

Student/Parent Handbook

2021-2022



Handbook Verification Sheet

Dear Parents/Guardians,

We require that you review the Student Handbook with your child. Please sign this form and send it in.

My child, (print name) _____ and I have reviewed and understand the Student/Parent Handbook and understand STARS Academy's rules, policies, and procedures for the 2021-22 school year.

X _____
(Student Signature)

X _____
(Parent/Guardian Signature)



STARS Academy's Directory 2021-2022

Address: 7353 Valley Circle Blvd., West Hills, CA 91304

School Number	(818) 835-4962
Head of School.....	Shayna Turk (sturk@starsacademyschool.com)
Director of Admissions & Family Relations.....	Alex Yorke (ayorke@starsacademyschool.com)
Administrative Assistant.....	Jennifer Dollins (jdollins@starsacademyschool.com)
Educators.....	Amanda Druyan (adruyan@starsacademyschool.com) Jenna Hertz (jhertz@starsacademyschool.com) Hayley Silvers (hsilvers@starsacademyschool.com) Melisa Mendez (mmendez@starsacademyschool.com)
Paraprofessionals.....	Angela Echeverria (aecheverria@starsacademyschool.com)
Elective Educators.....	Alec Mandell (amandell@starsacademyschool.com) Jack Bockian (jbockian@starsacademyschool.com) Jordan Raft (jraft@starsacademyschool.com) Nick Bockian (nbockian@starsacademyschool.com) Steven Silvers (ssilvers@starsacademyschool.com)
PE Educator.....	Gabi Milman (gmilman@starsacademyschool.com) Dan Schneider (dschneider@starsacademyschool.com)

Staff email addresses are written as the following: firstinitiallastname@starsacademyschool.com.

NOTE:

STARS Academy does not discriminate on the basis of sex, gender expression, age, marital status, disability, race, religion, creed, color, or national origin.

STARS Academy is a private nonprofit organization and all donations are tax deductible.

If you have questions which are not answered here, please call STARS Academy at (818) 835-4962 or see our website at www.starsacademyschool.com.



Important Dates for the 2021-2022 School Year

Note: subject to change

2021

September 2	Welcome Back Event
September 9	First Day of School
September 16-17	Pupil Free Days
September 30	Back to School Night
October 18	Picture Day
November 11-12	Pupil Free Days
November 18	Parent Meeting
November 22-26	Thanksgiving Break
December 20-31	Winter Break

2022

January 17	Pupil Free Day
January 27-28	Student-Led Conferences
February 3	Parent Meeting
February 21	Pupil Free Day
March 11	Pupil Free Day
March 14-25	Spring Break
April 7	Parent Meeting
April 18	Pupil Free Day
May 26	Parent Meeting
May 31-June 1	Student-Led Conferences
June 3	Last Day of School



Daily Schedule

8:00-8:25 AM	Drop off
8:25-8:30 AM	SCHOOL DAY BEGINS
8:30-8:45 AM	Morning Meeting
8:45-9:30 AM	Humanities
9:35-10:00 AM	Movement
10:05-10:30 AM	Recess
10:35-11:20 AM	Math
11:25-11:55 AM	Science
12:00-12:45 PM	Lunch
12:50-1:15 PM	Language Study (T, TH, F) & Research (M, W)
1:20-2:00 PM	Humanities
2:05-2:35 PM	Elective (M, W, F) & Writing (T, TH)
2:40-3:00 PM	Clean up & Closing Circle
3:00-3:30 PM	Pickup



STARS Academy Guidelines

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this handbook is to provide information about STARS Academy for our staff, students, and their families. It contains important information about the school as well as policies and procedures that are designed to ensure that the school functions as an effective learning community. Thus, it is important that all members of the learning community understand the expectations.

Please read this handbook carefully and refer to it throughout the school year. If you have questions about anything in the handbook, or if something is not covered in the handbook, please ask the administrators.

As our school is a place of learning, our handbook reflects our values and practices. We are always in the process of developing and refining the handbook and the policies and procedures described in it. We welcome feedback about our handbook so that we can improve it each year.

MISSION

The mission of STARS Academy is to successfully educate all students through deep academic inquiry and creativity of the arts (collaborative music, dance, performing arts, and design disciplines) through flexible, multi-age groupings.

Our goal is to inspire a love of learning for students through cooperation, critical thinking, and self-direction, while simultaneously empowering our learners to evaluate, organize, and produce solutions in a complex technological and artistic world. STARS Academy engages both students and faculty in a process of ongoing intellectual inquiry, and community-based involvement, coupled with whole-family participation.

We welcome students from all backgrounds and experiences to create an inclusive learning community where all students, parents, and professionals appreciate and value diversity in all its forms. STARS Academy does not target students already involved in the arts and requires no audition process or prior training for admission.

As an alternative to traditional school programs, we provide a variety of arts-based extracurricular activities. STARS Academy believes that infusing the arts into an engaging, coherent, relevant, diversely-accessible, and rigorous curriculum provides students the academic, social, and technical skills and attitudes necessary to succeed in the 21st century. The arts serve as a vehicle to develop focus and attention, work ethic, active participation, and a commitment to excellence while developing students' confidence and motivation.

Through STARS Academy's model, students will develop positive self-esteem, empathy, pro-social values, and establish a respect for cultural diversity as they learn in a child-centered environment led by highly-qualified educators. This cohesive K-8 program is tuition-free and admission is by lottery. STARS Academy maintains the highest level of integrity in fiscal management while seeking all available resources and using them effectively to support its instructional program.



