St. Helen School
Middle School Policy Manual
2026-2027

Middle School Policies

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Introduction

At St. Helen School, we firmly believe that every child is created in the image and likeness of God. Each student is unique and valuable, endowed with gifts and potential meant to be nurtured and developed. Our mission is to help every student grow into their fullest potential—academically, socially, spiritually, and personally.

We strive to educate well-balanced students who are not only prepared for the academic challenges of the most rigorous high schools but who also embody strong leadership, integrity, and a commitment to serving their communities. Our goal is to develop young people who think critically, act compassionately, and lead courageously.

The policies outlined in this manual are designed to provide consistent practices across classrooms and grade levels, ensuring fairness and clarity for all students and families. At the same time, we recognize and respect the autonomy of our teachers and the unique dynamics of each class. This balance allows for flexibility within a framework that supports excellence and accountability.

This handbook serves as a resource to support parents in their vital role as partners in their children's education. It clearly spells out expectations and procedures so that families, students, and staff can work together in harmony toward the common goal of student success.

Together, we commit to nurturing an environment where every student is encouraged to learn, grow, and thrive in the fullness of their God-given potential.

"Education is not just about information, but formation."
- **Pope Francis**

"The future starts today, not tomorrow."
- **St. John Paul II**

"Be who God meant you to be and you will set the world on fire."
- **St. Catherine of Siena**

"What we are is God's gift to us. What we become is our gift to God."
- **Eleanor Powell**

Academic Grading Policy

In middle school (Grades 5–8), academic grading is designed to reflect both student achievement and personal growth. We believe in educating the whole child—nurturing not only academic success but also the development of character, work habits, and life skills that prepare students for long-term success.

Grade Breakdown

To support this approach, academic grades are calculated using the following structure:

- **Assessments – 45%**
  Assessments—including tests, quizzes, presentations, and major projects—are tools that most accurately reflect a student's mastery of academic content. These formative and summative tasks are aligned to learning objectives and provide measurable evidence of what students know and can do. However, we recognize that performance on assessments is only one part of a student's learning journey.

- **Classwork – 40%**
  Daily classwork represents a significant portion of a student's grade because it reflects engagement, effort, and progress over time. Class activities offer students the chance to practice new skills, collaborate with peers, receive immediate feedback, and demonstrate growth. Including classwork in the grade emphasizes that learning is ongoing and visible in more than just test results.

- **Homework – 15%**
  Homework is assigned as practice and reinforcement of classroom learning. While it is not a strong indicator of mastery on its own, it provides essential benefits such as the development of time management, organization, responsibility, and independent learning skills. We intentionally assign homework with purpose and balance, understanding that it supports the development of the whole learner.

A Holistic View of Grading

Grades are a reflection of progress, not perfection. They should provide meaningful information to students, parents, and teachers about both academic achievement and learning habits. We value:

- **Effort and Persistence** – Recognizing students who work hard, ask questions, and seek to improve.
- **Growth Over Time** – Honoring progress and personal development, not just high scores.
- **Feedback and Reflection** – Encouraging students to use grades as a starting point for self-reflection, goal-setting, and improvement.
- **Balance and Wellness** – Ensuring that grading practices support students' emotional health and do not define their worth.

By using a balanced grade structure and focusing on the whole child, we aim to build confident, motivated learners who are prepared not just for the next test—but for life.

5-8 Grade Breakdown

Learn!

Classwork 40%

Ongoing Metric for Mastery

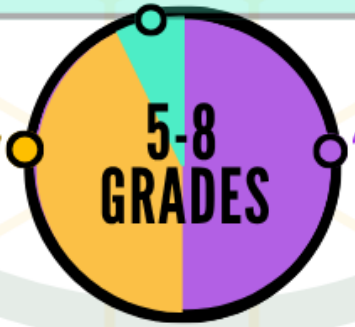
- **Active** learning
- Work completed **with guidance**
- Ensures foundation of learning and skills
- Hands-on Activities
- Working toward mastery
- Performance in classwork provides direction for homework assignments
- Examples can include:
  - In class projects
  - Worksheets
  - In class discovery
  - End of section reviews

Practice!

