



Student Handbook  
2022-2023

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## **SECTION 1: GENERAL INFORMATION**

### **Mission**

The mission of Pioneer Technology Arts Academy (PTAA) is to empower and engage students to reach their full potential as global leaders who will enhance their communities and the world through creativity, collaboration and innovation.

### **Vision**

The vision of PTAA is to be the leader in global education in Texas within 10 years. We will be respected and admired by our peers. Our instructional model will be sought after and shared, and we will have pride in ourselves. The best teachers will seek to work with us, and people who work here will love what they do and work hard because they want to. Our students will be admitted to and excel at top universities and colleges here and abroad. Staff, students and the community will feel we have contributed to their lives in a positive way.

When ALL of our students recognize their full potential in life, our vision will be realized. By partnering with our students and their families, we will ensure they are not only accepted to college, but that they complete college and graduate. We are committed to keeping all of our students and our mission will be a success only when our students graduate from college and live lives of choice and empowerment.

### **School Board**

The Board members together are responsible for governance, performance, success, accountability and financial solvency of PTAA School. They are the committed fiduciaries for the students and the State of Texas and uphold the public's trust. We are grateful to these volunteers for their service to PTAA and its students.

### **Statement of Non-Discrimination**

Pioneer Technology & Arts Academy ("PTAA") does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age in providing educational services, activities, and programs, including vocational and career technology programs. PTAA complies with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended; Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972; Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 ("ADA"), as amended, which incorporates and expands upon the requirements of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended; the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended; and any other legally-protected classification or status protected by applicable law. Any questions or concerns about PTAA's compliance with these federal programs should be brought to the attention of the following persons

designated as being responsible for coordinating compliance with these requirements: The Title IX Coordinator, for concerns regarding discrimination on the basis of sex/gender, is ATTN: HR Department Head, 15720 Hillcrest, Dallas, TX 75248 469-405-8967

The ADA/Section 504 Coordinator, for concerns regarding discrimination on the basis of disability, is ATTN: Special ED Department Head, 15720 Hillcrest, Dallas, TX 75248 469-405-8967

The Age Discrimination Coordinator, for concerns regarding discrimination on the basis of age, is ATTN: HR Department Head, 15720 Hillcrest, Dallas, TX 75248 469-405-8967

All other concerns regarding discrimination may be directed to:  
ATTN: HR Department Head, 15720 Hillcrest, Dallas, TX 75248  
469-405-8967

### **General Admissions and Enrollment Information**

Admission and enrollment of students shall be open to persons who reside within the geographic boundaries stated in the School's charter, and who are eligible for admission based on lawful criteria identified in the charter and in state law. The total number of students enrolled in PTAA shall not exceed the number of students approved in the charter or subsequent amendments. Total enrollment may further be limited by PTAA based on occupancy limitations, code compliance and staffing requirements as deemed necessary.

*In accordance with state law, PTAA does not discriminate in its admissions policy on the basis of sex; national origin; ethnicity; religion; disability; academic, artistic, or athletic ability; or the district the child would otherwise attend.*

### **Exclusion from Admission**

As authorized by the PTAA charter and Texas Education Code §12.111(a)(5)(A), any student with a documented history of a criminal offense, a juvenile court adjudication, or other discipline problems under Texas Education Code Chapter 37, Subchapter A may be excluded from admission and enrollment in PTAA.

### **Submission of Applications and Admissions Lottery**

Students wanting to attend PTAA must submit an application during the School's open enrollment period, which takes place from **January 10<sup>th</sup> to March 15<sup>th</sup> each year**, or as otherwise set by the administration. Enrollment forms are available at campus offices and online through the School's website during the month of February.

If fewer applications than spots available are received, students will be offered admission on a first-come, first-served basis. If PTAA receives more applications than it has spots available in any grade level, it will conduct a random lottery. Each applicant selected during the lottery (until all open seats are filled) will be offered admission. Once all enrollment spots have been filled by the lottery, the lottery will continue, and



applicants will be placed on a waiting list in the order in which they are drawn. If a vacancy arises before the commencement of the next school year, the individual on the waiting list with the lowest number assignment will be offered admission and then removed from the waiting list.

If an application is received after the application period has passed, the applicant's name will be added to the waiting list behind the names of the applicants who timely applied.

Families offered an enrollment seat will be sent a registration packet with instructions for registering. This notice will be sent **no later than April 1st**. Families must complete and return the registration packet by the published deadline in order to secure enrollment. If an enrollment offer is declined or if you do not complete the registration packet by the established deadline, your child's seat will be offered to the next potential student on the waiting list.

*Exceptions to Lottery Process:* Federal guidelines permit PTAA to exempt from the lottery students who are already attending the School; siblings of students already admitted to or attending PTAA; and children of the School's founders, teachers, and staff, so long as the total number of students allowed under this exemption constitutes only a small percentage of the School's total enrollment.

### **McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act of 2001**

• Homeless children and youth are ensured specific educational rights and protections.

A listing of these specific rights may be obtained from PTAA by contacting:

Compliance Department Head, 15720 Hillcrest, Dallas, TX 75248 469-405-896

"Homeless children and youth" as defined and covered by the McKinney-Vento

Homeless Education Assistance Act of 2001 means children and youth who

- lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence;
- have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings;
- are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason;
- are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations;
- are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative accommodations;
- are living in emergency or transitional shelters;
- are abandoned in hospitals, or are awaiting foster care placement.

Parents of students in homeless situations can keep their students in their schools of origin (the school that the child or youth attended when permanently housed or the school in which the child or youth was last enrolled even if the student is now residing outside the school attendance area or school district) or enroll them in any public school that students living in the same attendance area are eligible to attend.

### **Student Information**

Any student admitted to PTAA must have records, such as a report card and/or transcript from the previous school attended, to verify his or her academic standing.

Verification of residency and current immunization records are also required. Every student enrolling in the School for the first time must present documentation of immunizations as required by the Texas Department of State Health Services.

No later than 30 days after enrolling in the School, the parent and school district in

which the student was previously enrolled shall furnish records that verify the identity of the student. These records may include the student's birth certificate or a copy of the student's school records from the most recently attended school. Students will not be denied enrollment because they failed to meet this requirement.

PTAA will forward a student's records on request to a school in which a student seeks or intends to enroll without the necessity of the parents' consent.

### **Food Allergy Information**

The parent of each student enrolled in the School must complete a form provided by PTAA that discloses (1) whether the child has a food allergy or a severe food allergy that should be disclosed to PTAA to enable personnel to take any necessary precautions regarding the child's safety; and (2) specifies the food(s) to which the child is allergic and the nature of the allergic reaction. For purposes of this requirement, the term "severe food allergy" means a dangerous or life-threatening reaction of the human body to a food-borne allergen introduced by inhalation, ingestion, or skin contact that requires immediate medical attention.

PTAA may also require information from a child's physician if the child has food allergies.

Food allergy information forms will be maintained in the child's student records and shall remain confidential. Information provided on food allergy information forms may be disclosed to teachers, school counselors, school nurse or designees, and other appropriate school personnel only to the extent consistent with Board policy and as permissible under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 ("FERPA").

### **Establishing Identification**

Any of the following documents are acceptable for proof of identification and age: birth certificate, driver's license; passport; school ID card, records, or report card; military ID; hospital birth records; adoption records; church baptismal record; or any other legal document that establishes identity.

### **Undocumented Students**

Enrollment may not be denied to children who are not legally admitted into the United States.

### **Residency Verification**

The Texas Education Code authorizes schools to obtain evidence that a person is eligible to attend public schools. To be eligible for continued enrollment in PTAA, each student's parent must show proof of residency at the time of enrollment. Residency may be verified through observation, documentation, and other means, including, but not limited to:

1. A recently paid rent receipt;
2. A current lease agreement;
3. The most recent tax receipt indicating home ownership;
4. A current utility bill indicating the address and name of the residence occupiers;
5. Mailing addresses of the residence occupiers;

6. Visual inspection of the residence;
7. Interviews with persons with relevant information; or
8. Building permits issued to a parent on or before September 1st of the school year in which admission is sought (permits will serve as evidence of residency for the school year in which admission is sought only).

Falsification of residence on an enrollment form is a criminal offense.

### **School Calendar**

PTAA operates according to the school calendar adopted annually by the Board of Directors. Holidays may be used as school make-up days for days lost due to bad weather. The latest changes to the calendar will be available on the School's website.

### **School Day**

Classes begin at 8:00 a.m. and are dismissed at 3:45 p.m. Students may be dropped off as early as 7:15 a.m. They will be supervised, but there are no organized activities before the instructional day begins. **Students are expected to be picked up by 4:10 pm.** Students staying for tutoring must stay until 4:30 p.m. and should be picked up promptly at that time.

After those times, students not in after-school activities (clubs, athletics) will not be supervised by a PTAA staff member. Middle School students may be enrolled in a before and after-school program provided by an outside vendor. Applicable fees for activities and/or supervision are between the parent and the provider. These fees vary, and information may be obtained in the school office.

### **Drop-off and Pick-up Procedures**

All students must be dropped off and picked up **ONLY** in the designated areas. Parents can also park and walk to drop off and pick up their child from the designated areas. The current drop off and pick up maps are available in your school office.

### **Student Drivers and Parking**

All student drivers must hold a valid driver's license and insurance. Students driving to school must park in the designated lot and have paid any required campus parking fees. Students may not go to their cars during the school day. Students must also drive in a manner that is safe and does not disrupt the learning environment or school community in any way. Students who fail to follow these guidelines will have their driving privileges suspended or revoked and may be subject to discipline under the Student Code of Conduct.

### **Attendance**

Regular attendance is expected of all PTAA students due to the rigor of our curriculum. Consistent school attendance is an essential component of each student's education. Official attendance is taken each day and recorded each instructional period. Tardies and early checkouts are also recorded each day.

Absence from school will affect a student's ability to succeed in class; therefore, students and parents should make every effort to avoid unnecessary absences.

Additionally, state law mandates compulsory school attendance for children of a certain age, and PTAA policy deals with attendance for course credit and a student's final grade. These items are discussed below.

### **Texas Compulsory Attendance Law**

The state compulsory attendance law requires that a student between the ages of 6 and 19 must attend school and school-required tutorial sessions, unless the student is otherwise legally exempted or excused. PTAA staff must investigate and report violations of the state compulsory attendance law. A student absent from school without permission from any class, from required special programs, or from required tutorials will be considered "truant" and subject to disciplinary action.

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

**Notice to Parents:** *Under Texas Education Code § 25.095(a), you are hereby notified that if a student is absent from school on ten or more days or parts of days within a six-month period in the same school year, the student's parent is subject to prosecution under Texas Education Code § 25.093; and the student is subject to referral to a truancy court for truant conduct under Texas Family Code § 65.003(a).*

*PTAA shall notify a student's parent if the student has been absent from school, without excuse, on three days or parts of days within a four-week period. The notice will inform the parent of the parent's duty to monitor the student's school attendance and require the student to attend school; the student is subject to truancy prevention measures under Texas Education Code § 25.0915; and that a conference between school officials and the parent is needed to discuss the absences.*

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

To receive credit or a final grade in a class, a student must attend at least 90% of the days a class is offered. These days include both excused and unexcused absences. A student who attends fewer than 90% of the days the class is offered may be referred to the Attendance Review Committee to determine whether the absences were due to extenuating circumstances and how the student may regain credit or earn a final grade. The Attendance Review Committee will consider the following factors when determining whether there are extenuating circumstances for the absence:

1. all absences, whether excused or unexcused, must be taken into account with consideration given to special circumstances as defined by the Texas Education Code;
2. for a student transferring into PTAA after school begins, including a migrant student, only those absences after enrollment in PTAA;
3. whether the absences were for reasons over which the student or parent could exercise control;
4. the acceptability and authenticity of documentation expressing reasons for the student's absences;

5. 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; In reaching consensus about a student's absences, the committee will attempt to ensure that its decision is in the best interest of the student. The student, parent or other representative will be given an opportunity to present any information to the committee about the absences and to discuss ways to earn or regain credit.

If credit is lost or a final grade is not earned due to excessive absences, the Attendance Review Committee will decide how the student may regain credit or earn a final grade. If the committee determines there are no extenuating circumstances and that credit or a final grade may not be earned, the student or parent may appeal the committee's decision to the Board of Directors by filing a written request with the Superintendent. The appeal notice must be postmarked to the following address within 10 days following the last day of instruction in the semester for which credit was denied:  
PEIMS Department Head, 15720 Hillcrest, Dallas, TX 75248 469-405-8967  
The appeal will then be placed on the agenda of the next regularly scheduled Board meeting. The Superintendent or designee shall inform the student or parent of the date, time, and place of the meeting.

### **Absence and Tardiness**

When a student must be absent from school, parents are asked to call the school each day the student will be absent. Upon returning to school, the student must bring a note, signed by the parent, or a medical excuse signed and dated by a medical provider that describes the reason for the absence. Notes should be submitted to the school registrar, and may be scanned and emailed, submitted through the PTAA website, or faxed to the School. If a note is not received 3 school days of the absence, the absence will be recorded as unexcused.

Because excessive absences are considered truancy under state law, PTAA reserves the right to take excessive absence cases to court.

The School recognizes two kinds of absences: excused and unexcused. Students and parents should read this section carefully to understand the School's expectations. Students and parents should also be aware of the School's policy regarding homework, quizzes, and tests following an absence.

### **Excused Absences**

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 United States citizenship;
- Service as an election clerk;
- For students in the conservatorship (custody) of the state;
- Mental health or therapy appointments;
- Court-ordered family visitations or any other court-ordered activity provided it is not

practicable to schedule the student's participation in the activity outside of school hours;

- 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 a student returns to school the same day or attends part of the day prior to a doctor's appointment and then presents a doctor's note verifying the appointment, the absence is excused and the student is counted present.

Students should be picked up and signed out for early dismissal in the office. We cannot call your student from the classroom until you are in the front office signing them out.

A student may also be absent for up to two days in a school year for service as an early voting clerk, provided the student receives approval from the campus Administrator(s) prior to the absence and informs his or her teachers of the absence.

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.

For religious holy days, required court appearances, activities related to obtaining citizenship, and services as an election clerk, one day of travel to the site and one day of travel from the site shall also be excused by the School.

The only additional excused absences are for personal illness, death in the immediate family (parent, sibling, grandparent, or member of the immediate household), a school-related absence or an absence approved in advance by the campus Administrator(s) due to extenuating circumstances.

### **Unexcused Absences**

Any absence not listed above or approved in advance by campus Administrator(s) due to extenuating circumstances will be considered an unexcused absence.

### **Tardiness and Late Arrival**

Students who arrive late must sign in at the campus office. Late arrivals are documented. Any student arriving after the official attendance time of the second period will be marked absent for average daily attendance purposes although the student's presence will be noted for period attendance by the teacher.

### **Make-Up Work**

If a student misses class for any reason, a teacher may assign make-up work that incorporates the instructional objectives for the class and that will assist the student in mastering the essential knowledge and skills necessary to meet subject or course requirements. Students are responsible for obtaining and completing the make-up work in a satisfactory manner and within the time specified by the teacher. Teachers will provide students and parents with additional information regarding penalties for failure to complete make-up work within the time allotted, and the process for making up tests missed due to absence.

**Students are not allowed to make-up work for unexcused absences.**

### **Driver's License Attendance Verification**

The Texas Department of Public Safety ("DPS") is required to verify the attendance

records of a student between the ages of 16 and 18 that is seeking to obtain or renew a driver's license. In order for DPS to access this information or, in certain circumstances, for a school administrator to provide the attendance information to DPS, written parental permission must be obtained. Students may obtain the required Verification of Enrollment ("VOE") form from the School office.

### **Release of Students from School**

A student will not be released from school at times other than at the end of the school day except with permission from the campus Administrator(s) and in accordance with campus sign-out procedures. Additionally, state rules require that parental consent be obtained before a student under the age of 18 may leave campus at any point in the school day.

Because class time is important, doctor's appointments or meetings with other professionals should be scheduled at times when the student will not miss instructional time, when possible.

### **Closed Campus**

Students are not permitted to leave campus for lunch. Parents are welcome to eat lunch with their child in the cafeteria. Parents may only bring lunch for their own children. Food delivery services are not permitted for students. Students and adults may not bring in or give away food to other students during lunch times.

### **Withdrawals/Voluntary Withdrawal**

A student under 18 years of age may be withdrawn from school only by a parent. PTAA requests notice from the parent at least three days in advance so that records and documents may be prepared. Parents may obtain a withdrawal form from the main office. The parent shall also provide the name of the new school in which the student will be enrolled and must sign the withdrawal request to document that the student will continue to be enrolled in a school as required by compulsory attendance laws.

