your counselor early to plan coursework appropriately.

Academic Integrity

Honesty in schoolwork is absolutely essential. Cheating, plagiarism, or any form of dishonesty undermines learning and will not be tolerated.

- **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** can be a valuable educational tool when used appropriately. However, using AI without permission or presenting AI-generated work as your own original work is considered academic dishonesty.
- **Cheating** includes, but isn’t limited to: copying someone else’s homework, looking at someone’s test or using an unauthorized “cheat sheet,” obtaining test answers in advance, or using online translators or solution websites to do your work for you (when not permitted).
- **Facilitating dishonesty** by giving your work to someone else to copy, or sharing test content with others who haven’t taken it, is also a violation.

- **Plagiarism** is presenting someone else's words or ideas as your own without proper credit. This applies to copying text from the internet or a book into an essay without quotation or citation, or rephrasing someone's unique ideas without attribution. Even copying a friend's lab report or art project design can be plagiarism.

Consequences for academic dishonesty may include a zero on the assignment or test in question (with no opportunity to make up those points) and parent/guardian notification. The teacher may refer the incident to the principal, and disciplinary action may follow, especially for significant or repeated offenses. This could range from detentions to suspension in severe cases (for example, organizing a cheating ring or hacking into school accounts). Colleges and scholarship committees often ask about academic honesty issues; protecting your integrity is protecting your future.

Academic Responsibility of the Learner

Students at Hillsdale are expected to take ownership of their education. This means coming to class prepared (with homework done, materials ready), participating actively, asking questions when unsure, and putting forth their best effort on all assignments. Teachers and staff are here to facilitate learning, but ultimately each student must commit to doing the work of learning. This includes managing time wisely, especially when involved in extracurriculars or jobs, and seeking extra help when needed (our teachers are available before or after school by arrangement, and we have tutoring resources; just ask!).

Be Respectful, Be Prepared, Be Engaged

These three principles form the foundation of classroom conduct:

- **Be Respectful:** Show courtesy to teachers, staff, and fellow students. This includes using appropriate language, listening when someone else is speaking, following classroom rules, and respecting differing opinions and backgrounds. Respect also extends to school property. Take care of textbooks, equipment, and facilities. A positive classroom environment where everyone feels respected helps all students learn.
- **Be Prepared:** Arrive on time with all necessary materials (Chromebook charged, notebook, writing utensils, completed homework, etc.). Being prepared also means being mentally ready: coming with a mindset to learn complete required reading or studying beforehand. If you were absent, check Google Classroom or with the teacher for what you missed so you can be prepared when you return.
- **Be Engaged:** Pay attention in class, participate in discussions or group work, and put effort into class activities. Avoid distractions (like cell phones, which should be away during the school day) and stay on task. Engagement also means thinking critically, applying yourself fully to projects, and taking initiative. For example, if you don't understand something, engage by asking for clarification or extra practice.

Our core belief is that by being respectful, prepared, and engaged, students will create a culture of excellence and support each other's learning.

Athletic, Co-Curricular, and Extracurricular Eligibility

Participation in athletics and activities is encouraged, but academics come first. To be eligible for sports, clubs, drama, band, student council, and so on:

- **Attendance:** To be eligible to participate in a practice or contest on a given day, student-athletes are expected to attend school.
 - **Key Guidelines**
 - **Excused Absences:** Absences for reasons such as medical appointments, funerals, or college visits must be approved through the school office and communicated to the coach.

- **Illness:** Students who leave school due to illness or are absent because they are sick may not return solely to participate in practices or contests that day.
- **Unexcused Absences:** Any unexcused absence or truancy on practice or game days may result in ineligibility to participate and may lead to additional team discipline.
- **Exceptions:** Extenuating circumstances may be considered by the Principal or Athletic Director, but must be approved in advance.
 - This policy reinforces the priority of academics and student health while promoting accountability and fairness.
- **Behavior:** Students must follow the Code of Conduct in and out of school. Infractions (like drug/alcohol use, fighting, etc.) may affect your status on a team or club according to the Athletic Code of Conduct or activity guidelines. Coaches and advisors may have additional expectations (like curfews, grade checks, or codes of behavior). Violation of team rules may result in suspension or removal from the team on top of school consequences.
- **Grades:** Students must meet OHSAA and district scholastic standards. Ohio requires being enrolled in and passing a minimum of 5 one-credit courses (or equivalent) each grading period for High School and being enrolled in and passing 4 classes for Jr. High. At Hillsdale, we also enforce a minimum GPA (for example, 1.0 or higher, and not more than one failing grade per quarter. If a student is failing multiple classes or has a very low GPA, they may go on probation or become ineligible for the next grading period. We do offer an Academic Assistance Plan for borderline students to regain eligibility with tutoring and grade checks.

The Athletic Director and principal oversee eligibility. If you have questions (especially about OHSAA rules on age, semesters, transfers, etc.), please contact the Athletic Director.

Conferences

Communication between home and school is key. Parent/Guardian-Teacher Conferences are scheduled during the year (usually in the fall and in early spring). Notices will be sent home with dates and how to sign up for a time slot. These meetings are a chance to discuss your child's progress, strengths, and areas for improvement. We can also arrange conferences at any time during the year upon request; just call or email the teacher or counselor to set up a meeting before or after school. Students are encouraged to attend conferences with their parents/guardians, especially at the secondary level, so they can be part of the conversation about their learning.

If you ever have a concern about a grade or classroom issue, do not wait for a formal conference, please reach out to the teacher promptly. We welcome the opportunity to partner with you.

Early Graduation

If a student wishes to graduate early (in less than 4 years of high school), they must have a plan approved by the school counselor and principal typically by the end of sophomore year. Parent/Guardian approval is required. Early grads still must meet all requirements. Once early graduation is approved, the student will be reclassified to the graduating class they intend to join and will be eligible for senior activities of that class.

Field Trips

Field trips are off-campus learning experiences tied to curriculum or school activities. Prior to any trip, you will receive a permission form detailing the destination, date, time, purpose, any cost, and special instructions (like what to wear or bring). This form must be signed by a parent/guardian and returned by the deadline for the student to participate. Sometimes space or resources require limiting who can go (e.g., certain club trips), so make sure to meet any stated criteria or deadlines.

Expectations on field trips: students represent our school and must adhere to the same behavioral standards as on campus. School rules apply on the bus and at the venue. If a student has a history of poor behavior or poor attendance, the school may decide the student cannot go on a non-mandatory trip for safety/liability reasons. In such cases, the student will have an alternative assignment at school that day. We will inform parents/guardians ahead of time if a student is being excluded for those reasons.

Because trips are planned in advance, students are responsible for talking to teachers and getting any work they will miss before the trip. Typically, work due that day should be turned in early, and tests should be taken beforehand or arrangements made. The student is accountable for keeping up; a field trip is an excused absence but not an excuse for falling behind academically.

Transportation is usually by school bus. Students may only ride in other vehicles if explicitly arranged (like a van driven by staff or, in rare cases, with parent/guardian transport if pre-approved). Often, we invite parent/guardian chaperones. If interested, let the teacher know, and be sure you have volunteer clearance on file.

Grade Access

Through ProgressBook, parents/guardians and students can check grades 24/7. Teachers update grades regularly (at least weekly, usually). If you see a concerning trend, email the teacher for clarification rather than waiting for report cards.

Grading System

Our grading scale for Hillsdale Grades 7–12 is as follows (standard scale unless otherwise noted by a specific course syllabus):

Percentage Scale	Letter Grade	GPA Points
94-100	A	4.0
90-93.99	A-	3.667
87-89.99	B+	3.333
83-86.99	B	3.0
80-82.99	B-	2.667
77-79.99	C+	2.333
73-76.99	C	2.0
70-72.99	C-	1.667

67-69.99	D+	1.333
63-66.99	D	1.0
60-62.99	D-	0.667
00-59.99	F	0

Semester Course Final Average

The semester grade is based on a student's average percentage grade received for two nine-week grading periods and a final exam. Both nine-week grading periods of a semester course will be 40% of the course grade, while final exams are 20%.

- All courses will conclude the semester with an exam.
- If you are taking a state tested course and you pass the state test, you will be excluded from taking the final exam.
- Plus/minus may be used at teacher's discretion for more precision (for example, 90–92 A-, 93–100 A). For GPA calculation, we use a 4.0 scale (A=4, B=3, C=2, D=1, F=0).
- Each quarter grade is determined by the teacher based on homework, quizzes, tests, projects, participation, etc.

Graduation/Commencement

To earn a Hillsdale Local Schools diploma, students must:

- Successfully complete the required credits (at least 21, including 4 English, 4 math, 3 science, 3 social studies, 0.5 health, 0.5 PE, 0.5 personal finance, and electives including 1.0 in fine arts).
- Meet competency requirements on state tests (or meet alternative pathways as defined by the Ohio Department of Education, such as career-tech credential and WorkKeys, or military enlistment, etc.).
- Earn at least two of the state-defined diploma seals (e.g., Citizenship Seal, Science Seal, College-Ready Seal, etc.) to demonstrate readiness.

Our guidance office keeps track of these criteria and will keep students informed of their status.

Commencement: Only students who have fulfilled all graduation requirements may participate in the graduation ceremony. This includes passing all required courses and earning required seals/competency. Students who are short on credits or requirements may not walk at commencement. We encourage seniors to stay focused through the end to avoid “senioritis” that could jeopardize your standing in a class needed for graduation.

Commencement is a formal ceremony. Graduates must wear the prescribed cap and gown (in school colors) and attire underneath that is appropriate (guidelines will be provided; usually collared shirt and tie for guys, dress or nice slacks for girls, and dress shoes for all; no jeans/shorts or sneakers). Caps shall not be decorated.

Seniors are expected to attend graduation practice (usually the day before). Missing practice without an excused reason may disqualify you from participating in the ceremony, because practice is crucial for the event to run smoothly.

School fees and obligations (lost books, uniforms, etc.) should be cleared by the week of graduation, or the student may not receive their diploma until they are.

