



**MESQUITE INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT**

# **Student Handbook 2018-2019**

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## Table of Contents

PREFACE .....	1
SECTION I: PARENTAL RIGHTS .....	3
CONSENT, OPT-OUT, AND REFUSAL RIGHTS.....	3
Consent to Conduct a Psychological Evaluation .....	3
Consent to Display a Student’s Original Works and Personal Information .....	3
Consent to Receive Parenting & Paternity Awareness Instruction if Student is Under Age 14 .....	3
Consent to Video or Audio Record a Student When Not Otherwise Permitted by Law .....	3
Prohibiting the Use of Corporal Punishment .....	4
Limiting Electronic Communications with Students by District Employees .....	4
Objecting to the Release of Directory Information .....	4
Objecting to the Release of Student Information to Military Recruiters and Institutions of Higher Education (Secondary Grade Levels Only).....	5
Participation in Third-Party Surveys .....	5
Consent Required Before Student Participation in a Federally Funded Survey, Analysis, or Evaluation.....	5
“Opting Out” of Participation in Other Types of Surveys or Screenings and the Disclosure of Personal Information.....	6
REMOVING A STUDENT FROM INSTRUCTION OR EXCUSING A STUDENT FROM A REQUIRED COMPONENT OF INSTRUCTION.....	6
Human Sexuality Instruction .....	6
Reciting a Portion of the Declaration of Independence in Grades 3–12 .....	7
Reciting the Pledges to the U.S. and Texas Flags .....	7
Religious or Moral Beliefs.....	7
Tutoring or Test Preparation .....	7
RIGHT OF ACCESS TO STUDENT RECORDS, CURRICULUM MATERIALS, AND DISTRICT RECORDS/POLICIES.....	8
Instructional Materials .....	8
Notices of Certain Student Misconduct to Noncustodial Parent.....	8
Participation in Federally Required, State-Mandated, and District Assessments .....	8
Student Records .....	8
Accessing Student Records .....	8
Authorized Inspection and Use of Student Records .....	9
Teacher and Staff Professional Qualifications .....	11
STUDENTS WITH EXCEPTIONALITIES OR SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES.....	12

Children of Military Families .....	12
Parental Role in Certain Classroom and School Assignments.....	12
Multiple Birth Siblings.....	12
Safety Transfers/Assignments .....	12
Service/Assistance Animal Use by Students .....	13
Students in the Conservatorship of the State (Foster Care) .....	13
Students Who Are Homeless.....	14
Students Who Have Learning Difficulties or Who Need Special Education or Section 504 Services.....	14
Special Education Referrals .....	14
Contact Person for Special Education Referrals .....	14
Section 504 Referrals .....	14
Contact Person for Section 504 Referrals.....	14
Notification to Parent of Intervention Strategies for Learning Difficulties Provided to Student in General Education .....	14
Students Who Receive Special Education Services with Other School-Aged Children in the Home .....	15
Students Who Speak a Primary Language Other than English.....	16
Students with Physical or Mental Impairments Protected Under Section 504 .....	17
SECTION II: OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS AND PARENTS ....	18
ABSENCES/ATTENDANCE .....	18
Compulsory Attendance .....	18
Age 19 and Older.....	18
Between Ages 6 and 19 .....	18
Prekindergarten and Kindergarten .....	18
Exemptions to Compulsory Attendance .....	19
All Grade Levels.....	19
Secondary Grade Levels .....	19
Failure to Comply with Compulsory Attendance.....	20
All Grade Levels.....	20
Students with Disabilities.....	20
Age 19 and Older.....	20
Between Ages 6 and 19 .....	20
Attendance for Credit or Final Grade (Kindergarten-Grade 12).....	21
Official Attendance-Taking Time & School Hours.....	21

Documentation After an Absence (All Grade Levels).....	22
Doctor’s Note After an Absence for Illness (All Grade Levels) .....	22
Driver License Attendance Verification (Secondary Grade Levels Only).....	22
ACCOUNTABILITY UNDER STATE AND FEDERAL LAW (All Grade Levels) .....	22
ADMISSION AND ENROLLMENT .....	23
ARMED SERVICES VOCATIONAL APTITUDE BATTERY TEST .....	24
BULLYING (All Grade Levels) .....	24
CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION (CTE) PROGRAMS (Secondary Grade Levels Only).....	25
CELEBRATIONS (All Grade Levels) .....	26
CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE AND OTHER MALTREATMENT OF CHILDREN (All Grade Levels) .....	26
CLASS RANK/HIGHEST-RANKING STUDENT (Secondary Grade Levels Only) .....	27
CLASS SCHEDULES (Secondary Grade Levels Only) .....	28
COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY ADMISSIONS & FINANCIAL AID (Secondary Grade Levels Only) .....	29
COLLEGE CREDIT COURSES (Secondary Grade Levels Only) .....	29
COMMUNICATIONS-AUTOMATED.....	29
Emergency.....	29
Nonemergency.....	29
COMPLAINTS AND CONCERNS (All Grade Levels) .....	29
CONDUCT (All Grade Levels) .....	31
Applicability of School Rules .....	31
Campus Behavior Coordinator.....	31
Disruptions of School Operations .....	31
Social Events.....	32
COUNSELING .....	32
Academic Counseling.....	32
Elementary and Middle School Grade Levels.....	32
High School Grade Levels .....	32
Personal Counseling (All Grade Levels) .....	33
COURSE CREDIT (Secondary Grade Levels Only).....	33
CREDIT BY EXAMINATION—If a Student Has Taken the Course/Subject (All Grade Levels) .....	33
CREDIT BY EXAMINATION FOR ADVANCEMENT/ACCELERATION—If a Student Has Not Taken the Course/Subject .....	33

Students in Grades K–5 .....	34
Students in Grades 6–12 .....	34
DATING VIOLENCE, DISCRIMINATION, HARASSMENT, AND RETALIATION (All Grade Levels).....	34
Dating Violence.....	34
Discrimination.....	35
Harassment.....	35
Sexual Harassment and Gender-Based Harassment.....	35
Retaliation.....	36
Reporting Procedures .....	36
Investigation of Report .....	36
DISCRIMINATION .....	37
DISTANCE LEARNING .....	37
All Grade Levels .....	37
Texas Virtual School Network (TXVSN) (Secondary Grade Levels).....	37
DISTRIBUTION OF LITERATURE, PUBLISHED MATERIALS, OR OTHER DOCUMENTS (All Grade Levels).....	38
School Materials.....	38
Nonschool Materials.....	38
From Students.....	38
From Others.....	38
DRESS AND GROOMING (All Grade Levels) .....	39
Applies to All.....	39
Clothing.....	39
Shoes.....	40
Accessories.....	40
Hair.....	40
Standard Dress Guidelines.....	40
Exceptions.....	40
ELECTRONIC DEVICES AND TECHNOLOGY RESOURCES (All Grade Levels) .....	41
Possession and Use of Personal Telecommunications Devices, Including Mobile Telephones .....	41
Possession and Use of Other Personal Electronic Devices .....	41
Instructional Use of Personal Telecommunications and Other Electronic Devices.....	41
Third-Party Applications and Student E-mail.....	42

Acceptable Use of District Technology Resources .....	42
Unacceptable and Inappropriate Use of Technology Resources .....	42
Disclaimer of Liability.....	42
END-OF-COURSE (EOC) ASSESSMENTS .....	43
ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS (All Grade Levels) .....	43
EXAM EXEMPTIONS .....	43
EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES, CLUBS, AND ORGANIZATIONS (All Grade Levels) .....	44
Standards of Behavior .....	45
FEES (All Grade Levels).....	45
FUNDRAISING (All Grade Levels).....	46
GANG-FREE ZONES (All Grade Levels) .....	46
GENDER-BASED HARASSMENT .....	46
GRADE-LEVEL CLASSIFICATION (Grades 9-12 Only) .....	46
GRADING GUIDELINES (All Grade Levels) .....	46
GRADUATION (Secondary Grade Levels Only) .....	47
Requirements for a Diploma Beginning with the 2014-15 School Year .....	47
Testing Requirements for Graduation .....	47
Foundation Graduation Program.....	47
Credits Required .....	49
Available Endorsements .....	49
Personal Graduation Plans .....	49
Available Course Options for All Graduation Programs .....	50
Certificates of Coursework Completion .....	50
Students with Disabilities .....	50
Graduation Speakers.....	50
Graduation Expenses .....	51
Scholarships and Grants .....	51
HARASSMENT.....	51
HAZING (All Grade Levels) .....	51
HEALTH-RELATED MATTERS.....	52
Student Illness (All Grade Levels) .....	52
Bacterial Meningitis (All Grade Levels) .....	52
Food Allergies (All Grade Levels) .....	54

Head Lice (All Grade Levels) .....	54
Physical Activity Requirements .....	54
Elementary School.....	54
Middle School .....	55
School Health Advisory Council (SHAC) (All Grade Levels) .....	55
Student Wellness Policy/Wellness Plan (All Grade Levels) .....	55
Other Health-Related Matters .....	55
Physical Fitness Assessment (Grades 3-12).....	55
Vending Machines (All Grade Levels) .....	55
Tobacco and E-Cigarettes Prohibited (All Grade Levels and All Others on School Property) .....	55
Asbestos Management Plan (All Grade Levels).....	56
Pest Management Plan (All Grade Levels) .....	56
HOMELESS STUDENTS (All Grade Levels).....	56
ILLNESS .....	56
IMMUNIZATION (All Grade Levels).....	56
LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES (All Grade Levels) .....	57
Questioning of Students.....	57
Students Taken Into Custody .....	57
Notification of Law Violations.....	58
LEAVING CAMPUS (All Grade Levels) .....	58
During Lunch .....	59
At Any Other Time During the School Day .....	59
LOST AND FOUND (All Grade Levels).....	60
MAKEUP WORK .....	60
Makeup Work Because of Absence (All Grade Levels) .....	60
DAEP Makeup Work .....	60
Grades 9-12 .....	60
In-School Suspension (ISS) Makeup Work (All Grade Levels) .....	60
MEDICINE AT SCHOOL (All Grade Levels) .....	61
Psychotropic Drugs .....	62
NONDISCRIMINATION STATEMENT (All Grade Levels).....	62
PARENT AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT (All Grade Levels) .....	63
Working Together .....	63
PHYSICAL EXAMINATIONS/HEALTH SCREENINGS .....	64

Athletics' Participation (Secondary Grade Levels Only) .....	64
Spinal Screening Program .....	64
Other Exams and Screenings (All Grade Levels) .....	64
PLEDGES OF ALLEGIANCE AND A MINUTE OF SILENCE (All Grade Levels) .....	64
PRAYER (All Grade Levels) .....	64
PROMOTION AND RETENTION .....	65
Elementary and Middle Grade Levels .....	65
High School Grade Levels .....	66
RELEASE OF STUDENTS FROM SCHOOL .....	66
REPORT CARDS/PROGRESS REPORTS AND CONFERENCES (All Grade Levels) .....	66
RETALIATION.....	67
SAFETY (All Grade Levels) .....	67
Accident Insurance .....	67
Preparedness Drills: Evacuation, Severe Weather, and Other Emergencies.....	68
Emergency Medical Treatment and Information .....	68
Emergency School-Closing Information .....	68
SAT, ACT, AND OTHER STANDARDIZED TESTS.....	68
SCHEDULE CHANGES (Middle and High School Grade Levels) .....	68
SCHOOL FACILITIES .....	69
Use by Students Before and After School (All Grade Levels) .....	69
Conduct Before and After School (All Grade Levels) .....	69
Use of Hallways During Class Time (All Grade Levels) .....	69
Cafeteria Services (All Grade Levels).....	69
Library (All Grade Levels) .....	70
Meetings of Noncurriculum-Related Groups (Secondary Grade Levels Only).....	70
SEARCHES .....	70
Students' Desks and Lockers (All Grade Levels) .....	70
Telecommunications and Other Electronic Devices (All Grade Levels) .....	71
Vehicles on Campus (Secondary Grade Levels Only) .....	71
Trained Dogs (All Grade Levels).....	71
Metal Detectors (All Grade Levels) .....	71
Drug Testing (Secondary Grade Levels Only).....	71
SEXUAL HARASSMENT.....	71
SPECIAL PROGRAMS (All Grade Levels) .....	72



STANDARDIZED TESTING .....	72
Secondary Grade Levels .....	72
SAT/ACT (Scholastic Aptitude Test and American College Test) .....	72
TSI (Texas Success Initiative) Assessment .....	72
STAAR (State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness) .....	72
Grades 3-8 .....	72
High School Courses—End-of-Course (EOC) Assessments .....	73
STEROIDS (Secondary Grade Levels Only) .....	73
STUDENTS IN FOSTER CARE (All Grade Levels) .....	74
STUDENT SPEAKERS (All Grade Levels) .....	74
SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION (All Grade Levels) .....	74
SUICIDE AWARENESS (All Grade Levels) .....	74
SUMMER SCHOOL (All Grade Levels) .....	74
TARDIES (All Grade Levels) .....	74
TEXTBOOKS, ELECTRONIC TEXTBOOKS, TECHNOLOGICAL EQUIPMENT, AND OTHER INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS (All Grade Levels) .....	74
TRANSFERS (All Grade Levels) .....	75
TRANSPORTATION (All Grade Levels) .....	75
School-Sponsored Trips .....	75
Buses and Other School Vehicles .....	75
VANDALISM (All Grade Levels) .....	76
VIDEO CAMERAS (All Grade Levels) .....	76
VISITORS TO THE SCHOOL (All Grade Levels) .....	77
General Visitors .....	77
Unauthorized Persons .....	77
Visitors Participating in Special Programs for Students .....	77
Business, Civic, and Youth Groups .....	77
VOLUNTEERS (All Grade Levels) .....	78
VOTER REGISTRATION (Secondary Grade Levels Only) .....	78
WITHDRAWING FROM SCHOOL (All Grade Levels) .....	78
Glossary .....	79
APPENDIX A: Freedom from Bullying Policy .....	82

## PREFACE

To Students and Parents:

Welcome to the 2018-19 school year. Education is a team effort, and we know that students, parents, teachers, and other staff members all working together can make this a wonderfully successful year for our students.