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

Withdrawing students and parents are expected to:

- Return all textbooks and checked-out materials and equipment;
- Complete any make-up work assigned;
- Pay any unpaid balance for student fees, if any; and
- Sign a release of student records.

In all cases, withdrawal forms must be appropriately completed and signed before withdrawal is complete.

### **Involuntary Withdrawal**

PTAA may initiate withdrawal of a student under the age of 19 for non-attendance if:

1. the student has been absent 10 consecutive school days, and
2. repeated efforts by the school to locate the student have been unsuccessful.
3. an enrolled student is a no-show on the first day of classes.



Additionally, PTAA may revoke the enrollment of a student 19 years of age or older who has more than five unexcused absences in one semester.

### **Dress and Grooming**

Most of PTAA's required uniform can be purchased from each of PTAA's campuses such as the blazer with monogram or sweater vest with monogram, tie, spirit t-shirts, fleece jacket and PTAA sweatshirt. However, generic khaki pants, shorts, oxford shirts, and polos may be purchased from any other store. For special event days like picture day, all students should have the PTAA monogram blazer or sweater vest that is available through PTAA.

### **Why the school uniform is important:**

- Uniforms help to create a positive school ethos (culture or spirit), foster a sense of belonging and school pride;
- Schools with uniforms produce better educational results by eliminating distraction and focusing student attention on learning.
- The uniform is a social leveler – equal dress without regard to background or income reduces negative peer pressure and potential bullying.
- Uniforms have practical advantages for parents and students. Students and parents don't have to spend time deciding what to wear at the start of each school day. The clothes are designed to be comfortable and safe, with no long trailing sleeves, skirts or hoods to catch on dangerous equipment in PE or science lessons.
- Uniforms are more economical for parents than wardrobes subject to fads and the higher price tags that accompany them.

The School's dress standards are designed to teach grooming and hygiene, prevent disruption, minimize safety hazards, while providing flexibility for the parent and student. Students must come to school cleanly and neatly groomed and wearing the clothing prescribed in the Uniform Code. Students are required to arrive in proper attire every day.

### **Uniform Code**

Students who do not follow the School's guidelines for personal attire and appearance may be subject to discipline under the Student Code of Conduct. Additionally, a parent may be contacted to bring an acceptable change of clothing to school, and the student may be assigned to in-school suspension for the remainder of the day until a change of clothes is brought to the school.

PTAA students are expected to dress in a manner that conveys respect for their learning community and communicates a message of personal confidence and pride. The following specific guidelines must be adhered to:

### **Students may NOT wear:**

- Clothing or conspicuously displayed jewelry or accessories with inappropriate advertising or statements that are offensive or inflammatory are prohibited. This prohibition includes, but is not limited to, alcoholic beverages, profanity, sex, tobacco, drugs, gangs, guns and other weapons, excessively violent or gory imagery, and the

promotion of violence.

- Any form of slippers or “house shoes.”
- Slides
- Large chains, such as those attached to wallets.
- Jeans or any pants that have tears or holes larger than 1 inch. NO holes or tears may be above the knee.
- Sagging pants. If pants are loose at the waistline a belt should be worn.
- Hair must be neat and clean. Unconventional hairstyles that are considered to be distracting and/or disruptive to the educational environment are prohibited. Students may wear natural hair colors only. For further clarification on what is unconventional, please consult with the campus administration.
- Visible tattoos and similar body painting(s) that promote violence or reflect gang activity are prohibited. Visible tattoos and similar body painting(s) that are considered offensive, inflammatory or disruptive to the learning environment are prohibited. This prohibition includes, but is not limited to, inappropriate advertising or statements that are offensive or inflammatory, alcoholic beverages, profanity, sex, tobacco, drugs, gangs, guns and other weapons, excessively violent or gory imagery, and the promotion of violence.

Female students must also adhere to the following rules:

- Skirts and shorts must reach at least the length of one’s fingertips when arms are held normally.
- Halter tops, exposed midriffs, strapless and/or low cut tops, exposed backs, spaghetti straps and see-through clothing are not permitted.
- Any sleeveless tops must have straps that are at least two finger- widths wide.
- Oversized armholes/jersey-type tanks are not permitted without a sleeved undershirt.
- Clothing may not be too tight or revealing.
- Appropriate undergarments must be worn at all times, and may not be visible or exposed.

Male students must adhere to the following:

- No sleeveless shirts may be worn. This applies to undergarment-type tank tops as well as athletic tank tops, unless worn in athletics/PE.
- Pants must be worn at the waist and secured with a belt if needed.
- Appropriate undergarments must be worn at all times, and may not be visible or exposed.

PTAA will periodically review its dress and grooming policies, and make changes as needed.

**While it is inevitable that there will be differences of opinion as to the appropriateness of dress, grooming, and/or determining whether or not a student’s attire is disruptive or distracting to the educational environment of the school, the final determination will be made by the campus Administrator(s). Any student who does not comply with the dress code will be removed from the regular school setting until the student complies with this code.**

## **Student Fees**

Materials that are part of the basic educational program are provided with state and local funds at no charge to a student. Students are expected to provide their own consumable items, such as pencils, paper, pens, erasers, notebooks, calculators, headsets, etc. Students may be required to pay certain fees or deposits, including:

1. A fee for materials for a class project that the student will keep, if the fee does not exceed the cost of materials;
2. Membership dues in voluntary student clubs or organizations and admission fees to extracurricular activities;
3. A security deposit for the return of materials, supplies or equipment;
4. A fee for personal physical education and athletic equipment and apparel, although a student may provide the student's own equipment or apparel if it meets reasonable requirements and standards relating to health and safety;
5. A fee for voluntarily purchased items, such as student publications, class rings, pictures, yearbooks, graduation announcements, etc.;
6. A fee for voluntary student health and accident benefit plan;
7. A reasonable fee, not to exceed the actual annual maintenance cost, for the use of musical instruments and uniforms owned or rented by the school;
8. A fee for items of personal apparel used in extracurricular activities that become the property of the student;
9. A parking fee;
10. A fee for replacement of a student identification card;
11. If offered, a fee for a driver training course, not to exceed the actual cost per student in the program for the current school year;
12. A fee for an optional course offered for credit that requires the use of facilities not available on campus or the employment of an educator who is not part of the school's regular staff;
13. A fee for summer school courses that are offered tuition-free during the regular school year;
14. A reasonable fee, not to exceed \$50, for costs associated with an educational program offered outside of regular school hours through which a student who was absent from class receives instruction voluntarily for the purpose of making up the missed instruction and meeting the level of attendance required for class credit, so long as the fee would not create a financial hardship or discourage the student from attending the program;
15. A fee for lost, damaged, or overdue library book; or
16. A fee specifically permitted by any other statute.

PTAA may waive any fee or deposit if the student and parent are unable to pay. A request for such a waiver must be made in writing to the Superintendent or designee, and include evidence of inability to pay. Details for the fee waiver are available in the campus office.

Supply lists are posted on the School website in July and made available in the school offices.

Families are responsible for paying all fees associated with extra-curricular programs, including clubs, parking, athletics, fine arts, UIL academics, and academic supervision

prior to participation.

### **College Enrollment and Tuition**

Students will be enrolled in college courses at the advice of the IHE with considerations of the student's TSI scores, progress of the student's high school graduation plan, and advice of the campus counselor or designee. PTAA will pay tuition on dual credit courses on a student's first attempt at a course. Should a student drop, withdraw, or fail a course, the student is responsible for the tuition payment if that course is to be re-enrolled.

### **Textbooks and Curriculum Materials**

State-approved textbooks and additional curriculum materials are provided free of charge for each subject or class, except for dual credit courses. Materials must be used by the students as directed by the teacher and treated with care. A student who is issued damaged materials should report the damage to the teacher.

Students must return all textbooks and supplemental materials to the teacher at the end of the school year or when the student withdraws from school. Any student failing to return issued materials in an acceptable condition loses the right to free textbooks and educational materials until the student and/or parent pay for the damages. However, a student will be provided textbooks and educational materials for use during the school day. PTAA may reduce or waive the payment requirement if the student is from a low-income family. Release of student records, including official transcripts, will be delayed pending payment for lost or severely damaged textbooks.

### **Food Service**

PTAA participates in the National School Lunch Program and offers nutritionally balanced breakfasts and lunches. Guidelines set by the Texas Department of Agriculture ("TDA") and United States Department of Agriculture ("USDA") are followed to meet the nutritional needs of all students. Menus may be obtained at the school office.

Free and reduced-price breakfasts and lunches are available based on financial need. Information about a student's participation is confidential. Applications are available with the registration packet. Students must apply for meal assistance each school year.

### **State-Mandated Nutrition Guidelines**

The TDA places strict limits on any food or drink provided or sold to students other than through PTAA's food and nutrition services. More detailed information may be obtained at the school office or online at [www.squaremeals.org](http://www.squaremeals.org).

### **Transportation**

*PTAA does not provide regular transportation to and from school, unless required by a student's Individualized Education Plan ("IEP") for a student with disabilities. However, PTAA may provide transportation in school vehicles for educational field trips and participation in athletic and other extracurricular events.*

Riding a school vehicle is a privilege. School vehicle drivers have the authority to

maintain discipline and require seating charts. When riding a school vehicle, students are held to behavioral standards established in this Handbook and the Student Code of Conduct. Students must:

1. Follow the driver's directions at all times;
2. Enter and leave the vehicle in an orderly manner;
3. Keep feet, books, instrument cases, and other objects out of the aisle;
4. Not deface the vehicle or its equipment;
5. Not put head, hands, arms, legs, or an object out of any window; and
6. Wait for the driver's signal in order to leave or cross in front of the vehicle.

Only designated students are allowed to ride in the vehicle. Students may neither ride the vehicle to a different location nor have friends ride the vehicle to participate in after-school activities.

If a student with a disability is receiving school transportation as a result of an IEP, the Admission Review and Dismissal ("ARD") Committee will have the discretion in determining appropriate disciplinary consequences related to inappropriate behavior in a school vehicle.

### **Transcripts**

For those students who are awarded High School credit(s), PTAA maintains an academic achievement record (or transcript). Transcripts list complete personal student data, give complete scholastic grades, and scores on standardized achievement tests related to the credits earned. Requests for transcripts should be made to the campus registrar. Students are provided with 2 free official transcripts. Each additional transcript is \$5. Payments should be made at the time of the request in either cash or check. Official transcripts may be picked up from the campus registrar five business days after the request is submitted except at the end of the semester.

### **Displaying a Student's Original Work: Artwork, Projects, Photos, and Other Products**

Teachers may display student work in classrooms or elsewhere on campus as recognition of student achievement. By clicking yes on the photo/video section/form of student enrollment, you are giving parental consent to display student artwork, special projects, photographs taken by students, and other original works on the PTAA website, on any campus or classroom website, in printed materials (including the yearbook), by video, or by any other method of mass communication including displaying or publishing an original video or voice recording.

### **Distribution of Materials or Documents**

#### **School Materials**

Publications prepared by and for PTAA may be posted or distributed with prior approval by the Administrator(s) and/or teacher. Such items may include school posters, brochures, murals, etc.

#### **Non-School Materials**

Students must obtain express prior approval of the Superintendent or designee before

distributing, posting, selling, or circulating written materials, handbills, photographs, pictures, petitions, films, tapes, posters, or other visual or auditory materials on campus. Non-school literature shall not be distributed by students on PTAA property if:

- The materials are obscene, vulgar, or otherwise inappropriate for the age and maturity of the audience.
- The materials endorse actions endangering the health or safety of students.
- The materials promote illegal use of drugs, alcohol, or other controlled substances.
- The distribution of such materials would violate the intellectual property rights, privacy rights, or other rights of another person.
- The materials contain defamatory statements about public figures or others.
- The materials advocate imminent lawless or disruptive action and are likely to incite or produce such action.
- The materials are hate literature or similar publications that scurrilously attack ethnic, religious, or racial groups or contain content aimed at creating hostility and violence, and the materials would materially and substantially interfere with school activities or the rights of others.
- There is reasonable cause to believe that distribution of the non-school literature would result in material and substantial interference with School activities or the rights of others.

Any student who posts 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.

Written or printed materials, handbills, photographs, pictures, films, tapes, or other visual or auditory materials over which PTAA does not exercise control shall not be sold, circulated, or distributed by persons or groups not associated with PTAA or a school support group on school premises unless the person or group obtains specific prior approval from the Superintendent or designee. To be considered, any non-school material must include the name of the sponsoring organization or individual. The requestor may appeal the Superintendent or designee's decision in accordance with Board policy.

### **Electronic Device Policy**

Electronic and telecommunication devices are a major source of distraction in the classroom. For this reason, **students are not permitted to possess items such as cell phones, smart watches, pagers, radios, CD players, tape recorders, camcorders, DVD players, cameras, or electronic devices or games at school,** unless prior permission has been obtained from the Administrator(s).

If a student is permitted to possess an electronic or telecommunications device at school, including a cell phone, all such devices must be turned off during school hours.

If a School employee observes a student using any electronic or telecommunication device (including a cell phone) during the school day or a school-related activity, the employee will collect the item and turn it into the Administrator(s)'s office. If a student and parent have executed a waiver permitting the student to possess an electronic communication device at school, school officials may power on and search the device if there is a reasonable cause to believe that the device has been used in the

transmission or reception of communications prohibited by law, policy, or regulation. A parent will be contacted to pick up the item and pay the applicable fine. A \$15 fee will be assessed before the parent is able to retrieve the device. An additional \$15 fee will be assessed each subsequent time a device is confiscated. Any disciplinary action will be in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct. PTAA will not be responsible for damage to or loss or theft of confiscated items.

### **Pledges of Allegiance and Moment of Silence**

Each school day, students will recite the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States flag and the Pledge of Allegiance to the Texas flag. Parents may submit a written request to the Superintendent or designee to excuse their student from reciting a pledge. State law requires that one minute of silence will 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 PTAA 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.

### **Recitation 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.” A student will be exempted from this requirement if a parent provides a written statement requesting that the student be excused, PTAA determines that the student has a conscientious objection to the recitation, or the parent is a representative of a foreign government to whom the United States extends diplomatic immunity.

### **Prayer and Meditation**

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

## **SECTION 2: STUDENT HEALTH AND SAFETY**

### **Alcohol-Free School Notice**

In order to provide a safe and alcohol-free environment for students and employees, all alcoholic beverages are prohibited on PTAA property at all times, and at all school-sanctioned activities occurring on or off school property. Student violators are subject to possible prosecution, as allowed by law, as well as the disciplinary terms of the Student Code of Conduct.

### **Tobacco-Free School Notice**

Smoking (including electronic cigarettes, cigars, and pipes) and using tobacco products is prohibited in school buildings, vehicles, or on or near school property, or at school-

related or school-sanctioned events off school property. Students may not possess tobacco products at any of the locations or activities listed above. Student violators are subject to possible prosecution, as allowed by law, as well as the disciplinary terms of the Student Code of Conduct.

### **Drug-Free School Notice**

PTAA believes that student use of illicit drugs is both wrong and harmful. Consequently, PTAA prohibits the use, sale, possession, or distribution of illicit drugs by students on school premises or any school activity, regardless of its location. PTAA also prohibits the use, sale, possession, or distribution of look-alike substances and/or synthetic substances designed to imitate the look and/or effects of illicit drugs. Student violators are subject to possible prosecution, as allowed by law, as well as the disciplinary terms of the Student Code of Conduct.

### **Substance Abuse Prevention and Intervention**

If you are worried that your child may be using or is in danger of experimenting, using, or abusing illegal drugs or other prohibited substances, please contact the school counselor or administrator. 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 Web site:

<http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/mhsa-child-adolescent-services/>.

### **Suicide Awareness**

PTAA 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 <http://www.texasuicideprevention.org> or contact the school counselor for more information related to suicide prevention services available in your area.

### **Asbestos Management Plan**

All school facilities have been inspected for asbestos by a licensed Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act (“AHERA”) inspector. An Asbestos Management Plan has been created for the School in accordance with federal regulations. Parents may view the Asbestos Management Plan at the campus office.

### **Bacterial Meningitis Information**

State law requires PTAA to provide the following information:

*What is bacterial meningitis?* Meningitis is an inflammation of the membranes that surround the brain and spinal cord. Meningitis 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. However, bacterial meningitis is very serious and may involve complicated medical, surgical, pharmaceutical and life support management.

*What are the symptoms of bacterial meningitis?* 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, seizures, discomfort looking into bright lights, confusion, sleepiness and lethargy. In both children and adults, there may be a rash of tiny, red-purple spots or purple patches on the skin. These can occur anywhere on the body. The more symptoms, the higher the risk, so when these symptoms appear seek immediate medical attention. The diagnosis of bacterial meningitis is based on a combination of symptoms and laboratory results.