Heartland Technical Education Center (HTEC)

Beginning in 11th grade, students have the option to attend the Heartland Technical Education Center for various vocational and technical programs. If you are enrolled at HTEC:

- You are still a Hillsdale student and may participate in Hillsdale sports, dances, and graduation (following all eligibility rules).
- You must follow both the HTEC rules and the Hillsdale Code of Conduct. Behavior or attendance issues at HTEC will be reported to us and vice versa. Discipline at one school may carry over to the other. For example, if you're suspended at HTEC, you cannot come to Hillsdale that day either.
- Transportation: The district provides a shuttle to HTEC. We strongly encourage using it. If you drive yourself, you need permission from both Hillsdale and HTEC, and you must follow their driving rules. If the Hillsdale bus doesn't run (like on a delay or cancellation for us but not HTEC), we will announce plans for getting Career Center students to HTEC.
- Check in with the guidance office regarding any credits or requirements (like government class) that you still need at Hillsdale. Good communication ensures you meet all graduation requirements.
- Represent Hillsdale well! Heartland Technical Education Center is a privilege and an excellent opportunity to get career-ready skills. Take it seriously, attend regularly, and enjoy hands-on learning.

If you're considering attending HTEC for next year, talk to the school counselor during sophomore year for information and to schedule a visit.

Field trips are privileges. Enjoy them, learn from them, and show our community what great students Hillsdale has!

Honor Roll

Students who earn a grade point average (GPA) of 3.5 or higher during a grading period will be recognized on the Honor Roll. Students earning a 4.0 GPA (all A's) will be recognized on the Scholar Roll, while students earning all A's and B's will be recognized on the Honor Roll.

Incomplete Grades

If circumstances (usually serious illness or emergency) prevent a student from completing required work by the end of a grading period, a grade of "I" (Incomplete) may be given on the report card. The student then has a specified amount of time to finish the work. At Hillsdale, Incompletes must be resolved within two weeks after the grading period unless an extension is granted. If not resolved, the "I" will turn into an F for those assignments and the quarter grade will be calculated accordingly. For example, a student who misses finals due to hospitalization might get Incompletes and then take the exams during that two-week window.

It's the student's responsibility to work with each teacher to make up for what's missing. Incomplete grades due to extended illness or other critical issues may be given extra consideration; we'll coordinate a plan with the student and family.

National Honor Society Membership

NHS is a national organization that recognizes Scholarship, Leadership, Service, and Character.

- **Selection Process:** In the spring, juniors (and eligible seniors not yet inducted) with a cumulative GPA at or above 3.50 are invited to apply. Students fill out an information form detailing their leadership roles, service activities, and co-curricular involvement. A faculty council reviews anonymous applications

(they see the info but not names) and also considers input from the staff on each candidate's character. Selection is by majority vote of the council, based on evidence of the four pillars. It is an honor, not guaranteed by GPA alone.

- **Induction:** Those selected are inducted in a formal ceremony. Once a member, you must uphold standards (maintain GPA, contribute service hours, attend NHS meetings and activities).
- **Probation/Dismissal:** Members who fall below standards (e.g., GPA drops or a disciplinary incident showing poor character) may be warned or ultimately removed after a faculty council review, per NHS national guidelines.

NHS provides opportunities for further leadership and service. We highly encourage eligible students to consider it.

Progress Book/Online Gradebook

Hillsdale uses ProgressBook (Parent/Guardian Access) to allow students and parents/guardians to view grades, assignments, attendance, and teacher comments. At the start of the year, new families receive account setup info. Returning families use the same login (reset password if needed). If you have trouble accessing, contact the school office for assistance.

In ProgressBook, you can set up alerts for low grades or missing assignments. Teachers often also post assignment details and resources. It's an excellent way to stay on top of academic progress in real time. We encourage checking it weekly together with your student, rather than waiting until report cards. If something seems off (a sudden drop, or an assignment you're sure was handed in is marked missing), encourage your student to speak to the teacher or send a quick email to clarify. Communication is key; technology aids that but doesn't replace the personal touch.

Progress Reports & Report Cards

Official report cards are available four times a year (at the end of each quarter). These will be available on ProgressBook (and a paper copy can be sent home upon request). Mid-quarter, if a student is doing poorly (D or F) in any course, teachers will typically send home a Progress Report or at least make contact via phone/email to alert parents/guardians so there's time to improve before the quarter ends.

Nonetheless, given the accessibility of grades online, the tradition of interim reports is shifting toward continuous communication. If you lack internet access and need paper progress reports, please inform the office.

Retention

(For grades 7–8 primarily) If a junior high student fails multiple core subjects for the year, a meeting will determine whether retention (repeating the grade) is necessary. Generally, failing two or more of the four core courses (English, Math, Science, Social Studies) may result in retention unless there are compelling reasons otherwise. Sometimes summer school or tutoring can allow promotion by catching up on one failed subject. Each case is considered individually by a team including the principal, counselor, teachers, and parents/guardians. The student's maturity, effort, attendance, and assessment scores are also factors. The goal is not to punish but to ensure the student is prepared for the next grade's work.

At the high school level, "retention" isn't by grade but by credits. If a student doesn't earn enough credits, they will not graduate on time. We categorize students by cohort year rather than by strict credits, but practically, if a student is short credits, they may need to attend credit recovery or take an extra year to graduate.

School Without Failures

This is a philosophy or program the district embraces to reduce student failure rates by emphasizing mastery learning, offering redo opportunities, and intervening early when students struggle. The idea is that we want every student to succeed and will provide multiple pathways and support for them to demonstrate competency. For instance, some classes might allow test retakes after further study, or alternative assignments for students who failed a project. It doesn't mean standards are lowered; it means we believe failure is not an endpoint but a learning step. Students should not give up; if you fail something, work with your teacher on how to improve and demonstrate your learning in another way if possible.

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Address, Emergency Contacts, and Email Changes

Keeping student information current is critical. Parents/guardians must notify the school office as soon as possible if there is a change to the address, phone numbers, or email address. This ensures you receive school communications and that, in an emergency, we can reach you. You can update certain information through Final Forms, but please also call the office to confirm changes. Emergency contacts (the people authorized to pick up your child if you cannot be reached) should also be kept up to date.

Adult Students/Age of Majority

Students aged 18 or older are legal adults; however, they must follow all school rules, just as any other student. The school will continue to keep parents/guardians informed (e.g. on attendance, grades, and discipline) unless the adult student expressly requests in writing that we limit parents/guardian communication as allowed by law. Even if such a request is made, school officials may still contact parent/guardian in emergencies or if the student's welfare is at stake. All students, regardless of age, are subject to the same standards of behavior and academic requirements.

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Approved artificial intelligence (AI) tools may be used at Hillsdale Local School District to support learning, creativity, and productivity when permitted by a teacher. AI should be used as a learning aid, not a replacement for original thinking, effort, or academic integrity.

Students are expected to:

- Use AI tools only when allowed by the teacher and for the purposes outlined in the assignment.
- Ensure all submitted work reflects their own understanding and learning.
- Properly acknowledge AI assistance when required.
- Never use AI to cheat, plagiarize, complete assessments dishonestly, or bypass learning expectations.
- Protect personal information and follow all district technology and acceptable use policies.

Misuse of AI may be treated as a violation of academic integrity and may result in disciplinary consequences. When used responsibly, AI can be a powerful tool to enhance learning and prepare students for future careers.

Bell Schedules (Grades 7–12)

Regular Schedule:

First Period begins at 8:00 AM. Dismissal at 3:00 PM. There are 7 class periods, a lunch period, and an advisory period.

Two-Hour Delay Schedule:

If school is delayed (e.g. for weather), classes will begin at 10:00 AM. Each class period will be shortened, and dismissal remains at 3:00 PM. Buses run exactly two hours later than usual in the morning.

(Note: Schedules for assemblies or special event days will be announced as needed.)

Bus Notes/Transportation Changes

If a parent/ guardian needs to pick up the student instead of using the bus, a written note or email from the parent/guardian is required. The note should be submitted to the office in the morning for approval. We understand emergencies happen; if a last-minute change is needed, please call the school as early as possible. *For your child's safety, we cannot allow a child to deviate from their normal transportation routine without written or direct communication from a parent/guardian.* To ensure a smooth start to the school year, transportation schedule changes are not permitted during the week before school begins or during the first week of school.

Students are not permitted to ride a bus they are not assigned to, except with prior approval. If someone other than a parent/guardian will be picking up your child, you must notify the office in writing, and that individual should be prepared to show ID at pickup.

Closings and Delays

When inclement weather or another emergency (power outage, etc.) makes it unsafe to hold school or necessitates a delayed start, the Superintendent will make an announcement as early as possible. Notifications may be made via: automated text system (ensure your phone numbers are current in our system), local TV/Radio, district website, and/or social media.

A "Two-Hour Delay" means buses run two hours later and school starts at 10:00 AM (as described in Bell Schedules). If conditions don't improve, a delay could turn into a closure, so continue to monitor alerts. Please do not drop students off early on delay days, as staff will not be available.

During weather emergencies, ultimately it is a parental/guardian decision whether it's safe to send your teen driver or have the bus brave the roads from your location. If we have school but you feel travel is unsafe in your area, you may keep your student home and that absence may be considered excused. Please call the office to report it and send a note, treating it like any illness/necessity absence.

Computer Network/Internet Acceptable Use Policy (AUP)

Our schools utilize a range of technology including computers, tablets, internet access, Google Workspace for Education, etc., to enhance learning. All students and their parent/guardian must sign the District's Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) at the beginning of the year, which is completed through FinalForms. This agreement outlines the rules for using school technology resources.

Key points include:

- Use technology for educational purposes only while on school property or using school accounts. Inappropriate use (visiting illicit or hateful websites, cyberbullying, downloading pirated content, gaming unrelated to education, etc.) is prohibited.
- Respect system security; do not share passwords, attempt to bypass filters, or access accounts/files that aren't yours.
- Treat district devices with care. Report any issues or damage immediately. Do not install unauthorized software or attempt to "jailbreak" devices.

- Understand that there is no expectation of privacy when using school networks or devices. The district can monitor and review all usage, files, and communications. This includes email and documents on your school Google account.
- Cyberbullying or harassing others via school or personal devices (if it carries over to the school environment) will be dealt with as a serious disciplinary matter.

Consequences for violating the AUP may range from loss of computer privileges to suspension or expulsion, depending on severity. Also, any illegal activity may be referred to law enforcement. The full AUP is available on the district website (Board Policy EDE).

Concerns and Complaints

Parent/Guardian Involvement and Complaint Procedure

We encourage students and parents/guardians to communicate any school-related concerns so that we can work together to resolve them. Typically, concerns should first be addressed at the level closest to the issue: for example, if there's a classroom concern, speak with the teacher; an athletic concern, speak with the coach. We find that most issues can be resolved through respectful dialogue. If a satisfactory resolution isn't reached, you may then bring the issue to the school principal. The principal will investigate or mediate as needed. If the concern involves a school policy or an administrative action that isn't specific to one teacher, you can contact the principal directly. We are committed to handling concerns promptly and fairly.