HISTORY

Shayna and Alex have been friends since birth. Spending a majority of their childhood together in plays inspired both of them in their later careers. Alex joined Shayna's STARS musical theater program in 2005, and the two have partnered to produce over 40 productions together since. In 2014, Shayna and Alex brought a modified version of STARS to Heschel Day School. In 2017, Shayna and Alex brought the STARS program to CHIME Institute. At CHIME, the two saw the potential to integrate a fully-inclusive educational environment and the arts. After teaching for five years, both stepped down from their teaching positions to open STARS Academy.

THEMES AND INSTRUCTIONAL FOCUS OF STARS ACADEMY

Our instructional focus is based on the belief that educating children to their highest ability includes the integration of dance, drama, music, and visual arts. The arts serve as a bridge for understanding differences, culture, identity, communication, and respect for our common humanity. Based on research performed at The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing arts, , "Arts Integration is an approach to teaching in which students construct and demonstrate understanding through an art form [and] engage in a creative process which connects an art form and another subject area and meets evolving objectives in both" (Silverstein, Layne, 2010). STARS Academy's vision is a hands-on curriculum with an arts-rich emphasis. It is based on the best progressive teaching practices as well as educational research.

We focus on three main tiers as an instructional approach: arts-integrated education, student-centered learning, and project-based learning.

Arts-Integrated Education

STARS Academy engages students in an academically rigorous and equitable education program through arts integration and interdisciplinary study. Our school includes dance and visual arts led by specialty music teachers as a way to effectively engage the arts into the curriculum. This integration allows creative expression for students through both mind and body, as they bring their ideas and dreams to life. We implement the Common Core State Standards (with the implementation of the five Cs - Critical Thinking, Creativity, Communication, Collaboration, and Culture) school wide and maintain a connection to themes in the core curriculum. Additionally, in order to further support the integration of the arts, we regularly invite guest artists from the wider Los Angeles art community to host workshops and expose our students to a variety of art-making styles.

Our school days include opportunities to play, invent, discover, and design. Through these opportunities, students become well-versed in a wide range of art media and techniques. They ultimately enhance their core skills through this integration. We believe in an active learning process, rather than passively receiving teachers' knowledge. Lessons integrate multiple content and performance standards, build upon prior knowledge, and allow for reflection, self-assessment, and metacognition. We bring learning alive as students apply classroom learning to tangible problem solving.



Student-Centered Learning

STARS Academy's student-centered learning focuses on a personalized approach to learning. Our goal is individual student success, both academically and socially. At STARS Academy, teachers come to know students individually, and work as a team to address each student's academic and social needs. Additionally, our goal is to develop student leaders through peer practice partnerships and collaborative creation. We provide our students opportunities to showcase their learning in public through family events, presentations, and publications. Our students are empowered to take on responsibility, advocate to effect and create change, and develop a sense of self.

Project-Based Learning

Many of our classes employ project-based learning to help students understand the multifaceted relationships among academic subjects, technical and life skills, and the greater world. Project-based learning integrates multiple subject areas into a topic of study. A single project has an overarching theme, but students approach it from a multi-disciplinary perspective. By focusing on the project as a whole, students learn competency skills such as reading, writing and arithmetic where the emphasis is placed on these skills as tools, not as ends to the process. As they work through the project, students also acquire and exercise problem-solving and critical-thinking skills. The project-based learning process engages and motivates students to accomplish multi-level achievements. They increase core competencies and improve practical skills, as well as complete a tangible project. Project-based learning promotes self-motivation and competence through the interests of students, enhancing their propensity to become lifelong learners. These approaches also encourage many modalities of expression.

Full-Inclusion

STARS Academy utilizes/incorporates non-discriminatory and inclusive policies, practices, and pedagogies at all times. All students see themselves as vital components of the school culture. "The rationale for inclusion is based on the belief that important academic, social, and ethical skills and attitudes are developed when students with various abilities, needs, and backgrounds learn together. A well-established body of research supported by federal and state law indicates that inclusion of children with disabilities benefits both students with and without disabilities alike" (research collected by CHIME Institute's Schwarzenegger Community School).

THE GOVERNING BOARD

The governing board of STARS Academy is the Board of Directors of and is organized as a 501(c) 3 nonprofit corporation whose purpose is to establish and maintain programs for children and their families in community settings.

The STARS Academy School Board of Directors governs STARS Academy according to its bylaws. The Board of Directors' major roles and responsibilities include establishing and approving all major educational and operational policies, approving all major contracts, approving the school's annual budget, overseeing the school's fiscal affairs, and selecting and evaluating the administrative staff.

STARTING SCHOOL

Attending a new school can be stressful for both parents and students. We want to recognize and support the emotional needs of each student, but at the same time support his/her/their independence and successful adjustment to school. We encourage you to do everything possible to help your child feel comfortable in his/her/their new environment, but also to recognize that sometimes it's best to leave and allow the teacher and other students to begin the inclusion process. If you have concerns about your child's adjustment on the first day, please discuss them with your child's teacher(s) so that a plan may be implemented to facilitate the transition.