*How serious is bacterial meningitis?* Bacterial meningitis is a serious, potentially deadly disease that can progress extremely fast. If it is diagnosed early and treated promptly, the majority of people make a complete recovery. However, in some cases it can be fatal or a person may be left with permanent severe health problems or 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 saliva (such as by kissing, or by sharing drinking containers, food, utensils, cigarettes, toothbrushes, etc.) or come in contact with respiratory or throat secretions (such as by coughing or sneezing).

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

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

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

\* Please note that the Texas Department of State Health Services ("TDSHS") requires at least one meningococcal vaccination for grades 7 through 12, and state guidelines recommend this vaccination be administered between age 11 and 12, with a booster dose at 16 years of age. 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 or designee for more information, as this may affect a student who wishes to enroll in a dual credit course taken off campus.

*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 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 Texas Department of Health office to ask about meningococcal vaccine. Additional information may also be found at the web sites for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) and the Texas Department of State Health Services: <https://www.dshs.tx.us/idcu/disease/meningitis/>.

### **Communicable Diseases**

To protect other students from contagious illnesses, students infected with certain diseases are not allowed to come to school while contagious. Parents of students with a communicable or contagious disease should notify the Administrator(s) so that other students who might have been exposed to the disease can be alerted. School authorities will report those students who are suspected of having a reportable condition. A list of reportable conditions can be found on the Texas Department of State Health Services website at: <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/idcu/investigation/conditions/>. Any student excluded from school attendance for reason of communicable disease may be readmitted by one or more of the following methods, as determined by the local health authority:

- Certificate of the attending physician, advanced practice nurse or designee, or physician assistant attesting that the child does not currently have signs or symptoms of a communicable disease or to the disease's non-infectiousness in a school setting;
- Submitting a permit for readmission issued by a local health authority; or
- Meeting readmission criteria as established by the commissioner of health.

Please, contact the school nurse or designee if you have questions or if you are concerned about whether a child should stay home.

### **Head Lice**

Head lice, although not an illness or a disease, is very common among children and is spread very easily through head-to-head contact during play, sports, or nap time and when children share things like brushes, combs, hats, and headphones. If careful observation indicates that a student has head lice, the school nurse or designee will contact the student's parent to pick the child 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 or designee to discuss the treatment used. The nurse or designee can also offer additional recommendations, including subsequent treatments and how best to get rid of lice and prevent their return. Once the child is free from lice, he or she may return to school.

More information on head lice can be obtained from the TDSHS website at: <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/schoolhealth/lice.shtm>.

### **Immunization Requirements**

The State of Texas requires that every child in the state be immunized against vaccine preventable diseases caused by infectious agents in accordance with an established immunization schedule.

To determine the specific number of doses that are required for your student, please read the most recent version of “Texas Minimum State Vaccine Requirements for Students Grades K–12.” For specific immunization requirements, please, contact the school nurse or designee or visit the Texas Department of State Health Services at <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/immunize/school/>.

Proof of immunization may be personal records from a licensed physician or public health clinic with a signature or rubber-stamp validation.

### **Provisional Enrollment**

A student can be enrolled provisionally for no more than 30 days if he or she transfers from one Texas school to another, and is awaiting the transfer or the immunization record.

A student may be enrolled provisionally if the student has an immunization record that indicates the student has received at least one dose of each specified age-appropriate required vaccine. To remain enrolled, the student must complete the required subsequent doses in each vaccine series on schedule and as rapidly as is medically feasible and provide acceptable evidence of vaccination to the school. PTAA shall review the immunization status of a provisionally enrolled student every 30 days to ensure continued compliance in completing the required doses of vaccination. If at the end of the 30-day period, a student has not received a subsequent dose of vaccine, then the student is not in compliance, and PTAA shall exclude the student from school attendance until the required dose is administered.

A student who is homeless, as defined by the McKinney Act (42 U.S.C. § 11302), shall be admitted temporarily for 30 days if acceptable evidence of vaccination is not available. PTAA shall promptly refer the student to appropriate public health programs to obtain the required vaccinations.

### **Exclusions from Immunization Requirements**

Exclusions from immunization requirements are allowable on an individual basis for medical reasons, reasons of conscience (including a religious belief), and active duty with the armed forces of the United States.

To claim exclusion for medical reasons, the student must present a statement signed by the student’s physician (M.D. or D.O.), duly registered and licensed to practice medicine in the United States who has examined the student, in which it is stated that, in the physician’s opinion, the vaccine required is medically contraindicated or poses a significant risk to the health and well-being of the student or any member of the student’s household. Unless it is written in the statement that a lifelong condition exists, the exemption statement is valid for only one year from the date signed by the physician.

To claim an exclusion for reasons of conscience, including a religious belief, a signed Texas Department of State Health Services (“TDSHS”) affidavit must be presented by the student’s parent, stating that the student’s parent declines vaccinations for reasons of conscience, including because of the person’s religious beliefs. The affidavit will be valid for a period of two years. The form affidavit may be obtained by writing the TDSHS Immunization Branch (MC 1946), P.O. Box 149347, Austin, Texas 78714-9347, or online at <https://webds.dshs.state.tx.us/immco/default.aspx>. The form must be

submitted to the Superintendent within 90 days from the date it is notarized. If the parent is seeking an exemption for more than one student in the family, a separate form must be provided for each student. Students, who have not received the required immunizations for reasons of conscience, including religious beliefs, may be excluded from school in times of emergency or epidemic declared by the commissioner of public health.

To claim exclusion for armed forces, the student must prove that he or she is serving on active duty with the armed forces of the United States.

### **Immunization Records Reporting**

The School's record of a student's immunization history, while private in most instances, may be inspected by the Texas Education Agency, local health departments, and TDSHS and transferred to other schools associated with the transfer of the student to those schools.

### **Emergency Medical Treatment**

If a student has a medical emergency at school or a school-related activity and the parent cannot be reached, PTAA staff will seek emergency medical treatment unless the parent has previously provided a written statement denying this authorization. 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 campus registrar to update any information.

### **Student Illness**

When your child is ill, please, contact the school to let us know he or she will not be attending that day. Students must be fever-free without the use of fever-reducing medication and must be free of vomiting/diarrhea without the use of diarrhea suppressing medication for at least 72 hours before returning to school.

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

### **Administration of Medication**

Medication should be administered at home whenever possible. If necessary, medication can be administered at school by the school nurse or designee under the following circumstances:

1. Nonprescription medication brought to school must be submitted to PTAA by a parent along with a written request. The medication must also be in the original and properly labeled container.
2. Prescription medications administered during school hours must be prescribed by a physician or advanced nurse or designee practitioner ("ANP") and filled by a pharmacist licensed in the State of Texas. **In accordance with the Texas Board of Nursing's Nurse or designee Practice Act, PTAA will not administer medications prescribed or fulfilled in Mexico.**

3. Prescription medications must be submitted in a labeled container showing the student's name, name of the medication, reason the medication is being given, proper dosage amounts, the time the medication must be taken, and the method used to administer the medication. Medications sent in plastic baggies or unlabeled containers will NOT be administered.
  4. If the substance is herbal or a dietary supplement, it must be provided by the parent and will be administered only if required by the student's Individualized Education Program ("IEP") or Section 504 plan for a student with disabilities.
  5. Only the amount of medication needed should be delivered to PTAA, *i.e.* enough medication to last one day, one week, etc. In cases of prolonged need, send in the amount for a clearly specified period. Extra medication will not be sent home with the student.
  6. In certain emergency situations PTAA may administer a nonprescription medication to a student but only in accordance with the guidelines developed by the School's medical advisor and when the parent has previously provided written consent for emergency treatment.
- Changes to daily medications require written instruction from the physician or ANP and written permission from the parent. Parents are responsible for advising PTAA that a medication has been discontinued.

### **Asthma and Anaphylaxis Medication**

Asthma and anaphylaxis are life-threatening conditions, and students with those conditions are entitled to possess and self-administer prescription medication while on PTAA property or at school-related events.

Student possession and self-administration of asthma or anaphylaxis medication at school requires the student to demonstrate his or her ability to self-administer the medication to the student's physician or other licensed health care provider and the school nurse or designee, if available. Requirements also include written authorization from the student's parent and physician or other licensed health care provider on file in the school office indicating the student is capable of independently administering his or her own asthma or emergency anaphylaxis medication. Medication in a student's possession must be in an original container with a prescription label. Please note that most pharmacies will place a label on the inhaler device upon request.

### **Steroid Notice**

PTAA does not permit steroid use. A notice shall be posted in a conspicuous location in the school gym or in each other places in a building where physical education classes are conducted.

### **Dyslexia and Related Disorders**

From time to time, students may be tested and, when appropriate, treated for dyslexia and related disorders in accordance with programs, rules and standards approved by the state. Parents will be notified should PTAA determine a need to identify or assess their student for dyslexia and related disorders.

### **Fitness Testing**

According to requirements under state law, PTAA will annually assess the physical fitness of students. PTAA is not required to assess a student for whom, as a result of disability or other condition identified by rule or law, the assessment exam is inappropriate.

### **Spinal Screening**

All children in grades 6–9 must be screened for abnormal spinal curvature before the end of the school year. The screening requirement for students entering grade six or nine may be met if the child has been screened for spinal deformities during the previous year.

A parent who declines participation in the spinal screening provided by PTAA must submit to the Superintendent or designee documentation of a professional examination which includes the results of a forward-bend test. This documentation must be submitted to PTAA during the year the student is scheduled for screening or, if the professional exam is obtained during the following summer, at the beginning of the following school year.

Exemption: A student is exempt from screening if the screening conflicts with the tenets and practices of a recognized church or religious denomination of which the individual is an adherent or member. To qualify for the exemption, the student's parent, managing conservator, or guardian must submit to the Superintendent or designee on or before the day of the screening procedure an affidavit stating the objections to screening.

### **Vision and Hearing Screenings**

All children enrolled in Texas schools must be screened for possible vision and hearing problems in accordance with regulations issued by the Texas Department of State Health Services. Students in certain grade levels identified by state regulations shall be screened for vision and hearing problems.

Screening records for individual students may be inspected by the TDSHS or a local health department, and may be transferred to another school without parental consent.

Exemption: A student is exempt from screening requirements if screening conflicts with the tenets and practices of a recognized church or religious denomination of which the individual is an adherent or a member. To qualify for the exemption, the individual or, if the individual is a minor, the minor's parent, managing conservator, or guardian, must submit to the Superintendent or designee on or before the day of admission an affidavit stating the objections to screening.

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

The PTAA School Health Advisory Council holds quarterly meetings. 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. If you are interested in serving on this committee, contact the Superintendent.

## **Freedom from Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation**

### **Statement of Nondiscrimination**

PTAA prohibits discrimination, including harassment, against any student on the basis of race, color, religion, gender or sex, national origin, disability, age, or any other basis prohibited by law. PTAA also prohibits dating violence, as defined by this Handbook. Retaliation against anyone involved in the complaint process is a violation of school policy.

### **What Constitutes Discrimination?**

For purposes of this Handbook, discrimination against a student is defined as conduct directed at a student on the basis of race, color, religion, gender or sex, national origin, disability, age, or any other basis prohibited by law and that adversely affects the student.

### **What is Prohibited Harassment?**

Prohibited harassment of a student is defined as physical, verbal, or nonverbal conduct based on the student's race, color, religion, gender or sex, national origin, disability, age, or any other basis prohibited by law that is so severe, persistent, or pervasive that the conduct:

- Affects a student's ability to participate in or benefit from an educational program or activity, or creates an intimidating, threatening, hostile, or offensive educational environment;
- Has the purpose or effect of substantially or unreasonably interfering with the student's academic performance; or
- Otherwise adversely affects the student's educational opportunities.

Examples of prohibited harassment may include offensive or derogatory language directed at another person's religious beliefs or practices, accent, skin color, or need for accommodation; threatening or intimidating conduct; offensive jokes; name calling, slurs, or rumors; physical aggression or assault; display of graffiti or printed material promoting racial, ethnic, or other negative stereotypes; or other kinds of aggressive conduct such as theft or damage to property.

### **When is Harassment Considered Sexual and/or Gender-Based?**

In compliance with the requirements of Title IX, PTAA does not discriminate on the basis of sex in its educational programs or activities. Sexual harassment of a student, including harassment committed by another student, includes unwelcome sexual advances; requests for sexual favors; or sexually motivated physical, verbal, or nonverbal conduct when 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, or creates an intimidating, threatening, hostile, or offensive educational environment;
- Has the purpose or effect of substantially or unreasonably interfering with the student's academic performance; or
- Otherwise adversely affects the student's educational opportunities.

Examples of sexual harassment of a student may include sexual advances; touching

intimate body parts or coercing physical contact that is sexual in nature; jokes or conversations of a sexual nature; and other sexually motivated conduct, communications, or contact.

PTAA also does not tolerate sexual harassment of a student by school employees. Romantic or inappropriate social relationships between students and school employees are prohibited. Any sexual relationship between a student and a school employee is always prohibited, even if consensual. (Texas Penal Code § 21.12 and Section 21.003(a) or (b), Education Code).

Sexual harassment of a student by a school employee includes both welcome and unwelcome sexual advances; requests for sexual favors; sexually motivated physical, verbal, or nonverbal conduct; or other conduct or communication of a sexual nature when:

- A school employee causes the student to believe that the student must submit to the conduct in order to participate in a school program or activity, or that the employee will make an educational decision based on whether or not the student submits to the conduct; or
- The conduct is so severe, persistent, or pervasive that it:
  - o Affects the student's ability to participate in or benefit from an educational program or activity, or otherwise adversely affects the student's educational opportunities; or
  - o Creates an intimidating, threatening, hostile, or abusive educational environment.

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.

### **What is Meant by “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 partner. Examples of dating violence against a student may include but not limited to: physical or sexual assaults; name-calling, put-downs, threats to hurt the student or 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 or does not follow the demands of the person; attempts to isolate the student from friends and family; stalking, or encouraging others to engage in these behaviors.

For purposes of this Handbook, dating violence is considered prohibited harassment if the conduct is so severe, persistent, or pervasive that the conduct:

- Affects the student's ability to participate in or benefit from an educational program or activity, or creates an intimidating, threatening, hostile, or offensive educational environment;
- Has the purpose or effect of substantially or unreasonably interfering with the student's



academic performance; or

- Otherwise adversely affects the student's educational opportunities.

### **Retaliation**

PTAA prohibits retaliation against a student alleged to have experienced discrimination or harassment, including dating violence, or another student who, in good faith, makes a report, serves as a witness, or otherwise participates in an investigation. 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.

A student who intentionally makes a false claim, offers false statements, or refuses to cooperate with a school investigation regarding discrimination or harassment is subject to appropriate discipline.

### **Reporting Procedures**

Any student who believes that he or she has experienced prohibited harassment or believes that another student has experienced prohibited harassment should immediately report the alleged acts to a teacher, counselor, the Administrator(s), or other school employee. Alternatively, a student may report prohibited harassment directly to the appropriate Compliance Coordinator designated in the first section of this Handbook.

A student shall not be required to report prohibited harassment to the person alleged to have committed the conduct. Reports concerning prohibited conduct, including reports against the Title IX Coordinator, the ADA/Section 504 Coordinator, and/or the Age Discrimination Coordinator may be directed to the School Board. If a report is made directly to the School Board, PTAA shall appoint an appropriate person to conduct an investigation.

### **Investigation of Complaints**

After receiving a complaint of prohibited discrimination or harassment, PTAA may, but need not, require the student to prepare a written report. Oral complaints will be reduced to written form. Upon receipt of a complaint, the appropriate Compliance Coordinator or other authorized School official shall promptly authorize and undertake an investigation. Following completion of the investigation, the Compliance Coordinator or other authorized School official will prepare a written decision regarding the complaint, including a determination of whether prohibited discrimination or harassment occurred.

When appropriate, PTAA may take interim action to avoid additional opportunities for discrimination or harassment. The investigation may consist of personal interviews with the person making the report, the person against whom the report is filed, and any others with knowledge of the circumstances surrounding the allegations. If the results of the investigation establish that prohibited discrimination or harassment occurred, PTAA shall promptly respond by taking appropriate disciplinary or corrective action reasonably calculated to address the discrimination or harassment and prevent its recurrence.

PTAA may take disciplinary action based on the results of an investigation, even if the

School concludes that the conduct did not rise to the level of harassment prohibited by law or policy.

### **Confidentiality**

To the greatest extent possible, PTAA 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 and comply with applicable law.

### **Appeal**

A student or parent who is dissatisfied with the outcome of the investigation may appeal through the PTAA grievance procedure. A student shall be informed of his or her right to file a complaint with the United States Department of Education Office for Civil Rights.