Counselor

Our school counselor, Mr. Call, is here to support students in grades 7–12 academically, socially, and emotionally. Services include: scheduling and course planning, college and career guidance, scholarship information, short-term personal counseling, and coordinating with outside counseling services when needed. Students can request to see the counselor, or parent/guardian can call to refer their child. We also cover guidance topics through classroom lessons (e.g., on college applications, career exploration, social skills).

Parental Notification (HB 8): We will not encourage students to withhold information about their well-being from parents/guardians. If a student shares with a counselor or staff member something significant regarding their mental, emotional, or physical health, we will encourage the student to involve their parent, and in many cases we will inform the parent/guardian directly, unless there is a compelling safety reason not to. We want to work in partnership with families to support students. The only exceptions are cases of suspected abuse or neglect, which by law must be reported to children's services first; even in those cases, we typically encourage the student that their parent/guardian should know.

Custody Notifications/Court Orders

If there are any court orders that affect who may have contact with your child (custody orders, restraining orders, guardianship papers, etc.), the custodial parent or legal guardian must provide an up-to-date certified copy of those orders to the school office. We must have documentation on file to enforce any restrictions (for example, if a non-custodial parent is not allowed to pick up a child, or if certain individuals are barred from contact). In the absence of a court order, we are legally bound to treat both parents as having equal rights to access and information.

Please also inform us if a custody case is pending that could impact the child's school life. The school will follow court orders as written; we cannot modify or make exceptions without

additional court documentation. We will also keep sensitive custody information confidential, sharing it only with staff who need to know for the safety and well-being of the student.

Directory Information & Student Privacy

Under Ohio law and FERPA, certain student information can be released without prior consent as “directory information,” provided we give notice and an opportunity to object. Hillsdale Local Schools defines directory information (consistent with ORC 3319.321) as: the student’s name, parent/guardian names, home address, telephone listing, date of birth, current grade level, participation in officially recognized activities and sports, awards and honors received, and (for athletes) height and weight. This information is generally not considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if disclosed. Examples might include: publishing a sports roster with player names and heights, acknowledging honor roll students in the newspaper, or using a student’s name and photo in the yearbook or school social media.

- **Opt-Out:**

If you do not want your child’s directory information released, you must notify the school in writing each school year (an email or letter to the principal is acceptable). We will honor all opt-out requests. Absent an opt-out, the school may release directory info for legitimate purposes, except we do not release it to any organization for commercial or profit-making activities. Furthermore, under Ohio law, if the school receives a request for directory information for a profit-making plan (e.g., a company requesting student addresses for marketing), we will refuse the request unless we have written parental/guardian permission.

- **Photo/Video and Name Releases:**

We often like to showcase our students’ achievements and activities. This might include posting pictures on our website or social media, or sending press releases about events. If you have concerns about your child’s photo or name being published, please indicate this on the beginning-of-year forms or contact the principal. We respect privacy requests and will exclude your child from any public-facing media as directed.

Our aim is to balance celebrating our students and communicating with our community while respecting family privacy preferences.

Drills

We conduct safety drills throughout the year, as required by law and for everyone’s safety:

- **Fire Drills:** When the alarm sounds, everyone must evacuate the building quickly and calmly via the nearest exit, then proceed to the designated assembly point outside. Students must remain with their class so teachers can take attendance. Never assume it’s “just a drill”; always respond immediately. Misuse of fire alarms or failure to follow drill procedures is a serious offense and may have serious consequences along with notification to law enforcement..
- **Tornado/Severe Weather Drills:** Upon announcement (or siren), students will move to the designated shelter area (auxiliary gym), interior rooms, or hallways on the lowest floor, away from windows, in a quiet, orderly fashion. Sit on the floor against the wall and protect your head. We’ll practice this so everyone knows where to go.
- **Lockdown (Safety) Drills:** These are typically done in coordination with local law enforcement. Students will be taught the proper response which may include: locking/barricading classroom doors, moving out of sight, and maintaining silence. In some drills we may practice evacuation or “ALICE” options. During a drill, follow all staff instructions immediately. Because these can be sensitive, teachers will debrief with students afterwards to address questions or anxieties. Any student who deliberately causes a panic or disrupts a safety drill may face disciplinary action.

We appreciate everyone's cooperation during drills. These routines save lives if a real crisis were to occur. Each year, the Ashland County Sheriff's Department reviews our emergency protocols and may observe our drills to provide feedback.

Driving/Parking Regulations

Eligible students may drive to school. Driving is a privilege that can be revoked if abused. Key points:

- **Parking Permits:**

All student-driven vehicles parked on campus during the school day must display a Hillsdale parking permit on the rearview mirror. Permits are issued in the office. There is no fee for the initial permit (replacement of a lost permit is \$5). To obtain a permit, students must present a valid driver's license, proof of insurance, and a signed parental/guardian permission form. The permit number will be assigned to a specific vehicle(s); if you drive multiple cars, register each one (you can transfer the hang tag between them). If you get a new vehicle during the year, update the office.

- **Parking Lot Rules:**

Park only in the designated student parking area (do not park in visitor spots, or fire lanes). Cars must be parked straight between the painted lines. Upon arriving, park and lock your vehicle, and enter the building promptly. You shall not loiter in or around cars before or during school. During school hours, students must have office approval to go to the parking lot (e.g., if you forgot something in your car, come sign out to retrieve it).

- **Safe Driving:**

The campus speed limit is 10 mph and must be observed at all times. Reckless driving, speeding, or endangering others (by spinning tires, etc.) is forbidden. At dismissal, be cautious: yield to buses and watch for pedestrians.

Leaving Campus: Once you arrive in the morning, you are not allowed to leave campus in your vehicle until the end of the school day unless you have followed proper sign-out procedures (e.g., for a pre-arranged appointment). You cannot transport other students off campus during the day unless they too have permission to sign out (no "ride-sharing" to skip class).

- **Attendance and Driving:**

Driving to school is not an excuse for being tardy. If car trouble or traffic repeatedly causes you to be late, you may lose driving privileges. Excessive absences or tardiness attributable to driving will be addressed (remember, you choose to drive; you accept responsibility for arriving on time). If a student is too ill to remain at school, they shall only drive themselves home if the office has made direct contact with a parent/guardian to verify permission. Otherwise, the parent/guardian or an authorized adult must pick up the ill student.

- **Search of Vehicles:**

By driving to school and parking in the school parking lot, you consent to your vehicle being searched by school officials if there is reasonable suspicion that it contains items prohibited by school policy or law (such as drugs, alcohol, or weapons). If you refuse to cooperate with a search, your parking privileges will be revoked, and law enforcement may be called.

- **Discipline:**

Minor parking lot violations (no permit, parking in the wrong area) may result in warnings or school consequences, and your car may be towed at your expense if improperly parked after warnings. More serious issues (unsafe driving, using a car to leave without

permission, etc.) may result in a loss of driving privileges for a period and possible additional discipline. Transporting another student off campus without permission is strictly prohibited and may result in suspension of parking privileges.

We want our parking lot to be safe for everyone. Please drive responsibly and be mindful that driving to school is optional; if the rules are not followed, you will be back on the bus.

Emergency Medical Authorization (EMA)

Ohio law (ORC 3313.712) requires that each student have an Emergency Medical Authorization form completed and on file each year. Hillsdale uses Final Forms to collect this information. Parents/Guardians must fill out or update the EMA form at the start of every school year, providing current contact numbers, alternate contacts, physician information, and any medical conditions or allergies the school should know about. It is critically important that this information is accurate and kept up-to-date throughout the year. If your work or cell number changes, or if there's a change in your child's health status or insurance, please update Final Forms and inform the office. In an emergency, this form guides us in contacting you and getting your child appropriate care. If we cannot reach you, the form also gives us permission to seek treatment for your child. Failure to have an EMA on file can delay care in an emergency, so please ensure it is done.

Fees

Some classes (e.g., art, lab sciences, tech courses) have fees to cover consumable materials. A fee schedule is provided at the start of the year. Fees are expected to be paid by the designated date (or you can arrange a payment plan through the office). Unpaid fees will be carried on the student's account. The school may withhold grade cards, transcripts, or diplomas until fees are paid. If you are experiencing financial hardship, please contact us, as we can often work something out or adjust fees for students eligible for free/reduced lunch. No student will be denied participation in a course due to inability to pay a fee, but the obligation to pay remains unless waived.

Fines

Fines may be assessed for lost or damaged textbooks, media center books, equipment, or other school property. The fine is typically equal to the repair or replacement cost. Again, these must be cleared for the student to receive final records or for seniors to graduate. Take care of school materials to avoid fines, and if something is lost, report it as soon as possible; sometimes lost items turn up in lost-and-found.

McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act

Under the McKinney-Vento Act, students who are experiencing homelessness have the right to a free and appropriate public education. This includes students who are staying with others due to hardship, living in shelters, motels, vehicles, or other temporary housing. Eligible students may enroll in school immediately, continue attending their school of origin when it is in their best interest, and receive needed support such as transportation and access to school programs. Families and students needing assistance or more information should contact the school counselor, building principal, or the district liaison for confidential support.

Parents Bill of Rights (HB 8)

As part of our commitment to parental/guardian involvement, the district has adopted a formal process for certain types of complaints. Parents/Guardians have the right to: review curriculum materials, especially any dealing with sexuality education; be informed in advance of and

consent to any health or mental health services provided to their child at school (beyond basic first aid); and be notified of any significant changes in their child's health or well-being at school.

Complaint Process: If a parent/guardian believes the school is not adhering to these requirements or has concerns about sexual content in the curriculum, media center books, or services provided to their child, the parent/guardian may file a written complaint with the building principal. The principal will review the concern and respond in writing within 30 days outlining any action taken or explaining the decision. If the parent/guardian is not satisfied with the principal's resolution, they may appeal the decision in writing to the Superintendent. The Superintendent (or designee) will review the matter and provide a final written response. This process is in place to ensure transparency and responsiveness to parental/guardian concerns regarding sensitive areas of instruction or services.

We value parent/guardian feedback and strive to maintain open lines of communication. Our goal is your student's success and well-being, and we know that comes best from a strong partnership between home and school.

Photo and Name Release Policy

We often celebrate student accomplishments by posting photos/names on our school website, newsletter, or in local media. If you do not consent to your student's image or full name being used in these positive publicity efforts, please submit a written request to the principal. We will honor your request and exclude your child from identifiable images or publications. Otherwise, we will assume permission is granted. We never include other personal info (like address or phone) in public communications.