The Mesquite Independent School District Student Handbook is designed to provide basic information that you and your child will need during the school year. The handbook is divided into two sections:

**Section I—PARENTAL RIGHTS**—with information to assist you in responding to school-related issues. We encourage you to take some time to closely review this section of the handbook.

**Section II—OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS AND PARENTS**—organized alphabetically by topic, and, where possible, further divided by applicability to ages and/or grade levels, for quick access when searching for information on a specific issue.

Please be aware that the term “parent,” unless otherwise noted, is used to refer to the parent, legal guardian, any person granted some other type of lawful control of the student, or any other person who has agreed to assume school-related responsibility for a student.

Both students and parents should become familiar with the MISD Student Code of Conduct, which is a document adopted by the board and intended to promote school safety and an atmosphere for learning. That document may be found on the district’s website at [Mesquite Independent School District Website](#) and is available in hard copy upon request.

The Student Handbook is a general reference guide only and is designed to be in harmony with board policy and the Student Code of Conduct. Please be aware that it is not a complete statement of all policies, procedures, or rules that may be applicable in a given circumstance.

In case of conflict between board policy (including the Student Code of Conduct) and any provisions of the Student Handbook, the provisions of board policy and the Student Code of Conduct are to be followed.

Please be aware that the Student Handbook is updated yearly, while policy adoption and revision may occur throughout the year. The district encourages parents to stay informed of proposed board policy changes by attending board meetings and reviewing newsletters and other communications explaining changes in policy or other rules that affect Student Handbook provisions. The district reserves the right to modify provisions of the Student Handbook at any time, whenever it is deemed necessary. Notice of any revision or modification will be given as is reasonably practical under the circumstances.

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

If you or your child has questions about any of the material in this handbook, please contact your child’s campus for clarification.

Also, please complete the New Student Enrollment or Returning Student Registration online in order to acknowledge receipt of the following:

1. Parental engagement per Title 1;
2. *Student Handbook* and *Code of Conduct*;
3. Absences & Attendance information;
4. Pest Management;
5. Acceptable Use Policy of District Technology Resources;
6. Student Directory Information permission;
7. Release of Student Information to Military Recruiters; and
8. Release of Student Information to Institutions of Higher Learning.

NOTE: References to policy codes are included so that parents can refer to board policy. The district's official policy manual is available for review in the district administration office and electronic copies of all board policies may be found at [MISD Board Policy](#).

### **Accessibility**

If you have difficulty accessing the information in this document because of disability, please contact the Communications Department at 972-288-6411.

## **SECTION I: PARENTAL RIGHTS**

This section of the MISD Student Handbook includes information related to certain rights of parents as specified in state or federal law.

### **CONSENT, OPT-OUT, AND REFUSAL RIGHTS**

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

A district employee will not conduct a psychological examination, test, or treatment without obtaining prior written parental consent unless the examination, test, or treatment is required under state or federal law regarding requirements for special education or by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) for child abuse investigations and reports.

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

Teachers may display students' work, which may include personally identifiable student information, in classrooms or elsewhere on campus as recognition of student achievement.

However, the district will seek parental consent before displaying students' artwork, special projects, photographs taken by students, original videos or voice recordings, and other original works on the district's website, a website affiliated or sponsored by the district, such as a campus or classroom website, and in district publications, which may include printed materials, videos, or other methods of mass communication.

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

A student under the age of 14 must have parental permission to receive instruction in the district's parenting and paternity awareness program; otherwise, the student will not be allowed to participate in the instruction. This program, developed by the Office of the Texas Attorney General and the State Board of Education (SBOE), is incorporated into the district's health education classes.

#### **Consent to Video or Audio Record a Student When Not Otherwise Permitted by Law**

State law permits the school to make a video or voice recording without parental permission for the following circumstances:

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

The district will seek parental consent through a written request before making any other video or voice recording of your child not otherwise allowed by law.

[See **Video Cameras** on page 76 for more information, including a parent’s right to request video and audio equipment be placed in certain special education settings.]

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

MISD prohibits the use of corporal punishment—spanking or paddling the student—per board policy FO(LOCAL).

### **Limiting Electronic Communications with Students by District Employees**

Teachers and other approved employees are permitted by the district to use electronic communication with students within the scope of the individual’s professional responsibilities, as described by district guidelines. For example, a teacher may set up a social networking page for his or her class that has information related to class work, homework, and tests. As a parent, you are welcome to join or become a member of such a page. However, text messages sent to an individual student are only allowed if a district employee with responsibility for an extracurricular activity needs to communicate with a student participating in the extracurricular activity.

If you prefer that your child not receive any one-to-one electronic communications from a district employee or if you have questions related to the use of electronic media by district employees, please contact the campus principal.

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

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, or FERPA, permits the district to disclose appropriately designated “directory information” from a student’s education records without written consent. “Directory information” is information that is generally not considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if released. Examples include a student’s photograph for publication in the school yearbook; a student’s name and grade level for purposes of communicating class and teacher assignment; the name, weight, and height of an athlete for publication in a school athletic program; a list of student birthdays for generating school wide or classroom recognition; a student’s name and photograph posted on a district-approved and -managed social media platform; and the names and grade levels of students submitted by the district to a local newspaper or other community publication to recognize the A/B honor roll for a specific grading period. Directory information will be released to anyone who follows procedures for requesting it.

However, a parent or eligible student may object to the release of a student’s directory information. This objection must be made in writing to the principal within 10 school days of your child’s first day of instruction for this school year.

As allowed by state law, the district has identified two directory information lists—one for school-sponsored purposes and the second for all other requests. For all district publications and announcements, the district has designated the following as directory information: student name, electronic mail address, photograph, honors and awards, grade level, current school, most recent school previously attended, enrollment status, participation in officially recognized activities and

sports, and weight and height of members of athletic teams. If you do not object to the use of your child's information for these limited school-sponsored purposes, the school will not need to ask your permission each time the district wishes to use the information for the school-sponsored purposes listed above.

For all other purposes, the district has identified the following as directory information: student name, honors and awards, grade level, enrollment status, participation in officially recognized activities and sports, and weight and height of members of athletic teams. If you do not object to the use of your child's information for these purposes, the school must release this information when the school receives a request from an outside entity or individual.

Also review the information at **Authorized Inspection and Use of Student Records** on page 9.

### **Objecting to the Release of Student Information to Military Recruiters and Institutions of Higher Education (Secondary Grade Levels Only)**

The district is required by federal law to comply with a request by a military recruiter or an institution of higher education for students' names, addresses, and telephone listings, unless parents have advised the district not to release their child's information without prior written consent. A form included in the forms packet is available if you do not want the district to provide this information to military recruiters or institutions of higher education.

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

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

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

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

You will be able to inspect the survey or other instrument and any instructional materials used in connection with such a survey, analysis, or evaluation. [For further information, see policy EF(LEGAL).]

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

As a parent, you have a right to receive notice of and deny permission for your child’s participation in:

- Any survey concerning the private information listed above, regardless of funding.
- School activities involving the collection, disclosure, or use of personal information gathered from your child for the purpose of marketing, selling, or otherwise disclosing that information. NOTE: This does not apply to the collection, disclosure, or use of personal information collected from students for the exclusive purpose of developing, evaluating, or providing educational products or services for, or to, students or educational institutions.
- Any nonemergency, invasive physical examination or screening required as a condition of attendance, administered and scheduled by the school in advance and not necessary to protect the immediate health and safety of the student. Exceptions are hearing, vision, or spinal screenings, or any physical examination or screening permitted or required under state law. [See policies EF and FFAA.]

As a parent, you may inspect a survey created by a third party before the survey is administered or distributed to your child.

### **REMOVING A STUDENT FROM INSTRUCTION OR EXCUSING A STUDENT FROM A REQUIRED COMPONENT OF INSTRUCTION**

#### **Human Sexuality Instruction**

As a part of the district’s curriculum, students receive instruction related to human sexuality. The School Health Advisory Council (SHAC) is involved with the selection of course materials for such instruction.

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

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

In accordance with state law, below is a summary of the district's curriculum regarding human sexuality instruction:

Coursework containing human sexuality instruction, e.g., abstinence, puberty, STDs, teen pregnancy, etc., is taught in grades 5-12. Detailed course objectives for each grade level can be found here: [Human Sexuality Programs & Course Descriptions](#).

As a parent, you are entitled to review the curriculum materials. In addition, you may remove your child from any part of the human sexuality instruction with no academic, disciplinary, or other penalties. You may also choose to become more involved with the development of curriculum used for this purpose by becoming a member of the district's SHAC. Please see the campus principal for additional information.

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

You may request that your child be excused from recitation of a portion of the Declaration of Independence. State law requires students in social studies classes in grades 3-12 to recite a portion of the text of the Declaration of Independence during Celebrate Freedom Week unless (1) you provide a written statement requesting that your child be excused, (2) the district determines that your child has a conscientious objection to the recitation, or (3) you are a representative of a foreign government to whom the U.S. government extends diplomatic immunity. [See policy EHBK(LEGAL).]

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

As a parent, you may request that your child be excused from participation in the daily recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance to the U.S. flag and the Pledge of Allegiance to the Texas flag. The request must be in writing. State law does not allow your child to be excused from participation in the required minute of silence or silent activity that follows. [See **Pledges of Allegiance and a Minute of Silence** on page 64 and policy EC(LEGAL).]

### **Religious or Moral Beliefs**

You may remove your child temporarily from the classroom if an instructional activity in which your child is scheduled to participate conflicts with your religious or moral beliefs. The removal cannot be for the purpose of avoiding a test and may not extend for an entire semester. Further, your child must satisfy grade-level and graduation requirements as determined by the school and by state law.

### **Tutoring or Test Preparation**

Based on informal observations, evaluative data such as grades earned on assignments or tests, or results from diagnostic assessments, a teacher may determine that a student is in need of additional targeted assistance in order for the student to achieve mastery in state-developed essential knowledge and skills. The school will always attempt to provide tutoring and strategies for test-taking in ways that prevent removal from other instruction as much as possible. In accordance with state law and policy EC, the school will not remove a student from a regularly scheduled class for remedial tutoring or test preparation for more than 10 percent of the school days on which the class is offered, unless the student's parent consents to this removal.



The school may also offer tutorial services, which students whose grades are below 70 will be required to attend.

[Also refer to policies EC and EHBC, and contact your student's teacher with questions about any tutoring programs provided by the school.]

## **RIGHT OF ACCESS TO STUDENT RECORDS, CURRICULUM MATERIALS, AND DISTRICT RECORDS/POLICIES**

### **Instructional Materials**

As a parent, you have a right to review teaching materials, textbooks, and other teaching aids and instructional materials used in the curriculum, and to examine tests that have been administered to your child.

You are also entitled to request that the school allow your child to take home any instructional materials used by the student. If the school determines that sufficient availability exists to grant the request, the student must return the materials at the beginning of the next school day if requested to do so by the student's teacher.

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

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

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

You may request information regarding any state or district policy related to your child's participation in assessments required by federal law, state law, or the district.

### **Student Records**

#### ***Accessing Student Records***

You may review your child's student records. These records include:

- Attendance records,
- Test scores,
- Grades,
- Disciplinary records,
- Counseling records,
- Psychological records,
- Applications for admission,
- Health and immunization information,
- Other medical records,

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

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

A federal law, known as the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, or FERPA, affords parents and eligible students certain rights with respect to student education records. For purposes of student records, an “eligible” student is one who is age 18 or older or who is attending an institution of postsecondary education. These rights, as discussed in this section as well as at **Objecting to the Release of Directory Information** on page 4, are:

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

Family Policy Compliance Office  
U.S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20202-5901

Both FERPA and state laws safeguard student records from unauthorized inspection or use and provide parents and eligible students certain rights of privacy. Before disclosing any personally identifiable information from a student's records, the district must verify the identity of the person, including a parent or the student, requesting the information.

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

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

Federal law requires that, as soon as a student reaches the age of 18, is emancipated by a court, or enrolls in a postsecondary institution, control of the records goes to the student. The parents may continue to have access to the records, however, if the student is a dependent for tax

purposes and under limited circumstances when there is a threat to the health and safety of the student or other individuals.

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

- When district school officials have what federal law refers to as a “legitimate educational interest” in a student's records. School officials would include board members and employees, such as the superintendent, administrators, and principals; teachers, school counselors, diagnosticians, and support staff (including district health or district medical staff); a person or company with whom the district has contracted or allowed to provide a particular institutional service or function (such as an attorney, consultant, third-party vendor that offers online programs or software, auditor, medical consultant, therapist, school resource officer, or volunteer); a parent or student serving on a school committee; or a parent or student assisting a school official in the performance of his or her duties. “Legitimate educational interest” in a student's records includes working with the student; considering disciplinary or academic actions, the student's case, or an individualized education program for a student with disabilities; compiling statistical data; reviewing an educational record to fulfill the official's professional responsibility to the school and the student; or investigating or evaluating programs.
- To authorized representatives of various governmental agencies, including juvenile service providers, the U.S. Comptroller General's office, the U.S. Attorney General's office, the U.S. Secretary of Education, TEA, the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture's office, and Child Protective Services (CPS) caseworkers or other child welfare representatives, in certain cases.
- To individuals or entities granted access in response to a subpoena or court order.
- To another school, school district/system, or institution of postsecondary education to which a student seeks or intends to enroll or in which he or she is already enrolled.
- In connection with financial aid for which a student has applied or which the student has received.
- To accrediting organizations to carry out accrediting functions.
- To organizations conducting studies for, or on behalf of, the school, in order to develop, validate, or administer predictive tests; administer student aid programs; or improve instruction.
- To appropriate officials in connection with a health or safety emergency.
- When the district discloses information it has designated as directory information [see **Objecting to the Release of Directory Information** on page 4 for opportunities to prohibit this disclosure].

Release of personally identifiable information to any other person or agency—such as a prospective employer or for a scholarship application—will occur only with parental or student permission as appropriate.

The principal is custodian of all records for currently enrolled students at the assigned school. The principal is the custodian of all records for students who have withdrawn or graduated.

A parent or eligible student who wishes to inspect the student's records should submit a written request to the records custodian identifying the records he or she wishes to inspect. Records may be inspected by a parent or eligible student during regular school hours. The records custodian or designee will respond to reasonable requests for explanation and interpretation of the records.