### **Freedom from Bullying and Cyber-bullying**

PTAA prohibits bullying as defined by this section as well as retaliation against anyone involved in the complaint process. Bullying occurs when a student or group of students engages in written or verbal expression, expression through electronic means, or physical conduct that occurs on school property at a school-sponsored or school-related activity, or in a vehicle operated by PTAA that:

- has the effect or will have the effect of physically harming a student, damaging a student's property, or placing a student in reasonable fear of harm to the student's person or of damage to the student's property; or
- is sufficiently severe, persistent, and pervasive enough the action or threat creates an intimidating, threatening, or abusive educational environment for a student.

Conduct described above is considered bullying if that conduct:

- Exploits an imbalance of power between the student perpetrator and the student victim through written or verbal expression or physical conduct; and
- Interferes with a student's education or substantially disrupts the operation of PTAA.

PTAA also prohibits cyberbullying, which is defined as the use of any electronic communication device to engage in bullying or intimidation.

### **Reporting Procedures**

Any student who believes that he or she has experienced any form of bullying or believes that another student has experienced bullying should immediately report the alleged acts to the Administrator(s), a teacher, counselor, or other school employee. A report may be made orally or in writing. Any school employee who receives notice that a student has or may have experienced bullying shall immediately notify a campus administrator. A failure to immediately report may impair PTAA's ability to investigate and address the prohibited and/or inappropriate conduct.

### **Investigation of Report**

The Administrator(s) shall determine whether the allegations in the report, if proven, would constitute prohibited harassment, and if so proceed under that policy instead. The Administrator(s) shall conduct an appropriate investigation based on the allegations in the report, and shall take prompt interim action calculated to prevent hazing and/or

bullying during the course of an investigation, if appropriate.

The Administrator(s) shall prepare a written report of the investigation, including a determination of whether hazing and/or bullying occurred. If the results of an investigation indicated that hazing and/or bullying occurred, the school shall promptly respond by taking appropriate disciplinary or corrective action reasonably calculated to address the conduct in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct. PTAA may take action based on the results of an investigation, even if the school concludes that the conduct did not rise to the level of hazing and/or bullying under this policy.

### **Confidentiality**

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

### **Appeal**

A student or parent who is dissatisfied with the outcome of the investigation may appeal through the PTAA grievance procedure.

### **Law Enforcement Agencies Questioning of Students**

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

1. The Administrator(s) shall verify and record the identity of the official and request an explanation of the need to question or interview the student at school.
  2. The Administrator(s) ordinarily will make reasonable efforts to notify the student's parent, unless the interviewer raises what the Administrator(s) considers to be a valid objection.
  3. The Administrator(s) ordinarily will be present during the questioning or interview, unless the interviewer raises what the Administrator(s) considers to be a valid objection.
- When the investigation involves allegations of child abuse, special rules apply.

### **Students Taken into Custody**

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

1. Pursuant to an order of the juvenile court;
2. Pursuant to the laws of arrest;
3. By a law enforcement officer if there is probable cause to believe the student has engaged in conduct that violates a penal law, delinquent conduct or conduct in need of supervision, or conduct that violates a condition of probation imposed by the juvenile court;
4. By a probation officer if there is a probable cause to believe the student has violated a condition of probation imposed by the juvenile court;
5. Pursuant to a properly issued directive to apprehend; or
6. By an authorized representative of the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services ("TDFPS"), a law enforcement officer, or a juvenile probation officer, without a court order, under the conditions set out in Section 262.104 of the Texas Family Code

relating to the student's physical health or safety.

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

The Administrator(s) will immediately notify the Superintendent and will ordinarily attempt to notify the parent unless the officer or other authorized person raises what the Administrator(s) considers to be a valid objection to notifying the parents. Because the Administrator(s) 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.

### **Child Abuse Reporting and Programs**

PTAA provides child abuse anti-victimization programs and cooperates with official child abuse investigators as required by law. The School also provides training to its teachers and students in preventing and addressing incidents of sexual abuse and other maltreatment of children, including knowledge of likely warning signs indicating that a child may be a victim of sexual abuse or maltreatment. Assistance, interventions and counseling options are also available.

The School's administration shall cooperate with law enforcement investigations of child abuse, including investigations by the Texas Department of Protective and Family Services. School officials may not refuse to permit an investigator to interview a student who is alleged to be a victim of abuse or neglect at school. School officials may not require the investigator to permit school personnel to be present during an interview conducted at school.

Investigations at school may be conducted by authorized law enforcement or state agencies without prior notification or consent of the student's parent, if necessary.

### **Plan for Addressing Sexual Abuse and Other Maltreatment of Children**

#### **What is Sexual Abuse of a Child?**

The Texas Family Code defines "sexual abuse" as any sexual conduct harmful to a child's mental, emotional, or physical welfare as well as, in certain circumstances, failure to make a reasonable effort to prevent sexual conduct harmful to a child.

#### **What is Other Maltreatment of a Child?**

Under State law, "other maltreatment" of a child includes "abuse" or "neglect," as defined by Texas Family Code sections 261.001 and 261.401.

### **Reporting Obligation**

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 the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services ("DFPS"). Reports may be made by contacting one of the following:

- **Texas Abuse Hotline:** 1-800-252-5400 or, in non-emergency situations only;
- <http://www.txabusehotline.org>;
- Your local police department; or
- Call 911 for emergency situations.

PTAA has established a plan for addressing child sexual abuse and other maltreatment of children (the “Plan”) which is addressed in this section of the Handbook.

### **Methods for Increasing Awareness Regarding Sexual Abuse or Other Maltreatment of Children**

#### **For Staff:**

PTAA annually trains staff in all content areas addressed in the plan. Training is provided by campus staff, administrative staff, or outside agencies as determined by the campus administration.

#### **For Students:**

School counseling staff will address issues to increase awareness regarding sexual abuse and other maltreatment of children and anti-victimization programs with age appropriate conversation and materials no less than once per school year. These discussions will occur in classroom group settings.

#### **For Parents:**

Parents must be aware of warning signs indicating that their child may have been or is being sexually abused or otherwise maltreated. A child who has experienced sexual abuse or other maltreatment should be encouraged to seek out a trusted adult. Be aware as a parent or other trusted adult that evidence of sexual abuse or other maltreatment may be more indirect than disclosures or signs of physical abuse. It is important to remain calm and comforting if your child, or another child, confides in you. Reassure the child that he or she did the right thing in coming to you.

The fact that the abuser is a parent or other family member does not remove your obligation to protect the child. Parents who permit their child to remain in a situation where he or she may be injured or abused may also be subject to prosecution for child abuse. And, if you are frightened for your own safety or that of your child, you should call **911 or 1-800-252- 5400**.

Also remember that parents are legally responsible for the care of their children and must provide their children with safe and adequate food, clothing, shelter, protection, medical care and supervision, or arrange for someone else to provide these things. Failure to do so may be considered neglect.

The Administrator(s) will provide information regarding counseling options available in your area for you and your child if your child is a victim of sexual abuse or other maltreatment. The DFPS also provides early abuse intervention through counseling programs. Services available in your county can be accessed at the following web address:

[http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Prevention\\_and\\_Early\\_Intervention/Programs\\_Available\\_In\\_Your\\_County/default.asp](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Prevention_and_Early_Intervention/Programs_Available_In_Your_County/default.asp).

These websites are also helpful:

Texas Education Agency – Prevention of Child Abuse Overview:

[http://tea.texas.gov/Texas\\_Schools/Safe\\_and\\_Healthy\\_Schools/Child\\_Abuse\\_Prevention/Child\\_Abuse\\_Prevention\\_Overview/](http://tea.texas.gov/Texas_Schools/Safe_and_Healthy_Schools/Child_Abuse_Prevention/Child_Abuse_Prevention_Overview/)

Sexual Abuse Prevention Programs:

<https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/preventing/programs/sexualabus/>

Promoting Healthy Families in Your Neighborhood:

<https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/packet.pdf>

Signs of Child Abuse:

[http://www.keepkidshealthy.com/welcome/commonproblems/child\\_abuse.html](http://www.keepkidshealthy.com/welcome/commonproblems/child_abuse.html)

DFPS – Prevent Child Abuse (HelpandHope.org) <http://helpandhope.org>

DFPS – How to Report Child Abuse or Neglect

[http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Contact\\_us/report\\_abuse.asp](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Contact_us/report_abuse.asp)

Texas Attorney General – What Can We Do About Child Abuse?

<https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/cvs/what-can-we-do-about-child-abuse>

Prevent Child Abuse.org – Texas Chapter [www.preventchildabusetexas.org](http://www.preventchildabusetexas.org)

Texas Council on Family Violence – Abuse Prevention Links <http://www.tcfv.org/>

### **Warning Signs of Sexual Abuse or Other Maltreatment**

Psychological and behavioral signs of possible sexual abuse or other maltreatment may include:

- Nightmares, sleep problems, extreme fears without an obvious explanation.
- Sudden or unexplained personality changes; becoming withdrawn, angry, moody, clingy, “checking out,” or showing significant changes in eating habits.
- Depression or irritability.
- An older child behaving like a young child, for example, bedwetting or thumb sucking.
- Developing fear of certain places or resisting being alone with an adult or young person for unknown reasons.
- Resistance to routine bathing, toileting, or removing clothes, even in appropriate situations.
- Play, writing, drawings, or dreams of sexual or frightening images.
- Refusal to talk about a secret he or she has with an adult or older child.
- Leaving clues that seem likely to provoke a discussion about sexual issues.
- Using new or adult words for body parts.
- Engaging in adult-like sexual activities with toys, objects or other children.
- Developing special relationships with older friends that may include unexplained money, gifts, or privileges.
- Intentionally harming him or herself, for example, drug/alcohol use, cutting, burning, running away, and sexual promiscuity.
- Thinking of self or body as repulsive, dirty, or bad.
- Becoming increasingly secretive about internet or telephone use.

Physical symptoms of possible sexual abuse or other maltreatment include:

- Stomachaches or illness, often with no identifiable reason.
- Difficulty in walking or sitting.
- Stained or bloody underwear.
- Genital or rectal pain, itching, swelling, redness, or discharge.
- Bruises or other injuries in the genital or rectal area.
- Unexplained soreness, pain or bruises around the mouth, sexually transmitted disease, or pregnancy.

Any one sign does not necessarily mean that a child has been sexually abused or maltreated, but the presence of several signs is the time you should begin asking questions and seeking help. Often signs first emerge at other times of stress, such as during a divorce, death of a family member or pet, problems at school or with friends, or other traumatic or anxiety-inducing events.

### **Actions That an Abused Child Should Take**

During student awareness sessions concerning sexual abuse and other maltreatment issues, students will be encouraged to tell a trusted adult in a private and confidential conversation if they have been a victim of sexual abuse or other maltreatment or have been in situations that make them feel uncomfortable in any way. School employees are trained to take appropriate actions to help the child obtain assistance and to follow proper reporting procedures. Older students will also be provided with local crisis hotline numbers to obtain assistance.

### **Available Counseling Options**

A list of counseling providers can be found at:

[http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Prevention\\_and\\_Early\\_Intervention/Programs\\_Available\\_In\\_Your\\_County/](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Prevention_and_Early_Intervention/Programs_Available_In_Your_County/)

### **Interrogations and Searches**

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

Administrators, teachers and other professional personnel may question a student regarding the student's own conduct or the conduct of other students. In the context of school discipline, students have no claim to the right not to incriminate themselves.

Students shall be free from unreasonable searches and seizures by school officials.

School officials may search a student's outer clothing, pockets, or property by establishing reasonable cause or securing the student's voluntary consent.

A search is reasonable if (1) the school official has reasonable grounds for suspecting that the search will uncover evidence of a rule violation or a criminal violation and (2) the scope of the search is reasonably related to the circumstances justifying the search, such as the extent of the search, the objectives of the search, the age and sex of the student, and the nature of the infraction.

### **Desk and Locker Searches**

Students should have no expectation of privacy in the contents of their lockers, desks or other school property. Lockers and desks assigned to students remain at all times under the control and jurisdiction of PTAA. If a student puts a personal lock on a locker, the combination or a copy of the key must be given to the issuing teacher. The School will make periodic inspections of lockers and desks at any time, with or without notice or student consent. School officials will remove any item that violates school policy or that may potentially be dangerous.

Students have full responsibility for the security of their lockers and desks, and shall be

held responsible for any prohibited items found therein. A student's parent shall be notified if any prohibited articles or materials are found in a student's locker or desk, or on the student's person.

### **Vehicles on Campus**

Vehicles parked on school property and property under school control are under the jurisdiction of PTAA and may be searched at any time if reasonable suspicion exists to believe that the search will result in evidence that school rules or other laws have been violated. If a vehicle subject to search is locked, the student shall be asked to unlock the vehicle and consent to a search of the vehicle. If the student refuses to permit the vehicle to be searched, PTAA may contact the student's parents and/or law enforcement officials. A student may be held responsible for and in possession of prohibited items found in his or her vehicle parked on school property or at a school-related event.

### **Random Drug Searches**

In order to ensure a drug-free learning environment, PTAA conducts random drug searches of all school facilities. PTAA may use or contract for specially trained nonaggressive dogs to sniff out and alert school officials to the current presence of concealed prohibited or illegal items, including drugs and alcohol. Canine visits may be unannounced. The dogs shall be used to search vacant classrooms, vacant common areas, the areas around student lockers, and the areas where vehicles are parked on PTAA property or at school-related events. The dogs shall not be asked to alert on students. A dog alert to a locker, vehicle, or item in a classroom, constitutes reasonable grounds for a search by school officials.

### **Procedures for Use of Restraint and Time-Outs**

School employees, volunteers or independent contractors are authorized to use restraint in the event of an emergency and subject to the following limitations:

- Only reasonable force, necessary to address the emergency, may be used.
- The restraint must be discontinued at the point at which the emergency no longer exists.
- The restraint must be implemented in such a way as to protect the health and safety of the student and others.
- The student may not be deprived of basic human necessities.

At no time, however, may a student be placed in seclusion.

A student with a disability may not be confined in a locked box, locked closet or other specially designated locked space as either a discipline management practice or a behavior management technique.

### **Visitor and Volunteer Policy**

PTAA encourages parents and family members to regularly visit the school and become involved in student activities. The impact that positive parental involvement has on the learning and development of students is immeasurable. With that in mind, the following policies must be adhered to so that a safe, secure, and productive learning environment



can be ensured for all.

- Visitors MUST sign in at the main office whenever they are on campus. A valid ID must be provided to scan through the RAPTOR system. They will be provided with a visitor ID that must be worn while on campus. Visitors are not permitted to make unscheduled or drop-in visits to classrooms.
- When visiting campus to meet with teaching staff, visitors must have a pre-arranged time set up with the teacher(s) in question except for urgent matters. Times are best arranged via email. An email directory is located on our website. With few exceptions, conferences are scheduled during teacher/team planning time, and/or immediately before or after school. Under no circumstances can a teacher be interrupted while providing instruction before, during, or after the school day to meet with a parent.
- Visitors to campus must be the parent, guardians, or other adult family members with permission of the parent/guardian. Students' friends, younger siblings, and other non-related individuals cannot visit the campus during school hours.
- Volunteers MUST go through a background check conducted by our district office. Once the check is cleared, volunteers are notified and may begin helping on campus. Until this clearance is obtained, they are not to be involved in any educational or extra-curricular activities.

Additionally, the Administrator(s) may take the following actions whenever there is a school visitor:

- Establish an electronic database for the purpose of storing information concerning visitors. Information stored in the electronic database may be used only for the purpose of school security, and may not be sold or otherwise disseminated to a third party for any purpose.
- Verify whether the visitor is a sex offender registered with the computerized central database maintained by the Department of Public Safety or any other database accessible by PTAA.

Any visitor identified as a sex offender shall be escorted by school personnel at all times during a school visit and shall have access only to common areas of the campus.

## **Disruptions**

In order to protect student safety and sustain an educational program free from disruption, state law permits PTAA to take action against any person – student or nonstudent – who:

- Disrupts classes while on school property or on public property that is within 500 feet of school 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; entering a classroom without authorization; and disrupting the activity with profane language or any misconduct.
- Interferes with an authorized activity by seizing control of all or part of a building.
- Interferes with the movement of people at an exit or an entrance to school property.
- Interferes with the movement of people in an exit, an entrance, or a hallway of a school building without authorization from an administrator.
- Interferes with the transportation of students in school vehicles.
- Uses force, violence, or threats in an attempt to prevent participation in an authorized

assembly.

- Uses force, violence, or threats in an attempt to prevent people from entering or leaving school property without authorization from an administrator.
- Uses force, violence, or threats to cause disruption during an assembly.