Religious Expression

Students are allowed to engage in religious activities or prayer during non-instructional times to the same extent as they may engage in secular activities (for example, a student may pray individually in the cafeteria during lunch just as other students may chat or read. Students can also form religious clubs if other non-curricular clubs are allowed, and will be given the same access to facilities. The content of student work (homework, art, etc.) that is expressed in religious terms will be judged by academic standards (such as relevance to the assignment) and not penalized or rewarded based on its religious nature.. In short, we neither advance nor inhibit religion; we remain neutral and allow student-initiated, voluntary religious expression as permitted by law. If you feel your or your child's religious rights at school are being infringed, please contact the principal so we can address it.

Video Surveillance

For safety and security, our school building and buses are equipped with video cameras. Students and visitors are under surveillance when on school premises. Video recordings are used to deter misbehavior and may be reviewed by administration if an incident is reported.

Cameras are in public or common areas such as hallways, cafeteria, parking lots, etc., there are no cameras in private areas like restrooms or locker rooms. Footage is typically not released to the public or parent/guardian, except as allowed by law or subpoena, but summaries of what is seen may be used in disciplinary meetings. By being on school property, individuals consent to being recorded.

Visitors

We welcome parents/guardians and other appropriate visitors. To maintain a secure environment all visitors must check in at the main office immediately upon arrival. You will be

asked to sign in and wear a visitor badge. If you wish to visit a classroom, please arrange it in advance with the principal and teacher. Unannounced classroom visits can be disruptive and may not be allowed. For security, exterior doors are locked during the school day. Use the main entrance and buzzer system to gain entry. *Note:* Students are not allowed to bring friends or relatives from other schools to “shadow” or visit during the school day, except with prior administrative approval (which is generally only granted for educational purposes or exchange programs).

Volunteers

We appreciate the help of volunteers for tutoring, media center assistance, chaperoning, etc. All volunteers working directly with students must be approved by the principal and shall require a background check (BCI/FBI) as per Board policy and state law. If you're interested in volunteering, contact the school office for instructions on the process of becoming a Board approved volunteer. We require volunteers to follow confidentiality rules; what you observe about students in school should stay private.

Withdrawal of a Student

If you plan to withdraw or transfer your student to another school, please notify the guidance office or main office as soon as possible with the last day of attendance. We will prepare withdrawal forms and a transfer of records. Students must turn in all textbooks, media center books, Chromebooks, and other school materials, and pay any outstanding fees/fines. We will provide you a copy of the latest report card and immunization record to take to the new school if needed. We will send official records directly to the new school upon receiving a records request from them and after all obligations are met. It's important to formally withdraw to avoid accumulation of absences or truancy issues.

Work Permits

Ohio law requires minors (students under 18) to obtain a work permit for employment during the school year. Work permit application packets are available in the main office. The process involves: the student's portion (personal info), the employer's portion (job details and pledge of compliance with youth labor laws), and a physician's portion (a physical exam, which can often be satisfied by the school sports physical on file). Bring the completed sections back to the office; the principal's secretary or administrator will review it and issue the permit through the state's online system. During summer, permits are processed at the Board of Education office. Remember, academics come first, therefore students are expected to maintain their grades and attendance even while working. If a job negatively impacts school performance, parent/guardian and the school may need to intervene (and legally, excessive work hours on school nights are restricted).

ATTENDANCE

Regular attendance is not only critical for a student's learning, it's also the law. The expectation is that every student will be in school on time, all day, every day, unless there is a valid, excused reason. We ask parents/guardians and students to make attendance a high priority.

Absence Reporting

When a student must be absent, a parent/guardian is expected to call the school attendance line that morning (preferably by 8:30 AM) to inform us of the absence and the reason. If we do not hear from you, our office will attempt to call you at home or work to verify the absence as a safety check. This is per Ohio's “missing child” law. Additionally, upon returning to school, the

student should bring a written note from the parent/guardian (or the parent/guardian may email the attendance secretary) explaining the reason and date(s) of absence. All absences must be documented. If a student sees a doctor, dentist, etc., a note from that office should be submitted. We will record absences as excused or unexcused based on the reasons provided (see below).

Excused Absences

The State of Ohio and Board Policy JED recognize certain conditions as valid excuses for missing school. Excused absences may include:

- **Court Appearances** – If a student must appear in court (by subpoena, juvenile court, etc.), that is excused with documentation from the court.
- **Death of a Family Member:** Bereavement is excused. Generally up to 3 days is considered reasonable, unless special circumstances merit more time (e.g., traveling for a funeral out of state)
- **Driver's Education:** A high school student may be excused for up to 8 hours total (max 2 hours per day on no more than 4 days) to attend a driver's education course or in-car driving instruction. To use this, parents/guardians should inform the attendance office with the schedule. Typically the student might leave early or arrive late a few days for driving practice. We will mark those as excused (code DR ED) so long as documentation is provided after completion (e.g., a note from the driving school). Keep in mind, all class work missed must be made up.

When a student is excused absent, they have the right to make up assignments and tests. Teachers will give reasonable deadlines that are generally the same number of days the student was out, unless more time is granted. It's the student's responsibility to approach teachers about make-up work. For extended absences, arrangements can be made via the counselor to collect assignments.

- **Emergencies or Other Circumstances** – If something very unusual occurs that isn't listed but is beyond the family's control (house fire, natural disaster, etc.), the principal can approve those absences case-by-case.

Additionally, Ohio law now explicitly allows excused "Released Time for Religious Instruction" (see Administrative Info) and excused hours for Driver's Education (see below), which this handbook honors as excused:

- **Homelessness-Related** – Absences due to a student's homelessness (such as needing to find shelter) are excused.
- **Illness in the Family:** If a student's presence at home is necessary due to the illness or medical appointment of an immediate family member (for instance, a parent's/guardian's surgery where the student needs to help), it can be excused with an explanation.
- **Medical/Dental Appointments:** We encourage scheduling routine appointments outside of school hours when possible. If that's not feasible, the student should miss as little school time as necessary (come to school before/after the appointment). A note from the doctor/dentist is required upon return to excuse the absence.
- **Needed at Home Due to Emergency:** In rare cases, a student aged 14 or older might be needed at home for a short period to perform essential work or care (for example, if a parent/guardian is incapacitated and no other help is available). This requires superintendent approval to be excused and is typically limited in duration.
- **Personal Illness or Injury:** The most common reason. If a student is too ill to attend (fever, contagious condition, vomiting, etc.), they should stay home. We may require a doctor's note if a student is absent due to illness more than 10 days in a year or appears to have a chronic issue. A doctor's verification is also required for long-term or frequent intermittent absences due to illness.

- **Placement in Foster Care or Court Change in Custody** – Absences related to entering foster care or changing foster placement, or court hearings for a foster child, are excused.
- **Pre-approved College Visits** – Juniors and seniors are allowed up to 2 excused days to visit colleges, trade schools, or military induction appointments. These must be arranged through the Guidance Office ahead of time (a College Visit Permission form should be completed), and verification of the visit (a note from the college admissions office) should be submitted when the student returns.
- **Quarantine**: If public health authorities order a quarantine, those days are excused absences (e.g., during a communicable disease outbreak).
- **Religious Holidays or Events** – Students may be excused for religious observances (e.g., Eid, Yom Kippur) or events (a required ceremony) according to sincerely held beliefs. Please notify the school in advance.
- **Religious Instruction Release Time**: With prior parent/guardian request and arrangement, a student can be excused for off-campus religious classes. The student will not be marked truant; however, they are responsible for making up any work missed and the sponsoring program handles liability and records. If interested, contact the office for the policy and request form.

Unexcused Absences

An absence is unexcused if it does not meet any of the criteria above, or if the school does not receive proper verification.

Common examples of unexcused absences: oversleeping, missing the bus, car trouble (occasionally may be excused at principal's discretion, but generally not), traffic, "needed at home" without prior approval, babysitting a sibling (not excused unless emergency), out-of-town trips not approved, or simply not attending with vague excuses like "family emergency" that aren't explained.

- **Truancy** (skipping) is unexcused by definition. If a student skips school or a class without permission, it's unexcused and disciplinary action will follow.
- **Vacations without Prior Notice**: If a student goes on a trip and the school was not notified in advance for pre-approval, those days are unexcused. Even if told in advance, the days may still count as unexcused if it's not a justifiable reason by policy (family vacation is not a listed excused reason). The principal has discretion in rare cases to authorize an excused absence for a meaningful educational opportunity, but that must be arranged ahead.

If a student has an unexcused absence, they may receive zeros on work due or done that day. Our policy is to *encourage* completing missed work even for unexcused time; we want learning to happen, but credit for that work may be reduced or not given. Teachers will generally accept the work for feedback, and some may allow partial credit, but they are not obligated to do so. The principal will consider the circumstances; for example, if a student cut class but still did an assignment, we may give partial credit for learning's sake but also impose discipline for the cut.

Excessive Absences and Notifications

In alignment with Ohio House Bill 96 updates:

- There is no longer a separate "excessively absent" designation under the new law (which used to trigger a notice at 38 hours in a month or 65 hours in a year). Instead, the focus is on "chronic absenteeism."
- **Chronic Absenteeism**: If a student misses 10% of the required school hours in a year for any reason, they are considered "chronically absent". For a rough idea, that's about 92 hours in a typical school year (which equates to about 15-16 days). Note that this

includes excused and unexcused absences together. Our goal is to intervene before a student reaches that point.

- The school will monitor attendance closely. If a student's absences (excused or not) start accumulating to concerning levels, we will:
- Send home letters at certain thresholds (for example, after 30 hours, 50 hours, etc.) reminding families of the importance of attendance and offering assistance.
- Require a medical note for further absences if a student has a significant number of illness days.
- Initiate an Absence Intervention Plan if a student becomes habitually truant (see below) or is at risk of becoming chronically absent. This plan is developed by a team including the student, parent/guardian, and school staff to improve attendance.

Notes

A student can have any absence excused with a valid healthcare provider's note (which should specify the date the student was seen and if any specific days should be excused). While we certainly encourage staying home when ill, if absences become frequent, we may start requiring medical notes to excuse them (we will notify you if that is the case). Without a note, an absence that seems excessive or questionable could be marked unexcused.

Our ultimate goal with these procedures is not punitive. The goal is to identify barriers to attendance and help remove them. That might mean connecting families with resources (transportation help, health care, etc.) or adjusting something at school to re-engage a student. We want every student in school to learn.