COVID-19 RULES AND SAFETY PROCEDURES

Due to COVID-19, STARS Academy has put in place strict safety procedures that are to be followed by all students, staff, and families. The STARS Academy community will be following CDC guidelines for our program. We trust that families will conduct themselves according to the guidelines in their lives outside of school to help keep our STARS Academy community safe. The following safety protocols will be present at all times on the STARS Academy campus:

- Children will be asked to wash their hands immediately upon entrance and exit to/from campus.
- Specialized filtration systems will be running at all times during the school day.
- Staff are responsible for cleaning protocols to be conducted each day when all children have exited campus.
- ALL persons present on campus over the age of two are required to wear a mask at all times inside and when social distancing is not possible. LADPH strongly encourages the use of a face covering outdoors in crowded areas. A face covering is not required when eating or drinking.
- During eating times (recess and lunch) children will not be required to wear masks but must remain socially distanced.
- The CDC does not recommend the use of N95 or surgical masks for the general public. For faculty and staff who are unvaccinated, a KN95 is recommended and should be disposed of after wearing it once.
- Reusable masks should be washed whenever dirty or at least daily. Disposable face masks should be thrown away after wearing them once. Always wash your hands after touching a used mask.

Universal Pre-entry (baseline) COVID-19 Testing

Everyone returning to campus after a break — K-8 — students, faculty, and staff — must send in a negative PCR test prior to returning to school.

Weekly Routine Testing as of 1/3/2022

All students, faculty, and staff, regardless of vaccination status, must have a negative PCR test on file every week in order to return to campus the following week. The only exception is for those who have tested positive for COVID-19 within the previous 3 months.

We will provide the following testing opportunities (Health Office's preference in parentheses):

- On-campus testing for students whose parent/guardians have a SIGNED WAIVER allowing them to be tested without a family member present (preferred method, in terms of accuracy and efficiency). Note: An assigned staff or faculty member will accompany students.
- You may also use a provider of your choice and send PCR results to STARS Academy no later than Friday of the week prior (least preferred)

In Case of Potential Exposure

Honesty is the key to keeping our community safe. If any of the following scenarios arise please alert the STARS Academy Administration immediately.

If a STARS Academy student or staff member **has been exposed to someone** who has tested positive regardless if they are symptomatic or not.

- Parents must alert STARS Academy administration immediately.
- The child will be asked to see their primary care physician.
- The child will be expected to stay home and must receive a negative COVID-19 test before returning to school.

The best way to protect yourself and others is to stay home if you think you've been exposed to someone who has COVID-19. However, anyone who has had close contact with someone with COVID-19 and who meets the following criteria does NOT need to stay home.

- Someone who has been fully vaccinated and shows no symptoms of COVID-19
- Someone who has COVID-19 illness within the previous 3 months has recovered and remains without COVID-19 symptoms (for example, cough, shortness of breath)

If a STARS Academy family member, student, or staff member **has tested positive** for COVID-19 and is symptomatic or not.

- A case incident response assessment will be performed to evaluate who was potentially exposed, and what surfaces were potentially contaminated.
- Parents must alert STARS Academy administration immediately.
- STARS Academy families will be notified immediately.
- Per LADPH, should an UNVACCINATED student be identified as a close contact of someone who tests positive for Covid-19, they must quarantine for 10 days and receive a negative Covid PCR test before returning to campus.
- If a VACCINATED student is identified as a close contact, they must only test negative and be asymptomatic to be allowed back onto campus. No quarantine beyond waiting for test results is necessary.
- Please be aware that LADPH requirements are subject to change.



Every incident will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Policies regarding COVID-19 are subject to change as more information is available. Families who fail to abide by these guidelines may have their student dismissed from the program. All tuition for the year will be expected to be paid in full and no refunds will be given for any funds already paid.

Vaccination

All faculty and staff are required to be vaccinated before returning to work on the STARS Academy campus with the exception of those with documented medical or religious exemptions.

At this time, the vaccine is not required, but is highly encouraged, for age-eligible students. This rule may change for the 2022-23 school year. If your child is fully vaccinated, please upload your proof of vaccination to STARS Academy (info@starsacademyschool.com).

Although the government is not mandating the vaccine yet, this is likely to be our school policy in the upcoming year. We are an independent school. We are not mandating it. We are saying that if you choose to send your child to our school then you choose to vaccinate your child. If you choose not to vaccinate, there are other schools for you to choose (both independent and public).

California currently allows certain exemptions. A qualified medical condition will be accepted, according to the current laws and regulations. This written exemption must be on the physician's official letterhead and have the doctor's signature attached. This note should be sent to info@starsacademyschool.com. Other "sincerely held religious beliefs" exemptions are, at this time, also allowed under California law. This written exemption must be provided from the family directly. This note should be sent to info@starsacademyschool.com.

For any student with one of these exemptions, there will be additional COVID mitigation strategies that may include wearing an N95 mask, additional distancing, additional PCR COVID testing, and ineligibility to participate in certain indoor or high contact activities that require exertion.

Travel Advisory

Per LADPH, these are current guidelines for those who travel outside of California and are subject to change.

- UNVACCINATED individuals must receive a negative test 3-5 days after domestic or international travel AND quarantine for 7 days. If they are not tested they must self-quarantine for 10 days.
- VACCINATED individuals must receive a negative test 3-5 days after international travel only.
- [COVID Travel Guidelines](#)

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Emergency Form (filled out digitally on Active during registration):



We must be able to reach you at all times in the event of an emergency. Please alert us by email or text immediately if any of the following information changes

- Home address
- Home, work, and/or cell phone numbers
- Doctor's phone number
- Names and phone numbers of people who are authorized to be called in case of an emergency or to pick up your child after school

Immunization Records

The school must have immunization records of all students. State law requires that we receive immunization records prior to the enrollment of the student. Please note that there are new immunization requirements for students entering the 7th grade – students must show proof of the Tdap vaccine or they will not be able to attend school (unless the student has a medical exemption.)

LATE ARRIVAL & TARDY POLICY

School begins promptly at 8:30 AM. Students that arrive after 8:30 AM must have a parent/guardian walk them up to class. This ensures that we can start our school day on time.