### **Emergency Closings**

Generally, PTAA dismisses classes for weather-related events on the same days as surrounding local independent school districts. Any closures for weather will be broadcast on local television and/or radio stations. PTAA may also need to close during certain emergency situations beyond the control of school officials. The announcement of non-weather related school closings will be broadcast on local television and/or radio stations as early as possible. Any emergency closures will also be posted on the PTAA website.

### **Drills: Fire, Tornado, and Other Emergencies**

Students, teachers, and other staff will participate in drills of emergency procedures. When the alarm is sounded, students should follow the direction of school staff quickly, quietly, and in an orderly manner. Order rather than speed shall be stressed. Defined instructions for vacating each room will be posted in each room, and students will be instructed in these procedures.

### **Pest Control Information**

PTAA periodically applies pesticides inside school buildings and on school grounds. Except in an emergency, signs will be posted 24 hours before application. Students may not reenter a treated area inside a building or use an area on school grounds for at least 12 hours following application. Parents who want to be notified prior to pesticide application may contact the Superintendent or designee.

### **Videotaping of Students**

For safety purposes, including the maintenance of order and discipline, surveillance cameras may be used to monitor student behavior in classrooms, on school vehicles, and in school common areas. Video recordings may be reviewed routinely to document student misconduct and used by PTAA staff when investigating an incident. Tapes and other video recordings will be available for viewing pursuant to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act ("FERPA").

## **SECTION 3: ACADEMICS AND GRADING**

### **Academic Programs**

The Administrator(s) will provide students and parents with information regarding academic programs to prepare for higher education and career choices.

A student removed from the regular classroom to in-school suspension or another setting will have an opportunity to complete his or her daily work just as if they were in the regular learning center.

Students and parents are encouraged to discuss options for ensuring that students

complete all work required with a teacher or the Administrator(s).

### **Curriculum and Instruction**

The Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (“TEKS”) require all students to demonstrate the knowledge and skills necessary to read, write, compute, problem solve, think critically, apply technology, and communicate across all subject areas. TEKS are the basis of curricular planning for each grade level and each content area. All students enrolled in grades 3-11 will participate in the appropriate Texas state assessments. PTAA offers instruction in the TEKS of the appropriate grade levels in the following required curriculum:

1. A foundation curriculum that includes:
  - a. English language arts and reading (including spelling, handwriting and cursive writing);
  - b. Mathematics;
  - c. Science;
  - d. Social studies; and
2. An enrichment curriculum that includes
  - a. Languages other than English, to the extent possible;
  - b. Health education;
  - c. Physical education (“PE”);
  - d. Fine Arts;
  - e. Career and technical education; and
  - f. Technology applications.

### **STEM Programs**

PTAA offers career and technical education programs in both Engineering and Computer Coding, the fastest growing fields within STEM occupations. STEM is an acronym for Science, Technology, Engineering and Math education. PTAA focuses on these areas together not only because the skills and knowledge in each discipline are essential for student success, but also because these fields are deeply intertwined in the real world and in how students learn most effectively. STEM is an interdisciplinary and applied approach that is coupled with hands-on, problem-based learning. Our classes:

- Integrate math, science, and technology content and skills.
- Introduce mechanics, electrical circuits, and applied mathematical reasoning that all too often are stumbling blocks for Middle and High school students.
- Initiate complex, strategic problem-solving and higher-order thinking.

PTAA will take steps to ensure that lack of English language skills will not preclude a student from participating in all educational programs.

### **Trilingual Education**

In Middle School, PTAA’s intent is to offer English, Spanish, and Mandarin Chinese languages. Spanish and Mandarin Chinese will be taught to provide an understanding of other cultures and a global education. Many of today’s students will work for companies that operate and compete in a global marketplace; some may even have

opportunities to work overseas themselves. We also recognize that many would be enriched and better prepared to participate in our democracy by learning more about the diverse cultures found in their own communities. A globalized education gives them a generous amount of exposure to the rest of the world, with a goal of equipping them to take advantage of emerging economic opportunities. Over the next decade, it is estimated the demand for college-educated talent will exceed the growth in supply for most of the developed world.

### **Progress Reports/Report Cards**

Students and parents are provided a report card every six weeks. Interim progress reports are available to parents through Skyward Family Access. Please familiarize yourself with our school calendar and our marking periods. Students who are enrolled in virtual classes will also receive regular progress reports and report cards that will reflect their progress in their courses as of the end of each respective marking period. For students receiving special education services, progress is reported in the same manner as all students. The student's ARD committee will conduct at least one formal annual review each year to evaluate overall progress.

### **Grading and Credit**

All semester grades are recorded as numerical grades and given as submitted by the teacher of record. In determining course credit the following method is used:

90-100 = A

80-89 = B

70-79 = C

< 70 = F

Credit will be awarded for an average of 70 or higher in each course. In courses that are two-semester courses, credit will be awarded when an average of the two semesters is 70 or higher.

Classes use weighted category grading. Please contact your campus administrator for the weights.

### **Homework and Assignments**

Research reveals that homework, when carefully designed, implemented, and evaluated, is an effective tool for improving understanding, enriching learning, encouraging personal connections, and providing opportunities to pursue special interests. In broad terms, homework includes written work, reading, studying and preparing for class, and other activities related to classroom work, but assigned to be done at home. Teachers have the discretion to set deadlines for students to complete and return homework and other assignments.

### **Late Work**

PTAA has implemented a no late policy in order to teach students responsibility, time management, and to simulate real world deadlines. All work submitted by the posted due date will be eligible for full credit. The only late work that will be accepted is late work following an excused absence, as described in the first section of this Handbook. A reasonable amount of make-up time will be given for these absences. For these

absences, students are still strongly encouraged to submit work prior to being absent whenever possible.

For absences due to other legitimate reasons such as personal medical events/illness, deaths in immediate family, or any other unforeseen events, staff and teachers will work cooperatively with parents and students to adjust the due dates in advance. Make-up work will only be accepted with prior approval after the student has returned from the absence. Students grades K–12 are not allowed to make-up work from unexcused absences, including family vacations.

Given the dynamic nature of learning based on best practices under the Teaching-Learning Cycle where teachers are modifying their curriculum to fit learning needs, it is not always possible for teachers to have an exact plan of assignments for future weeks. For this reason, it is not possible to provide students work in advance of other students to facilitate time off.

### **Middle School Courses and Credits**

PTAA students have the opportunity to take at least two courses (Algebra 1 and Spanish 1 or Mandarin 1) for high school credit. Students in grades 7 and 8 are eligible for additional courses for high school credit. Qualification will be determined based on previous school recommendations, state assessment history, and placement testing. Students successfully completing a high school course in middle school will be given the corresponding credit towards graduation requirements and will continue to advance to the next level of course, as appropriate.

### **High School Graduation Requirements**

PTAA shall ensure that each student enrolls in the courses that complete the curriculum requirements identified by the State Board of Education (“SBOE”) for the foundation high school program, or the recommended or advanced high school program.

### **Requirements for a High School Diploma in Texas**

Under the new foundation graduation program, a student must meet the following requirements to receive a high school diploma:

- complete the required number of credits established by the State and any additional credits required by PTAA;
- complete any locally required courses in addition to the courses mandated by the State;
- achieve passing scores on certain EOC assessments or approved substitute assessments, unless specifically waived as permitted by State law; and
- demonstrate proficiency, as determined by PTAA, in the specific communication skills required by the State Board of Education.

### **Testing Requirements for Graduation**

Students are required, with limited exceptions, to perform satisfactorily on the following EOC assessments: English I, English II, Algebra I, Biology, and United States History. A student who has not achieved sufficient scores on the EOC assessments will have opportunities to retake the assessments. Students must perform successfully on EOC

assessments, if applicable to the course taken, in order to receive High School credit.

### **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 and diploma. 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. 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 the student’s parents are advised of the specific benefits of graduating with an endorsement and submit written permission to an appropriate school administrator 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 acknowledgements” that will be acknowledged on a student’s diploma and transcript. Performance acknowledgements are available for outstanding performance in bilingualism and bi-literacy, in a dual credit course; on an AP or IB exam; on the PSAT, ACT-Plan, SAT, or ACT exam; or for earning a nationally or internationally recognized license or certificate. The criteria for earning these performance acknowledgements are prescribed by state rules, and the Administrator(s) can provide more information about these acknowledgments.

### **High School GPA and Class Rank**

We utilize various GPA scales to calculate class rank. Regular classes are on a 4.0 scale, AP and/or Honor classes are on a 5.0 scale, Dual Credit classes are on a 6.0 scale. Grades earned in the following courses are usually excluded when calculating the weighted GPA and academic class rank:

- High school PE and/or athletics
- Local credits
- Correspondence courses
- Summer school courses
- Credit by examination
- Credit for acceleration
- Credit recovery courses not taken through PTAA
- Home school courses
- Distance Learning and online courses from a non-accredited private or public school
- Courses taken in foreign countries (unless offered by an accredited US school)
- High school courses taken while the student is in middle school
- Pass/fail courses

- Non-accredited private schools

### **Valedictorian and Salutatorian**

Valedictorian and Salutatorian honors will be awarded to the students with the highest and second highest GPA. GPAs will be calculated to the ten-thousandths place. To be considered for the award, students must attend at least 4 complete consecutive semesters at PTAA beginning the fall of the Junior year. In years where the class size is relatively small, class ranks may not be completed.

### **Community Service**

While academics is our prime focus, PTAA will also focus on developing productive citizens. Community Service is giving of one's time for the betterment of others. Students will be required to earn a minimum of 20 community service hours. Any student who earns 50+ hours will be awarded a graduation cord. Hours can start to accumulate in June following the completion of eighth grade. It will be the student's responsibility to track hours earned and turn them into the appropriate campus staff member.

### **Transferred Grades**

When a student transfers grades for properly documented and eligible courses, the District shall assign weight to those grades based on the categories and grade weight system used by PTAA.

### **Withdrawal Prior to the End of the Semester**

Students who withdraw prior to the end of the semester and before all exams are completed will NOT receive a semester grade or semester credit from a PTAA campus. The grade in progress at the time of withdrawal will be sent to the new school. The student's new school will determine how the grade information sent by PTAA for the current grading period will be processed and credits calculated/awarded.

### **Enrollment Prior to the End of the Semester**

If the previous school has not completed the semester, the withdrawal/transfer grades from the previous school will be used with the grades earned for the remainder of the grading period to determine that grade for the grading period. The student will take the semester final to be used in calculating the semester average and course credit.

### **Placement of Former Home School Students**

#### **High School Course Credits**

Students entering PTAA who wish to obtain high school level credit for courses completed in home school settings must follow the procedures below.

Request high school credit earned through home school within the first nine weeks of enrollment at PTAA.

Submit copies of student assessment results, work samples, and any other evidence of course completion.

Submit a detailed outline and/or course syllabus and copies of instructional materials.

All required items above should be given to the campus administrator. After submission

of the credit request and required items, PTAA staff will review the materials, and course credit will be awarded based on the level and type of work completed, relevancy of the course itself, and the level to which the course addresses the Texas state standards (TEKS) for the credit being requested. Submission of the credit request and required items does not guarantee public school credit. In addition, acceptance of home school credit by other private schools does not obligate or guarantee credit for these courses by PTAA.

If PTAA determines that the student appears to be deficient in particular areas of the course or not enough documentation is available to award course credit, the student will be required to complete an end-of-semester, end-of-course, or an equivalent exam to determine course credit. Such exams will assess overall content knowledge of the courses as outlined in the Texas state standards (TEKS).

### **Grades K-8 Placement**

Students entering PTAA in grades K–8 from home school programs will follow the same procedures 1–3 above for high school. Work completed in home school settings will be assessed by school staff to determine the level to which the grade-level and subjects align to Texas state standards (TEKS) and PTAA courses. Students may be requested to take an end-of-semester, end-of-course assessment. The data from documentation and/or assessment will be used in conjunction with the overall assessment of the curriculum used in the home school setting to place the students in the appropriate grade.

### **Standardized Testing**

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

In addition to routine tests and other measures of achievement, students in grades 3–8 will take state-mandated assessments, such as the 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, unless the student is enrolled in a reading or math course intended for students above the student's current grade level, in order for the student to be promoted to the next grade level.

### **End-of-Course Assessments**

End-of-course (“EOC”) assessments are required and will be administered for the following High School courses:

Algebra I; English I, II; Biology; and United States History.

Students completing any of these High School courses in Middle School will be required to take the EOC for that course.

Masters, Meets or Approaches performance on the applicable assessments will be required for graduation, except in circumstances where a student may be eligible to



graduate in accordance with a plan approved by an Individual Graduation Committee. (See “Individual Graduation Committee Decisions” above.) Once a student passes the EOC in Middle School, the student will not be required to repeat the course again in High School.

There are three testing windows during the school 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**

This alternative STAAR assessment is for students receiving special education services as determined by the student’s ARD committee. These particular EOC assessments may have different testing windows than the general assessments, and the ARD committee will determine whether successful performance on the assessments will be required for graduation.

### **STAAR-L**

STAAR -L, which is a linguistically accommodated assessment, will be available for students who have been determined to be limited English proficient and who require this type of testing accommodation. STAAR-L is only available to students in grades 3-5.

### **Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (“TELPAS”)**

The TELPAS is a system of statewide assessments administered to all Limited English Proficient (“LEP”) students in grades K–12. The TELPAS measures English ability based on the stages of language development of second language learners. These results will further the understanding of the educational needs of LEP students by providing a state- level measure of both their current academic English levels and their annual progress in English.

### **Promotion and Retention**

A student may be promoted on the basis of academic achievement and/or demonstrated proficiency in the subject matter of the course or grade level. To earn credit in a course, a student must demonstrate mastery on grade level standards and meet PTAA’s requirements for attendance.

Students in grades K–8 will be advanced based on a number of factors, including state test results; reading and math ability; maturity (in lower grades); and class grades. Decisions are made by a committee of teachers, administrators, and, where applicable, counseling and special education staff. Parents are notified at least four weeks before the end of the school year if retention is a possibility.

A student in grades 9–12 will advance to a grade level based on the number of course credits earned.

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.

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 exam 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 exam in English.

If a student in grade 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.

If a student in grade 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.

Parents of students who do not perform satisfactorily on their STAAR or EOC assessments will be notified that their child will participate in an Accelerated Instructional Program designed to improve performance. 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 Administrator(s), the student’s teacher, and the student’s parent will determine the additional special instruction the student will receive.

If a student fails after a third attempt, the student will be retained at his or her current grade level. The parent, however, may appeal this decision to the Committee. A decision to promote a student to the next grade level must be unanimous. Regardless of 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.

In addition to the requirements listed above for students in grades 5 and 8, a student may be considered for retention if they have met any of the following criteria:

- failed one or more core subject areas;
- failed one or more state assessments;
- is below level in one or more core subject areas;
- missed more than 10% of instructional days in an academic year. \*The decision must be made by a committee, which consists of the child’s core subject area teachers, the counselor, and the Administrator(s).

Students will also have multiple opportunities to retake EOC assessments.

### **Students with Disabilities**

Upon the recommendation of the Admission, Review, and Dismissal (“ARD”) Committee, a student with disabilities who is receiving special education services may be promoted and/or permitted to graduate under the provisions of his or her Individualized Education Program (“IEP”).

### **Credit by Exam**

PTAA uses examinations and guidelines established by the State Board of Education to

offer credit and acceleration by exam.

### **If a Student has Prior Instruction**

A student in grades 6–12 who has previously taken a course or subject (but did not receive credit for it) may, in circumstances determined by the Administrator(s), be permitted to earn credit by passing an exam on the essential knowledge and skills defined for the course or subject. To receive credit, a student must score at least 70% on the exam.

The Attendance Review Committee may also offer a student with excessive absences an opportunity to receive credit for a course by passing an exam.

### **If a Student has Not Taken the Course**

A student will be permitted to take an exam to earn credit for an academic course or subject area for which the student has had no prior instruction or to accelerate to the next grade level. The exams offered by PTAA are approved by the Board of Directors. The dates on which exams are scheduled during the 2020-2021 year will be published in an appropriate school publication and on the PTAA website.

A student in grade 6 or above will earn course credit with a passing score of at least 80 on the exam, or a score designated by the state for an exam that has alternate scoring standards. A student may take an exam to earn course credit no more than twice. If a student fails to achieve the designated score on the approved exam before the beginning of the school year in which the student would need to enroll in the course according to the school's course sequence, the student must complete the course.

If a student plans to take an exam, the student (or parent) must register with the Counselor/Administrator(s) no later than 30 days prior to the scheduled testing date. PTAA will not honor a request by a parent to administer a test on a date other than the published dates. If PTAA agrees to administer a test other than the one chosen by the school, the student's parents will be responsible for the cost of the exam.