A parent or eligible student who provides a written request and pays copying costs of 10 cents per page may obtain copies. If circumstances prevent inspection during regular school hours and the student qualifies for free or reduced-price meals, the district will either provide a copy of the records requested or make other arrangements for the parent or student to review these records. The address of the superintendent's office is 3819 Towne Crossing Blvd., Mesquite, Texas 75150.

The address(es) of the principals' offices can be found here: [MISD Website](#).

A parent (or eligible student) may inspect the student's records and request a correction or amendment if the records are considered inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the student's privacy rights. A request to correct a student's record should be submitted to the appropriate records custodian. The request must clearly identify the part of the record that should be corrected and include an explanation of how the information in the record is inaccurate. If the district denies the request to amend the records, the parent or eligible student has the right to request a hearing. If the records are not amended as a result of the hearing, the parent or eligible student has 30 school days to exercise the right to place a statement commenting on the information in the student's record.

Although improperly recorded grades may be challenged, contesting a student's grade in a course or on an examination is handled through the general complaint process found in policy FNG(LOCAL). A grade issued by a classroom teacher can be changed only if, as determined by the board of trustees, the grade is arbitrary, erroneous, or inconsistent with the district's grading policy. [See FINALITY OF GRADES at FNG(LEGAL), **Report Cards/Progress Reports and Conferences** on page 66, and **Complaints and Concerns** on page 29 for an overview of the process.]

The district's policy regarding student records found at policy FL is available here: [Mesquite ISD Board Policy](#).

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

## **Teacher and Staff Professional Qualifications**

You may request information regarding the professional qualifications of your child's teachers, including whether a teacher has met state qualification and licensing criteria for the grade levels and subject areas in which the teacher provides instruction; whether the teacher has an emergency permit or other provisional status for which state requirements have been waived; and whether the teacher is currently teaching in the field of discipline of his or her certification. You also have the right to request information about the qualifications of any paraprofessional who may provide services to your child.

## **STUDENTS WITH EXCEPTIONALITIES OR SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES**

### **Children of Military Families**

Children of military families will be provided flexibility regarding certain district requirements, including:

- Immunization requirements.
- Grade level, course, or educational program placement.
- Eligibility requirements for participation in extracurricular activities.
- Graduation requirements.

In addition, absences related to a student visiting with his or her parent, including a stepparent or legal guardian, who has been called to active duty for, is on leave from, or is returning from a deployment of at least four months will be excused by the district. The district will permit no more than five excused absences per year for this purpose. For the absence to be excused, the absence must occur no earlier than the 60th day before deployment or no later than the 30th day after the parent's return from deployment.

Additional information may be found at [TEA's Military Family Resources](#).

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

#### ***Multiple Birth Siblings***

As a parent, if your children are multiple birth siblings (e.g., twins, triplets, etc.) assigned to the same grade and campus, you may request that they be placed either in the same classroom or in separate classrooms. Your written request must be submitted no later than the 14th day after the enrollment of your children. [See policy FDB(LEGAL).]

#### ***Safety Transfers/Assignments***

As a parent, you may:

- Request the transfer of your child to another classroom or campus if your child has been determined by the district to have been a victim of bullying, which includes cyberbullying, as defined by Education Code 37.0832. Transportation is not provided for a transfer to another campus. See the principal for information.
- Consult with district administrators if your child has been determined by the district to have engaged in bullying and the board decides to transfer your child to another classroom or campus. Transportation is not provided for a transfer to another campus. [See **Bullying** on page 24, policy FDB, and policy FFI.]
- Request the transfer of your child to attend a safe public school in the district if your child attends school at a campus identified by TEA as persistently dangerous or if your child has been a victim of a violent criminal offense while at school or on school grounds. [See policy FDE.]

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

### **Service/Assistance Animal Use by Students**

A parent of a student who uses a service/assistance animal because of the student's disability must submit a request in writing to the principal before bringing the service/assistance animal on campus. The district will try to accommodate a request as soon as possible but will do so within 10 district business days.

### **Students in the Conservatorship of the State (Foster Care)**

A student who is currently in the conservatorship (custody) of the state and who enrolls in the district after the beginning of the school year will be allowed credit-by-examination opportunities outside the district's established testing windows, and the district will grant proportionate course credit by semester (partial credit) when a student only passes one semester of a two-semester course.

A student who is currently in the conservatorship of the state and who is moved outside of the district's or school's attendance boundaries, or who is initially placed in the conservatorship of the state and who is moved outside the district's or school's boundaries, is entitled to continue in enrollment at the school he or she was attending prior to the placement or move until the student reaches the highest grade level at the particular school. In addition, if a student in grade 11 or 12 transfers to another district but does not meet the graduation requirements of the receiving district, the student can request to receive a diploma from the previous district if he or she meets the criteria to graduate from the previous district.

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

- Assist the student with the completion of any applications for admission or for financial aid;
- Arrange and accompany the student on campus visits;
- Assist in researching and applying for private or institution sponsored scholarships;
- Identify whether the student is a candidate for appointment to a military academy;
- Assist the student in registering and preparing for college entrance examinations, including, subject to the availability of funds, arranging for the payment of any examination fees by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS); and
- Coordinate contact between the student and a liaison officer for
- students who were formerly in the conservatorship of the state.

[See also **Credit by Examination for Advancement/Acceleration** on page 33, **Course Credit** on page 33, and **Students in Foster Care** on page 74 for more information.]

## **Students Who Are Homeless**

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

- Proof of residency requirements;
- Immunization requirements;
- Educational program placement, if the student is unable to provide previous academic records, or misses an application deadline during a period of homelessness;
- Credit-by-examination opportunities;
- The award of partial credit (awarding credit proportionately when a student passes only one semester of a two-semester course);
- Eligibility requirements for participation in extracurricular activities; and
- Graduation requirements.

If a student in grade 11 or 12 is homeless and transfers to another school district but does not meet the graduation requirements of the receiving district, the student can request to receive a diploma from the previous district if he or she meets the criteria to graduate from the previous district.

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

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

[See also **Credit by Examination for Advancement/Acceleration** on page 33, **Course Credit** on page 33, and **Homeless Students** on page 56 for more information.]

## **Students Who Have Learning Difficulties or Who Need Special Education or Section 504 Services**

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

If a student is experiencing learning difficulties, his or her parent may contact the individuals listed below to learn about the school’s overall general education referral or screening system for support services. This system links students to a variety of support options, including making a referral for a special education evaluation or for a Section 504 evaluation to determine whether the student needs specific aids, accommodations, or services. A parent may request an evaluation for special education or Section 504 services at any time.

## **Special Education Referrals**

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

**Note:** A request for a special education evaluation may be made verbally; it does not need to be made in writing. Districts must still comply with all federal prior-written notices and procedural safeguard requirements as well as the requirements for identifying, locating, and evaluating children who are suspected of having a disability and in need of special education. However, a verbal request does not require the district to respond within the 15 school-day timeline.

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

Instead, the general timeline of 45 school days plus extensions for absences of three or more days will apply.

Upon completing the evaluation, the district must give the parent a copy of the evaluation report at no cost.

Additional information regarding special education is available from the school district in a companion document titled *Parent's Guide to the Admission, Review, and Dismissal Process*.

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

The designated person to contact regarding options for a student experiencing learning difficulties or regarding a referral for evaluation for special education services is Kim Johnson at 972-882-7703.

## **Section 504 Referrals**

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



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

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

The designated person to contact regarding options for a student experiencing learning difficulties or regarding a referral for evaluation for Section 504 services is Kem Edwards at 972-882-7441.

[See also Students with **Physical or Mental Impairments Protected under Section 504** on page 17.]

The following websites provide information to those who are seeking information and resources specific to students with disabilities and their families:

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

### **Notification to Parent of Intervention Strategies for Learning Difficulties Provided to Student in General Education**

The district will annually notify parents that it provides assistance to students, other than those already enrolled in a special education program, who need assistance for learning difficulties, including intervention strategies.

### **Students Who Receive Special Education Services with Other School-Aged Children in the Home**

If a student is receiving special education services at a campus outside his or her attendance zone, the parent or guardian may request that any other student residing in the household be transferred to the same campus, if the appropriate grade level for the transferring student is offered on that campus. However, the district is not required to provide transportation to the other children in the household. The parent or guardian should speak with the principal of the school regarding transportation needs prior to requesting a transfer for any other children in the home. [See policy FDB(LOCAL).]

### **Students Who Speak a Primary Language Other than English**

A student may be eligible to receive specialized support if his or her primary language is not English, and the student has difficulty performing ordinary class work in English. If the student qualifies for these extra services, the Language Proficiency Assessment Committee (LPAC) will determine the types of services the student needs, including accommodations or modifications related to classroom instruction, local assessments, and state-mandated assessments.

## **Students with Physical or Mental Impairments Protected Under Section 504**

A student determined to have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity, as defined by law, and who does not otherwise qualify for special education services, may qualify for protections under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. Section 504 is a federal law designed to prohibit discrimination against individuals with disabilities. When an evaluation is requested, a committee will be formed to determine if the student is in need of services and supports under Section 504 to receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE), as this is defined in federal law. [See policy FB.]

[See also **Students Who Have Learning Difficulties or Who Need Special Education or Section 504 Services** on page 14 for more information.]

## **SECTION II: OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS AND PARENTS**

Topics in this section of the Student Handbook contain important information on academics, school activities, and school operations and requirements. Take a moment with your child to become familiar with the various issues addressed in this section. It is organized in alphabetical order to serve as a quick-reference when you or your child has a question about a specific school-related issue. Where possible, the topics are also organized to alert you to the applicability of each topic based on a student's age or grade level. Should you be unable to find the information on a particular topic, please contact Administrative Services at 972-288-6411.

### **ABSENCES/ATTENDANCE**

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

#### **Compulsory Attendance**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **Exemptions to Compulsory Attendance**

### ***All Grade Levels***

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

- Religious holy days;
- Required court appearances;
- Activities related to obtaining U.S. citizenship;
- Documented health-care appointments for the student or a child of the student, including absences for recognized services for students diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders, if the student comes to school or returns to school on the same day as the appointment. A note from the health-care provider must be submitted upon the student's arrival or return to campus; and
- For students in the conservatorship (custody) of the state,
  - An activity required under a court-ordered service plan; or
  - Any other court-ordered activity, provided it is not practicable to schedule the student's participation in the activity outside of school hours.

As listed in Section I at **Children of Military Families**, absences of up to five days will be excused for a student to visit with a parent, stepparent, or legal guardian who has been called to duty for, is on leave from, or immediately returned from certain deployments. See page 12 for that section.

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

In addition, a junior or senior student's absence of up to two days related to visiting a college or university will be considered an exemption, provided the student receives approval from the campus principal, supplies a college visitation form or letterhead dated with student name and signed by college official, and makes up any work missed.

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

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

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

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

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

### ***All Grade Levels***

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

### ***Students with Disabilities***

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

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

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

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

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

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

A court of law may also impose penalties against a student’s parent if a school-aged student is deliberately not attending school. A complaint against the parent may be filed in court if the student is absent without excuse from school on 10 or more days or parts of days within a six-month period in the same school year.

If a student ages 12-18 incurs unexcused absences on 10 or more days or parts of days within a six-month period in the same school year, the district, in most circumstances, will refer the student to truancy court.

[See policy FEA(LEGAL).]

## **Attendance for Credit or Final Grade (Kindergarten–Grade 12)**

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

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

- If makeup work is completed, absences for the reasons listed above at **Exemptions to Compulsory Attendance** will be considered extenuating circumstances for purposes of attendance for credit or the award of a final grade.
- A transfer or migrant student begins to accumulate absences only after he or she has enrolled in the district.
- In reaching a decision about a student's absences, the committee will attempt to ensure that it is in the best interest of the student.
- The committee will consider the acceptability and authenticity of documented reasons for the student's absences.
- The committee will consider whether the absences were for reasons over which the student or the student's parent could exercise any control.
- The committee will consider the extent to which the student has completed all assignments, mastered the essential knowledge and skills, and maintained passing grades in the course or subject.
- The student or parent will be given an opportunity to present any information to the committee about the absences and to talk about ways to earn or regain credit or a final grade.

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

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

## **Official Attendance-Taking Time & School Hours (All Grade Levels)**

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

School hours for MISD campuses are as follows:

Elementary Campuses            7:55 a.m. – 3:05 p.m.

Middle School Campuses	8:25 a.m. – 3:35 p.m.
High School Campuses	8:45 a.m. – 3:55 p.m.

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

### **Documentation After an Absence (All Grade Levels)**

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

The campus will document in its attendance records for the student whether the absence is considered by the district to be excused or unexcused. NOTE: Unless the absence is for a statutorily allowed reason under compulsory attendance laws, the district is not required to excuse any absence, even if the parent provides a note explaining the absence. Mesquite ISD allows three (3) discretionary excused absences per student per school year when the school receives a note or phone call from the parent/guardian.

### **Doctor’s Note After an Absence for Illness (All Grade Levels)**

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

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

[See policy FEC(LOCAL).]

### **Driver License Attendance Verification (Secondary Grade Levels Only)**

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

### **ACCOUNTABILITY UNDER STATE AND FEDERAL LAW (All Grade Levels)**

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

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

This information can be found on the district's website at [MISD Campus & District Accountability](#). Hard copies of any reports are available upon request to the district's administration office.

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

## **ADMISSION & ENROLLMENT**

Mesquite ISD welcomes all students who live within the boundaries of the school attendance zones and meet state age, residency, and health requirements. The State of Texas requires that children be five years old on or before September 1 to enter kindergarten [TEC 25.001]. To attend first grade at any public school in Texas, a child must be six years old at the beginning of the school year, or have been previously enrolled in the first grade of a public school in another state or completed public school kindergarten in another state [TEC 42.003(c)].

A student is entitled to enroll in the district if he or she is living in the district and has the present intention to remain in the district. Ownership of property within attendance zones does not qualify as residency [TEC 25.01]. The district may investigate residency per policy FD, including home visits.

Enrolling students must meet all immunization requirements before being permitted to enroll [TEC 25.001]. The parent/guardian is responsible for providing all immunization records before enrollment can be completed. Acceptable immunization records are limited to official health records verified by a licensed physician or public health personnel. Students enrolling in MISD for the first time should present the following documents:

- Proof of Residency
- Current immunization records
- Birth certificate (registered copy)
- Social Security card or state ID of student
- Driver's license of parent/guardian enrolling student
- Withdrawal records from previous school [TEC 25.002]
- Any academic and necessary discipline records available for the student enrolling (report card, current grades, credits, special programs)



## **ARMED SERVICES VOCATIONAL APTITUDE BATTERY TEST**

A student in grades 10-12 will be offered an opportunity to take the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery test and consult with a military recruiter. Please contact the principal for information about this opportunity.