DISMISSAL

- The instructional day ends at 3:00 PM for all students. Students may be picked up no later than 3:30 PM. Each staff member has cleaning duties to attend promptly at 3:30 PM and any child left on campus past that time will delay this process that is put in place to ensure everyone's safety.
- Please note that STARS Academy does not provide supervision outside the gate after it is closed and locked. Students are never permitted outside of the campus gate or in the neighboring areas after school hours. STARS Academy is not responsible for off campus supervision (i.e. anywhere outside of school gate)
- Students may not leave campus by themselves. For safety, they must be escorted by a STARS Academy staff member.
- If a child is not picked up by closing, the family will be charged \$1 per minute after 3:30 PM to be paid upon arrival of the parent.

PERSONAL EMERGENCY

In cases of emergency during the school day, your child will only be released into the custody of those people whom you have previously identified on the emergency forms. Persons not identified on the emergency forms can pick up a student only if the parent has sent a written notification to the school (text or email) notifying the school of the person's identity. The person then picking up your student will be asked to verify their identity. No one under the age of 18 may pick up a student.

LEAVING SCHOOL DURING THE DAY



If you must pick up your child early for an appointment during the day, please email or text us ahead of time. The note should state the reason for leaving early and the time of pickup. Please keep doctor and dental appointments during school hours to a minimum. When you arrive, please text us and an adult will bring the child out to your vehicle. Parents are not permitted to enter campus without prior authorization.

Authorizing People Not on Emergency Cards for Student Pick-Up (i.e. Playdates)

If you wish to authorize a parent to pick up your child(ren) and that parent is not on your emergency release card, you must email info@starsacademyschool.com or text the STARS Academy phone number on the day you wish for them to pick up your child and specifically authorize that they are allowed to take your child(ren) home on that date.

HEALTH AND ABSENTEEISM

Illness

If your child is exhibiting ANY symptoms of illness we ask that you please keep them at home. We can make arrangements for your child to access the lessons for the day via Zoom.

Please call the STARS Academy phone number before 8:30 AM when your child is ill. For your child's protection and the protection of others, please do not send your child to school sick. If your child complains of feeling sick at school, depending upon the severity, you may be contacted to pick him/her up. After a five day absence, a doctor's note will be required for the student to return to school.

Absenteeism

Please read the school calendar carefully and plan your vacations around it. Regular attendance at school is necessary for children to progress academically, as well as to be part of the social community of the school.

Medication

A doctor's medical authorization will be required for all medical protocols, including medications to be administered at school. Medications will be stored and administered by the school administrators. All medications, over the counter and prescription, cannot be administered by school staff unless the school has written authorization from your student's physician. Forms for your physician to fill out are available for download on our registration website. Once filled out please submit on our registration site. All medications must be handed to a STARS Academy staff member by an adult in their original container with a prescription label.

K-8TH GRADES - LUNCH AND SNACKS

Please send a healthy snack and lunch each day. There will be an opportunity for children to eat their packed snacks in the morning during recess/nutrition. The following are suggested healthy snacks/lunches: fruit, vegetables, sandwiches, crackers, cheese, bread, fruit juice, milk, water, beans,



pretzels, corn nuts, granola bars, nuts (no peanuts), and seeds without shells. Please do not bring soda, candy, or coffee drinks. **We have several students with severe peanut allergies. Please do not ever send your child with any food containing peanuts.**

AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS / EXTRA-CURRICULAR OPPORTUNITIES

STARS Academy after school programs are offered daily from 3:30 - 5PM (except STARS Theater Program, which is offered twice a week from 3:30 - 6:30PM) and provide extended school day opportunities. It provides a time for students to explore an academic, athletic, art, or social interest outside of the school day. We offer these programs as a convenience for working parents, but they also provide the opportunity for any student to benefit from and enjoy the various activities we offer. The small class sizes allow for individual growth and accomplishment in a chosen field of activity. These classes are also open to non-STARS Academy students as well. Please arrive to pick your child(ren) up from the after school programs at 5PM promptly.

BIRTHDAYS & CELEBRATIONS

If you would like to celebrate a special event in your child's life during school, i.e., a birthday, please contact the school administration in advance and plan a convenient time. Please ensure that enough treats are brought for the entire school.

HOMEWORK

Reading

STARS Academy will not be providing any tangible homework. Students will be encouraged to develop a love of reading and teachers will support students in choosing an appropriately leveled book that aligns with your child's interests. They can check out books from our STARS Academy library or from the public library. We can also make recommendations from Amazon as well.

Math

We ask that students practice their math facts nightly for 20 minutes to reinforce their automaticity with fact fluency.

Discussion Topics

Each week class discussion topics will be sent home to all families. We ask that you continue your child's learning by engaging in these discussion topics as a family.

STARS ACADEMY'S DRESS CODE

All STARS Academy students shall be required to show proper attention to personal cleanliness, health, neatness, safety and suitability of clothing and appearance for school activities. In every case the dress and grooming of the student shall be clean and shall not: cause actual distraction from or



disturbance in any school activity or actually interfere with the participation of a student in any school activity, create a hazard to the safety of him/herself or others, and/or create a health hazard to others.

The California legislature has determined that gang apparel is hazardous to the health and safety of the school environment, and therefore, the wearing of such apparel may be restricted. Our dress code is gender neutral; students will not be disciplined or prevented from wearing attire that is commonly associated with the other gender.

SHOES: All students are required to wear closed-toe shoes. We will be engaging in movement activities daily and all students must wear comfortable shoes suitable for moving. Shoes with wheels are not permitted on campus.