### **Computer Resources**

To prepare students for an increasingly computerized society, PTAA has made a substantial investment in computer technology for instructional purposes. Use of these resources is restricted to students working under a teacher's supervision and for approved purposes only. Students and parents must read and agree to abide by the Student Acceptable Use Policy found in this Handbook.

### **Counseling Academic Advising**

Students and parents are encouraged to talk with the Administrator(s) to learn about course offerings, class selection, college choices. Each spring, students in 8th–12th grade will be provided with information on anticipated course offerings for the next year and other information that will help to make the most of academic and vocational opportunities.

### **Personal Counseling**

The Administrator(s) is available to assist students with a wide range of personal

concerns, including social, family, or emotional issues, and substance abuse. The Administrator(s) may also provide information about community resources to address these concerns. A student who wishes to meet with the Administrator(s) should set an appointment through the School Secretary.

### **Extracurricular Activities, Clubs, and Organizations**

Participation in school-related 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 and not a right. Eligibility for participation in many school-related activities is governed by state law and rules of the University Interscholastic League (“UIL”), a statewide association overseeing interscholastic competition between public schools. Additional information regarding extracurricular activities, clubs, and organizations may be obtained from the Administrator(s).

Participation in these activities may result in events that occur off-campus. When PTAA arranges transportation for these events, students are required to use the transportation provided by PTAA to and from the event. Exceptions may only be made with approval from the activity’s coach or sponsor.

**Please note:** 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 of organization rules is also a violation of school rules, the consequences specified by the Student Code of Conduct or by local policy will apply in addition to any consequences specified by the organization.

### **Physical Education Requirements**

All Middle School students will engage in at least 150 minutes per week of structured moderate-to-vigorous physical activity for four semesters as part of the physical education curriculum.

### **Physical Education Exemption**

Short-term exemption from physical education is possible for students who have physical handicaps, illnesses, or other incapacities that a physician deems severe enough to warrant exemption or severe enough to warrant modified activity in such classes. Each case is handled on an individual basis as follows:

Each request for exemption or for modified activity must be accompanied by a physician’s certificate. Such certificates are honored, but must be renewed each year. When the certificate will allow modified activities in class, the student should remain in physical education class. The teachers adjust the activities of the student to the disability.

An exempted student may be admitted to regular physical education activities only upon presentation of a written statement from the same physician who signed the original exemption.

### **Special Programs Bilingual/ESL Services**

PTAA offers Bilingual/English as a Second Language (“ESL”) services for English language learners who are limited to their English proficiency. The program is designed to assist students identified as having Limited English Proficiency with development in language – listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The goal of this program is to provide additional English language assistance to students, enabling them to become academically successful in all classes. Students are assessed with state- approved Oral Language Proficiency and Norm-Referenced Test to qualify for placement in the program. If the test results indicate either limited oral or limited cognitive academic English ability, the student (with parent approval) is provided additional English language support.

### **Special Education Services**

PTAA has the responsibility of identifying, locating, and evaluating individuals with disabilities who are 5 to 21 years of age and who fall within the school’s jurisdiction. If you know or suspect that your student has a disability, please contact the Administrator(s) for information about available programs, assessments, and services. Special education services are specifically designed to meet the unique needs of students with disabilities. Each student who receives special education services has an Individual Education Plan (“IEP”), which is developed by the student’s ARD Committee. The ARD Committee considers the student’s disability and determines appropriate accommodations, supplementary aids, and/or services that are necessary for the student to participate in the general curriculum.

All special education services are provided in the least restrictive environment, which may be special education settings, general education settings, or a combination of both. All students receiving special education services are educated to the maximum extent appropriate with their non-disabled peers as well as participating in all school activities on the same basis as students who are not disabled.

The *Notice of Procedural Safeguards – Rights of Parents of Students with Disabilities*, can be obtained from a campus administrator or at the Texas Education Agency Special Education Website:

[http://tea.texas.gov/Curriculum\\_and\\_Instructional\\_Programs/Special\\_Education/](http://tea.texas.gov/Curriculum_and_Instructional_Programs/Special_Education/).

### **Providing Assistance to Students Who Have Learning Difficulties or Who Need Special Education Services**

If a student is experiencing learning difficulties, the parent may contact [name, title, phone number] to learn about PTAA’s overall general education referral or screening system for support services. This system links students to a variety of support options, including referral for a special education evaluation. Students having difficulty in the regular classroom should be considered for tutorial, compensatory, and other academic or behavior support services that are available to all students, including a process based on Response to Intervention (“Rtl”). The implementation of Rtl has the potential to have a positive impact on PTAA’s ability to meet the needs of all struggling students. At any time, a parent is entitled to request an evaluation for special education services by presenting a written request to [name, title], or an administrative employee. PTAA must, within 15 school days of receiving the request, either (1) give the parent an

opportunity to give written consent for the evaluation or (2) refuse to provide the evaluation and provide the parent with written notice that explains why the child will not be evaluated. This written notice will include a statement that informs the parents of their rights if they disagree with PTAA. Additionally, the parent will receive a copy of the *Notice of Procedural Safeguards – Rights of Parents of Students with Disabilities*. If consent for evaluation is obtained, PTAA must complete the evaluation and report within 45 school days of the date PTAA receives the written consent. PTAA must give a copy of the evaluation report to the parent.

### **Section 504 Services**

PTAA provides a free appropriate public education to each qualified student with a disability, regardless of the nature or severity of the student's disability. A "student with a disability" is one who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the student's major life activities, has a record of having such impairment, or is regarded as having such impairment. A student with a disability is "qualified" if he or she is between the ages of 3 and 21, inclusive.

An appropriate education is the provision of regular or special education and related services that are (1) designed to meet the student's individual educational needs as adequately as the needs of students who do not have disabilities are met; and (2) based on adherence to procedures that satisfy federal requirements for educational setting, evaluation and placement, and procedural safeguards.

Qualified students with disabilities will be placed in the regular educational environment, unless PTAA demonstrates that education in the regular environment with the use of supplemental aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily. Should an alternate educational environment be necessary, PTAA will comply with all legal requirements regarding least restrictive environment and comparable facilities for students with disabilities. In providing or arranging for nonacademic and extracurricular services and activities, PTAA will ensure that a qualified student with a disability participates with students who do not have disabilities to the maximum extent appropriate.

To be eligible for services and protections against discrimination on the basis of disability under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, a student must be determined, as a result of an evaluation, to have a "physical or mental impairment" that substantially limits one or more major life activities. If a student has or is suspected of having a disability, or requires special services, parents or teachers should contact the Administrator(s) for information concerning available programs, assessments, and services.

## **SECTION 4: STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT**

### **Purpose of the Student Code of Conduct**

To function properly, education must provide an equal learning opportunity for all students by recognizing, valuing, and addressing the individual needs of every student. In addition to the regular curriculum, principles and practices of good citizenship must also be taught and modeled by school staff. To foster an orderly and distraction-free environment, PTAA has established this Student Code of Conduct ("the Code") in

accordance with state law and the PTAA open-enrollment charter. The Code has been adopted by the Board of Directors, and provides information to parents and students regarding expectations for behavior, consequences of misconduct, and procedures for administering discipline.

In accordance with state law, the Code will be posted at each PTAA campus and/or will be available for review at the campus office. Parents will be notified of any violation that may result in a student being suspended or expelled from PTAA. Students must be familiar with the standards set forth in the Student Code of Conduct, as well as campus and classroom rules.

The Code does not define all types and aspects of student behavior, as PTAA may impose campus or classroom rules in addition to those found in the Code. These rules may be posted in classrooms or given to the student and may or may not constitute violations of the Code. When students participate in student activities, they will also be expected to follow the guidelines and constitutions that further specify the organization's expectations, student behavior and consequences.

### **Authority and Jurisdiction**

PTAA has disciplinary authority over a student:

1. During the regular school day and while the student is going to and from school on PTAA transportation;
2. During lunch periods in which a student is allowed to leave campus;
3. While the student is in attendance at any school-related activity, regardless of time or location;
4. For any school-related misconduct, regardless of time or location;
5. For any expulsion offense committed while on PTAA property or while attending a school-sponsored or school-related activity of PTAA or another school in Texas;
6. While the student is in transit to or from school or to or from school-related activities or events;
7. When retaliation against a school employee or volunteer occurs or is threatened, regardless of time or location;
8. When the student commits a felony, as provided by Texas Education Code §§ 37.006 or 37.0081; and
9. When criminal mischief is committed on or off PTAA property or at a school-related event.

### **Reporting Crimes**

In addition to disciplinary consequences, misdemeanor and felony offenses committed on campus or while attending school-sponsored or school-related activities will be reported to an appropriate law enforcement agency.

### **Standards for Student Conduct**

Each student is expected to:

- Demonstrate courtesy, even when others do not.
- Behave in a responsible manner, always exercising self-discipline.
- Attend all classes, regularly and on time.

- Prepare for each class; take appropriate materials and assignments to class.
- Meet PTAA's standards of grooming and dress.
- Obey all campus and classroom rules.
- Respect the rights and privileges of students, teachers, and other PTAA staff and volunteers.
- Respect the property of others, including PTAA property and facilities.
- Cooperate with and assist the school staff in maintaining safety, order, and discipline.
- Adhere to the requirements of the Student Code of Conduct.

### **Discipline Management Techniques**

Disciplinary techniques are designed to improve conduct and to encourage students to adhere to their responsibilities as members of the school community. Disciplinary action will draw on the professional judgment of teachers and administrators and on a range of discipline management techniques. Discipline will be correlated to the seriousness of the offense, the student's age and grade level, the frequency of misbehavior, the student's attitude, the effect of the misconduct on the school environment, and statutory requirements.

Because of these factors, discipline for a particular offense, unless otherwise specified by law, may bring into consideration varying techniques and responses.

The following discipline management techniques may be used—alone or in combination—for behavior prohibited by the Student Code of Conduct or by campus or classroom rules:

- Assignment of school duties such as cleaning or picking up litter.
- Behavioral contracts.
- Cooling-off time or "time-out."
- Counseling by teachers, counselors, or administrative personnel.
- Rewards for positive behavior.
- Demerits.
- Detention.
- Expulsion from PTAA, as specified in the expulsion section of the Code.
- Grade reductions for cheating, plagiarism, and as otherwise permitted by policy.
- In-school suspension, as specified in the suspension section of the Code.
- Out-of-school suspension, as specified in the suspension section of the Code.
- Parent-teacher conferences.
- Penalties identified in individual student organizations' extracurricular standards of behavior.
- Referral to an outside agency or legal authority for criminal prosecution in addition to disciplinary measures imposed by PTAA.
- School-assessed and school-administered probation (final warning contracts).
- Seating changes within the classroom.
- Sending the student to the office or other assigned area.
- Techniques or penalties identified in individual student organizations' extracurricular standards of behavior.
- Temporary confiscation of items that disrupt the educational process.
- Verbal correction, oral or written.
- Withdrawal of privileges, such as participation in extracurricular activities, field trips,



eligibility for seeking and holding honorary offices, or membership in school- sponsored clubs and organizations.

- Withdrawal or restriction of bus privileges.
- Other strategies and consequences as determined by school officials.

### **Corporal Punishment**

PTAA will NOT administer corporal punishment upon a student for misconduct.

### **Student Code of Conduct Offenses**

The categories of conduct below are prohibited at school and all school-related activities.

#### **Level I Offenses:**

1. Causing an individual to act through the use of threat or coercion.
2. Cheating or copying the work of another.
3. Directing profanity, vulgar language, or obscene gestures toward another student or school employee.
4. Discharging a fire extinguisher without valid cause.
5. Disobeying conduct rules regarding school transportation.
6. Engaging in any conduct that school officials might reasonably believe will substantially disrupt the school program or incite violence.
7. Engaging in disruptive actions or demonstrations that substantially disrupt or materially interfere with school activities.
8. Engaging in verbal or written exchanges that threaten the safety of another student, a school employee, or school property.
9. Failing to comply with directives given by school personnel (insubordination).
10. Falsifying records, passes, or other school-related documents.
11. Gambling.
12. Inappropriate or indecent exposure of a student's private body parts (depending on nature, severity and circumstances, this offense may also rise to a Level II offense). See glossary.
13. Leaving school grounds or school-sponsored events without permission.
14. Making false accusations or hoaxes regarding school safety.
15. Possessing pornographic material.
16. Possessing published or electronic material that is designed to promote or encourage illegal behavior or that could threaten school safety.
17. Possession of telecommunications or other electronic devices, including displaying, turning on, or using a telecommunications device (including a cellular telephone or other electronic device) while on school property during the school day.
18. Recording the voice or image of another without the prior consent of the individual(s) being recorded or in any way that disrupts the educational environment or invades the privacy of others.
19. Refusing to accept discipline management techniques assigned by a teacher or Administrator(s).
20. Repeated tardiness.

21. Repeatedly violating communicated campus or classroom standards of conduct.
22. Throwing objects that can cause bodily injury or property damage.
23. Violating dress and grooming standards as communicated in the Student Handbook.

***Disciplinary Consequences*** (may not necessarily be followed in order and progressive disciplinary measures are not required)

1. After school detention.
2. Application of one or more Discipline Management Techniques listed above.
3. Confiscation of cell phones or other electronic devices.
4. Grade reductions for academic dishonesty.
5. In-school suspension.
6. Out-of-school suspension.
7. Removal from the classroom and/or placement in another classroom.
8. Restitution/restoration, if applicable.
9. Saturday school.
10. School-assessed and school-administered probation.
11. Temporary confiscation of items that disrupt the educational process.
12. Verbal correction.
13. Withdrawal of privileges, such as participation in extracurricular activities and eligibility for seeking and holding honorary offices, and/or membership in school-sponsored clubs or organizations.
14. Level I offenses may be elevated to Level II at Administrator discretion.

**Level II Offenses**

1. Abusing over-the-counter drugs. (See glossary for “abuse.”)
2. Being a member of, pledging to become a member of, joining, or soliciting another person to join or pledge to become a member of a public school fraternity, sorority, gang or secret society or organization as defined by Texas Education Code § 37.121.
3. Being under the influence of prescription or over-the-counter drugs that cause impairment of physical or mental faculties. (See glossary for “under the influence.”)
4. Committing extortion or blackmail, meaning obtaining money or an object of value from an unwilling person.
5. Creating or participating in the creation of a “hit list.” (See glossary.)
6. Damaging or vandalizing property owned by others, including but not limited to school property or facilities, property of PTAA employees, or property of other students.
7. Defacing or damaging PTAA property—including textbooks, lockers, furniture, and other equipment—or property of any other person, with graffiti or by any other means.
8. Engaging in conduct that constitutes dating violence, including the intentional use of physical, sexual, verbal, or emotional abuse to harm, threaten, intimidate, or control another person with whom the student has or has had a dating relationship.
9. Engaging in inappropriate verbal, physical, or sexual conduct directed toward another person, including a PTAA student, employee, or volunteer.
10. False accusation of conduct that would constitute a misdemeanor or felony.
11. Fighting or arranging a fight. School is not a place to arrange fights, whether those fights take place on or off school grounds. Fighting is an instance of physical contact in

anger, regardless of whether fists or weapons are used. Students who involve themselves in fighting or arranging a fight will, at a minimum, be suspended for the remainder of the day.

12. Forgery of school documents at school or otherwise.

13. Gang-related activity of any kind or nature (behavior that is deemed serious gang-related activity may be elevated or addressed as a Level III Offense).

14. Felony (Non-Title Five felony); school is notified by police.

15. Participating in “hazing.” (See glossary.)

16. Possessing or selling look-alike drugs, or attempting to pass items off as drugs or contraband.

17. Possessing or selling seeds or pieces of marijuana in less than a usable amount.

18. Possessing, smoking, or using tobacco products and/or e- cigarettes at school or at a school-related or school-sanctioned activity on or off school property. (See glossary.)

19. Possession of stolen property.

20. Possessing, using, giving, or selling paraphernalia related to any prohibited substance (illegal, prescription, and over-the-counter drug). (See glossary for “paraphernalia.”)

21. Possession or use of Prohibited Items, including but not limited to:

a. Fireworks of any kind, smoke or stink bombs, or any other pyrotechnic device;

b. A razor, box cutter, chain, or any other object used in a way that threatens or inflicts bodily injury to another person;

c. A “look-alike” weapon;

d. An air gun or BB gun;

e. Ammunition;

f. A stun gun;

g. A pocket knife or any other small knife with a blade less than 1.5” in length;

h. Mace or pepper spray;

i. Matches or a lighter;

j. A laser pointer for other than an approved use; or

k. Any articles not generally considered to be weapons, including school supplies, when the Administrator(s) determines that a danger exists.