Tardiness

The development of good attendance habits includes being on time. It shows responsibility on the part of the student. Tardies are divided into two categories:

Tardy to Class: Students who are in regular attendance and find that they will be tardy to a class should report directly to the class. Students should NOT report to the high school office or the guidance office. These offices DO NOT issue passes to students who are tardy to class. Students should be in their rooms before the bell rings. Students have five minutes to change classes. Each teacher will grant three tardy occurrences to his or her class per year without disciplinary consequences. A detention will be assigned on the fourth tardy and for every fourth tardy thereafter with the consequences the same as for tardy to school. Teachers or study hall monitors will email the principal with the names of students whose tardies warrant detention. The principal will schedule all detentions accordingly. If a student is detained by a teacher, that teacher should give the student a written pass to give to the teacher for admittance to the next class. Students with unexcused tardiness are expected to make up work for class time missed. Students do not qualify for perfect attendance if they have been tardy to school.

Tardies to School: A student is tardy if he/she is not in class by 8:00 am. up to 9:30 am. A student arriving at school after 8:00 am. must report to the office to obtain an admit slip to class. A written note should accompany the student. Students who are tardy because of medical appointments or court appearances must bring proof of appointment with them when they return to school in order for the tardiness to be excused. Oversleeping and car trouble are not excused tardies. Excessive tardiness

will be defined as four or more tardies. Tardy to school is cumulative throughout the school year. The principal will issue and supervise detention after school for school tardies with the following consequences:

- ☐ 1st Offense - 4th tardy: Detention (1 hour)
- ☐ 2nd Offense - 8th tardy: Detention (2 hours)
- ☐ 3rd Offense - 12th tardy: Two Detentions (4 hours)
- ☐ 4th Offense - 16th tardy: Determined by Principal
- ☐ 5th Offense - 20th tardy: Determined by Principal

Truancy/Absence Intervention

Ohio law defines Habitual Truancy and requires schools to address it with specific steps:

- A “Habitual Truant” is a student of compulsory school age who has unexcused absences totaling 30 or more consecutive hours, 42 or more hours in one month, or 72 or more hours in a school year. (These roughly equate to 5 consecutive days, 7 days in a month, or 12 days in a year unexcused.)
- When a student meets the Habitual Truant threshold, the school is mandated to form an Absence Intervention Team and create an Absence Intervention Plan:
- Within 7 school days of the triggering absence, we will assign the student to an Absence Intervention Team. This team will include a school administrator or designee, another relevant school staff member who knows the student (teacher, counselor, etc.), and the parent/guardian. We may also include a county agency representative or a concerned adult familiar with the student, if appropriate. We will make at least 3 attempts to involve the parent/guardian in this process (it’s crucial that parents/guardians participate – we need your insight and help to get attendance back on track).
- The team will meet (within 10 business days of assignment) and develop a personalized intervention plan within 14 days. The plan will identify the reasons for the absences and lay out specific strategies to improve attendance. It might include things like: counseling referrals, schedule adjustments, attendance contracts, academic support, or other actions. The plan will also state that if the student does not make progress, the school will file a complaint with juvenile court after a certain time (61 days) as required by law. We will send the parent/guardian a written copy of this plan.
- The student is then monitored for implementation of the plan. If the student and family cooperate and attendance improves, fantastic – no further action. If the student refuses to participate or continues to be absent excessively (and falls under habitual truancy again after the plan), then the district must file a complaint in Juvenile Court against the student (and possibly against the parents/guardians for truancy neglect)[167][168]. Specifically, if the student has more unexcused absences after 61 days of the plan and hasn’t substantially improved, we will proceed with a court referral[165].
- Important: If the habitual truancy occurs very late in the year (within the last 21 school days), the law gives us some flexibility to either start the plan then or wait and start it at the beginning of the next school year. Either way, the process will continue until resolved.

Health and Wellness

Health Services/School Nurse

Our school nurse is on duty to handle illnesses, injuries, and health concerns that arise during the school day. Basic first aid and care will be provided. If a student feels sick, they should

request a pass to the nurse's office. The nurse will evaluate and, if necessary, contact the parent/guardian to pick the student up. Do not just call/text a parent/guardian to come get you without seeing the nurse or main office. We must track student illnesses and ensure proper check-out. For injuries beyond minor scrapes, we will administer first aid and contact parent/guardian. In emergencies, we will call 911 first and then notify parent/guardian.

- **Chronic Conditions:** If your child has a health condition like diabetes, seizures, severe allergies, etc., please ensure we have an updated Health Care Action Plan on file. Meet with the nurse at the start of the year to discuss accommodations. We can secure and administer emergency medications like EpiPens as per doctor's orders.
- **Confidentiality:** Health information is kept confidential and only shared with staff on a "need-to-know" basis (e.g., teachers may be informed that a student has asthma and may need an inhaler).
- **No Health Services without Consent:** Other than immediate first aid or responses to life-threatening emergencies, the school will not initiate medical or mental health services for your child without your consent. For instance, if we feel a student would benefit from counseling beyond a one-time check-in, we will reach out to parent/guardian for permission or referral options.

Communicable Diseases

If your child is diagnosed with a communicable illness (such as strep throat, pink eye, COVID-19, chickenpox, etc.), please inform the school nurse or office as soon as possible. The school is required to track certain illnesses and may need to send exposure notices to other families (without naming the student). Your cooperation helps us monitor and prevent the spread of illnesses. The school will provide guidance on when your child can return to school, based on health department recommendations (for example, fever-free for 24 hours without medication). In some cases, a doctor's note may be required to return. We maintain confidentiality, but must balance that with public health needs.

Health Screenings

The nurse conducts routine screenings as required by state law (for example, vision and hearing screenings for certain grades). If any issues are found, a referral will be sent home recommending further evaluation by a professional. You may opt out of non-mandatory screenings by sending a written request.

Immunizations

All students must meet Ohio's immunization requirements (ORC 3313.67). Upon enrollment, and typically at 7th and 12th grades, certain shots are required (e.g., Tdap and Meningococcal vaccines for 7th; a second Meningococcal dose for 12th). The school will notify you which records are needed. If a student is not in compliance by the 14th day of school, the law permits exclusion from school until immunizations are up-to-date or an exemption (medical or religious/philosophical, with proper documentation) is provided. We will send letters home well before that point to remind families. This is for the protection of all students. If you have questions or need resources for low-cost immunizations, contact the school nurse.

Insurance

Student accident insurance is available on an optional basis each year. Early in the year, we will send home information about coverage and enrollment (or provide a link on the website). This low-cost policy can help cover expenses if a student is injured during school activities or sports. While we have a nurse and take precautions, accidents can happen. If you do not have

insurance, you are especially encouraged to consider this. All athletes are required to have insurance (either personal family insurance or this student plan) to participate.

Medication

Dispensing Prescription and Non-Prescription:

The school understands some students may need to take medication during the day. However, strict procedures are in place for the safety of all students:

- **Prescription Medications:**
If your child must take a prescription medication at school, you and the prescribing doctor must complete the district's "Authorization for Medication" form (available in the office). This form requires the physician's written order and signature, and your consent. The medication must be brought to the school office by a parent/guardian (not sent with the student) in the original pharmacy container with the proper label. The school nurse (or trained designee) will keep it locked in the clinic and dispense it as directed. Students are not permitted to carry prescription medications, except in special cases (such as an inhaler or EpiPen), and only with written authorization on file for self-carry.
- **Over-the-Counter Medications (OTC):**
Students are not allowed to carry or self-administer any over-the-counter (OTC) medications (such as Tylenol, ibuprofen, or cough drops) at school without prior office permission. If your child needs an OTC medication during school hours, the parent/guardian must also complete an authorization form (a doctor's signature is not required for OTC meds, but a parent/guardian's signature is). The medication must be in a new, sealed container when brought to the office. The school will secure it and dispense it in accordance with written instructions. *Do not send OTC drugs in baggies or unmarked containers with a student; we may confiscate it and there may be disciplinary action.*
- **No medication (prescription or OTC) will be given without the proper forms on file.** This is state law (ORC 3313.713) and is for the protection of your child. The school will also not provide medications (we don't stock Tylenol or any medications for student use, so plan accordingly if you anticipate your child might need something).
- **Medication Pick-up:**
Parent/Guardian should collect any remaining medication at the end of the school year (or when the prescription is complete). We will dispose of unclaimed meds after the last day of school.

These rules ensure medications are used safely. We appreciate your cooperation.

SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

Arrival/Dismissal

All students in grades 7–12 should be dropped off at the Event Entrance. Students may enter the building beginning at 7:30 a.m. All students will be dismissed at 3:00 p.m. Pickup for grades 7–12 will also take place at the Event Entrance. All bus riders will be dropped off and picked up at the rear of the building. To ensure student safety, the back of the parking lot is closed to all other traffic during arrival and dismissal to allow for bus loading and unloading.

Assemblies & Special Presentations

Throughout the year, we may hold assemblies for purposes such as: pep rallies, educational speakers (e.g., anti-bullying, college/career fair, motivational speakers), Veterans Day recognition, etc. Assemblies are considered part of the school day, and attendance is expected. Students should move to assembly locations (gym, auditorium, etc.) quickly and sit in

designated areas (often by grade level or class). Behavior expectations: be courteous, pay attention to the speaker or performers, stay off your phone, applaud appropriately, and avoid talking or distracting others. Disruptive students may be removed and face discipline.

Some assemblies, especially those by outside speakers, may cover sensitive topics. We usually vet these thoroughly. If a parent/guardian ever has a concern about assembly content (perhaps due to personal beliefs or the child's sensitivity), please inform the principal in advance; alternate arrangements can be made if needed.

Book Bags

For safety reasons, book bags must be stored in lockers during the school day, as they can create tripping hazards in classrooms. Students may bring their book bags to their final period **only** if that class is held in the choir, band, wood shop, or agriculture rooms. This allows students to head directly to their buses at dismissal without delay.

Building Behavior Expectations

Hall Passes: If you need to be in the hall during class for restroom or errands, you must have a hall pass (either a written pass or a visible lanyard/hallway pass object). Hallways should be quiet during class time.

Hallways: During class changes, move promptly to your next class. Keep to the right in hallways to avoid congestion. Do not stop in the middle of halls; if you need to chat with someone, step to the side, out of traffic flow. No running. Use normal conversation voices as others may be working in classrooms.

Lockers: Get materials for multiple classes if possible to minimize trips. Plan locker visits (before school, maybe at lunch, after school).