Homework 15%

Weak Metric of Mastery

- **Practice!**
- **Opportunity** to refine skills
- Review learned concepts
- Varying degrees of parental involvement
- Examples can include:
  - Practice skills
  - Reviewing
  - Reading



Assess!

Assessments 45%

Strong Metric of Mastery

- **Summative** and **Formative**
- Formative should be **Frequent** and ongoing
- Opportunities to re-assess to show growth
- Opportunity to find what students **can** do
- Accommodation made to meet student needs
- Can vary by student
- Examples can include:
  - Quizzes
  - Exams
  - Essays
  - Tests
  - Projects

Repeat!

Test Corrections

As part of this commitment, **all middle school teachers offer students the opportunity to complete test corrections**. This practice allows students to earn back a portion of missed credit—**at minimum, half a point per incorrect answer**—when they thoughtfully revise their mistakes and demonstrate understanding. Test corrections encourage accountability, reflection, and resilience, helping students see mistakes as opportunities for growth rather than failure. Specific expectations for completion will be communicated by each teacher.

Homework Policy

Homework plays an important role in supporting student learning by giving students opportunities to practice and reinforce skills introduced in class. While homework does not hold the same weight as assessments in our grading system, it is still an essential part of the learning process and a valuable tool for building lifelong habits of responsibility, organization, and time management.

Purpose of Homework

Homework is not meant to introduce new material, but rather to provide guided practice, independent reinforcement, or preparation for upcoming lessons. It gives students the chance to refine their understanding, develop persistence, and take ownership of their learning outside of the classroom.

Grading Criteria

Homework in middle school is graded based on two primary criteria:

- **Accuracy** – Has the student made a sincere effort to complete the work correctly and thoughtfully?
- **Timeliness** – Was the assignment submitted on time, according to the due date set by the teacher?

Together, these criteria ensure that homework remains a meaningful part of the learning process while also emphasizing accountability and consistent work habits.

Late Homework Policy

We understand that students occasionally face challenges that may prevent them from turning in homework on time. To balance grace with structure, our policy allows students to submit late homework with the following guidelines:

- 10% will be deducted for each day the assignment is late, up to a maximum deduction of 40%.
- The lowest possible score for late homework is 60%, as long as the assignment is completed with effort and accuracy.

- Late homework will not be accepted during the final week of each academic quarter. This deadline ensures that teachers have time to assess student work fairly and issue timely report cards.

Time Expectations & Workload Management

Middle school students should expect to spend **no more than 75 minutes per night on homework**. This breaks down to approximately **15 minutes per subject** (Math, Science, Social Studies, Reading, and ELA). Teachers coordinate to help maintain this balance and ensure that homework remains manageable.

We understand that long-term assignments and projects may be assigned in advance, with time provided throughout the week to work on them. **Time management is critical**- students who postpone project work or studying may find themselves with more than 75 minutes of homework in a single evening. Planning ahead and using in-class time wisely will help prevent unnecessary stress.

When students are preparing for an upcoming test or quiz, **studying will take the place of that night's homework in that subject**. This gives students the flexibility to focus their attention where it is most needed without increasing their overall workload.

If a student consistently spends more than 75 minutes per night on homework despite using time effectively, families are encouraged to communicate with teachers. We are committed to ensuring that homework supports, not overwhelms, student learning and well-being.

Communications

Agenda Books & Student Responsibility

In middle school, **developing strong organizational skills** is a key part of preparing students for long-term academic success. One of the most important tools students will use throughout the year is their **agenda book**. This tool helps students track assignments, plan ahead, and take ownership of their learning.

Daily Use of Agenda Books

- At the end of each school day, during homeroom, students are required to copy the nightly homework from the board into their agenda book.
- This process is **student-driven**. Teachers may monitor the process, but it is the student's responsibility to ensure their agenda book is complete and accurate.
- Students should also use their agenda book to record long-term assignments, project deadlines, upcoming tests, and reminders.

Homework Posted in FACTS

- As a secondary support, homework will be published in FACTS (our Student Information System) by 4:00 PM each school day.
- While this serves as a helpful backup for parents and students, it should not replace the daily habit of writing homework in the agenda book.