22. Any repetitive Level I Offenses – i.e., two or more Level I offenses within a semester, whether the same or any combination.

23. Threatening or bullying a student, employee, or volunteer of PTAA, whether on or off school property. If the conduct causes a substantial disruption of the educational environment it may be elevated to a Level III Offense depending on circumstances as determined by PTAA.

24. Violating the PTAA medication policy.

***Disciplinary Consequences*** (may not necessarily be followed in order and progressive disciplinary measures are not required)

1. Any applicable Level I Disciplinary Consequence or Discipline Management Technique listed above, including multiple consequences as deemed appropriate by PTAA.

2. Out-of-school suspension for up to five days.

3. Level II Offenses may be elevated to Level III offenses at Administrator discretion.

### **Level III Offenses**

1. Abusing a student's own prescription drug, giving a prescription drug to another student, or possessing or being under the influence of another person's prescription drug while on school property or at a school-related event. (See glossary for "abuse.")
2. Aggravated assault.
3. Aggravated kidnapping.
4. Aggravated robbery.
5. Aggravated sexual assault
6. Any offense listed in Sections 37.006(a) or 37.007 (a), (b), and (d) of the Texas Education Code, no matter when or where the offense takes place.
7. Arson.
8. Burglary of a motor vehicle on campus.
9. Capital murder.
10. Committing or assisting in a robbery or theft, even if it does not constitute a felony according to the Texas Penal Code.
11. Commission of a felony offense listed under Title 5, Texas Penal Code. (See glossary.)
12. Committing the following offenses on school property or within 1,000 feet of school property as measured from any point on the school's real property boundary line, or while attending a school-sponsored or school-related activity on or off school property:
  - a. Engaging in conduct punishable as a felony.
  - b. Committing an assault (see glossary) under Texas Penal Code 22.01(a)(1).
  - c. Selling, giving, or delivering to another person, or possessing, using, or being under the influence of marijuana, a controlled substance, or a dangerous drug in an amount not constituting a felony offense. (See glossary for "under the influence.")
  - d. Selling, giving, or delivering to another person an alcoholic beverage; committing a serious act or offense while under the influence of alcohol; or possessing, using, or being under the influence of alcohol, if the conduct is not punishable as a felony offense.
  - e. Behaving in a manner that contains the elements of an offense relating to abusable volatile chemicals.
  - f. Behaving in a manner that contains the elements of the offense of public lewdness or indecent exposure.
13. Conduct endangering the health and safety of others.
14. Criminal attempt to commit murder or capital murder.
15. Criminally negligent homicide.
16. Deliberate destruction or tampering with school computer data or networks.
17. Engaging in "bullying" and/or cyberbullying. (See glossary.)
18. Engaging in conduct punishable as a felony.
19. Engaging in conduct relating to a false alarm or report (including a bomb threat) or a terroristic threat involving a public school. (See glossary.)
20. Engaging in conduct punishable as a felony listed under Title 5 (see glossary) of the Texas penal Code when the conduct occurs off school property and not at a

school-sponsored or school-related event and:

- a. The student receives deferred prosecution (see glossary);
  - b. A court or jury finds that the student has engaged in delinquent conduct (see glossary); or
  - c. The Administrator(s) has reasonable belief (see glossary) that the student engaged in the conduct, whether on or off school property.
21. Engaging in conduct that constitutes discrimination or harassment, including conduct motivated by race, color, religion, national origin, gender, disability, or age and directed toward another student or PTAA employee. (See glossary.)
  22. Engaging in conduct that constitutes sexual harassment or sexual abuse, whether by word, gesture, or any other conduct directed toward another person, including an PTAA student, employee, or volunteer.
  23. Engaging in conduct that contains the elements of retaliation against any PTAA employee or volunteer, whether on or off of school property.
  24. Engaging in inappropriate or indecent exposure of private body parts.
  25. Felony criminal mischief against school property, another student, or school staff.
  26. Gang activity (violent or likely to cause harm to another or disrupt the educational environment in any way).
  27. Inappropriate sexual conduct.
  28. Indecency with a child.
  29. Issuing a false fire alarm.
  30. Manslaughter.
  31. Murder.
  32. Persistent Level I offenses (four or more Level I offenses committed in any one school year).
  33. Persistent Level II offenses (two or more Level II offenses committed in any one school year).
  34. Possessing, selling, distributing, or being under the influence of inhalants.
  35. Possessing, selling, distributing, or being under the influence of a simulated controlled substance.
  36. Possession, use, transfer or exhibition of any firearm, illegal knife, club, or any other prohibited weapon or harmful object (as determined by PTAA).
  37. Public lewdness.
  38. Required registration as a sex offender.
  39. Setting or attempting to set fire on school property (not arson).
  40. Sexual abuse of a young child or children.
  41. Sexual assault.
  42. Stealing from students, staff, or PTAA.
  43. Targeting another individual for bodily harm.
  44. Use, exhibition, or possession of a knife with a blade more than 1.5" in length, including but not limited to switchblade knives or any other knife not defined as an illegal knife.
  45. Possession of any weapon such as brass knuckles.
  46. Violating computer use policies, rules, or agreements of PTAA, such as the:

**Student Acceptable Use policy**, including but not limited to:

- a. Attempting to access or circumvent passwords or other security-related information of PTAA or its students or employees, and uploading or creating computer viruses, including such conduct off school property if the conduct causes a substantial disruption to the educational environment.
- b. Attempting to alter, destroy, or disable PTAA computer equipment, PTAA data, the data of others, or other networks connected to the PTAA system, including conduct occurring off school property if the conduct causes a substantial disruption of the educational environment.
- c. Using the Internet or other electronic communications to threaten PTAA students, employees, or volunteers, including conduct occurring off school property if the conduct causes a substantial disruption to the educational environment.
- d. Sending or posting electronic messages that are abusive, obscene, sexually oriented, threatening, harassing, damaging to another's reputation, or illegal, including conduct occurring off school property if the conduct causes a substantial disruption to the educational environment.
- e. Using e-mail or Web sites at school to encourage illegal behavior or threaten school safety.

46. Any discretionary or mandatory expulsion violation under Texas Education Code, Chapter 37.

***Disciplinary Consequences*** (may not necessarily be followed in order and progressive disciplinary measures are not required)

- 1. Out of school suspension for five–ten days.
- 2. Expulsion.

**Student Code of Conduct Consequences**

**Detention**

Detention may be held on each day during school for up to eight hours. Students who serve after school detention must make arrangements to be picked up from school. Parents may request in person a delay of the detention; no phone calls or notes will be accepted.

**After School Detention**

The following rules apply to students assigned to after school detention:

- 1. Students will bring materials to work on. Classroom materials may also be sent by a teacher.
- 2. Students will not be permitted to go to their lockers during detention; all materials must be brought to the detention room when reporting.
- 3. Sleeping is not permitted.
- 4. Students will follow all rules concerning classroom behavior. Failure to comply will mean suspension from school.
- 5. Any student assigned to detention must stay the entire time. Students refusing to complete their time will be suspended from school.

## **Suspension**

PTAA utilizes two kinds of suspension: in school suspension and out of school suspension.

### **In School Suspension**

The following rules and regulations apply to all students assigned to in school suspension (“ISS”):

1. Students must report to the ISS room at 8:00 a.m. ISS will be run from 8:00 a.m. until dismissal time.
2. Students will bring all required materials
3. Students will not be permitted to go to their lockers.
4. Students may not bring food or drink into the ISS room.
5. No disruptive behavior will be allowed.
6. Unexcused absences will be referred to the Administrator(s).
7. Sleeping is prohibited.
8. Students must abide by the PTAA policies and behavioral standards during their suspension period.
9. A student who misses a scheduled ISS session without a confirmed excuse will be assigned one day out of school suspension. If a student misses more than one scheduled ISS session without a confirmed excuse, he or she may be subject to expulsion.

Failure to follow these guidelines will be reported to the Administrator(s) for further action, which may include up to three days of out of school suspension or any other Level I consequence.

### **Out of School Suspension**

The Administrator(s) will give notice of suspension and the reasons for the suspension to the student. In deciding whether to order out-of-school suspension, the administrator may take into consideration factors including self-defense, prior discipline history, intent or lack of intent and other appropriate or mitigating factors determined by the administrator.

### **Removal from School Transportation**

A student being transported by PTAA transportation to or from school or a school-sponsored or school-related activity may be removed from a school vehicle for conduct violating the school’s established standards for conduct in a school vehicle.

### **Conferences, Hearings, and Appeals of Disciplinary Decisions**

All students are entitled to conferences, hearings, and/or appeals of disciplinary matters as provided by applicable state and federal law, and PTAA policy.

### **Process for Suspensions Lasting Up To Five Days**

In addition to the above list of Code of Conduct violations, the Administrator(s) has authority to suspend a student for a period of up to five school days for any of the following additional reasons:

- the need to further investigate an incident,
- a recommendation to expel the student, or
- an emergency constituting endangerment to health or safety.

### **Prerequisites to Suspension**

Prior to suspending a student for up to five days, the Administrator(s) must attempt to hold an informal conference with the student to:

- notify the student of the accusations against him/her,
- allow the student to relate his or her version of the incident, and
- determine whether the student's conduct warrants suspension.

### **Notification to Parents/Guardians**

If the Administrator(s) determines the student's conduct warrants suspension during the school day for up to five days, the Administrator(s) will make reasonable effort to notify the student's parent(s) that the student has been suspended before the student is sent home. The Administrator(s) will notify a suspended student's parent(s) of the period of suspension, the grounds for the suspension, and the time and place for an opportunity to confer with the Administrator(s).

### **Credit During Suspension**

A student shall receive credit for work missed during the period of suspension if the student makes up work missed during the period of suspension within the same number of school days the student was absent on suspension.

### **Process for Out-of-School Suspensions Over Five Days (extended suspension) and Expulsion Notice**

When the Administrator(s) determine that a student's conduct warrants suspension for more than five days (extended suspension) or expulsion, but prior to taking any such action, the Administrator(s) will provide the student's parent(s) with written notice of:

- The reasons for the proposed disciplinary action; and
- The date and location for a hearing before the Administrator(s), within five school days from the date of the disciplinary action.
- The notice shall further state that, at the hearing, the student:
  - May be present;
  - Shall have an opportunity to present evidence;
  - Shall be apprised and informed of PTAA's evidence;
  - May be accompanied by his or her parent(s); and
  - May be represented by an attorney.

### **Hearing Before the Administrator(s)**

PTAA shall make a good faith effort to inform the student and the student's parent(s) of the time and place for the hearing, and PTAA shall hold the hearing regardless of whether the student, the student's parent(s) or another adult representing the student attends. The Administrator(s) may audio record the hearing.

Immediately following the hearing, the Administrator(s) will notify the student and the



student's parent(s) in writing of his or her decision. The decision shall specify: The length of the extended suspension or expulsion, if any;  
When or if the expulsion is not permanent, the procedures for re-admittance at the end of the expulsion period if at all; and  
The right to appeal the Administrator(s)'s decision to the Board of Directors or the Board's designee.  
The notice shall also state that failure to timely request such a hearing constitutes a waiver of further rights in the matter.

### **Appeal to the School Board**

The student or his or her parent(s) may appeal the extended suspension or expulsion decision to the PTAA Board of Directors by notifying the Administrator(s) in writing within five calendar days of the date of receipt of the Administrator(s)'s decision. The Board will review the audio or transcribed record from the hearing before the Administrator(s) at a regular or specially called meeting in closed session. The Board will notify the student and his or her parent(s) of its decision within five calendar days of the hearing. The decision of the Board is final and may not be appealed.  
Please note that discipline consequences will not be deferred pending the outcome of an appeal of an extended suspension or expulsion to the Board.

### **No Credit Earned**

Except when required by law, students will not earn academic credit during a period of expulsion.

### **Emergency Placement and Expulsion**

If the Administrator(s) reasonably believes a student's behavior is so unruly, disruptive, or abusive that it seriously interferes with a teacher's ability to communicate effectively with students in a class, with the ability of a student's classmates to learn, or with the operation of PTAA or a school-sponsored activity, the Administrator(s) may order immediate removal of the student. The Administrator(s) may impose immediate suspension if he or she reasonably believes such action is necessary to protect persons or property from eminent harm. At the time of such an emergency removal, the student will be given verbal notice of the reason for the action and appropriate hearings will be scheduled within a reasonable time after the emergency removal.

### **Placement of Students with Disabilities**

All disciplinary actions regarding students with disabilities (504 or special education under the IDEA) shall be conducted in accordance with applicable federal and state laws.

### **Suspension/Expulsion Requirement**

A student with a disability shall not be removed from his or her current placement for disciplinary reasons and/or pending appeal to the Board of Directors for more than ten days without ARD Committee action to determine appropriate services in the interim and otherwise in accordance with applicable law. If a special education due process

appeal to a TEA special education hearing officer is made, the student with a disability shall remain in the then current education setting in place at the time such appeal is noticed to PTAA, unless PTAA and the student's parents agree otherwise.

### **Gun-Free Schools Act**

In accordance with the Gun-Free Schools Act, PTAA shall expel, from the student's regular program for a period of one year, any student who is determined to have brought a firearm, as defined by federal law, to school. The Administrator(s) may modify the term of expulsion for a student or assess another comparable penalty that results in the student's expulsion from the regular school program on a case-by-case basis and in accordance with legal requirements.

For the purposes of this section, "firearm" means:

1. Any weapon – including a starter gun – which will, or is designed to, or which may readily be converted to expel a projectile by the action of an explosive from the frame or receiver of any such weapon;
2. Any firearm muffler or firearm silencer;
3. Any destructive device. "Destructive device" means any explosive, incendiary or poison gas bomb, grenade, rocket having a propellant charge of more than four ounces, missile having an explosive or incendiary charge of more than 1/4 ounce, mine, or device similar to any of the preceding described devices. It also means any type of weapon – other than a shotgun shell or a shotgun that is generally recognized as particularly suitable for sporting purposes – by whatever name known which will, or which may be readily converted to, expel a projectile by the action of an explosive or other propellant, and which has any barrel with a bore of more than 1/2 inch in diameter; and any combination of parts either designed or intended for use in converting any device into a destructive device as described, and from which a destructive device may be readily assembled.

## **SECTION 5: IMPORTANT NOTICES FERPA, PARENTAL RIGHTS, AND STUDENT PRIVACY**

### **A. COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM**

The Superintendent or PEIMS Coordinator will develop and maintain a comprehensive system of student records and reports dealing with all facets of the school program and shall ensure through reasonable procedures that records are accessed by authorized persons only, as allowed by this policy. These data and records shall be stored in a safe and secure manner and shall be conveniently retrievable for use by authorized school officials.

### **B. CUMULATIVE RECORD**

A cumulative record shall be maintained for each student from entrance into PIONEER TECHNOLOGY & ARTS ACADEMY (PTAA) ("the School") until withdrawal or a student's graduation from the School.

This record shall move with the student from school to school and be maintained at the school where currently enrolled until graduation or withdrawal. Records for non enrolled students shall be retained for the period of time required by law. No permanent records

may be destroyed without explicit permission from the Superintendent.

### **C. CUSTODIAN OF RECORDS**

The PEIMS Coordinator is the custodian of all records for currently enrolled students, and for students who have withdrawn or graduated.

### **D. TYPES OF EDUCATION RECORDS**

For the purposes of this policy, the term “educational records” means those records, files, documents, and other materials that contain information directly related to a student and are maintained by the School or by a person acting for the School, including:

1. Admissions data, personal and family data, including certification of date of birth.
2. Standardized test data, including intelligence, aptitude, interest, personality, and social adjustment ratings.
3. All achievement records, as determined by tests, recorded grades, and teacher evaluations.
4. All documentation regarding a student’s testing history and any accelerated instruction he or she has received, including any documentation of discussion or action by a grade placement committee convened for the student.
5. Health services record, including:
  - a. The results of any tuberculin tests required by the School.
  - b. The findings of screening or health appraisal programs conducted or provided by the school.

## **SECTION 6: GLOSSARY**

### **Glossary**

The glossary provides legal definitions and locally established definitions and is intended to assist in understanding terms related to the Student Code of Conduct.

**Abuse** is improper or excessive use.

**Abusable Volatile Chemical Offense**, as defined by Health and Safety Code § 485.001 and 485.031. No student shall inhale, ingest, apply, use, or possess an abusable volatile chemical with intent to inhale, ingest, apply or use any of these in a manner:

1. Contrary to the directions for use, cautions, or warnings appearing on a label of a container of the chemical; and
2. Designed to affect the central nervous system, create or induce a condition of intoxication, hallucination, or elation, or change, distort, or disturb the person’s eyesight, thinking process, balance, or coordination.