PE CLOTHING: Students are welcome to bring additional clothes special for movement activities. It is completely optional to bring extra clothes.

LOST AND FOUND

STARS Academy is not responsible for lost items. Students will be provided with the appropriate organizational tools and will be expected to be responsible for all of their belongings.

DISCIPLINE POLICY

The discipline policy of STARS Academy is based on concepts of positive behavioral support and a progressive discipline process that will involve the students, school staff, parent(s) and/or legal guardian(s) and the student's caregiver(s). The discipline policy is guided by the notion that students should be held accountable for their behavior. STARS Academy takes a non-punitive approach to discipline, resolving conflicts through discussion, reparation, peer support, and reinforcement of community values. The climate of STARS Academy will be one of support, understanding, and respect. Every effort will be made to model appropriate behavior and to be proactive in preventing the need for students to engage in undesirable behavior. In short, STARS Academy is committed to providing its students an opportunity to experience the benefits of the curriculum in an environment that fosters their potential, self-esteem, and well-being. Certain expectations of the students are therefore essential to achieving these aims. Students who repeatedly defy behavior expectations will be dismissed from the STARS Academy's academic program. Parents will be expected to pay all remaining balances of tuition for the year and will not receive any refunds of funds already paid.

NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

We welcome students from all backgrounds and experiences to create an inclusive learning community where all students, parents, and professionals appreciate and value diversity in all its forms. The STARS Academy admits students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin in administration of its



educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school-administered programs.

USE OF ELECTRONIC EQUIPMENT SUCH AS CELL PHONES

It is the policy of STARS Academy to prohibit the use of cellular phones by students on campus during normal school hours. Radios, CD players, video games, game players, iPods, iPads, or any other electrical devices (not for school related use) may NOT be brought onto the campus. If your student needs an electronic device to enhance their curriculum, a parent or guardian needs to sign a waiver releasing STARS Academy of all liability. Students are permitted to possess cellular phones or electronic signaling devices on campus provided that any such device shall remain off and stored in a backpack. Students are permitted to use cellular phones or electronic signaling devices on campus before and after school or during school activities that occur outside of school hours. STARS Academy is not responsible for lost or stolen cellular telephones or other personal items of value such as iPods, cameras, electronic games, radios, CD players, computers, etc. Students may, however, be given permission to use their cell phones in the event of an emergency. Laser pointers and beepers are also strictly prohibited at all times and will be confiscated. STARS Academy is not responsible for the damage or loss of any cellular phone, radio, CD player, video games, game players, IPODS, or any other electronic device at any time.

Cell phones and all other electronic devices will be confiscated by any STARS Academy employee if taken out during the school day. Texting or picture taking is **never** allowed, and the school administration may request that parents/guardians check their student's cell phone activity. Students may not have obscene or inappropriate pictures in their cell phones. Confiscated cell phones will never be returned to students; cell phones will only be returned to parents, guardians, or another approved adult. Cell phones will be returned the following school day after 3:00PM.

Parents/guardians should contact the school to get in touch with their children. Parents/guardians are welcome to call or text the STARS Academy number at any point during the day. Please do not call or text your child during the school day. With permission, students may use the school phones if they need to call home for any reason.

INTERNET / PHOTOGRAPHY

STARS Academy expects that all students, families, and employees practice appropriate behavior with respect to photographing and posting photos of students online. Individuals should not photograph students and post their images online without permission from parents. Families in our community have differing values and expectations regarding photographs on the internet therefore the default position of community members should be to seek parental permission prior to posting photos. Parents will be provided with a photo/video release form upon application to school.

EXPECTED STUDENT BEHAVIOR



Students should always remember that their behavior at school and school-related activities is a reflection not only on themselves but also on STARS Academy. The following is what is expected from a STARS Academy student.

General Rules

Students should:

1. Be respectful to all.
2. Follow all classroom rules and teacher directions.
3. Be responsible for their materials and actions throughout the day.

Recess and Lunch Time Rules

1. Hands must be washed before going outside to eat.
2. Eat first, then play.
3. Clean up after yourself. Make sure all trash is thrown away in the proper receptacles.
4. Hands must be washed before and after any play activities outside.
5. Be safe! Be aware of your surroundings.
6. Social distance
7. Take care of our play equipment.

Campus Wide Rules

Students should:

1. Be courteous and respectful at all times.
2. Stay in designated areas only.
3. Wait to enjoy gum after school.
4. Throw all trash away in a trash can, and recycle all recyclables.
5. Refrain from using profanity.
6. Abide by the following prohibitions: gambling, lying, fighting, possessing inappropriate literature or material, trading cards, or involvement in verbally or physically abuse of another individual.
7. Cellular phones, radios, CD players, video games, iPods, iPads, MP3s, or other electrical devices must **not** be used during school hours (unless instructed by an administrator for school purposes only.)
8. Display respect towards others by not tampering with cars outside campus, bringing matches, lighters, or any type of explosive device to school or any form of weapon on campus
9. Students are held to the expectation of not leaving campus without permission.
10. Students are to recognize the individual strengths and abilities of each person on campus by showing respect to all students and adults and refrain from name-calling, using slurs, or engaging in other demeaning or potentially humiliating actions, including bullying.