Why This Matters

Agenda books help:

- Build **executive functioning skills** such as planning, time management, and task initiation
- Shift the responsibility for tracking assignments from adults to students
- Encourage independence and accountability
- Serve as a communication tool between home and school

Parents are encouraged to check their child's agenda book regularly and use it as a starting point for conversations about schoolwork. This simple daily habit can greatly improve academic success, reduce anxiety, and foster confidence in managing responsibilities.

Feedback & Graded Work

In middle school, we believe that **timely, meaningful feedback** is essential for student growth and learning. Feedback helps students understand their strengths, identify areas for improvement, and make meaningful academic progress. It also keeps families informed and engaged in their child's learning journey.

Return of Graded Work

Teachers will regularly return **graded assignments, assessments, and projects** to students, either in hard copy or through the school's digital platform. Students are expected to **place all returned work into a designated folder** that stays in their backpack or organizational binder. This folder serves as a personal record of progress and a tool for reflection and communication between school and home.

Purpose of Feedback

The purpose of returning graded work is to:

- Help students reflect on their performance
- Clarify misunderstandings or errors
- Reinforce skills and knowledge
- Encourage revision or correction where appropriate
- Foster open communication between home and school

Students are encouraged to **review all returned work** carefully and ask questions if they do not understand the feedback. Parents are also encouraged to regularly check the folder and use it as a starting point for conversations about academic goals and progress.

More Than Just a Grade

While it is important to monitor grades, simply checking a number or letter in a gradebook **does not provide the full picture of a student's learning**. The most valuable insights come from reviewing the specific **teacher comments, rubrics, corrections, and notes** on each assignment. This detailed feedback helps students:

- Understand **why** points were lost or gained
- Identify patterns in their work habits or understanding
- Take ownership of their learning and growth

Parents are encouraged to not only ask, “What grade did you get?” but instead ask, “What did the teacher say about your work?” Reviewing actual assignments together builds deeper understanding and stronger student-parent-teacher partnerships.

Providing clear feedback is a critical part of our holistic grading approach, where the goal is not just to assign a number or letter, but to support real, lasting learning.

Thursday Folders

To keep families informed and connected with school events, every student will receive a Thursday Folder each week.

Purpose of Thursday Folders

- Thursday Folders are sent home **every Thursday** and contain important school-wide information such as:
    - The school newsletter
    - Flyers for upcoming events
    - Announcements and updates from the administration
- Teachers may also include class-specific communications, homework reminders, and student work in these folders.

It is important for families to:

- **Check the Thursday Folder each week** to stay up to date on school news and events.
- Review the contents carefully and discuss any relevant information with your child.
- Return any required forms or documents promptly if included in the folder.

Thursday Folders are a key communication tool that helps ensure families are well-informed and engaged in their child's education.

Teacher Communications

Open and timely communication between teachers, students, and families is essential to support student success. We encourage parents and students to reach out with questions, concerns, or feedback throughout the school year.

Response Time Expectations

- Teachers and staff strive to be **responsive within 24 hours** during school days to all emails and phone calls.
- Messages received after school hours or on weekends will typically be answered on the next school day.

Preferred Methods of Communication

- Email is the preferred method for non-urgent questions or information.
- Phone calls may be scheduled if a more detailed conversation is necessary.

Supporting Positive Communication

- When reaching out to teachers, please provide clear information about your question or concern to help facilitate an efficient response.
- We ask families and students to respect this timeline and understand that immediate responses may not always be possible due to teaching and instructional duties.

Our goal is to foster a collaborative partnership where timely communication helps ensure every student thrives academically and personally.

IXL

To support personalized learning and skill practice, our middle school incorporates **IXL**, an adaptive online learning platform, as part of assignments in core subjects.

Benefits of IXL

- **Adaptive Learning:** IXL adjusts the difficulty of questions based on each student's responses, ensuring that assignments are appropriately challenging and tailored to individual needs.

- **Targeted Skill Practice:** Teachers assign specific skills on IXL that directly align with classroom instruction and learning goals, allowing students to focus on areas that need reinforcement.
- **Instant Feedback:** Students receive immediate feedback on their answers, helping them understand mistakes and learn correct strategies in real-time.
- **Progress Tracking:** Both teachers and students can monitor progress on assigned skills, which supports goal-setting and helps guide future instruction.