## **BULLYING (All Grade Levels)**

Bullying is defined in Section 37.0832 of the Education Code as a single significant act or a pattern of acts by one or more students directed at another student that exploits an imbalance of power and involves engaging in written or verbal expression, expression through electronic means, or physical conduct that:

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

Bullying includes cyberbullying. Cyberbullying is defined by Section 37.0832 of the Education Code as bullying that is done through the use of any electronic communication device, including through the use of a cellular or other type of telephone, a computer, a camera, electronic mail, instant messaging, text messaging, a social media application, an Internet website, or any other Internet-based communication tool.

The district is required to adopt policies and procedures regarding:

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

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

If a student believes that he or she has experienced bullying or has witnessed bullying of another student, it is important for the student or parent to notify a teacher, school counselor, principal, or another district employee as soon as possible to obtain assistance and intervention. The

administration will investigate any allegations of bullying or other related misconduct. The district will also provide notice to the parent of the alleged victim and the parent of the student alleged to have engaged in bullying. A student may anonymously report an alleged incident of bullying by leaving a written account in an administrator's office.

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

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

Upon the recommendation of the administration, the board may, in response to an identified case of bullying, decide to transfer a student found to have engaged in bullying to another classroom at the campus. In consultation with the student's parent, the student may also be transferred to another campus in the district. The parent of a student who has been determined by the district to be a victim of bullying may request that his or her student be transferred to another classroom or campus within the district. [See **Safety Transfers/Assignments** on page 12.]

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

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

[See **Safety Transfers/Assignments** on page 12, **Dating Violence, Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation** on page 34, **Hazing** on page 51, policy FFI, and the district improvement plan, a copy of which can be viewed in the campus office.]

## **CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION (CTE) PROGRAMS (Secondary Grade Levels Only)**

The district offers career and technical education programs in the following areas: Architecture & Construction; A/V Technology & Communication; Business Management & Administration; Education & Training; Finance; Health Science; Hospitality & Tourism; Human Services; Information Technology; Law, Public Safety, Corrections & Security; Manufacturing; Marketing; Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics; and Transportation, Distribution & Logistics. Admission to these programs is based on an admissions process.

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

The district will take steps to assure that lack of English language skills will not be a barrier to admission and participation in all educational and vocational programs. [See **Nondiscrimination Statement** on page 62 for the name and contact information for the Title IX coordinator and ADA/Section 504 coordinator, who will address certain allegations of discrimination.]

## **CELEBRATIONS (All Grade Levels)**

Although a parent or grandparent is not prohibited from providing food for a school-designated function or for children in the child's or grandchild's classroom for his or her birthday, please be aware that children in the school may have severe allergies to certain food products. Therefore, it is imperative to discuss this with the child's teacher prior to bringing any food in this circumstance. Occasionally, the school or a class may host certain functions or celebrations tied to the curriculum that will involve food. The school or teacher will notify students and parents of any known food allergies when soliciting potential volunteers for bringing food products.

[See **Food Allergies** on page 54.]

## **CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE AND OTHER MALTREATMENT OF CHILDREN (All Grade Levels)**

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

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

A child who has experienced sexual abuse or any other type of abuse or neglect should be encouraged to seek out a trusted adult. Be aware as a parent or other trusted adult that disclosures of sexual abuse may be more indirect than disclosures of physical abuse and neglect, and it is important to be calm and comforting if your child, or another child, confides in you. Reassure the child that he or she did the right thing by telling you.

Parents, if your child is a victim of sexual abuse or other maltreatment, the school counselor or principal will provide information regarding counseling options for you and your child available in your area. The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) also manages early intervention counseling programs. [To find out what services may be available in your county, see [Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, Programs Available in Your County](#).]

Be aware that children and adolescents who have experienced dating violence may show similar physical, behavioral, and emotional warning signs. [See **Dating Violence, Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation (All Grade Levels)** on page 34.]

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

- [Child Welfare Information Gateway Factsheet](#)
- [KidsHealth, For Parents, Child Abuse](#)
- [Texas Association Against Sexual Assault, Resources](#)
- [Texas Attorney General, What We Can Do About Child Abuse Part 1](#)
- [Texas Attorney General, What We Can Do About Child Abuse, Part 2](#)

Reports of abuse or neglect may be made to:

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

### **CLASS RANK/HIGHEST-RANKING STUDENT (Secondary Grade Levels Only)**

- The District shall include in the calculation of ranking points earned in all high school credit courses taken in grades 9-12, excluding grades earned in a private or commercially sponsored physical activity program; a traditional correspondence course; a local credit course; or a credit recovery course. In addition, the District shall exclude a course from the calculation if the course has been determined, on an individual basis, to justify exclusion of the course based on modified content or other factors. Grades earned through credit by examination, without prior instruction, shall be excluded as well. The calculation shall exclude the grade for any course in which credit is earned outside the regular school day or regular school year. The calculation shall exclude the grade in any course taken after a student has completed eight semesters of high school unless the course is required for graduation;
- The District shall weight the grades in eligible AP and dual credit courses, as well as in eligible courses locally designated as PreAP, GT, and Honors courses and in Regular courses, in accordance with provisions of EIC. Eligible courses locally designated as Pre-AP, GT, or Honors courses shall be identified in the course description guide. All eligible courses not identified as AP, dual credit, Pre-AP, GT, or Honors courses shall be weighted as Regular courses;
- The District shall convert semester grades to grade points and shall add the points to calculate a ranking point total for each student in accordance with the following chart:

Grade	Regular	Honors, PreAP, GT, Dual Credit	Advanced Placement
95-100	3	6	7
90-94	2.5	5	6
85-89	2	4	5
80-84	1.5	3	4
75-79	1	2	3
70-74	0.5	1	2

Below 70	0	0	0
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Class rank shall be determined by the total ranking points earned.

- When a student transfers grades for properly documented AP and dual credit courses, the District shall assign weight to those grades based on the ranking points used by the District. When a student transfers grades for courses identified as having been locally designated by the sending district as Pre-AP, GT, or Honors courses, the District shall evaluate each course to determine the appropriate category and weight for the grades within the District's ranking point system;
- For the purpose of determining honors to be conferred during graduation activities, the District shall calculate class rank at the end of the fifth six-week grading period of the senior year. The average of the fourth and fifth six-week grades shall be used as the semester grade for this purpose;
- The valedictorian and salutatorian shall be the eligible students with the highest and second highest rank, respectively. To be eligible for such recognition, a student must:
  - Have been continuously enrolled in the District for the two school years immediately preceding graduation; and
  - Be graduating after no more than eight semesters of enrollment of high school.
- In case of a tie in ranking point totals, the District shall apply the following methods, in this order, to determine recognition as valedictorian or salutatorian:
  - Calculate a ranking point average for each student involved in the tie by dividing the total grade points earned by the number of credits earned.
  - Calculate a projected final numerical grade average for each student involved in the tie by using the projected grades earned in the senior year after the fifth six-week grading period in eligible courses.
  - Calculate a junior year numerical grade average for each student involved in the tie by using only the grades earned in eligible courses during the junior year;
- The District shall recognize as graduating with "Honors" all students whose class rank comprise the top 10 percent of the students in the graduating class. All students whose class rank comprise the top five percent of the students in the graduating class shall be recognized as graduating with "Highest Honors."

[For further information, see policy EIC.]

## **CLASS SCHEDULES (Secondary Grade Levels Only)**

All students are expected to attend school for the entire school day and maintain a class/course schedule to fulfill each period of the day. Exceptions may be made occasionally by the campus principal for students in grades 9-12 who meet specific criteria and receive parental consent to enroll in less than a full-day's schedule.

[See **Schedule Changes** on page 68 for information related to student requests to revise their course schedule.]

## **COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY ADMISSIONS AND FINANCIAL AID (Secondary Grade Levels Only)**

For two school years following his or her graduation, a district student who graduates in the top 10 percent and, in some cases, the top 25 percent, of his or her class is eligible for automatic admission into four-year public universities and colleges in Texas if the student:

- Completes the distinguished level of achievement under the foundation graduation program (a student must graduate with at least one endorsement and must have taken Algebra II as one of the four required math courses); or
- Satisfies the ACT College Readiness Benchmarks or earns at least a 1500 out of 2400 on the SAT.

In addition, the student must submit a completed application for admission in accordance with the deadline established by the college or university. The student is ultimately responsible for ensuring that he or she meets the admission requirements of the university or college to which the student submits an application.

The University of Texas at Austin may limit the number of students automatically admitted to 75 percent of the University's enrollment capacity for incoming resident freshmen. For students who are eligible to enroll in the University during the summer or fall 2019 term, the University will admit the top six percent of the high school's graduating class who meet the above requirements. Additional applicants will be considered by the University through a holistic review process.

Should a college or university adopt an admissions policy that automatically accepts the top 25 percent of a graduating class, the provisions above will also apply to a student ranked in the top 25 percent of his or her class.

Upon enrolling in their first course that is eligible for high school credit, the district will provide written notice concerning automatic college admission, the curriculum requirements for financial aid, and the benefits of completing the requirements for automatic admission and financial aid.

Students and parents should contact the school counselor for further information about automatic admissions, the application process, and deadlines.

[See **Class Rank/Highest-Ranking Student** on page 27 for information specifically related to how the district calculates a student's rank in class, and requirements for **Graduation** on page 47 for information associated with the foundation graduation program].

[See **Students in the Conservatorship of the State (Foster Care)** on page 13 for information on assistance in transitioning to higher education for students in foster care.]

## **COLLEGE CREDIT COURSES (Secondary Grade Levels Only)**

Students in grades 9–12 have opportunities to earn college credit through the following methods:

- Certain courses taught at the high school campus, which may include courses termed dual credit, Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), or college preparatory;

- Enrollment in an AP or dual credit course through the Texas Virtual School Network (TXVSN);
- Enrollment in courses taught in conjunction and in partnership with colleges found at this website: [Mesquite ISD College Credit Options](#), which may be offered on or off campus;
- Enrollment in courses taught at other colleges or universities; and
- Certain CTE courses.

All of these methods have eligibility requirements and must be approved prior to enrollment in the course. Please see the school counselor for more information. Depending on the student's grade level and the course, a state-mandated end-of-course assessment may be required for graduation.

It is important to keep in mind that not all colleges and universities accept credit earned in all dual credit or AP courses taken in high school for college credit. Students and parents should check with the prospective college or university to determine if a particular course will count toward the student's desired degree plan.

## **COMMUNICATIONS—AUTOMATED**

### **Emergency**

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

[See **Safety** on page 67 for information regarding contact with parents during an emergency situation.]

### **Nonemergency**

Your child's school will request that you provide contact information, such as your phone number and e-mail address, in order for the school to communicate items specific to your child, your child's school, or the district. If you consent to receive such information through a landline or wireless phone, please ensure that you notify the school's administration office immediately upon a change in your phone number. The district or school may generate automated or pre-recorded messages, text messages, or real-time phone or e-mail communications that are closely related the school's mission, so prompt notification of any change in contact information will be crucial to maintain timely communication with you. Standard messaging rates of your phone carrier may apply. If you have specific requests or needs related to how the district contacts you, please contact your child's principal. [See **Safety** on page 67 for information regarding contact with parents during an emergency situation.]

## **COMPLAINTS AND CONCERNS (All Grade Levels)**

Usually student or parent complaints or concerns can be addressed informally by a phone call or a conference with the teacher or principal. For those complaints and concerns that cannot be handled so easily, the board has adopted a standard complaint policy at FNG(LOCAL) in the

district's policy manual. A copy of this policy and complaint forms may be obtained in the principal's office or on the district website: [MISD Board Policy](#).

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

## **CONDUCT (All Grade Levels)**

### **Applicability of School Rules**

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

For a senior who is eligible to graduate and is assigned to a DAEP through the last day of school, the student shall not be allowed to participate in the graduation ceremony and related graduation activities.

### **Campus Behavior Coordinator**

By law, each campus has a campus behavior coordinator to apply discipline management techniques and administer consequences for certain student misconduct, as well as provide a point of contact for student misconduct. Parents may contact the campus to determine their student's campus behavior coordinator. The campus behavior coordinator at each district campus is assigned by the campus principal and is generally an assistant principal.

### **Disruptions of School Operations**

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

- Interference with the movement of people at an exit, entrance, or hallway of a district building without authorization from an administrator.
- Interference with an authorized activity by seizing control of all or part of a building.
- Use of force, violence, or threats in an attempt to prevent participation in an authorized assembly.
- Use of force, violence, or threats to cause disruption during an assembly.
- Interference with the movement of people at an exit or an entrance to district property.



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

## **Social Events**

School rules apply to all school social events. Guests attending these events are expected to observe the same rules as students, and a student inviting a guest will share responsibility for the conduct of his or her guest.

A student attending a social event will be asked to sign out when leaving before the end of the event; anyone leaving before the official end of the event will not be readmitted.

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

## **COUNSELING**

### **Academic Counseling**

#### ***Elementary and Middle School Grade Levels***

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

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

#### ***High School Grade Levels***

High school students and their parents are encouraged to talk with a school counselor, teacher, or principal to learn more about course offerings, graduation requirements, and early graduation procedures. Each year, high school students will be provided information on anticipated course offerings for the next school year and other information that will help them make the most of academic and CTE opportunities, as well as information on the importance of postsecondary education.

The school counselor can also provide information about entrance examinations and application deadlines, as well as information about automatic admission, financial aid, housing, and scholarships as these relate to state colleges and universities. The school counselor can also provide information about workforce opportunities after graduation or technical and trade school opportunities, including opportunities to earn industry-recognized certificates and licenses.

## **Personal Counseling (All Grade Levels)**

The school counselor is available to assist students with a wide range of personal concerns, including such areas as social, family, emotional or mental health issues, or substance abuse. A student who wishes to meet with the school counselor should complete a counselor request form and submit it to the counseling center. If the student's need is immediate, the student may notify any school staff member to contact the counselor directly. As a parent, if you are concerned about your child's mental or emotional health, please speak with the school counselor for a list of resources that may be of assistance.