Restrooms: Use restrooms during passing periods if you can. If you must go during class, ask for a pass; no more than one boy/girl out of a class at a time if possible. Some bathrooms may be closed during class due to supervision constraints, so use the one specified by your teacher.

Elevator: The elevator is for use by individuals who cannot use stairs due to injury or disability, or for moving heavy equipment with permission. If you need to use the elevator (e.g., you're on crutches), get approval and an elevator pass from the office. You can have a friend assist you, but it should not become a hangout or general ride for others. Misuse of the elevator may result in losing the privilege.

After School: Once the final bell rings, students should leave the building in a timely manner unless staying for a supervised activity. By 3:15, only athletes at practice, club meetings, detention, or teacher help should be here. This is for safety, because we don't have staff to supervise big groups just hanging out. If you're waiting on a ride, do so quietly by the main entrance.

Cafeteria and Lunch Information

We have a closed campus for lunch. All students eat in the cafeteria or other designated lunch areas; you shall not leave school grounds. Grades 7–8 typically have a separate lunch period from 9–12 (depending on our schedule).

During lunch: Go to your locker beforehand if needed; bring your lunch or money with you. In the serving line, wait patiently and do not cut. Use polite language with cafeteria staff (they work hard to feed us!). You can bring your own lunch or purchase school lunch. Milk or other a la carte items are available as well. Once you have food, sit at a table. You are free to choose your seat unless staff direct otherwise. Please remain seated while eating (except to get utensils/condiments or throw trash). Enjoy conversation, but use an indoor voice. No shouting or horseplay (no throwing food, etc.).

Before lunch ends: Clean up your area: throw away trash, return trays to the dish window, pick up any dropped food or utensils. Leaving a mess is disrespectful. Wait to be dismissed by the lunch supervisors. If you finish early, you may socialize but stay in the cafeteria unless given permission to go elsewhere. Restrooms by the cafeteria can be used during lunch, but one at a time (don't loiter in restrooms). If weather and schedule permit, occasionally we might allow going outside after eating, but that's only with supervision and announcement. Lunch in the cafeteria is a privilege, therefore misconduct can result in assigned seating or removal from the cafeteria (eating in office or detention).

We follow nutrition guidelines for school meals. Students are not allowed to have food delivered from outside restaurants during lunch (no DoorDash, etc., unless special senior privilege granted). Parents/Guardians may drop off lunch for their child if needed (e.g., forgot lunch), but it must be eaten in the cafeteria.

Allergies/Dietary Needs:

If a student has a food allergy or special dietary need, let the nurse and cafeteria know. We will accommodate with allergen-free options or substitutions as required (doctor's note may be needed for certain modifications like lactose-free milk).

Cafeteria Account/Payment:

Each student has a lunch account (using a PIN). Please keep a positive balance. You can send cash/check or use our online payment system to add funds. Charging meals is allowed up to a point, but we will contact you if the account goes negative. No student will be denied a meal for lack of funds; however, we expect repayment of charges. Contact the food service director if you need any assistance or have questions about the account.

Free and Reduced Lunch:

If your family might qualify for free or reduced-price meals, please fill out the confidential application (available online or from the office) as soon as possible each year. If approved, you can receive breakfast and lunch at no cost or a reduced cost. Even if you don't use it every day, qualifying can help the school with funding and ensure a meal is always available for your student. All information is private; cafeteria accounts do not overtly identify who is free/reduced.

Cell Phone and Electronic Device Usage

We recognize that cell phones and personal electronic devices are a common part of daily life; however, during the school day, instruction and learning must remain the priority. All cell phones and personal electronic devices, including, but not limited to, smartphones, tablets, earbuds or headphones (such as AirPods), smartwatches, smart glasses, and any other wearable or connected "smart" technology capable of communication, recording, or internet access, must be silenced and securely stored in lockers or backpacks throughout the school day. Exceptions may be permitted based on individual student needs and must be approved in advance by school administration.

Remember, you're here to learn and socialize face-to-face. The virtual world can wait a few hours. If you have an emergency need to contact a parent/guardian, ask to use the office phone. We're reasonable when there's a good cause.

The school is not responsible for lost, stolen, or damaged personal devices. Keep them at home, or keep them secure in your locker if you need them after the school day. It's best not to bring expensive gadgets or at least keep them locked away. We will investigate reports of theft, but ultimately, bring at your own risk.

If a device causes a disruption (rings, etc.) or is seen being used, staff will confiscate the device. On the first offense, you typically get it back at the end of the day from the office. Repeated issues will require a parent/guardian to pick it up and may result in disciplinary actions.

If a parent/guardian needs to contact a student during school hours, they may do so through the school office. Parents/Guardians and students may also communicate via email during the school day.

Absolutely no recording (photo, video, audio) on school grounds without permission from a staff member and the individuals being photographed, videoed, or recorded. This is a serious privacy violation. Phones/Cameras are strictly prohibited in restrooms and locker rooms at all times.

Dance Information

All school dances (including Homecoming, Winter Formal, Prom, etc.) are school-sponsored events, and all Hillsdale Code of Conduct expectations apply. This includes all rules related to alcohol, drugs, and other prohibited substances. Although these events take place outside the regular school day, they are considered extensions of the school environment. Any student found in possession of, or for whom there is reasonable suspicion of using or possessing prohibited substances, will face school disciplinary action and may be referred to law enforcement.

Behavior: When dancing, some styles are not allowed: no sexually suggestive movements (no grinding, no inappropriate touching). Hands should stay in respectable places. Dance with mutual consent; unwelcome contact can lead to harassment issues. If a chaperone taps you on the shoulder to separate or change behavior, comply immediately. A warning may be given, but continued inappropriate dancing may result in you being asked to leave. We want everyone to have fun, but in a safe and respectful way that supports our Hillsdale community in a positive way.

Breathalyzers: The school reserves the right to use breathalyzer tests as a condition of entry or during the event if we suspect alcohol use. We hope never to need it, but it's part of keeping a drug-free environment.

Chaperones: Dances are chaperoned by staff and often parent/guardian volunteers. Treat them with respect.

Dress Code: Dress for most dances is semi-formal or formal. We expect attire to be tasteful and modest. For males, usually a collared shirt and tie at minimum; jacket optional for semi-formal, required for formal (prom). No jeans, shorts, or athletic shoes at formal dances. For females: dresses or pants outfits are fine. Dresses should not be excessively short (should reach mid-thigh at least), nor have excessively low necklines or bare midriffs. Slits in dresses should

be moderate (not above mid-thigh). Backless dresses are acceptable to an extent (not below the waist). Two-piece dresses should overlap at the waist (no midriff showing). If in doubt whether a dress is appropriate, show a photo to an adviser or administrator beforehand. The school may turn away students or ask for adjustments (like a shawl over a dress) if attire is not appropriate.

Entry/Exit: Once you enter a dance, if you leave (even to the parking lot), you shall not re-enter unless you had staff member approval. The event is typically 2-3 hours; plan accordingly. Arrive within a reasonable window of start time. Have rides ready by the end of the dance. Students should not linger in the parking lot after the event.

Guests: Students may invite one guest from another school or a recent graduate (generally under 21, and by some schools' rule under 20 or 19. Hillsdale's specific age limit is ? A guest permission form must be completed and approved by the principal before the dance. The Hillsdale host student is responsible for their guest and must accompany them. Guests are expected to follow our rules and dress code. All guest forms must be completed and processed by Monday prior to the event.

Music: Requests are welcome; however, songs may not be played if a clean version is not available. Only clean, edited music without profanity or explicit content will be played. If profanity or explicit content is mistakenly played, students shall not sing, shout, or repeat the inappropriate language.

We want dances to be memorable (for the right reasons). Adhering to these guidelines ensures they'll continue to be offered.

Displays of Affection

As noted in the Code of Conduct, public displays of affection should be limited to modest, brief gestures. Holding hands or a quick hug goodbye, we can live with that. Prolonged hugging, kissing, or intimate cuddling is not appropriate at school. This is a place of learning and a professional environment. If a staff member asks you to stop a certain behavior, do so immediately. Continued violations may result in parent/guardian contact and disciplinary action (detentions, etc.). Remember, not only can excessive PDA make others uncomfortable, it also can tarnish your own reputation. Keep private matters private.

Extracurricular Activities (Non-Athletic)

We have many clubs and groups: e.g., Student Council, Drama Club, FFA, Language Clubs, Art Club, Quiz Bowl, etc. Each may have its specific requirements or bylaws, but there are some general suggestions. Joining clubs is a great way to enrich your school life. Listen for announcements about meeting times, typically at the start of the year or semester.

Club leaders such as teachers and other staff supervise and guide the groups, but student officers usually lead. Respect your club leaders and contribute positively. Taking a leadership role (officer) is encouraged, it builds skills and looks great on resumes/college apps. However, it also comes with expectations of conduct. Officers should model good behavior and may be removed by the advisor or principal if they violate school rules.

Most clubs don't have grade requirements like sports, but if your academics significantly suffer due to too many activities, we might counsel you to cut back. Also, if you're on suspension, you generally cannot attend club meetings or events during that period.

Some groups travel for contests or conferences (e.g., FFA competitions, Quiz Bowl meets). The same rules as field trips apply regarding permission and behavior.

Clubs often have fundraising opportunities. Be a responsible representative when selling items or soliciting support from the community as you are representing your club, your school, and your community.

Lockers

Each student is assigned a locker (hall, gym, or both). Lockers are school property and are loaned to students for storage. Students are responsible for keeping lockers clean, undamaged, and secure. Memorize your combination and do not share it. Locker sharing is discouraged and requires administrative approval. Students are responsible for all items found in their assigned locker. If a locker will not open or close properly, ask for assistance, but do not force it.

Store books, materials, coats, cell phones, and personal items in your locker. Food may not be stored beyond lunch. Absolutely no contraband (including weapons, drugs, alcohol, or e-cigarettes) may be kept in lockers.

Searches: Lockers and their contents may be searched by school administrators at any time without student permission or a warrant, as permitted by law. Random inspections may include the use of drug-sniffing dogs.

Gym Lockers: Students participating in physical education or athletics may be assigned a separate gym locker. Students may be required to provide their own combination lock unless one is issued. Valuables should always be locked up. Gym lockers are subject to the same search rules and must be kept clean and cleared out at the end of each class or athletic season.

Limited personal items may be placed inside lockers (e.g., a small magnetic mirror or photo). Stickers, adhesives, or inappropriate content are not permitted. Locker exteriors may not be decorated unless approved for special events.