IXL and Our Homework Policy

In some classes, IXL assignments may be considered part of the homework component of your child's grade. As with all homework:

- Students are expected to complete IXL assignments **accurately and on time**.
- Homework policies regarding **grading, late submissions, and time management** apply to IXL practice as well.
- IXL provides an important avenue for practice and skill development outside of class, consistent with our goal of reinforcing learning while building responsibility and organization.

Using IXL helps ensure that homework is purposeful and effective, contributing to each student's growth without overwhelming their workload.

Chromebook Use Policy

Chromebooks are an essential learning tool in our middle school classrooms. To ensure that all students can benefit from this technology safely and effectively, we expect responsible use and care of school-issued devices.

Care and Responsibility

- Students are **required to take good care** of their Chromebooks at all times. This includes protecting the device from damage, loss, or theft.
- Students must **bring their Chromebook fully charged to school every day** so they are prepared for all learning activities.
- Chromebooks should be transported in a protective case or backpack to prevent damage.

Appropriate Use

- Chromebooks are to be used **only for school-related purposes** during school hours and at home when completing assignments or projects related to school.
- Personal use that is unrelated to schoolwork is not permitted on school-issued devices.
- Students must follow all school policies regarding internet use and digital citizenship.

Monitoring and Accountability

- All Chromebook activity is **monitored and tracked** both during school hours and at home to ensure appropriate use.
- Alerts are automatically sent to school administration if any **inappropriate or concerning activity** is detected.
- Inappropriate use of the Chromebook may result in disciplinary action, including loss of Chromebook privileges.

By following these guidelines, students help maintain a safe, productive learning environment and ensure that technology continues to enhance their educational experience.

Cell Phone and Personal Technology Policy

Students may bring personal electronic devices such as cell phones, smartwatches, or other similar technology to school. However, to maintain a focused and respectful learning environment, strict guidelines must be followed.

Policy Guidelines

- Upon arrival at school, **students must immediately turn in all personal electronic devices to their teacher**.
- Devices will be stored safely throughout the day and **returned to students at the end of the school day**.
- **Use of personal electronic devices is prohibited at all times during the school day**, including class time, breaks, lunch, recess, and any school-sponsored activities such as clubs or aftercare.

Consequences for Non-Compliance

- Failure to comply with these rules will result in the device being confiscated by school administration.
- The device will only be returned to a parent or guardian, not the student.
- Repeated violations may lead to further disciplinary measures.

This policy helps ensure that all students remain engaged and distractions are minimized, fostering a positive and productive school environment.

STING Periods

To support the academic growth and success of our 5th–8th grade students, we have implemented STING Periods, which occur twice a week. STING stands for:

Study, Tutor, Intervention, Navigate, Grow

Purpose of STING Periods

STING periods are designed to provide additional targeted academic support, enrichment, and personalized learning opportunities. These sessions help students strengthen skills in specific subjects or work independently in a structured environment.

Support sessions during STING periods, include

- **Study Hall**
  A quiet space where students can complete assignments and receive help as needed.
- **General Tutoring**
  Mrs. Kiefer and our Intervention Specialist offer individualized academic support for students requiring additional assistance.

Selection and Attendance

- Teachers may **recommend or even require** student attendance in specific STING sessions based on grades, progress, and learning goals.
- STING periods provide an important opportunity for students to take ownership of their learning and receive targeted support to help them succeed.

Expectations and Consequences

- Students are expected to **use STING periods responsibly** by engaging productively in their studies.
- If a student **fails to comply with expectations or abuses this time**, they will be assigned to work in a designated supervised space.

Student Behavior Policy

Maintaining a positive and respectful learning environment is essential for the success and well-being of all students. To support this goal, we use a system to address student behavior that differentiates between minor and major infractions.

Minor and Major Infractions

- **Minor Infractions** are behaviors that disrupt the learning environment but can typically be addressed quickly through redirection or teacher intervention.
- **Major Infractions** are more serious behaviors that require administrative involvement and result in more significant consequences.

Three Minors Equal One Major

- When a student accumulates three minor infractions, these will be considered equivalent to one major infraction.
- This system encourages students to reflect on repeated behaviors and take responsibility before issues escalate.