[See **Substance Abuse Prevention and Intervention** on page 74 and **Suicide Awareness** on page 74, and **Child Sexual Abuse and Other Maltreatment of Children and Dating Violence** on page 26.]

## **COURSE CREDIT (Secondary Grade Levels Only)**

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

## **CREDIT BY EXAMINATION—If a Student Has Taken the Course/Subject (All Grade Levels)**

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

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

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

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

## **CREDIT BY EXAMINATION FOR ADVANCEMENT/ACCELERATION—If a Student Has Not Taken the Course/Subject**

A student will be permitted to take an examination to earn credit for an academic course or subject area for which the student has had no prior instruction, i.e., for advancement or to accelerate to the next grade level. The examinations offered by the district are approved by the district's board of trustees, and state law requires the use of certain examinations, such as College Board Advanced Placement (AP) and College Level Examination Program (CLEP) tests,

when applicable. The dates on which examinations are scheduled during the 2018-19 school year will be published in appropriate district publications and on the district's website. The only exceptions to the published dates will be for any examinations administered by another entity besides the district or if a request is made outside of these time frames by a student experiencing homelessness or by a student involved in the foster care system. When another entity administers an examination, a student and the district must comply with the testing schedule of the other entity. During each testing window provided by the district, a student may attempt a specific examination only once.

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

### **Students in Grades K-5**

A student in elementary school will be eligible to accelerate to the next grade level if the student scores at least 80 on each examination in the subject areas of language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies, a district administrator recommends that the student be accelerated, and the student's parent gives written approval of the grade advancement.

### **Students in Grades 6-12**

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

## **DATING VIOLENCE, DISCRIMINATION, HARASSMENT, AND RETALIATION (All Grade Levels)**

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

The board has established policies and procedures to prohibit and promptly respond to inappropriate and offensive behaviors that are based on a person's race, color, religion, sex, gender, national origin, disability, age, or any other basis prohibited by law. A copy of the district's policy is available here: [MISD Board Policy](#). [See policy FFH.]

### **Dating Violence**

Dating violence occurs when a person in a current or past dating relationship uses physical, sexual, verbal, or emotional abuse to harm, threaten, intimidate, or control the other person in the relationship. Dating violence also occurs when a person commits these acts against a person in a

marriage or dating relationship with the individual who is or was once in a marriage or dating relationship with the person committing the offense. This type of conduct is considered harassment if the conduct is so severe, persistent, or pervasive that it affects the student's ability to participate in or benefit from an educational program or activity; creates an intimidating, threatening, hostile, or offensive educational environment; or substantially interferes with the student's academic performance.

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

## **Discrimination**

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

## **Harassment**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **Retaliation**

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

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

## **Reporting Procedures**

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

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

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

## **Investigation of Report**

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **DISCRIMINATION**

[See **Dating Violence, Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation** on page 34.]

## **DISTANCE LEARNING**

### **All Grade Levels**

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

The Extension Division of the University of Texas and the Extension Division of Texas Tech University are the two sources of correspondence coursework approved by TEA and MISD.

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

### **Texas Virtual School Network (TXVSN) (Secondary Grade Levels)**

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

Depending on the TXVSN course in which a student enrolls, the course may be subject to the "no pass, no play" rules. [See **Extracurricular Activities, Clubs, and Organizations** on page 44.] It should be noted that credit recovery courses are not accepted by the NCAA Clearinghouse. In addition, for a student who enrolls in a TXVSN course for which an end-of-course (EOC) assessment is required, the student must still take the corresponding EOC assessment.

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

A copy of policy EHDE may be accessed here: [MISD Board Policy](#).

## **DISTRIBUTION OF LITERATURE, PUBLISHED MATERIALS, OR OTHER DOCUMENTS (All Grade Levels)**

### **School Materials**

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

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

### **Nonschool Materials**

#### ***From Students***

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

Any student who sells, posts, circulates, or distributes nonschool material without prior approval will be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct. Materials displayed without approval will be removed.

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

#### ***From Others***

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

Prior review will not be required for:

- Distribution of materials by an attendee to other attendees of a school-sponsored meeting intended for adults and held after school hours.

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

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

## **DRESS AND GROOMING (All Grade Levels)**

The district's dress code is established to teach grooming and hygiene, prevent disruption, and minimize safety hazards. Students involved in extracurricular activities may be held to a higher standard with regard to dress and grooming.

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

The district prohibits any clothing or grooming that in the principal's judgment may reasonably be expected to cause disruption of or interference with normal operations. Any apparel or grooming that is extreme, distracting, unsafe, gang-related, offensive, or threatening may be deemed unacceptable by the building administrator and, therefore, is not permitted. **While it is inevitable that there will be differences of opinion regarding the appropriateness of a student's dress and grooming, the decision of the building principal is final and cannot be appealed further.**

### **Applies to All**

The following guidelines apply to all students at all campuses, including elementary campuses that do not participate in Standard Dress. Additional regulations for all secondary schools and participating elementary schools are listed under **Standard Dress Guidelines** below.

### ***Clothing***

- Ill-fitting clothes are not allowed, e.g., too tight, too baggy, sagging, too short, too long, too low, immodest, sloppy, etc.
- Shorts, skirts, and jumpers must be mid-thigh or longer.
- Slits in skirts will not extend more than 3 inches above the knee.
- Cutoffs, boxer shorts, pajama bottoms, athletic shorts or sweats, bike shorts, and leggings as outer garments are not allowed (elementary may make allowances, e.g., leggings, etc.).
- Shirts must have sleeves after the third grade.
- Hoods will not be worn inside the building. Hoodies must be solid in color and may have a school or college logo.



- Torn, ripped, or cut clothing is not allowed.

### ***Shoes***

- Loafers, athletic shoes, dress shoes, and closed-toe mules or closed-toe slides are acceptable.
- Sandals and open-toed shoes must have a back strap.
- Unsafe shoes are not permitted, e.g., shoes with wheels, slippers, flip flops, etc.

### ***Accessories***

- Tongue piercings, visible body piercings (other than earrings), and gauges are not allowed, including spacers and bandages used to conceal piercings.
- Grills and decorations on teeth are not allowed.
- Inappropriate tattoos and body art are not allowed.
- Hats, head scarves, bandanas, hair coverings, and sweatbands are not allowed in the building.

### ***Hair***

Students will wear their hair out of their eyes, well-groomed, and clean at all times. Extreme hairstyles, designs, and unnatural hair colors are not permitted. Facial hair is also not permitted.

## **Standard Dress Guidelines**

All secondary campuses and elementary campuses that participate in Standard Dress will adhere to the following guidelines in addition to the aforementioned guidelines under **Applies to All**.

The required colors for Standard Dress bottoms are solid khaki, gray, navy blue, or black; however, jeans, denim, vinyl and leather are not allowed. Approved bottoms are slacks, pants, skirts, jumpers, shorts, and capri pants. Belts must be worn with bottoms.

All tops for Standard Dress must have collars and be solid colors. Approved tops include shirts, blouses, turtlenecks, and polo-style shirts.

All outerwear must be worn over a Standard Dress top. No trench coats allowed.

### ***Exceptions***

Students are allowed to wear special clothing as designated by coursework, e.g., clinical rotation, JROTC, etc. Students with special needs may apply for a waiver to these guidelines; the principal will evaluate and approve these waivers on a case-by-case basis. The principal has discretion to allow for days that students may wear organization shirts, college or military shirts, and senior shirts. Students new to the District have 10 calendar days to comply with the standard dress policy and will follow an alternative dress code, determined by the principal, during the interim.

## **ELECTRONIC DEVICES AND TECHNOLOGY RESOURCES (All Grade Levels)**

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

The district permits students to possess personal mobile telephones; however, these devices must remain turned off during the instructional day, including during all testing, unless they are being used for approved instructional purposes. A student must have approval to possess other telecommunications devices such as netbooks, laptops, tablets, or other portable computers. All electronic devices will be collected on testing days.

The use of mobile telephones or any device capable of capturing images is strictly prohibited in locker rooms or restroom areas while at school or at a school-related or school-sponsored event. Devices may not be used to record teachers or other students due to FERPA restrictions.

If a student uses a telecommunications device without authorization during the school day, the device will be confiscated. A confiscated personal telecommunication device will be:

1. Secured by a school official and picked up by the parent or student before or after school, upon first confiscation. Parent will be notified.
2. Subsequent confiscations of a personal telecommunication device will result in a \$15 fee charged prior to the device being returned.

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

In limited circumstances and in accordance with law, a student's personal telecommunications device may be searched by authorized personnel. [See **Searches** on page 70 and policy FNF.]

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

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

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

In limited circumstances and in accordance with law, a student's personal electronic device may be searched by authorized personnel. [See **Searches** on page 70 and policy FNF.]

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

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

In some cases, students may find it beneficial or might be encouraged to use personal telecommunications or other personal electronic devices for instructional purposes while on

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

### **Third-Party Applications and Student E-mail**

The district utilizes web-based software applications and services that are operated by third parties to enhance educational programs, including student email accounts using a filtered system. These third parties support the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act and the Children's Internet Protection Act.

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

District-owned technology resources for instructional purposes may be issued to individual students. Use of these technological resources, which include the district's network systems and use of district equipment, is restricted to approved purposes only. Students and parents are required to accept responsibility for appropriate use of technology by acknowledging receipt of the Student Handbook and Student Code of Conduct during the online registration process. Violations of the user agreement may result in withdrawal of privileges and other disciplinary action.

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

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

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

In addition, any student who engages in conduct that results in a breach of the district's computer security will be disciplined in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct, and, in some cases, the consequence may rise to the level of expulsion.

### **Disclaimer of Liability**

The district shall not be liable for users' inappropriate use of the district's technology resources, violations of copyright restrictions or other laws, users' mistakes or negligence, and costs

incurred by users. The district shall not be responsible for ensuring the availability of the district's technology resources or the accuracy, age appropriateness, or usability of any information found on the Internet.

## **END-OF-COURSE (EOC) ASSESSMENTS**

[See **Graduation** on page 47 and **Standardized Testing** on page 72.]

## **ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS (All Grade Levels)**

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

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

The LPAC will also determine whether certain accommodations are necessary for any state-mandated assessments. The STAAR Spanish, as mentioned at **Standardized Testing** on page 72, may be administered to an English language learner for a student up to grade 5. In limited circumstances, a student's LPAC may exempt the student from an otherwise required state-mandated assessment or may waive certain graduation requirements related to the English I end-of-course (EOC) assessment. The Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS) will also be administered to English language learners who qualify for services.

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

## **EXAM EXEMPTIONS**

The following requirements must be met in order for a student in grades 9-12 to be exempted from the semester exam:

1. Student must have a semester passing average in class with zero (0) absences; or
2. Student must have a semester average of 85 with one (1) absence.

In addition to these guidelines, a student cannot have been assigned to an alternative program or been suspended (including ISS/ISIP) during the semester.

During the first semester, exempted students will be required to attend class during examination days. During the second semester, exempted students will not be required to attend class during

examination days.

Absence exception: Junior and senior students are allowed two college visitation days each year without penalty; however, the student must provide documentation to verify attendance.

## **EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES, CLUBS, AND ORGANIZATIONS (All Grade Levels)**

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

Participation in some of these activities may result in events that occur off-campus. When the district arranges transportation for these events, students are required to use the transportation provided by the district to and from the events. Exceptions to this may only be made with the approval of the activity's coach or sponsor. [See **Transportation** on page 75.]

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

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

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

- A student who receives at the end of a grading period a grade below 70 in any academic class—other than an Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) course; or an honors or dual credit course in English language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, economics, or language other than English—may not participate in extracurricular activities for at least three school weeks.
- A student who receives special education services and who fails to meet the standards in the individualized education program (IEP) may not participate for at least three school weeks.
- An ineligible student may practice or rehearse but may not participate in any competitive activity.
- A student shall be allowed in a school year a maximum of 15 extracurricular absences prior to post-district competition; however, a student shall be allowed unlimited absences for participation in post-district, state, or national competition.
- An absence for participation in an activity that has not been approved will receive an unexcused absence.

## Standards of Behavior

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

## FEES (All Grade Levels)

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

- Costs for materials for a class project that the student will keep.
- Membership dues in voluntary clubs or student organizations and admission fees to extracurricular activities.
- Security deposits.
- Personal physical education and athletic equipment and apparel.
- Voluntarily purchased pictures, publications, class rings, yearbooks, graduation announcements, etc.
- Voluntarily purchased student health and accident insurance.
- Musical instrument rental and uniform maintenance, when uniforms are provided by the district.
- Personal apparel used in extracurricular activities that becomes the property of the student.
- Parking fees and student identification cards.
- Fees for lost, damaged, or overdue library books.
- Fees for driver training courses, if offered.
- Fees for optional courses offered for credit that require use of facilities not available on district premises.
- Summer school for courses that are offered tuition-free during the regular school year.
- A reasonable fee for providing transportation to a student who lives within two miles of the school. [See **Transportation** on page 75.]
- A fee not to exceed \$50 for costs of providing an educational program outside of regular school hours for a student who has lost credit or has not been awarded a final grade because of absences and whose parent chooses the program in order for the student to meet the 90 percent attendance requirement. The fee will be charged only if the parent or guardian signs a district-provided request form.
- In some cases, a fee for a course taken through the Texas Virtual School Network (TXVSN).

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

### **FUNDRAISING (All Grade Levels)**

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

### **GANG-FREE ZONES (All Grade Levels)**

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

### **GENDER-BASED HARASSMENT**

[See **Dating Violence, Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation** on page 34.]

### **GRADE-LEVEL CLASSIFICATION (Grades 9-12 Only)**

After the ninth grade, students are classified according to the number of credits earned toward graduation.

Credits Earned	Classification
6	Grade 10 (Sophomore)
12	Grade 11 (Junior)
18	Grade 12 (Senior)

### **GRADING GUIDELINES (All Grade Levels)**

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

[See **Report Cards/Progress Reports and Conferences** on page 66 for additional information on grading guidelines and EIA.]