Conduct NOT permitted:

- Bullying/intimidation

- Possessing weapons
- Fights, threats, and/or violence
- Drug possession and/or sale of drugs
- Graffiti and/or vandalism
- Gang activity
- Cheating and/or plagiarism
- Forgery and falsification
- Sexual harassment and/or assault
- Blackmail and/or extortion
- Prejudice and hate crimes
- Robbery and stealing
- Fireworks and/or firecrackers

Conduct that IS permitted:

- Learning and following school and classroom rules.
- Solving conflicts maturely, without physical or verbal violence.
- Keeping a safe and clean school, that is free from graffiti, weapons, and drugs.
- Being a good role model and helping to create a positive school environment.
- Reporting any bullying, harassment, or hate-motivated incidents.
- Attending school on time and being prepared to learn.
- Keeping social activities safe.

BACKPACKS AND BOOK BAGS

Backpacks and bookbags are a desirable and necessary part of school life. However, there are times when they pose certain problems. Students are asked to follow individual classroom teacher's directions as to where to keep bags. In order to keep the campus safe, we expect students to make sure that their bags do not block doorways. Students may store bags in the designated areas.

Backpacks/book bags are considered the personal property of the student. No student may go into another student's bag without permission.

1. Backpacks/book bags are expected to be maintained so that they provide a positive form of organization for the student. In some cases, teachers will assist students in learning how to maintain an orderly book bag. Parents/Guardians are encouraged to also assist in this endeavor.
2. If the student's backpack is stolen, the parent/guardian is financially responsible for all content of the stolen backpack.

EMAILS

One of the best ways to communicate with teachers and/or the administrative staff is via email. All email addresses can be found on our website starsacademyschool.com. Please allow 24 – 48 hours for STARS Academy's faculty to respond to emails. In order to respect teachers personal time, emails may not be answered after 5 PM or on weekends, holidays, or extended breaks.



Also, please be aware that any email address registered through STARS Academy for student use is to be used ONLY for school purposes.

HARASSMENT & DISCRIMINATION POLICY:

STARS Academy is committed to providing a learning environment that is free from harassment in any form. Harassment of any student by any other student, or employee, is illegal according to Civil Code (California Educational Code 212.5) and is strictly prohibited. The school will treat allegations of harassment seriously and will review and investigate such allegations in a prompt, confidential, and thorough manner.

A charge of harassment shall not, in and of itself, create the presumption of wrongdoing. However, substantiated acts of harassment will result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal. Students found to have filed false or frivolous charges will also be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

Harassment occurs when an individual is subjected to treatment, or a school environment which is hostile or intimidating because of the individual's race, creed, color, national origin, gender identification, disability, or sex. Harassment can occur any time during school or during school-related activities. It is the student's responsibility to:

1. Conduct him or herself in a manner which contributes to a positive school environment.
2. Avoid any activity that may be considered discriminatory, intimidating, or harassing.
3. Consider immediately informing anyone harassing him or her that the behavior is offensive and unwelcome.
4. Report all incidents of discrimination or harassment to the administration.
5. Immediately discontinue conduct when informed that it is discriminatory, intimidating, harassing, or unwelcome.

Harassment includes, but is not limited to:

- Verbal Harassment
- Derogatory comments and jokes; threatening words spoken to another person.
- Physical Harassment
- Unwanted physical touching, contact, assault, deliberate impeding or blocking movements, or any intimidating interference with normal work or movement.
- Sexual Harassment: Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature.

STARS Academy prohibits discrimination and harassment based on an individual's sex (including sexual orientation or gender identity, pregnancy, childbirth or related medical condition); ethnicity (such as race, color, national origin, and ancestry); religion (including religious accommodation); disability (mental or physical disability or reasonable accommodation); age; marital status; or any other basis protected by federal, state, local law, ordinance, or regulation. Harassment based on any of the above-protected categories is a form of unlawful discrimination and will not be tolerated by STARS Academy. Harassment is intimidation or abusive behavior toward a student or employee that creates a

hostile environment and that can result in disciplinary action against the offending student or employee. Harassing conduct may take many forms, including verbal remarks and name-calling, graphic and written statements, or conduct that is physically threatening or humiliating.

This nondiscrimination policy covers admission or access to, or treatment or employment in the administration of any of its employment, educational programs, admissions policies, athletics, recreational, and other school-administered programs. The lack of English language skills will not be a barrier to admission to or participation in programs or activities.

The school administration are designated to handle all inquiries or complaints regarding its efforts to comply with and carry out its responsibilities related to discrimination or harassment based on a student's sex (Title IX); sexual orientation or gender identity (Title 5, CCR, §4910); race, color, or national origin (Title VI); or mental or physical disability (Section 504).

BULLYING

STARS Academy is committed to providing a safe learning and working environment and will not tolerate bullying or any behavior that infringes on the safety or well-being of students, employees, or any other persons within the school's jurisdiction; and will not tolerate retaliation in any form when bullying has been reported.

Bullying is defined as aggressive behavior that involves an imbalance of real or perceived physical or psychological power among those involved. Typically, the behavior is repeated over time and includes the use of hurtful words or acts.

Bullying behaviors may include, but are not necessarily limited to the following:

- Verbal: hurtful name-calling, teasing, gossiping, making threats, making rude noises, or spreading hurtful rumors.
- Nonverbal: posturing, making gang signs, leering, staring, stalking, destroying property, using graffiti or graphic images, or exhibiting inappropriate and/or threatening gestures or actions.
- Physical: hitting, punching, pushing, shoving, poking, kicking, tripping, strangling, hair pulling, fighting, beating, biting, spitting, or destroying property.
- Emotional (Psychological): rejecting, terrorizing, extorting, defaming, intimidating, humiliating, blackmailing, manipulating friendships, isolating, ostracizing, using peer pressure, or rating or ranking personal characteristics.
- Cyber bullying: Sending insulting or threatening messages or pictures by phone, email, websites or any other electronic or written communication.
- Creating unauthorized Facebook, Instagram, Twitter accounts

Administrators, staff, and parents are responsible for creating an environment where the school community understands that bullying behavior is inappropriate and will not be tolerated.