Locker inspections and clean-out days may be announced or unannounced. Lockers must be emptied and cleaned at the end of the school year. Damage, defacement, or tampering should be reported immediately. Students responsible for damage may face discipline and repair costs.

Lost and Found

Items found around campus (books, clothing, electronics) are generally turned into the lost and found, usually located near the office or the cafeteria. If you lose something, check there promptly; items left unclaimed may be donated to charity. All items left in lost and found at the end of the school year are promptly donated to charity.

Clearly label all of your personal belongings with your name when possible. It's easier to return them that way. The office holds small or valuable lost items (phones, jewelry, etc.) for security, so ask secretaries if you lost something that may be turned into the office.

Media Center

Our media center is a resource hub with books, reference materials, and computers for research and class projects. A schedule will be posted if the media center is closed or has a special event.

During class, you need a pass to come to the media center (unless your class is scheduled to be there). During study hall, you may come with a pass; check in with your teacher first. If the media center is full or closed, the media specialist aide may sign your pass to return you to class. Always sign in at the desk upon arrival and sign out when leaving.

Always use quiet voices. No food or drink near computers or books (water bottles with caps are generally okay). Be respectful of others studying. The media center is not a place for loud socializing or other loud activities.

Most books can be checked out for 2-3 weeks. Some reference or reserve materials might be available only overnight or for in-media center use. Take care of borrowed materials; you may be responsible for lost or badly damaged items. Return items on time, or the librarian may assess fines (most daily overdue fines are small, but lost items incur the full replacement cost).

The media center has small rooms for group work, you may use them with permission, but noise still should be moderate, and treat furniture well. The media center is a privilege. Students who disrupt or repeatedly violate media center rules may be temporarily or permanently banned from the media center; please behave accordingly.

Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS)

Our school implements PBIS as a proactive approach to teaching and reinforcing good behavior. You might notice posters about expectations in various settings (hallway, cafeteria, etc.) and we regularly acknowledge or reward positive behaviors.

Behavioral Support: If a student is struggling behaviorally, we first reteach expectations, then perhaps assign a mentor or check-in/check-out system, etc. We use detention or suspension only after trying positive strategies or for serious incidents.

Falcon PRIDE (example): We emphasize core values (Preparation, Respect, Integrity, Determination, Excellence) and catch students “doing the right thing.” Teachers can give Falcon Tickets or points for good deeds, improved effort, helping others, perfect attendance, etc.

Family Role: We invite parents/guardians to join our efforts and celebrate your student’s positive referrals or awards, and support our expectations at home.

Rewards: Students may earn privileges, be entered into prize drawings, or attend special events as part of our PBIS incentive program.

Zero Tolerance and PBIS: While we say “zero tolerance” for severe acts, PBIS doesn’t mean no punishment; it means we aim to prevent issues and create a positive climate, but consequences still apply for violations. We typically pair consequences with re-teaching appropriate behavior.

If you want to learn more or be involved in PBIS (perhaps as a parent/guardian volunteer for reward days, etc.), contact the office for more information. A collaborative approach yields the best results for school climate.

STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT

Our Code of Conduct outlines prohibited behaviors and potential disciplinary actions. The overarching expectations are that students will behave in a manner that is safe, respectful, and responsible, and will not interfere with the learning, safety, or well-being of others.

Conduct Violations

Violating any reasonable rule or behavior expectation may result in disciplinary action, ranging from a verbal warning or conference up to suspension or expulsion in extreme cases. The following list of offenses is not exhaustive but outlines major categories of conduct that are prohibited:

1. **Academic Dishonesty:** Any form of academic dishonesty, including, but not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, use of artificial intelligence or electronic resources when not permitted, or submitting work that is not one's own, is a violation of trust and may result in academic penalties and disciplinary action.
2. **Complicity (Aiding/Abetting):** Students may not assist, encourage, or facilitate another student's violation of the Code of Conduct. Any student who plans, supports, or knowingly participates in a rule violation, even if not the primary offender, may be subject to the same consequences as the student who committed the violation.
3. **Damage to Property:** A student shall not intentionally damage or deface school property or personal property of others. This includes vandalism, graffiti, destruction of materials, and also damage caused by misconduct (e.g. breaking something during horseplay). Students and their families will be held financially responsible for damage.
4. **Dangerous/Look Alike Weapons or Instruments:** A student shall not possess, handle, transmit, threaten with, or conceal any weapon or object that could be used as a weapon (including look-alike weapons) on school property or at school events. (Note: Under state law, bringing a firearm to school or possessing a firearm or knife capable of causing serious harm requires a one-year expulsion, subject to possible reduction by the Superintendent on a case-by-case basis. Law enforcement may be notified in such cases.)
5. **Disrespect/Profanity:** No individual shall engage in conduct that is disrespectful, abusive, or profane toward any person. This includes, but is not limited to, name-calling, derogatory remarks, swearing, or gestures that are offensive, threatening, or perceived as offensive or threatening.
6. **Disruption of School:** A student shall not by use of violence, force, coercion, threat, false rumor, or other means cause a material disruption or obstruction to the normal operation of the school or any school-sponsored event. This includes inciting others to misconduct, or group misconduct like "pranks" that violate rules. Off-campus conduct that directly causes a disruption at school is included.
7. **False Alarms / 911 Misuse:** Triggering a false fire alarm or dialing 911 without cause is strictly prohibited. These actions endanger everyone and divert emergency services. Violators may face school discipline and possible legal charges.
8. **Falsification:** Students shall not falsify, alter, fabricate, or knowingly provide false, misleading, or incomplete information; forge signatures; or otherwise misrepresent material facts in any matter involving district programs, activities, operations, personnel, records, or investigations.
9. **Fire and Explosives:** A student shall not ignite or attempt to ignite a fire on school premises, nor possess or use any incendiary or explosive device, including fireworks, smoke bombs, or lighters (except as specifically authorized for a science experiment or other school activity). Activating false alarms or making bomb threats is also prohibited and against the law.

10. **Hazing/Bullying/Harassment:** Hazing, bullying, intimidation, dating violence, or any kind of harassment (verbal, physical, electronic/cyber) is strictly forbidden. "Hazing" means any act coercing another to do something humiliating or dangerous to be part of a group. "Bullying" (including cyberbullying) is repeated unwelcome behavior toward another student that causes mental or physical harm and is severe or pervasive enough to create a hostile environment. No student or staff shall tolerate such behavior. Incidents will be investigated, and confirmed bullying or harassment may result in discipline up to suspension or expulsion.
11. **Insubordination and Defiance:** A student shall not fail to comply with instructions or directions given by teachers, administrators, or other authorized school personnel. This includes refusal to follow classroom rules, disrespectful arguing, or walking away when being addressed by a staff member.
12. **Misuse of Technology:** Students shall not misuse district-provided technology or personal electronic devices in a manner that violates the Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) or materially disrupts the educational process. Prohibited conduct includes, but is not limited to, accessing inappropriate or unauthorized websites, cyberbullying or harassment, and unauthorized audio, video, or photographic recording.
13. **Narcotics, Alcoholic Beverages, Drugs, Paraphernalia, or Look Alikes:** Students shall not possess, use, distribute, transmit, or show evidence of use of any illegal drug, controlled substance, narcotics, marijuana, THC, alcohol, nicotine product, vaping device, or other intoxicating substance. This prohibition includes look-alike substances, synthetic or imitation drugs, and the misuse of prescription or over-the-counter medications, or not following the school rules of prescription or over-the-counter medications. Possession of drug-related paraphernalia or look-alike paraphernalia is also prohibited.
14. **Other Conduct:** Any other behavior that school officials deem inappropriate or detrimental to the good order, safety, or welfare of the school and may be subject to disciplinary action.
15. **Tardiness:** Repeated tardiness to class or school can constitute insubordination. Students must make an effort to be punctual. Excessive tardiness may result in detention or other consequences.
16. **Theft:** A student shall not steal or attempt to steal school property or private property of others, nor receive or possess such property if stolen. This includes taking items without permission, even as a "prank."
17. **Tobacco and Vaping Products:** Students shall not possess, use, distribute, transmit, or show evidence of use of any tobacco product, nicotine product, electronic cigarette, vaping device, or similar delivery system on district property or at district-sponsored events. This prohibition includes, but is not limited to, vaping liquids or cartridges (with or without nicotine, THC, or other substances), look-alike or imitation devices, and any device or product designed to deliver nicotine or other inhaled or ingested substances.
18. **Transportation Violations and Use of Motor Vehicles** - A student shall not use or permit to be used a motor vehicle at or near a school activity on or off the school premises in such a way as to endanger the safety of any other person. All rules for school behavior apply on the school bus. Additionally, specific bus safety rules (remaining seated, no profane language, no throwing objects, etc.) must be obeyed. Violation of bus rules may result in loss of bus riding privileges in addition to other school consequences.
19. **Truancy:** A student shall not be truant from school, which means being absent without school authorization and without a valid excuse. Skipping any part of the school day (including classes or assigned activities like study hall) is considered truancy.

20. **Unauthorized Sales/Distributions:** Students may not sell, distribute, or post any items on campus that are not approved by school administration. This includes distributing flyers, advertisements, or selling candy for non-school fundraisers during school hours, without permission.
21. **Unauthorized Touching / Fighting:** A student shall not cause or attempt to cause physical injury to any person or behave in a manner that could cause physical harm. This includes fighting, assault, hitting, kicking, or any form of violence. Even “play fighting” is not allowed. All participants in a fight may be disciplined, regardless of who initiated the situation.
22. **Violation of Law:** Any conduct that is a crime or civil infraction, when committed on school grounds or at school events, is also a violation of the Code of Conduct. For example, offenses such as vandalism, assault, theft, or sexual harassment may result in both school discipline and referral to law enforcement.

Disciplinary Consequences

The District uses a range of disciplinary consequences, from mild to severe, based on the nature of the offense, the student’s disciplinary history, and the circumstances involved. This list is not exhaustive, and the District reserves the right to impose other appropriate disciplinary measures as permitted by law and Board policy. The primary purpose of discipline is to correct behavior, prevent further violations, and maintain a safe, orderly learning environment.