## **GRADUATION (Secondary Grade Levels Only)**

### **Requirements for a Diploma Beginning with the 2014-15 School Year**

Beginning with students who entered grade 9 in the 2014-15 school year, a student must meet the following requirements to receive a high school diploma from the district:

- Complete the required number of credits established by the state and any additional credits required by the district;
- Complete any locally required courses in addition to the courses mandated by the state;
- Achieve passing scores on certain end-of-course (EOC) assessments or approved substitute assessments, unless specifically waived as permitted by state law; and
- Demonstrate proficiency, as determined by the district, in the specific communication skills required by the State Board of Education (SBOE).

### **Testing Requirements for Graduation**

Students are required, with limited exceptions and regardless of graduation program, to perform satisfactorily on the following EOC assessments: English I, English II, Algebra I, Biology, and U.S. History. A student who has not achieved sufficient scores on the EOC assessments to graduate will have opportunities to retake the assessments. State law and state rules also provide for certain scores on norm-referenced national standardized assessments or on the state-developed assessment used for entrance into Texas public universities to substitute for the requirement to meet satisfactory performance on an applicable EOC assessment, should a student choose this option. [See the school counselor for more information on the state testing requirements for graduation.]

If a student fails to perform satisfactorily on an EOC assessment, the district will provide remediation to the student in the content area for which the performance standard was not met. This may require participation of the student before or after normal school hours or at times of the year outside normal school operations.

In limited circumstances, a student who fails to demonstrate proficiency on two or fewer of the required assessments may still be eligible to graduate if an individual graduation committee, formed in accordance with state law, unanimously determines that the student is eligible to graduate.

[See **Standardized Testing** on page 72 for more information.]

### **Foundation Graduation Program**

Every student in a Texas public school who entered grade 9 in the 2014–15 school year and thereafter will graduate under the “foundation graduation program.” Within the foundation graduation program are “endorsements,” which are paths of interest that include Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM); Business and Industry; Public Services; Arts and Humanities; and Multidisciplinary Studies. Endorsements earned by a student will be noted on the student’s transcript. The foundation graduation program also involves the term “distinguished level of achievement,” which reflects the completion of at least one endorsement



and Algebra II as one of the required advanced mathematics credits. A personal graduation plan will be completed for each high school student, as described on page 46.

State law and rules prohibit a student from graduating solely under the foundation graduation program without an endorsement unless, after the student's sophomore year, the student and student's parent are advised of the specific benefits of graduating with an endorsement and submit written permission to the school counselor for the student to graduate without an endorsement. A student who anticipates graduating under the foundation graduation program without an endorsement and who wishes to attend a four-year university or college after graduation must carefully consider whether this will satisfy the admission requirements of the student's desired college or university.

Graduating under the foundation graduation program will also provide opportunities to earn "performance acknowledgments" that will be acknowledged on a student's transcript. Performance acknowledgments are available for outstanding performance in bilingualism and biliteracy, in a dual credit course, on an AP or IB examination, on certain national college preparatory and readiness or college entrance examinations, or for earning a state recognized or nationally or internationally recognized license or certificate. The criteria for earning these performance acknowledgments are prescribed by state rules, and the school counselor can provide more information about these acknowledgments.

## Credits Required

The foundation graduation program requires completion of the following credits:

<b>Course Area</b>	<b>Number of Credits: Foundation Graduation Program</b>	<b>Number of Credits: Foundation Graduation Program With an Endorsement</b>
English/Language Arts	4	4
Mathematics	3	4
Science	3	4
Social Studies, including Economics	3	3
Physical Education	1	1
Language other than English	2	2
Fine Arts	1	1
Locally required courses	2	0
Electives	5	7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>24 credits</b>	<b>26 credits</b>

Additional considerations apply in some course areas, including:

- Mathematics. In order to obtain the distinguished level of achievement under the foundation graduation program, which will be included on a student's transcript and is a requirement to be considered for automatic admission purposes to a Texas four-year college or university, a student must complete an endorsement and take Algebra II as one of the 4 mathematics credits.
- Physical education. A student who is unable to participate in physical activity due to a disability or illness may be able to substitute a course in English language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, or another locally determined credit-bearing course for the required credit of physical education. This determination will be made by the student's ARD committee, Section 504 committee, or other campus committee, as applicable.
- Language other than English. Students are required to earn two credits in the same language other than English to graduate. Any student may substitute computer programming languages for these credits. In limited circumstances, a student may be able to substitute this requirement with other courses, as determined by a district committee authorized by law to make these decisions for the student.

### **Available Endorsements**

A student must specify upon entering grade 9 the endorsement he or she wishes to pursue.

- Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
- Business and Industry
- Public Services
- Arts and Humanities
- Multidisciplinary Studies

### ***Personal Graduation Plans***

A personal graduation plan will be developed for each high school student. The district encourages all students to pursue a personal graduation plan that includes the completion of at least one endorsement and to graduate with the distinguished level of achievement. Attainment of the distinguished level of achievement entitles a student to be considered for automatic admission to a public four-year college or university in Texas, depending on his or her rank in class. The school will review personal graduation plan options with each student entering grade 9 and his or her parent. Before the end of grade 8, a student and his or her parent will be required to sign off on a personal graduation plan that includes a course of study that promotes college and workforce readiness and career placement and advancement, as well as facilitates the transition from secondary to postsecondary education. The student's personal graduation plan will denote an appropriate course sequence based on the student's choice of endorsement.

Please also review [TEA's Graduation Toolkit](#).

A student may, with parental permission, amend his or her personal graduation plan after the initial confirmation.

## **Available Course Options for All Graduation Programs**

Information regarding specific courses required or offered in each curriculum area will be distributed to students each spring in order to enroll in courses for the upcoming school year.

NOTE: The district may require the completion of certain courses for graduation even if these courses are not required by the state for graduation.

Please be aware that not all courses are offered at every secondary campus in the district. A student who wants to take a course not offered at his or her regular campus should contact the school counselor about a transfer or other alternatives. If the parents of at least 22 students request a transfer for those students to take a course in the required curriculum other than fine arts or career and technical education (CTE), the district will offer the course for the following year either by teleconference or at the school from which the transfers were requested.

Early release is available to junior and senior students who are on track to graduate, including all state-mandated testing. Juniors are eligible for early release on either A-day or B-day. Seniors are eligible for early release on both A-day and B-day of block schedule.

## **Certificates of Coursework Completion**

A certificate of coursework completion will not be issued to a student who has successfully completed state and local credit requirements for graduation but has not yet demonstrated satisfactory performance on the state-mandated tests required for graduation.

## **Students with Disabilities**

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

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

[See policy FMH(LEGAL).]

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

## **Graduation Speakers**

Certain graduating students will be given an opportunity to have speaking roles at graduation ceremonies.

A student must meet local eligibility criteria, which may include requirements related to student conduct, to have a speaking role. Students eligible for speaking roles will be notified by the principal and given an opportunity to volunteer.

[See FNA(LOCAL) and the Student Code of Conduct. For student speakers at other school events, see **Student Speakers** on page 74.]

## **Graduation Expenses**

Because students and parents will incur expenses in order to participate in the traditions of graduation—such as the purchase of invitations, senior ring, cap and gown, and senior picture—both the student and parent should monitor progress toward completion of all requirements for graduation. The expenses often are incurred in the junior year or first semester of the senior year. [See **Fees** on page 45.]

## **Scholarships and Grants**

Students who have a financial need according to federal criteria and who complete the foundation graduation program, may be eligible under the TEXAS Grant Program and the Teach for Texas Grant Program for tuition and fees to Texas public universities, community colleges, and technical schools, as well as to private institutions.

Contact the school counselor for information about other scholarships and grants available to students.

## **HARASSMENT**

[See **Dating Violence, Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation** on page 34.]

## **HAZING (All Grade Levels)**

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

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

Hazing will not be tolerated by the district. If an incident of hazing occurs, disciplinary consequences will be handled in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct. It is a criminal

offense if a person engages in hazing; solicits, encourages, directs, aids, or attempts to aid another in hazing; or has firsthand knowledge of an incident of hazing being planned or having occurred and fails to report this to the principal or superintendent.

[See **Bullying** on page 24 and policies FFI and FNCC.]

## **HEALTH-RELATED MATTERS**

### **Student Illness (All Grade Levels)**

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

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

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

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

### **Bacterial Meningitis (All Grade Levels)**

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

- What is meningitis?

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

- What are the symptoms?

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

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

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

- How serious is bacterial meningitis?

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

- How is bacterial meningitis spread?

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

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

- How can bacterial meningitis be prevented?

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

There are vaccines available to offer protection from some of the bacteria that can cause bacterial meningitis. The vaccines are safe and effective (85–90 percent). They can cause mild side effects, such as redness and pain at the injection site lasting up to two days. Immunity develops within seven to 10 days after the vaccine is given and lasts for up to five years.

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

You should seek prompt medical attention.

- Where can you get more information?

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

NOTE: DSHS requires at least one meningococcal vaccination on or after the student's 11<sup>th</sup> birthday, unless the student received the vaccine at age 10. Also note that entering college students must show, with limited exception, evidence of receiving a bacterial meningitis vaccination within the five-year period prior to enrolling in and taking courses at an institution of

higher education. Please see the school nurse for more information, as this may affect a student who wishes to enroll in a dual credit course taken off campus.

[See **Immunization** on page 56 for more information.]

### **Food Allergies (All Grade Levels)**

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

The district has developed and annually reviews a food allergy management plan, which addresses employee training, dealing with common food allergens, and specific strategies for dealing with students diagnosed with severe food allergies. When the district receives information that a student has a food allergy that puts the student at risk for anaphylaxis, individual care plans will be developed to assist the student in safely accessing the school environment.

[See policy FFAF and **Celebrations** on page 26.]

### **Head Lice (All Grade Levels)**

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

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

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

[See policy FFAA.]

## **Physical Activity Requirements**

### ***Elementary School***

In accordance with policies at EHAB, EHAC, EHBG, and FFA, the district will ensure that students in full-day prekindergarten-grade 5 engage in moderate or vigorous physical activity for at least 30 minutes per day or 135 minutes per week.

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

### ***Middle School***

In accordance with policies at EHAB, EHAC, EHBG, and FFA, the district will ensure that students in middle or junior high school will engage in 45 minutes of moderate or vigorous physical activity per day for at least four semesters.

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

### **School Health Advisory Council (SHAC) (All Grade Levels)**

During the preceding school year, the district's School Health Advisory Council (SHAC) held four meetings. Additional information regarding the district's SHAC is available here: [Mesquite SHAC Information](#).

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

[See policies at BDF and EHAA. See **Human Sexuality Instruction** on page 6 for additional information.]

### **Student Wellness Policy/Wellness Plan (All Grade Levels)**

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

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

#### ***Physical Fitness Assessment (Grades 3-12)***

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

#### ***Vending Machines (All Grade Levels)***

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

#### ***Tobacco and E-Cigarettes Prohibited (All Grade Levels and All Others on School Property)***

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



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

### ***Asbestos Management Plan (All Grade Levels)***

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

### ***Pest Management Plan (All Grade Levels)***

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

All pesticides used are registered for their intended use by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and are applied only by certified pesticide applicators. Except in an emergency, signs will be posted 48 hours before indoor application. All outdoor applications will be posted at the time of treatment, and signs will remain until it is safe to enter the area. Parents who have further questions or who want to be notified prior to pesticide application inside their child's school assignment area may contact Scott Owens, the district's IPM coordinator, at 972-882-5554.

### **HOMELESS STUDENTS (All Grade Levels)**

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

For more information on services for homeless students, contact the district's homeless education liaison, Jennifer Hulme, at 972-882-7351.

[See **Students Who Are Homeless** on page 14.]

### **ILLNESS**

[See **Student Illness** under **Health-Related Matters** on page 52.]

### **IMMUNIZATION (All Grade Levels)**

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

school nurse within 90 days of notarization. If the parent is seeking an exemption for more than one student in the family, a separate form must be provided for each student.

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

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

As noted at **Bacterial Meningitis**, entering college students must also, with limited exception, furnish evidence of having received a bacterial meningitis vaccination within the five years prior to enrolling in and attending classes at an institution of higher education. A student wanting to enroll in a dual credit course taken off campus may be subject to this requirement.

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

## **LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES (All Grade Levels)**

### **Questioning of Students**

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

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

### **Students Taken Into Custody**

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

- To comply with an order of the juvenile court.
- To comply with the laws of arrest.
- By a law enforcement officer if there is probable cause to believe the student has engaged in delinquent conduct or conduct in need of supervision.
- By a law enforcement officer to obtain fingerprints or photographs for comparison in an investigation.

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

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

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

### **Notification of Law Violations**

The district is required by state law to notify:

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

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

### **LEAVING CAMPUS (All Grade Levels)**

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

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

- For students in elementary and middle school, a parent or otherwise authorized adult must come to the office and sign the student out. Please be prepared to show identification. Once an identity is verified, a campus representative will then call for the student or collect the student and bring him or her to the office. For safety purposes and stability of the learning environment, we cannot allow you to go to the classroom or other area unescorted to pick up the student. If the student returns to campus the same day, the parent or authorized adult must sign the student back in through the main office upon the student's return. Documentation regarding the reason for the absence will also be required.
- For students in high school, the same process will be followed. If the student's parent will authorize the student to leave campus unaccompanied, a note provided by the parent must be submitted to the main office in advance of the absence, no later than two hours prior to the student's need to leave campus. A phone call received from the parent may be accepted, but the school may ultimately require a note to be submitted for documentation purposes. Once the office has received information that the student's parent consents to the student leaving campus, a pass will be issued to the student to hand to his or her teacher with the necessary information. The student must sign out through the main office and sign in upon his or her return, if the student returns the same day. If a student is 18 years of age or is an emancipated minor, the student may produce a note on his or her own behalf. Documentation regarding the reason for the absence will be required.
- If a student becomes ill during the school day and the school nurse or other district personnel determines that the student should go home, the nurse will contact the student's parent and document the parent's wishes regarding release from school. Unless directed by the parent to release the student unaccompanied, the parent or other authorized adult must follow the sign-out procedures as listed above. If a student is allowed to leave campus by himself or herself, as permitted by the student's parent, or if the student is age 18 or is an emancipated minor, the nurse will document the time of day the student was released. Under no circumstances will a student in elementary or middle school be released unaccompanied by a parent or adult authorized by the parent.

### **During Lunch**

MISD schools operate on the closed campus concept. Students are not allowed to leave during lunch without a parent.