Students must also take responsibility for helping to create a safe environment:

- Treat everyone with respect.
- Be sensitive as to how others might perceive your actions or words.
- Do not engage in or contribute to bullying behaviors, actions, or words.
- Report bullying behavior to a trusted adult.

- Never engage in retaliatory behavior or ask, encourage, or consent to anyone's taking retaliatory action on your behalf.

STARS Academy's Bullying Procedures

Reports of bullying can be made by any individual in the STARS Academy community – parents, students, or staff. Individuals are encouraged to make reports to an administrator as soon as possible so that a proper investigation of the bullying behavior can occur. Reports can be made in person or via email to any administrator at the school. The administrator will then appoint the appropriate person to conduct the investigation or conduct the investigation.

Reports of bullying will be investigated thoroughly by administration or their appropriate staff designee and a determination concerning the nature and extent of bullying will be made.

Students who are found to have engaged in bullying will be subject to both intervention plans as well as school consequences. Intervention plans may include (but are not limited to) restricted free time, additional adult supervision, prescribed schedules of activities, peer mediation, and participation in bullying diversion curriculum. Consequences may include (but are not limited to) loss of school privileges, in-school suspension, or out of school suspension.

All parties involved and their parents will be informed to the greatest extent appropriate of the outcomes of the bullying investigations, the plans/consequences put in place as a result of the investigation, and future changes to the specified plans when they occur. It is the expectation of the STARS Academy community that parents will cooperate, support, and partner with the school during the investigation process and the implementation of intervention and consequences. The success of each child and the promotion of a healthy school climate relies on the support and partnership of parents and families.

Students who continue to engage in bullying behavior despite intervention and/or consequences may be subject to expulsion. School administration will use appropriate discretion in all such cases and the administrators have the final say on student dismissal from the program.

STARS Academy is committed to providing a safe environment for its students and all persons that enter the campus grounds. To facilitate this, certain rules and regulations have been formulated. It is expected that all students and adults will cooperate with these regulations.

DISCIPLINARY CONSEQUENCES

When there is divergence from these expectations, the staff, the student, and the student's parent(s)/ legal guardian(s) will seek age-appropriate interventions which redirect inappropriate behaviors into more successful behaviors with the least disruption to the student(s) educational program and the class. A desire of the discipline process is to maintain the child in the learning environment and implement interventions that are least restrictive to the individual(s) involved.

This discipline policy will not be implemented in a manner that is discriminatory, arbitrary or capricious, and will follow general principles of due process. Students and their parent(s)/legal guardian(s) will sign agreements related to their understanding of and responsibility to the standards set forth in the discipline policy as explained in this Student/Parent Handbook.



These policies, procedures and regulations are part of STARS Academy's Student/Parent Handbook. Students attending STARS Academy, as well as their parent(s) or legal guardian(s), will be required to sign an official school document agreeing to abide by all these school policies. Continued attendance at STARS Academy will be contingent upon signing the aforementioned official school document.

Parents/Guardians and students (when appropriate) will be asked to participate on the Student Success Team (SST) if a student's behavior is not improving. The team will develop appropriate modifications and intervention strategies.

Students who habitually fail to comply with school policies by chronically engaging in rule violating behavior even after the positive behavioral supports have been implemented and/or who present an immediate threat to health and safety may face an alternative in-school placement (in-house suspension) or suspension from school depending upon the severity of the infraction. Individual behavior support or intervention plans will be designed for the most persistent rule violators.

If rule violating behaviors continue after intervention, the Student Success Team (SST) and/or Discipline Committee may determine that STARS Academy is not the most appropriate placement for the student (i.e. expulsion). It is important that the parent(s) participate on the SST and be active partners in these decisions. If a student is dismissed due to violation of rules, parents will be expected to pay the full year of the student's tuition and will not receive any refunds of payments already made.



Family Involvement

Family involvement and collaboration are central to the mission of STARS Academy. This chapter describes types of family involvement, as well as processes for home-school communication and collaboration.

TYPES OF FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

Families may participate in several different ways, depending upon their preferences, strengths and resources.

UNDERSTANDING AND SUPPORTING THE SCHOOL MISSION

All parents/guardians are expected to support the mission of STARS Academy. The development of an inclusive learning community requires the support of families. Therefore, it is essential that all parents/guardians fully understand and are committed to supporting the mission, vision, and goals of the school.

INVOLVEMENT IN THEIR STUDENTS' EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

All parents/guardians are expected to be involved in their children's educational programs. STARS Academy supports a family centered approach, which honors parents' and/or guardians' priorities, concerns, and goals for their children. Family members are valued members of the educational team, contributing knowledge about their individual children's characteristics, learning styles, needs, and preferences. Ongoing communication between home and school, as well as a respectful and collaborative approach, helps to assure meaningful participation by families.

Such participation will be supported through such strategies as:

- Parent/Guardian involvement in identifying goals and priorities for their children's educational plan. These plans are based on an assessment of each child's level of functioning and learning styles, and developed through collaboration between teachers, staff, and when appropriate, the student;
- Two conferences per year to discuss goals and review portfolios; (Student Led)
- Collaboration with staff when problems or concerns arise.

HOME/SCHOOL COMMUNICATION

STARS Academy has a strong commitment to family/teacher collaboration. Families are encouraged to stay in contact with their child(ren)'s teacher(s) throughout the year.