No student shall knowingly deliver to a person younger than 18 an abusable volatile chemical. Health and Safety Code § 485.032

No student shall knowingly use or possess with intent to use inhalant paraphernalia to inhale, ingest, or otherwise introduce into the human body an abusable volatile

chemical. No student shall knowingly deliver, sell, or possess with intent to deliver or sell inhalant paraphernalia knowing that that person who receives it intends to use it to inhale, ingest, apply, use, or otherwise introduce into the human body an abusable volatile chemical. Health and Safety Code § 485.033

**Armor-piercing ammunition** is handgun ammunition used Administrator(s)ly in pistols and revolvers and that is designed primarily for the purpose of penetrating metal or body armor.

**Arson** is defined by Texas Penal Code § 28.02 and occurs when a person starts a fire, regardless of whether the fire continues after ignition, or causes an explosion with intent to destroy or damage:

- Any vegetation, fence, or structure on open-space land; or
- Any building, habitation, or vehicle:

Knowing that it is within the limits of an incorporated city or town,

Knowing that it is insured against damage or destruction,

Knowing that it is subject to a mortgage or other security interest,

Knowing that it is located on property belonging to another,

Knowing that it is located within its property belonging to another, or

When the person starting the fire is reckless about whether the burning or explosion will endanger the life of some individual or the safety of the property of another.

Arson also occurs when a person:

- Recklessly starts a fire or causes an explosion while manufacturing or attempting to manufacture a controlled substance and the fire or explosion damages any building, habitation, or vehicle; or
- Intentionally starts a fire or causes an explosion and in so doing recklessly damages or destroys a building belonging to another, or recklessly causes another person to suffer bodily injury or death.

**Assault** is defined in part by Texas Penal Code § 22.01 as intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly causing bodily injury to another.

**Bullying** is defined by Texas Education Code § 37.0832(a)-(b) to mean engaging in written or verbal expression, expression through electronic means, or physical conduct that occurs on school property, at a school-sponsored event, or school related activity, or in a vehicle operated by PTAA and that: has the effect of physically harming a student, damaging a student's property, or placing a student in reasonable fear of harm to the student or damage to the student's property; or is sufficiently severe, persistent, or pervasive enough that the action or threat creates an intimidating, threatening, or abusive educational environment for a student. The conduct described above is also considered bullying if that conduct exploits an imbalance of power between the student perpetrator and the student victim through written or verbal expression and physical conduct, and interferes with a student's education or substantially disrupts the operation of PTAA. "Cyberbullying" means the use of any electronic communication device to engage in bullying or intimidation.

**Chemical dispensing device** is a device designed, made, or adapted for the purpose of dispensing a substance capable of causing an adverse psychological or physiological effect on a human being.

**Club** is an instrument specially designed, made, or adapted for the purpose of inflicting serious bodily injury or death, including but not limited to a blackjack, nightstick, mace, and tomahawk.

**Controlled substances or dangerous drugs** include but are not limited to marijuana; any narcotic drug, hallucinogen, stimulant, depressant, amphetamine, barbiturate; anabolic steroid; or prescription medicine provided to any person other than the person for whom the prescription was written. The term also includes all controlled substances listed in Chapters 481 and 483 of the Texas Health and Safety Code.

**Criminal street gang** means three or more persons having a common identifying sign or symbol or an identifiable leadership who continuously or regularly associate in the commission of criminal activities.

**Dating violence** is the intentional use of physical, sexual, verbal, or emotional abuse by a person to harm, threaten, intimidate, or control another person with whom the student has or has had a dating relationship, as defined by Texas Family Code § 71.0021.

**Deadly conduct** occurs when a person recklessly engages in conduct that places another in imminent danger of serious bodily injury, and includes but is not limited to knowingly discharging a firearm in the direction of an individual, habitation, building, or vehicle.

**Deferred adjudication** is an alternative to seeking a conviction in court that may be offered to a juvenile for delinquent conduct or conduct indicating a need for supervision.

**Deferred prosecution** may be offered to a juvenile as an alternative to seeking a conviction in court for delinquent conduct or conduct indicating a need for supervision.

**Delinquent conduct** is conduct that:

- Violates either state or federal law, other than a traffic offense, and is punishable by imprisonment or confinement in jail;
- Violates a lawful order of a court under circumstances that would constitute contempt of that court in a justice or municipal court, or a county court for conduct punishable only by a fine;
- Constitutes an intoxication and alcoholic beverage offense under Chapter 49 of the Texas Penal Code; or
- Violates Texas Alcoholic Beverage Code § 106.041 relating to driving under the influence of alcohol by a minor (third or subsequent offense).

**Discretionary** means that something is left to or regulated by a local decision maker.

**E-Cigarette** means an electronic cigarette or any other device that simulates smoking by using a mechanical heating element, battery, or electronic circuit to deliver nicotine or other substances to the individual inhaling from the device. The term does not include a prescription medical device unrelated to the cessation of smoking.

**Explosive weapon** is any explosive or incendiary bomb, grenade, rocket, or mine that is designed, made, or adapted for the purpose of inflicting serious bodily injury, death, or substantial property damage, or for the Administrator(s) purpose of causing such a loud report as to cause undue public alarm or terror, and includes a device designed, made, or adapted for delivery or shooting an explosive weapon.

**False Alarm or Report** occurs when a person knowingly initiates, communicates, or circulates a report of a present, past, or future bombing, fire, offense, or other emergency that he or she knows is false or baseless and that would ordinarily:

- Cause action by an official or volunteer agency organized to deal with emergencies;
- Place a person in fear of imminent serious bodily injury; or
- Prevent or interrupt the occupation of a building, room, or place of assembly.

**Firearm silencer** means any device designed, made, or adapted to muffle the report of a firearm.

**Graffiti** means making marks with paint, an indelible pen or marker, or an etching or engraving device on tangible property without the effective consent of the owner. The markings may include inscriptions, slogans, drawings, or paintings.

**Harassment** is:

- Conduct that meets the definition established in PTAA Board policy and/or the Student Handbook; or
- Conduct that threatens to cause harm or bodily injury to another student, is sexually intimidating or obscene, causes physical damage to the property of another student, subjects another student to physical confinement or restraint, or maliciously and substantially harms another student's physical or emotional health or safety.

**Hazing** is an intentional, knowing, or reckless act, occurring on or off campus, by one person alone or acting with others, that is directed against a student and endangers the mental or physical health or safety of a student for the purpose of pledging, initiation into, affiliation with, holding office in, or maintaining membership in an organization.

**Hit list** is a list of people targeted to be harmed, using a firearm, a knife, or any other object to be used with intent to cause bodily harm.

**Illegal Knife** means a knife with a blade over 5-1/2"; hand instrument designed to cut or stab another by being thrown; dagger, including but not limited to a dirk, stiletto, and poniard; bowie knife; sword; spear; or as otherwise defined by Board policy.

**Indecent Exposure** means exposing one's anus or genitals with intent to arouse or gratify the sexual desire of any person while being reckless about whether another is present who will be offended or alarmed by the act.

**Knuckles** means any instrument consisting of finger rings or guards made of a hard substance and designed or adapted for inflicting serious bodily injury or death by striking a person with a fist enclosed in the knuckles.

**Machine gun** is any firearm that is capable of shooting more than two shots automatically, without manual reloading, by a single function of the trigger.

**Mandatory** means that something is obligatory or required because of an authority.

**Online Impersonation** occurs when a person, without obtaining the consent of another person and with the intent to harm, defraud, intimidate, or threaten any persons, uses the name or persona of another person to:

- Create a web page on a commercial social networking site or other Internet website; or
- Post or send one or more messages on or through a commercial social networking site or other Internet website, other than on or through an electronic mail program or message board program.

Online impersonation also occurs when a person sends an electronic mail, instant message, text message, or similar communication that reference a name, domain address, phone number, or other item of identifying information belonging to any person:

- Without obtaining the other person's consent;
- With the intent to cause a recipient of the communication to reasonably believe that the other person authorized or transmitted the communication; and
- With the intent to harm or defraud any person.

**Paraphernalia** are devices that can be used for inhaling, ingesting, injecting, or otherwise introducing a controlled substance into a human body. It also includes equipment, products, or materials used or intended for use in planting, propagating, cultivating, growing, harvesting, manufacturing, compounding, converting, producing, processing, preparing, testing, analyzing, packaging, repackaging, storing, containing, or concealing a controlled substance.

**Possession** means to have an item on one's person or in one's personal property, including but not limited to clothing, purse, or backpack; a private vehicle used for transportation to or from school or school-related activities, including but not limited to an automobile, truck, motorcycle, or bicycle; or any other school property used by the student, including but not limited to a locker or desk.

**Prohibited Weapon** means an explosive weapon; a machine gun; a short-barrel firearm; a firearm silencer; knuckles; armor-piercing ammunition; a chemical dispensing device; a zip gun; or a tire deflation device.

**Public school fraternity, sorority, secret society, or gang** means an organization composed wholly or in part of students that seeks to perpetuate itself by taking additional members from the students enrolled in school based on a decision of its membership rather than on the free choice of a qualified student.

**Reasonable belief** is a determination made by the superintendent or designee using all available information, including the information furnished under Article 15.27 of the Code of Criminal Procedure.

**Self-defense** is the use of force against another to the degree a person reasonably believes the force is immediately necessary to protect himself or herself.

**Short-barrel firearm** is a rifle with a barrel length of less than 16 inches or a shotgun with a barrel length of less than 18 inches, or any weapon made from a rifle or shotgun that, as altered, has an overall length of less than 26 inches.

**Switchblade Knife** is any knife with a blade that folds, closes, or retracts into the handle or sheath and that opens automatically by pressing a button or by the force of gravity or by the application of centrifugal force. The term does not include a knife that has a spring, detent, or other mechanism designed to create a bias toward closure and that requires.



## **SECTION 7: GRIEVANCES**

### **PTAA PARENT AND STUDENT COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCES**

#### **Guiding Principles**

##### **Informal Process**

The Board encourages students and parents to discuss their concerns and complaints through informal conferences with the appropriate teacher, Assistant Principal, or other campus administrator.

Concerns should be expressed as soon as possible to allow early resolution at the lowest possible administrative level.

##### **Formal Process**

If an informal conference regarding a complaint fails to reach the outcome requested by the student or parent, the student or parent may initiate the formal process described below by timely filing a written complaint form.

Even after initiating the formal complaint process, students and parents are encouraged to seek informal resolution of their concerns. A student or parent whose concerns are resolved may withdraw a formal complaint at any time.

The process described in this policy shall not be construed to create new or additional rights beyond those granted by law or Board policy, nor to require a full evidentiary hearing or “mini-trial” at any level.

##### **Freedom from Retaliation**

Neither the Board nor any Pioneer Technology & Arts Academy (“School”) employee shall unlawfully retaliate against any student or parent for bringing a concern or complaint.

##### **Notice to Parents and Students**

The School shall inform students and parents of this policy.

#### **Complaints**

In this policy, the terms “complaint” and “grievance” shall have the same meaning. This policy shall apply to all student and parent complaints, except as provided below.

## **General Provisions**

### **Filing**

Student and/or parental complaints shall be submitted in writing on a form provided by the School. Copies of documents that support the complaint shall be attached to the complaint form or presented at the Level One conference. After the Level One conference, no new documents may be submitted unless their existence was unknown to the complainant before the Level One conference. A complaint that is incomplete may be dismissed.

For purposes of this policy, “days” shall mean calendar days and announcement of a decision in the student’s or parent’s presence shall constitute communication of the decision.

### **Level One**

The student or parent shall request in writing a conference with the appropriate Campus Principal or Designee within three days from the time the event(s) causing the complaint were or should have been known. Following a conference, the appropriate Assistant Principal shall have seven days to respond. Attached Exhibit A

### **Level Two**

If the student or parents is not satisfied with the Level One decision, or if no decision is provided, the student or parent may request in writing a conference with the Superintendent's designee. The request must be filed within seven days of the Level One decision or the response deadline if no decision is made. The Designee shall hold the conference within seven days of the request.

The student or parent shall submit a signed statement of the complaint, any evidence supporting the complaint, and the date and results of the conference with the Campus Principal or Designee. The Designee shall have seven days following the conference to respond. Attached Exhibit B

### **Level Three**

If the student or parents is not satisfied with the Level Two decision, or if no decision is provided, the student or parent may request in writing a conference with the Superintendent or designee. The request must be filed within seven days of the Level Two decision or the response deadline if no decision is made. The Superintendent or Designee shall hold the conference within seven days of the request.

The student or parent shall submit a signed statement of the complaint, any evidence supporting the complaint, and the date and results of the conference with the Office of Student Services. The Superintendent or Designee shall have seven days following the conference to respond. Attached Exhibit B

### **Level Four**

If the student or parent is not satisfied with the Level Three decision, or if no timely decision is provided, the student or parent may submit to the Superintendent of Schools or designee in writing a request for a hearing before the Board of Directors. The request must be filed within seven days of the Level Three decision or the response deadline if no decision is made. The student or parent shall be informed of the date, time, and place of the hearing.

The Board of Directors shall hear the student or parent complaint and may set a reasonable time limit for presenting the complaint. Only written documentation and issues previously submitted and presented by the student or parent and the school will be considered. An audiotape recording of the hearing shall be made.

The Board of Directors shall communicate its decision, if any, orally or in writing before or during the next regularly scheduled Board meeting. If no decision is made by the end of the next regularly scheduled Board meeting, the Level Two decision shall be upheld. The Board may not delegate its authority to issue a decision, and any decision by the Board of Directors is final and may not be appealed.

If the complaint involves concerns or charges regarding a student or School employee, it shall be heard by the Superintendent in closed meeting unless the employee to whom the complaint pertains requests that it be heard in public. Attached Exhibit C

## PTAA School Complaint Form

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Problem: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

PTAA School (include address):

### **Basis of complaint:**

Please provide further details:

Please submit the grievance form to [grievancetexas@ptaaschool.org](mailto:grievancetexas@ptaaschool.org)

Exhibit A- Response to Level One Complaint

\_\_\_\_\_ (date)  
\_\_\_\_\_ (complaint's name)  
\_\_\_\_\_ (complaint's address)  
\_\_\_\_\_ (complaint's email)

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

Having considered the complaint at our Level One Conference on \_\_\_\_\_, I have decided on the following response:

\_\_\_\_\_

[Note: When preparing the letter, include only one of the following sentences.]

For the following reasons, I am unable to provide the remedy you seek:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Or

I will take the following actions to grant the remedy you seek for your complaint:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Or

Although I am unable to provide the full remedy you seek for your complaint, I will take the following actions to provide a partial remedy:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ (signature of principal)

Complaint, please note:

*To appeal this response, you must file a written notice of appeal with the appropriate administrator within the time limits set in PTAA local policy. The necessary appeal forms are available at Office of Student Services during regular business hours. Please email the office of student services at [grievancetexas@ptaaschool.org](mailto:grievancetexas@ptaaschool.org)*

Exhibit B- Response to Level Two/Three Appeal

\_\_\_\_\_ (date)  
\_\_\_\_\_ (complaint's name)  
\_\_\_\_\_ (complaint's address)  
\_\_\_\_\_ (complaint's email)

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

Having considered the Level Two appeal on \_\_\_\_\_ (date), I have decided on the following response:

---

[Note: When preparing the letter, include only one of the following sentences.]

I am unable to grant your appeal. I will uphold the decision made at Level One by \_\_\_\_\_ (name) and communicated to you in the Level One response.

Or

I wish to grant your appeal and have instructed \_\_\_\_\_ (name) to find a resolution in keeping with the remedy you seek.

Or

Although I am unable to fully grant your appeal, I have instructed \_\_\_\_\_ (name) to take the following actions as a partial remedy to your complaint:

---

\_\_\_\_\_, Superintendent (or designee)

Complaint, please note:

*To appeal this response, you must file a written notice of appeal with the appropriate administrator within the time limits set in PTAA local policy. The necessary appeal forms are available at Office of Student Services during regular business hours. Please email the office of student services at [grievancetexas@ptaaschool.org](mailto:grievancetexas@ptaaschool.org)*

Exhibit C- Board's Response to Level Four Appeal

-

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(date)

-

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(complaint's name)

-

---

(complaint's address)

-

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(complaint's email)

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

Having considered the Level Two appeal on \_\_\_\_\_ (date), I have decided on the following response:

---

[Note: When preparing the letter or announcing the decision at the Board meeting, include only one of the following sentences.]

We have denied the appeal and have upheld the decision made by the Superintendent (or designee) at Level Two or Level Three.

Or

We have granted the appeal and have instructed the Superintendent to find a resolution in keeping with the remedy you seek.

Or

We have partially denied and partially granted the appeal and have instructed the Superintendent as follows:

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Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_, President of the  
Board of Trustees

\_\_\_\_\_ School District