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

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

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

## **LOST AND FOUND (All Grade Levels)**

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

## **MAKEUP WORK**

### **Makeup Work Because of Absence (All Grade Levels)**

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

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

A student is encouraged to speak with his or her teacher if the student knows of an absence ahead of time, including absences for extracurricular activities, so that the teacher and student may plan any work that can be completed before or shortly after the absence. Please remember the importance of student attendance at school and that, even though absences may be excused or unexcused, all absences account for the 90 percent threshold in regards to the state laws surrounding “attendance for credit or final grade.” [See **Attendance for Credit or Final Grade** on page 21.]

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

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

### **DAEP Makeup Work**

#### ***Grades 9-12***

A high school student removed to a disciplinary alternative education program (DAEP) during the school year will have an opportunity to complete, before the beginning of the next school year, a foundation curriculum course in which the student was enrolled at the time of removal. The district may provide the opportunity to complete the course through an alternative method, including a correspondence course, another distance learning option, or summer school. The district will not charge the student for any method of completion provided by the district. [See policy FOCA(LEGAL).]

### **In-School Suspension (ISS) Makeup Work (All Grade Levels)**

A student removed from the regular classroom to in-school suspension or another setting, other than a DAEP, will have an opportunity to complete before the beginning of the next school year

each course the student was enrolled in at the time of removal from the regular classroom. The district may provide the opportunity by any method available, including a correspondence course, another distance learning option, or summer school. The district will not charge the student for any method of completion provided by the district. [See policy FO(LEGAL).]

## **MEDICINE AT SCHOOL (All Grade Levels)**

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

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

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

- Prescription medication, in the original, properly labeled container, provided by the parent, along with a written request.
- Prescription medication from a properly labeled unit dosage container filled by a registered nurse or another qualified district employee from the original, properly labeled container.
- Nonprescription medication, upon a parent's written request and a written request by a physician or other healthcare professional with authority to write prescriptions, when properly labeled and in the original container.
- Herbal or dietary supplements provided by the parent, with a written request by a physician or other healthcare professional with authority to write prescriptions, and only if required by the individualized education plan or Section 504 plan of a student with disabilities.

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

Students who are able to self-manage (can apply sunscreen themselves, know why they need sunscreen, and understand that they cannot share it with others) may possess and apply topical sunscreen while on school property or at a school-related event or activity to avoid overexposure to the sun.

Students requiring sunscreen for medical treatment of an injury or illness must submit a physician's note regarding possession and/or application of topical sunscreen. All sunscreen products must be approved by the Federal Food and Drug Administration for over-the-counter use. Sunscreen sprays are limited to use on secondary campuses and must be applied outdoors in an area sheltered from the wind. Sunscreen sprays should not be applied indoors or within six feet of another person.

A student with asthma or severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) may be permitted to possess and use prescribed asthma or anaphylaxis medication at school or school-related events only if he or

she has written authorization from his or her parent and a physician or other licensed health-care provider. The student must also demonstrate to his or her physician or health-care provider and to the school nurse the ability to use the prescribed medication, including any device required to administer the medication.

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

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

## **Psychotropic Drugs**

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

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

## **NONDISCRIMINATION STATEMENT (All Grade Levels)**

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

- Title IX Coordinator, for concerns regarding discrimination on the basis of sex, including sexual harassment or gender-based harassment: Mary Randall, Assistant Superintendent of Personnel, 3819 Towne Crossing Blvd., Mesquite, Texas 75150, 972-288-6411.
- Section 504 Coordinator, for concerns regarding discrimination on the basis of disability: Kem Edwards, Director of Counseling, 3819 Towne Crossing Blvd., Mesquite, Texas 75150, 972-288-6411.
- All other concerns regarding discrimination: See the superintendent, Dr. David Vroonland, 3819 Towne Crossing Blvd., Mesquite, Texas 75150, 972-288-6411.

[See policies FB, FFH, and GKD.]

## PARENT AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT (All Grade Levels)

### Working Together

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

- Encouraging your child to put a high priority on education and working with your child on a daily basis to make the most of the educational opportunities the school provides.
- Ensuring that your child completes all homework assignments and special projects and comes to school each day prepared, rested, and ready to learn.
- Becoming familiar with all of your child's school activities and with the academic programs, including special programs, offered in the district.
- Discussing with the school counselor or principal any questions you may have about the options and opportunities available to your child.
- Reviewing the requirements and options for graduation with your child in middle school and again while your child is enrolled in high school.
- Monitoring your child's academic progress and contacting teachers as needed. [See **Academic Counseling** on page 32.]
- Attending scheduled conferences and requesting additional conferences as needed. To schedule a telephone or in-person conference with a teacher, school counselor, or principal, please call the school office for an appointment. The teacher will usually return your call or meet with you during his or her conference period or before or after school. [See **Report Cards/Progress Reports and Conferences** on page 66.]
- Becoming a school volunteer. [For further information, see policy GKG and **Volunteers** on page 78.]
- Participating in campus parent organizations.
- Serving as a parent representative on the district-level or campus-level planning committees, assisting in the development of educational goals and plans to improve student achievement. [For further information, see policies at BQA and BQB.]
- Serving on the School Health Advisory Council (SHAC), assisting the district in ensuring local community values are reflected in health education instruction and other wellness issues. [See policies at BDF, EHAA, FFA, and information in this handbook at **School Health Advisory Council (SHAC)** on page 55.]
- Being aware of the school's ongoing bullying and harassment prevention efforts.
- Contacting school officials if you are concerned with your child's emotional or mental well-being.
- Attending board meetings to learn more about district operations. [See policies at BE and BED for more information.]



## **PHYSICAL EXAMINATIONS/HEALTH SCREENINGS**

### **Athletics' Participation (Secondary Grade Levels Only)**

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

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

### **Spinal Screening Program**

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

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

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

### **Other Examinations and Screenings (All Grade Levels)**

Students are required to undergo a risk assessment for Type 2 diabetes at the same time the district screens students for hearing and vision issues, or for abnormal spinal curvatures.

[See policy FFAA.]

## **PLEDGES OF ALLEGIANCE AND A MINUTE OF SILENCE (All Grade Levels)**

Each school day, students will recite the Pledge of Allegiance to the U.S. flag and the Pledge of Allegiance to the Texas flag. Parents may submit a written request to the principal to excuse their child from reciting a pledge. [See **Reciting the Pledges to the U.S. and Texas Flags** on page 7.]

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

[See policy EC for more information.]

### **PRAYER (All Grade Levels)**

Each student has a right to pray individually, voluntarily, and silently or to meditate in school in a manner that does not disrupt instructional or other activities of the school. The school will not

encourage, require, or coerce a student to engage in or to refrain from such prayer or meditation during any school activity.

## **PROMOTION AND RETENTION**

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

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

### **Elementary and Middle School Grade Levels**

In grades 1-5, promotion to the next grade level shall be based on an overall average of 70 on a scale of 100 based on course-level, grade-level standards (essential knowledge and skills) for the core academic subject areas and a grade of 70 or above in language arts (including English, reading, and spelling in grades 1-5) and mathematics.

In grades 6-8, promotion to the next grade level shall be based on an overall average of 70 on a scale of 100 based on course-level, grade-level standards (essential knowledge and skills) for all subject areas and a grade of 70 or above in English, reading, mathematics, science, and social studies.

In order to be promoted to grade 6, students enrolled in grade 5 must perform satisfactorily on the mathematics and reading sections of the grade 5 assessment in English or Spanish.

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

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

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

[See **Standardized Testing** on page 72.]

A student in grade 5 or 8 will have two additional opportunities to take a failed assessment. If a student fails a second time, a grade placement committee, consisting of the principal or designee, the teacher, and the student's parent, will determine the additional special instruction the student will receive. After a third failed attempt, the student will be retained; however, the parent can appeal this decision to the committee. In order for the student to be promoted, based on standards previously established by the district, the decision of the committee must be unanimous and the student must complete additional special instruction before beginning the

next grade level. Whether the student is retained or promoted, an educational plan for the student will be designed to enable the student to perform at grade level by the end of the next school year. [See policy EIE.]

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

Parents of a student at or above grade level 3 who does not perform satisfactorily on his or her state-mandated examinations will be notified that their child will participate in special instructional programs designed to improve performance. The student may be required to participate in this instruction before or after normal school hours or outside of the normal school year. Failure of a student to attend these programs may result in violations of required school attendance as well as the student not being promoted to the next grade level.

A Personal Graduation Plan (PGP) will be prepared for any student at the middle school or junior high level who did not perform satisfactorily on a state-mandated assessment or is determined by the district as not likely to earn a high school diploma before the fifth school year following enrollment in grade 9. The PGP will be designed and implemented by a school counselor, teacher, or other staff member designated by the principal. The plan will, among other items, identify the student's educational goals, address the parent's educational expectations for the student, and outline an intensive instruction program for the student. [For additional information, see the school counselor and policy EIF(LEGAL).] For a student receiving special education services, the student's IEP may serve as the student's PGP and would therefore be developed by the student's ARD committee.

[For information related to the development of personal graduation plans for high school students, see **Personal Graduation Plans** on page 49.]

## **High School Grade Levels**

To earn credit in a course, a student must receive a grade of at least 70 based on course-level or grade-level standards.

A student in grades 9-12 will be advanced a grade level based on the number of course credits earned. [See **Grade Level Classification** on page 46.]

Students will also have multiple opportunities to retake EOC assessments. [See **Graduation** on page 47 and **Standardized Testing** on page 72 for more information about EOC assessments.]

## **RELEASE OF STUDENTS FROM SCHOOL**

[See **Leaving Campus** on page 58.]

## **REPORT CARDS/PROGRESS REPORTS AND CONFERENCES (All Grade Levels)**

Report cards with each student's grades or performance and absences in each class or subject are issued at least once every 9 weeks for elementary and once every 6 weeks for secondary.

Progress Reports will be available via Skyward to parents in between the issuance dates of Report Cards. If the student receives a grade lower than 70 in any class or subject at the end of a grading period, it is recommended that the parent schedule a conference with the teacher of that class or subject. [See **Working Together** on page 63 for how to schedule a conference.]

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

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

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

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

## **RETALIATION**

[See **Dating Violence, Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation** on page 34.]

## **SAFETY (All Grade Levels)**

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

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

## **Accident Insurance**

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

More information may be obtained through the Risk Management Department at 972-882-5561. The District is not responsible for medical costs associated with a student injury.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

If the campus must close, delay opening, or restrict access to the building because of an emergency, the district will also alert the community in the following ways: phone, text message, email, District website, social media, and KEOM.

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

### **SAT, ACT, AND OTHER STANDARDIZED TESTS**

[See **Standardized Testing** on page 72.]

### **SCHEDULE CHANGES (Middle and High School Grade Levels)**

Schedule changes are only made when an error has been made in scheduling a student or leveling is necessary to equalize class sizes. Teacher and classroom assignment changes are strictly at the discretion of the campus principal on a case-by-case basis.

## **SCHOOL FACILITIES**

### **Use by Students Before and After School (All Grade Levels)**

Certain areas of the school will be accessible to students before and after school for specific purposes. Students are required to remain in the area where their activity is scheduled to take place. Students are not permitted to meet in school facilities without an appropriate sponsor.

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

### **Conduct Before and After School (All Grade Levels)**

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

### **Use of Hallways During Class Time (All Grade Levels)**

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

### **Cafeteria Services (All Grade Levels)**

The district participates in the School Breakfast Program, National School Lunch Program, and the Summer Food Service Program and offers students nutritionally balanced meals daily in accordance with standards set forth in state and federal law.

Free and reduced-price meals are available based on financial need or household situation. Information about a student's participation is confidential; however, disclosure of a student's eligibility may be made without prior notice or consent to programs, activities, and individuals that are specifically authorized access under the National School Lunch Act (NSLA), which is the law that sets forth the disclosure limits for the district's child nutrition programs. A student's name, eligibility status, and other information may be disclosed to certain agencies as authorized under the NSLA to facilitate the enrollment of eligible children in Medicaid or the state children's health insurance program (CHIP) unless the student's parent notifies the district that a student's information should not be disclosed. A parent's decision will not affect the student's eligibility for free and reduced-price meals. See your campus or visit [School Cafe](#) to apply for free or reduced-price meal services. Students must requalify every school year for free and reduced-price meals.

Parents are strongly encouraged to continually monitor their child's meal account balance. Payments can be made online using a VISA or MasterCard credit or debit card after setting up an online account through [School Cafe](#). Cash or checks will be taken at campus cafeterias. Notifications will be made by phone, e-mail, and/or paper mailings to alert the parent

of a low/below balance on the student's account and an application for free or reduced meals. The student will be allowed to continue purchasing meals up to \$5, and the district will present the parent with a schedule of repayment for any outstanding account balance. If the district is unable to work out an agreement with the student's parent on replenishment of the student's meal account and payment of any outstanding balance, the student will receive a courtesy meal. The district will make every effort to avoid bringing attention to such a student.

A Personal Identification Number (PIN) is assigned to each student upon enrollment for use in the cafeteria. All students will be able to enter their PIN at the register. Elementary students will be provided with a meal card that can be scanned instead of manually entering the PIN. Middle and high school students can request a meal card at the register. Alternative education campus students will use their PIN at the register.

Parents of students with disabilities or life-threatening food allergies must contact the school nurse in order to obtain and fill out a Diet Modification Request.

### **Library (All Grade Levels)**

The library is a learning laboratory with books, computers, magazines, and other materials available for classroom assignments, projects, and reading or listening pleasure. The library is open for independent student use during times designated by campus librarians.

### **Meetings of Noncurriculum-Related Groups (Secondary Grade Levels Only)**

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

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

## **SEARCHES**

In the interest of promoting student safety and attempting to ensure that schools are safe and drug free, district officials may from time to time conduct searches. Such searches are conducted without a warrant and as permitted by law.

### **Students' Desks and Lockers (All Grade Levels)**

Students' desks and lockers are school property and remain under the control and jurisdiction of the school even when assigned to an individual student.

Students are fully responsible for the security and contents of their assigned desks and lockers. Students must be certain that their lockers are locked, and that the combinations are not available to others.

Searches of desks or lockers may be conducted at any time there is reasonable suspicion to believe that they contain articles or materials prohibited by policy, whether or not a student is present.

The parent will be notified if any prohibited items are found in the student's desk or locker.