1. **Alternative Discipline:** When available and appropriate, alternative disciplinary options may be assigned for offenses. These options may occur outside the regular school day or fall outside the scope of other listed disciplinary consequences, and are intended to promote accountability while minimizing disruption to instruction.
2. **Behavior Contracts:** For repeated or chronic behavioral concerns, a student may be placed on a written behavior contract outlining specific expectations and conditions for continued enrollment or participation in school activities.
3. **Detention:** Assigned during lunch or after school and supervised by staff. Failure to serve detention may result in additional detention or escalation to a more serious disciplinary consequence.
4. **Emergency Removal:** Immediate removal of a student from school for the remainder of the day when the student poses a danger to self or others or causes a significant disruption. Due process procedures will follow as required by law.
5. **Expulsion:** Removal from school for up to eighty (80) school days or up to one (1) year in cases required by law. Expulsion is determined by the Superintendent following a formal hearing.
6. **In-School Detention (ISD):** The student remains in school but is assigned to a supervised setting outside of regular classes and completes assigned academic work.
7. **Out-of-School Suspension (OSS):** The student may be excluded from school for one (1) to ten (10) school days. The student may make up academic work as permitted but may not be on school property or attend school-sponsored events during the suspension period.
8. **Referral to Law Enforcement:** Certain behaviors (such as fighting, drug-related offenses, or serious safety concerns, etc.) may result in referral to law enforcement in addition to school discipline.
9. **Restitution:** When school property or the property of others is damaged, destroyed, or stolen, the student may be required to repair or restore the affected area when appropriate and/or pay for repair or replacement. Additional disciplinary consequences may also apply.

10. **Teacher Interventions:** Classroom-based responses such as verbal warnings, teacher-student conferences, seat changes, time-outs within the classroom, and parent/guardian contact by the teacher.

Disability Rights

Discipline for students on IEPs/504s follows additional guidelines. A Manifestation Determination meeting is required if considering more than 10 days suspension to ensure we don't punish for behavior caused by the disability. If the behavior isn't a manifestation, discipline can proceed as normal, with continuation of educational services after day 10 of removal. If it is a manifestation, we adjust the plan rather than expel (except in special circumstances involving weapons or drugs, where interim placements are allowed).

This Code applies during school, on the way to/from school, and at any school-related event, and also off-campus if the misconduct negatively impacts the school environment or safety (for example, online harassment of a classmate at home can still be disciplined at school).

By following this Code, we maintain a school atmosphere where all can learn without fear or disruption. We ask parents/guardians to review these rules with their children and support the school's enforcement of them.

Due Process

The District is committed to respecting and protecting the rights of students in disciplinary matters. No student shall be suspended or expelled without being informed of the alleged misconduct and given an opportunity to respond to the charges and present their side of the incident.

Parents or guardians will be notified in writing of any suspension, including the reason for the disciplinary action and the duration of the suspension. Parents/guardians have the right to appeal suspensions in accordance with District procedures.

In cases involving expulsion, the student and parent/guardian will be provided written notice of the charges and the proposed disciplinary action and will be offered a formal expulsion hearing. The hearing provides the opportunity to present evidence, question witnesses when appropriate, and be represented by counsel at the family's expense. Decisions regarding expulsion are made by the Superintendent, and expulsion decisions may be appealed to the Board of Education as provided by law and Board policy.

HAZING/BULLYING/HARASSMENT/SEXUAL HARASSMENT (TITLE IX)

Hillsdale Local Schools will not tolerate hazing, bullying, harassment, or dating violence in any form. All instances will be taken seriously and investigated.

Hillsdale Local Schools is committed to providing a safe, respectful, and inclusive learning environment. Hazing, bullying, harassment, and dating violence in any form are strictly prohibited. All reported incidents will be taken seriously and promptly investigated in accordance with District procedures and applicable law.

Title IX is a federal law that prohibits sex-based discrimination in any school program or activity. This includes sexual harassment. The district has a Title IX Coordinator (contact information is on the district website) to handle any complaints. Sexual harassment can be student-to-student or staff-to-student and includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for favors, or other verbal/physical conduct of a sexual nature that interferes with a student's education or creates a

hostile environment. While elementary kids are young, issues can still arise (like inappropriate touching, or repeated crude comments). Any such incidents should be reported and will be investigated promptly. The district has formal grievance procedures for Title IX complaints, which will be provided to anyone who comes forward with a concern.

Definitions:

Hazing:

Any act of coercion, intimidation, or pressure that compels an individual to participate in potentially harmful, humiliating, degrading, or unsafe activities as a condition of initiation, membership, or continued participation in a group, team, or organization.

Bullying:

Repeated and intentional written, verbal, electronic, or physical acts directed toward a student that cause physical harm, emotional distress, or mental injury, or that create an intimidating, hostile, or abusive educational environment. Bullying includes cyberbullying, which involves the use of electronic devices or digital platforms to harass, threaten, spread rumors, or socially exclude others.

Harassment:

Unwelcome conduct directed at an individual based on a protected or personal characteristic that is offensive, intimidating, threatening, or disruptive. Sexual harassment includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal, nonverbal, or physical conduct of a sexual nature.

- *Dating Violence* – a pattern of abusive behavior by one partner in a teenage romantic relationship to exert power and control over the other.
- *How to Report*: Students should report bullying or harassment to any staff member – we encourage telling a teacher, counselor, or principal. You may do so in person or in writing. Our school also has an anonymous reporting system (the tip line, as noted in the Threat Assessment section) if a student is afraid to come forward with their name.
- *Staff Action*: All staff who become aware of possible hazing or bullying are required to stop it and report it to administration[170]. The principal or designee will promptly investigate reports. This may involve interviews, reviewing evidence like messages, etc.
- *Consequences*: If confirmed, bullies or harassers face disciplinary action appropriate to the severity – ranging from mediation and parental/guardian conferences up to suspension or expulsion for serious or persistent cases. Additionally, education may be required (counseling, empathy training, etc.). We also work with victims to restore a sense of safety (counseling, schedule changes, etc.).
- *Retaliation is Prohibited*: No one shall retaliate against an individual for reporting or assisting in an investigation of bullying or harassment. Retaliation itself is a serious offense and will result in discipline.
- *False Reports*: Making intentionally false accusations of bullying is also wrong. If someone deliberately lies about another student to get them in trouble, that person will face consequences. However, we approach that carefully. We want to encourage reporting, so we only discipline for “false reports” if it’s proven the reporter knowingly lied.
- *Education & Prevention*: We educate students on bullying and how to stand up to it. Our health curriculum covers topics like the effects of bullying, how to get help, and includes dating violence prevention education for grades 7-12. We promote an inclusive environment (see PBIS) and teach digital citizenship to address cyberbullying.
- *Parents/Guardians*: If you suspect your child is being bullied, please notify us. We will keep communications open. If you fear your child is bullying others, also talk to us. Early intervention can correct behavior. We can refer families to outside services if needed.

Remember: every student deserves to feel safe and respected at school. We are committed to that. Students: be part of the solution – treat others with kindness and speak up against bullying.

School Safety

As described earlier, we have robust measures in place under Ohio's SAVE Students Act (HB 123) to enhance safety:

Anonymous Reporting (Tip Line): Anyone can anonymously report threats of violence, suicide concerns, or other safety issues through text or by calling the 844-SaferOH tip line. We encourage a "if you see something, say something" culture. Don't ever feel like you're snitching; you could be saving lives.

Remember, maintaining a safe school is everyone's responsibility. Don't spread rumors, but do report facts to an adult. Don't joke about bombs or shootings; it will be taken seriously and isn't funny. Work with us to keep our Falcon family safe.

Building Security: Our doors remain locked during the day with a buzzer entry, security cameras monitor entries and hallways, and all visitors must check in. Students, do not open exterior doors for anyone (even if you know them); direct them to the main entrance.

Emergency Communications: In a real emergency, the school will send out notifications as appropriate via text message or phone call, and through the website/social media as available. Ensure your contact info is current for those alerts. Also, have a family emergency plan. Know who would pick you up and where to go if we ever had to evacuate or dismiss early for a crisis.

Mental Health Support: Part of preventing violence is addressing underlying issues. We have connections with mental health agencies. If you or a friend is struggling with severe anger, depression, or trauma, please seek help via the counselor or any staff. Often, threats can be a cry for help. We treat them seriously but also aim to help the person making them, if possible, via counseling and support.

Prevention Programs: We provide training to staff and information to students on recognizing the signs of someone in crisis or planning harm. Programs like Say Something, anti-bullying campaigns, and others help create awareness.

Safety Drills: We do the mandated drills (fire, tornado, lockdown) and also training on ALICE (Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, Evacuate) so that both staff and students have options if facing an active threat.

Threat Assessment Team: A trained team that evaluates and addresses threats. If you hear or see something concerning (like a student talking about violence or bringing something dangerous), tell a staff member or use the tip line immediately. This team will follow up using evidence-based protocols. They might interview students, involve our school resource officer, and decide on interventions (from counseling referrals to law enforcement involvement).

Student Educational Records/Privacy (FERPA)

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is a federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. Parents/guardians and students age 18 or older ("eligible students") have the right to:

- Inspect and review education records by submitting a written request to the building principal. Access will be provided within 45 days.
- Request corrections to records believed to be inaccurate, misleading, or in violation of privacy. If a request is denied, the parent/guardian or eligible student has the right to a hearing and may place a written statement in the record.

- Control disclosure of personally identifiable information, except in situations permitted by law.

Schools may release records without written consent to:

- School officials with a legitimate educational interest
- Another school where the student enrolls or intends to enroll
- Authorized parties for financial aid, accreditation, audits, or approved studies
- Appropriate individuals during a health or safety emergency
- Parties with a lawful subpoena or court order

Directory information (such as name, grade level, school attended, participation in activities, honors, and school photographs) may be released unless a parent/guardian or eligible student submits a written request to opt out by the deadline communicated each school year.

Concerns regarding FERPA compliance may be filed with the Student Privacy Policy Office, U.S. Department of Education. We take student privacy seriously and only release information as allowed by law or with your permission. If you have questions about your student's records or FERPA, contact the school office.

This Student Handbook applies to the 2026–2027 school year and replaces all previous student handbooks and conduct guides. It serves as a reference guide, not a contract, outlining school rules, expectations, and shared responsibilities that support a safe, respectful, and supportive learning environment.

The handbook reflects current Hillsdale Board of Education policies and Ohio state and federal laws in effect at the time of publication. If any provision conflicts with Board policy or applicable law, the higher authority will govern. Because laws and policies may change, the district reviews them regularly, and families will be notified of any significant updates during the school year.

This handbook is effective only for the current school year and will be reviewed and revised yearly .

Thank you to our students and families for taking the time to review this guide. By understanding expectations and working together, we help create a school community where everyone is prepared to learn, grow, and succeed. Let's make the most of the year ahead as we continue to Take Flight.

Board of Education Approved on: 03/16/2026

Handbook Effective Dates: August 2026 – June 2027