Communication with Teachers

Each student and family is required to review this Parent/Student Handbook. Families may also contact teachers by emailing or calling the school number and leaving a message or making an appointment for a conference via Zoom. Please allow 24-48 hours for STARS Academy faculty to return



emails. Teachers are not available immediately before or after school, as this time is reserved for co-planning or “debriefing” amongst staff members, which is an integral part of the STARS Academy educational program. If there is a need to conference with a teacher, and/or the administrative staff, kindly make an appointment via email or text. No drop-in conferences, please. The weekly email and all essential school-wide information will be emailed out weekly on Mondays. It is important that STARS Academy has your current email.

Communication with the Staff

Please leave a message, text or email the STARS Academy number or the info email address to set up a Zoom conference. Due to the low number of staff members, calls may not be able to be returned until a lunch break or after school. If you have an urgent message please text the STARS Academy number. Staff will be checking messages throughout the day.

Communication with Students during the School Day

If you need to communicate with your child during school, please text or email the number or info email. We will relay the message and have your child get in touch with you via the STARS Academy phone.

Safety

EMERGENCY THAT REQUIRES EVACUATION

Both earthquake and fire drills will be conducted at STARS Academy. Students will be made aware of the evacuation procedures. Staff has been trained in emergency preparedness procedures. Below are the evacuation maps for two different safety situations. These plans will also be posted on school grounds.

EARTHQUAKE/FIRE SAFETY

School employees will:

- Participate in all emergency training and drills.
- Stay calm and direct students in the event of a real emergency.
- Follow the designated school plan.

Students will:

- Participate in all emergency training and drills.
- Remain as calm and quiet as the situation allows.
- Duck and cover in an earthquake situation until given the all-clear signal.
- Leave the building in a quiet and orderly manner when told to do so.
- Line up in the designated area for attendance to be taken.
- Follow all adult directions.
- Be on their best behavior until given the all clear or, in case of a major emergency, until a parent or guardian picks them up.

MAJOR SCHOOL SAFETY REGULATIONS

To maintain the safety of the campus, the following major regulations have been adopted. Failure to abide by these regulations will result in dismissal from the program.

1. Drug use/abuse - the use, sale, or possession of drugs, tobacco, or alcohol on campus, during the school day, at after school functions, or school sponsored trips, are regarded as a severe breach of school rules. This includes students who attend school-related functions under the influence of a drug or alcohol. A student guilty of any of these infractions will be dealt with in the most serious possible manner.
2. Gang Involvement - Any type of gang activity or gang association will not be tolerated. Gang symbols on notebooks, book bags, etc., or gang clothing are not allowed on campus.
3. Weapons - Possession of firearms, knives, or any explosives on campus is expressly forbidden. This rule also applies to toy weapons, paintballs, darts and any ordinary objects that are used in a harmful or dangerous manner.

4. Theft and Vandalism - Students are expected to respect the school's property as well as property belonging to others on campus and in the community. Taking property belonging to others and vandalism are considered serious offenses.

6. Visitors on Campus - Visitors will not be permitted on campus.

7. Leaving Campus without Permission – This is a serious violation. Parent(s) or guardian(s) and police will be notified immediately.

STUDENT/PARENT/TEACHER CONTRACT

The STARS Academy students will work cooperatively to become self-directing, think critically, develop social competence, respect their diversity, and actively seek learning opportunities. The teachers of the STARS Academy will establish the highest standards and expectations for student achievement, promote a foundation for life-long learning, and model appropriate behaviors and attitudes expected of students. The school community including parent(s)/caregiver(s), faculty, staff, administrators, and community members, will work cooperatively and collaboratively to create an enriching learning environment in which all partners are empowered by their own sense of ownership and responsibility to the school.

Staff Pledge: I agree to carry out the following responsibilities to the best of my ability:

- Teach classes through interesting and challenging lessons that promote student achievement.
- Vow to motivate students to learn.
- Have high expectations and help every child to develop a love of learning.
- Provide a nurturing, safe, and caring learning environment.
- Actively participate in collaborative decision-making and consistently work with families and school colleagues to make school an accessible and welcoming place for families that help each student achieve the school's high academic and behavioral standards.
- Respect the school, students, staff, and families.
- Modify curricular experiences to meet the individual educational and social needs of students.

Student Pledge: I agree to carry out the following responsibilities to the best of my ability:

- Come to school ready to learn and work hard.
- Know and follow the school and class rules.
- Communicate regularly with my family and teachers about school experiences so that they can help me to be successful in school.
- Read every day or evening after school.
- Respect the school, classmates, staff, and families.

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A C A D E M Y

Family Pledge: I agree to carry out the following responsibilities to the best of my ability:

- Read to my child or encourage my child to read every day.
- Ensure that my child is on time and attends school every day; gets adequate sleep, regular medical attention, and proper nutrition; and follows the school dress code.
- Communicate the importance of education and learning to my child.
- Respect the school, staff, students and families.
- Support the school’s commitment to inclusive and accessible education.

X _____
Student

X _____
Parent/Guardian

X _____
Teacher



STARS Academy Rules

SCHOOL RULES

We are safe

We are responsible for our words and actions

We respect ourselves, others, and property

We are a community

Adhering to School Rules may result in the following:

- Verbal or written praise / positive reinforcement
- Positive calls or notes home
- Success in learning!

Not adhering to School Rules may result in the following:

- Verbal and / or written warnings
- Loss of Privileges
- Notices to parent(s) / legal guardian(s) by telephone and / or letter.
- Parental / Staff / Student Conference
- Alternative In-School Placement [In-House Suspension]
- Suspension
- Dismissal from the STARS Academy program