## **Telecommunications and Other Electronic Devices (All Grade Levels)**

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

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

[See policy FNF(LEGAL) and **Electronic Devices and Technology Resources** on page 41 for more information.]

## **Vehicles on Campus (Secondary Grade Levels Only)**

A student has full responsibility for the security and content of his or her vehicle parked on district property and must make certain that it is locked and that the keys are not given to others. [See the Student Code of Conduct.]

Vehicles parked on district property are under the jurisdiction of the district. School officials may search any vehicle any time there is reasonable suspicion to do so, with or without the permission of the student. If a vehicle subject to search is locked, the student will be asked to unlock the vehicle. If the student refuses, the student's parent will be contacted. If a search is also refused by the student's parent, the district will turn the matter over to law enforcement. The district may, in certain circumstances, contact law enforcement even if permission to search is granted.

Middle school students are not allowed to drive to or park at school. High school students shall park in designated student parking areas only.

## **Trained Dogs (All Grade Levels)**

The district will use trained dogs to alert school officials to the presence of prohibited or illegal items, including drugs and alcohol. At any time, trained dogs may be used around lockers and the areas around vehicles parked on school property. Searches of classrooms, common areas, or student belongings may also be conducted by trained dogs when students are not present. An item in a classroom, a locker, or a vehicle to which a trained dog alerts may be searched by school officials.

## **Metal Detectors (All Grade Levels)**

Students are subject to metal detector searches on a random basis. [For further information, see policy FNF(LOCAL).]

## **Drug Testing (Secondary Grade Levels Only)**

School-sponsored extracurricular activities for which drug testing is required include boys' and girls' varsity athletics. [For further information, see policy FNF(LOCAL). Also see **Steroids** on page 73.]

## **SEXUAL HARASSMENT**

[See **Dating Violence, Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation** on page 34.]



## **SPECIAL PROGRAMS (All Grade Levels)**

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

## **STANDARDIZED TESTING**

### **Secondary Grade Levels**

#### ***SAT/ACT (Scholastic Aptitude Test and American College Test)***

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

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

#### ***TSI (Texas Success Initiative) Assessment***

Prior to enrollment in a Texas public college or university, most students must take a standardized test called the Texas Success Initiative (TSI) assessment. The purpose of the TSI assessment is to assess the reading, mathematics, and writing skills that entering freshmen-level students should have if they are to perform effectively in undergraduate certificate or degree programs in Texas public colleges and universities. This assessment may be required before a student enrolls in a dual credit course offered through the district as well. Achieving certain benchmark scores on this assessment for college readiness may also waive certain end-of-course assessment requirements in limited circumstances.

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

### ***Grades 3-8***

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

- Mathematics, annually in grades 3-8
- Reading, annually in grades 3-8
- Writing, including spelling and grammar, in grades 4 and 7

- Science in grades 5 and 8
- Social Studies in grade 8

Successful performance on the reading and math assessments in grades 5 and 8 is required by law in order for the student to be promoted to the next grade level, unless the student is enrolled in a reading or math course intended for students above the student's current grade level. Exceptions may apply for students enrolled in a special education program if the admission, review, and dismissal (ARD) committee concludes the student has made sufficient progress in the student's individual education plan (IEP). [See **Promotion and Retention** on page 65 for additional information.]

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[See **Graduation** on page 47 for additional information.]

### **STEROIDS (Secondary Grade Levels Only)**

State law prohibits students from possessing, dispensing, delivering, or administering an anabolic steroid. Anabolic steroids are for medical use only, and only a physician can prescribe use.

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

## **STUDENTS IN FOSTER CARE (All Grade Levels)**

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

Please contact Jennifer Hulme, who has been designated as the district's foster care liaison, at 972-288-6411 with any questions.

[See **Students in the Conservatorship of the State** on page 13 for more information.]

## **STUDENT SPEAKERS (All Grade Levels)**

The district provides students the opportunity to introduce designated school events. If a student meets the eligibility criteria and wishes to speak at an approved school event, the student should submit his or her name in accordance with policy FNA(LOCAL).

[See policy FNA(LOCAL) regarding other speaking opportunities and **Graduation** on page 47 for information related to student speakers at graduation ceremonies.]

## **SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION (All Grade Levels)**

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

## **SUICIDE AWARENESS AND MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT (All Grade Levels)**

The district is committed to partnering with parents to support the healthy mental, emotional, and behavioral development of its students. If you are concerned about your child, please access [Texas Suicide Prevention](#) or contact the school counselor for more information related to suicide prevention services available in your area.

You may also contact the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255.

## **SUMMER SCHOOL (All Grade Levels)**

Summer school is offered each year. For further information, contact the school counselor.

## **TARDIES (All Grade Levels)**

When a student is late to class, they will be considered tardy. Disciplinary consequences for tardies include but are not limited to:

- 1-2 tardies: Parent contact, warning notice, conduct marks, etc.
- 3-4 tardies: Detention, parent contact, etc.
- 5+ tardies: Parent conference, detention, in-school suspension, etc.

Students who are later than 10 minutes will be considered absent for that class period – a partial-day absence (*parts of days* per TEC Ch. 25.095).

Recording tardies starts over at the beginning of each grading period. Campuses may have additional procedures in order to reduce tardiness and preserve the sanctity of the school day.

## **TEXTBOOKS, ELECTRONIC TEXTBOOKS, TECHNOLOGICAL EQUIPMENT, AND OTHER INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS (All Grade Levels)**

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

## **TRANSFERS (All Grade Levels)**

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

[See **Safety Transfers/Assignments** on page 12, **Bullying** on page 24, and **Students Who Have Learning Difficulties or Who Need Special Education or Section 504 Services** on page 16, for other transfer options.]

MISD does not accept out-of-district transfers. [See FDA(LOCAL).]

MISD accepts in-district transfers on a limited case-by-case basis and as required by law. [See FDB(LOCAL).]

## **TRANSPORTATION (All Grade Levels)**

### **School-Sponsored Trips**

Students who participate in school-sponsored trips are required to use transportation provided by the school to and from the event. As approved by the principal, a coach or sponsor of an extracurricular activity may establish procedures related to making an exception to this requirement when a parent requests that the student be released to the parent or to another adult designated by the parent.

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

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

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

A parent may also designate a child-care facility or grandparent's residence as the regular pickup and drop-off location for his or her child. The designated facility or residence must be on an approved stop on an approved route. For information on bus routes and stops or to designate an alternate pickup or drop-off location, you may contact Transportation Services at 972-882-7550.

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

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

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

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

## **VANDALISM (All Grade Levels)**

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

## **VIDEO CAMERAS (All Grade Levels)**

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

The principal will review the video and audio recordings routinely and document student misconduct. Discipline will be in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct.

Upon written request of a parent of a student who receives special education services, a staff member (as this term is defined by law), a principal or assistant principal, or the board member, state law requires the district to place video and audio recording equipment in a classroom in which the student spends at least 50 percent of his or her instructional day, referred to in the law as a self-contained classroom. The majority of students in this type of classroom must also be students who receive special education services. Before the district places a video camera in a classroom or other setting in which your child receives special education services, the district will provide notice to you. Please speak directly with the principal for further information or to request the installation and operation of this equipment.

[See EHBAF(LOCAL).]

## **VISITORS TO THE SCHOOL (All Grade Levels)**

### **General Visitors**

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

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

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

### **Unauthorized Persons**

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

- The person poses a substantial risk of harm to any person; or
- The person continues to behave in a manner inappropriate for the school setting after having received a verbal or written warning to cease the inappropriate behavior.

A person ejected from or refused entry to District property under this provision may appeal this action by filing an appeal under FNG(LOCAL) or GF(LOCAL). MISD policies can be accessed here: [MISD Policy Online](#).

[See also Student Code of Conduct.]

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

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

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

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

### **VOLUNTEERS (All Grade Levels)**

We appreciate so much the efforts of parent and grandparent volunteers who are willing to serve our district and students. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact your student's campus for more information and to complete an application.

### **VOTER REGISTRATION (Secondary Grade Levels Only)**

A student who is eligible to vote in any local, state, or federal election may obtain a voter registration application at the main campus office.

### **WITHDRAWING FROM SCHOOL (All Grade Levels)**

A student under age 19 may be withdrawn from school only by a parent. The school requests notice from the parent at least three days in advance so that records and documents may be prepared. The parent may obtain a withdrawal form from the principal's office. A student who is age 19 or older, who is married, or who has been declared by a court to be an emancipated minor may withdraw without parental signature.

## Glossary

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

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

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

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

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

**CPS** stands for Child Protective Services.

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

**DFPS** is the Texas Department of Family Protective Services. **DPS** stands for the Texas Department of Public Safety.

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

**SAT** refers to one of the two most frequently used college or university admissions exams: the Scholastic Aptitude Test. The test may be a requirement for admissions to certain colleges or universities.

**SHAC** stands for School Health Advisory Council, a group of at least five members, a majority of whom must be parents, appointed by the school board to assist the district in ensuring that local community values and health issues are reflected in the district's health education instruction, along with providing assistance with other student and employee wellness issues.

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

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

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

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

**State-mandated assessments** are required of students at certain grade levels and in specified subjects. Successful performance sometimes is a condition of promotion, and passing the STAAR EOC assessments is a condition of graduation. Students have multiple opportunities to take the tests if necessary for promotion or graduation.

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

Conduct also addresses notice to the parent regarding a student's violation of one of its provisions.

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

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

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

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

## APPENDIX A: Freedom from Bullying Policy

Below is the text of Mesquite Independent School District's policy FFI(LOCAL) as of the date that this handbook was finalized for this school year.

### STUDENT WELFARE: FREEDOM FROM BULLYING

FFI(LOCAL)

#### **Bullying Prohibited**

The District prohibits bullying, including cyberbullying, as defined by state law. Retaliation against anyone involved in the complaint process is a violation of District policy and is prohibited.

#### **Examples**

Bullying of a student could occur by physical contact or through electronic means and may include hazing, threats, taunting, teasing, confinement, assault, demands for money, destruction of property, theft of valued possessions, name calling, rumor spreading, or ostracism.

#### **Retaliation**

The District prohibits retaliation by a student or District employee against any person who in good faith makes a report of bullying, serves as a witness, or participates in an investigation.

#### **Examples**

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

#### **False claim**

A student who intentionally makes a false claim, offers false statements, or refuses to cooperate with a District investigation regarding bullying shall be subject to appropriate disciplinary action.

#### **Timely Reporting**

Reports of bullying shall be made as soon as possible after the alleged act or knowledge of the alleged act. A failure to immediately report may impair the District's ability to investigate and address the prohibited conduct.

#### **Reporting Procedures**

##### **Student Report**

To obtain assistance and intervention, any student who believes that he or she has experienced bullying or believes that another student has experienced bullying should immediately report the alleged acts to a teacher, school counselor, principal, or other District employee. The Superintendent shall develop procedures allowing a student to anonymously report an alleged incident of bullying.

##### **Employee Report**

Any District employee who suspects or receives notice that a student or group of students has or may have experienced bullying shall immediately notify the principal or designee.

##### **Report Format**

A report may be made orally or in writing. The principal or designee shall reduce any oral reports to written form.

<b>Notice of Report</b>	When an allegation of bullying is reported, the principal or designee shall notify a parent of the alleged victim on or before the third business day after the incident is reported. The principal or designee shall also notify a parent of the student alleged to have engaged in the conduct within a reasonable amount of time after the incident is reported.
<b>Prohibited Conduct</b>	The principal or designee shall determine whether the allegations in the report, if proven, would constitute prohibited conduct as defined by policy FFH, including dating violence and harassment or discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, gender, national origin, or disability. If so, the District shall proceed under policy FFH. If the allegations could constitute both prohibited conduct and bullying, the investigation under FFH shall include a determination on each type of conduct.
<b>Investigation of Report</b>	The principal or designee shall conduct an appropriate investigation based on the allegations in the report. The principal or designee shall promptly take interim action calculated to prevent bullying during the course of an investigation, if appropriate.
<b>Concluding the Investigation</b>	<p>Absent extenuating circumstances, the investigation should be completed within 10 District business days from the date of the initial report alleging bullying; however, the principal or designee shall take additional time if necessary to complete a thorough investigation.</p> <p>The principal or designee shall prepare a final, written report of the investigation. The report shall include a determination of whether bullying occurred, and if so, whether the victim used reasonable self-defense. A copy of the report shall be sent to the Superintendent or designee.</p>
<b>Notice to Parents</b>	If an incident of bullying is confirmed, the principal or designee shall promptly notify the parents of the victim and of the student who engaged in bullying.
<b>District Action</b>	If the results of an investigation indicate that bullying occurred, the District shall promptly respond by taking appropriate disciplinary action in accordance with the District's Student Code of Conduct and may take corrective action reasonably calculated to address the conduct. The District may notify law enforcement in certain circumstances.
<i>Bullying</i>	
<i>Discipline</i>	<p>A student who is a victim of bullying and who used reasonable self-defense in response to the bullying shall not be subject to disciplinary action.</p> <p>The discipline of a student with a disability is subject to applicable state and federal law in addition to the Student Code of Conduct.</p>
<i>Corrective Action</i>	Examples of corrective action may include a training program for the individuals involved in the complaint, a comprehensive

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

<i>Transfers</i>	The principal or designee shall refer to FDB for transfer provisions.
<i>Counseling</i>	The principal or designee shall notify the victim, the student who engaged in bullying, and any students who witnessed the bullying of available counseling options.
Improper Conduct	If the investigation reveals improper conduct that did not rise to the level of prohibited conduct or bullying, the District may take action in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct or any other appropriate corrective action.
<b>Confidentiality</b>	To the greatest extent possible, the District shall respect the privacy of the complainant, persons against whom a report is filed, and witnesses. Limited disclosures may be necessary in order to conduct a thorough investigation.
<b>Appeal</b>	A student who is dissatisfied with the outcome of the investigation may appeal through FNG(LOCAL), beginning at the appropriate level.
<b>Records Retention</b>	Retention of records shall be in accordance with CPC(LOCAL).
<b>Access to Policy and Procedures</b>	This policy and any accompanying procedures shall be distributed annually in the employee and student handbooks. Copies of the policy and procedures shall be posted on the District's Web site, to the extent practicable, and shall be readily available at each campus and the District's administrative offices.