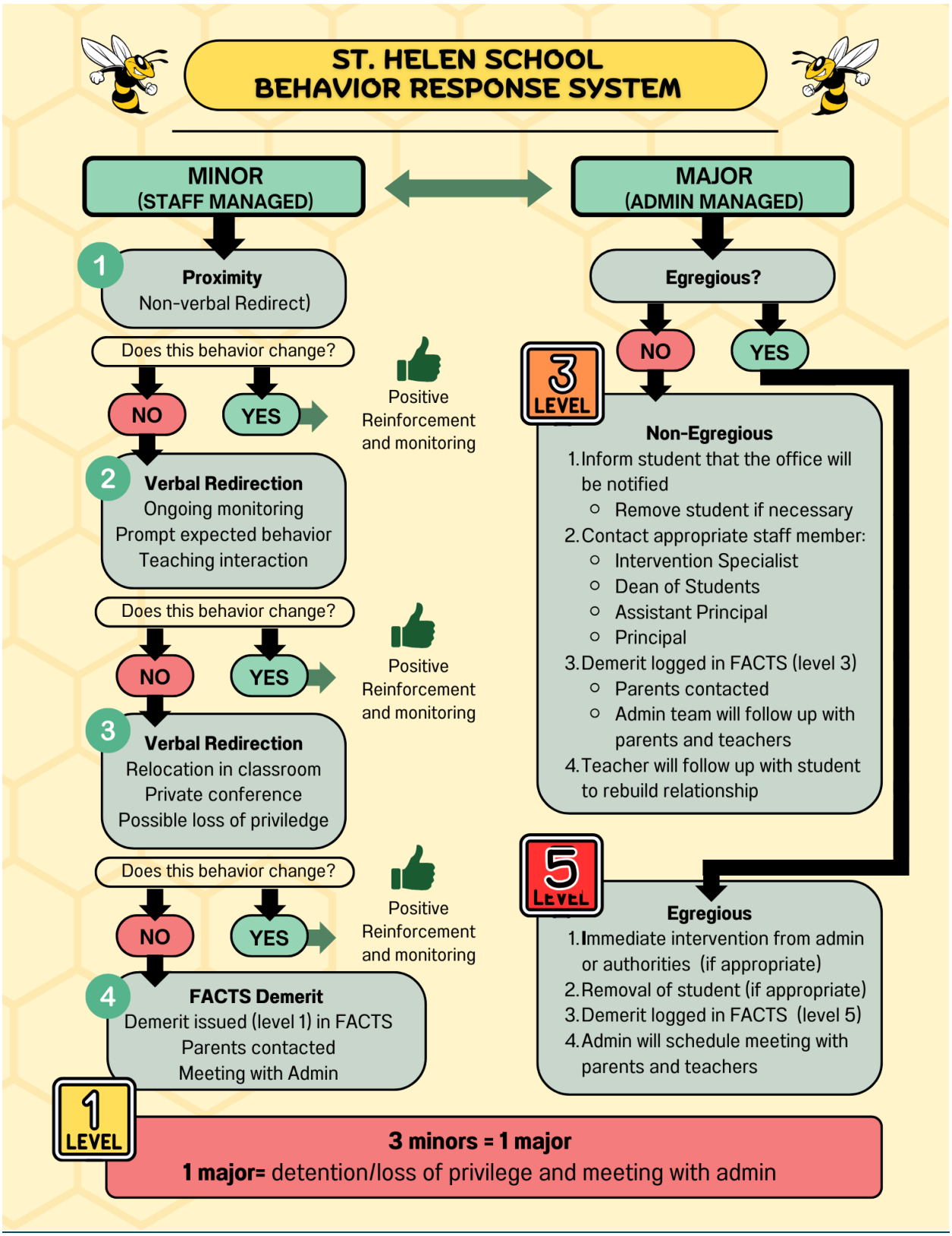
Consequences for Major Infractions

- Any major infraction, including the accumulation of three minors, will result in the student serving after-school detention.
- After-school detention is designed to provide students time to reflect on their behavior and understand its impact while maintaining accountability.

Communication with Families

- All minor and major infractions will be recorded and communicated through **FACTS**, our Student Information System.
- Parents and guardians will receive **email notifications** detailing the nature of the infraction and any assigned consequences.
- This timely communication helps families stay informed and involved in supporting positive student behavior.

Our goal is to promote self-discipline, respect, and positive choices. Clear expectations, consistent consequences, and open communication help create a safe and supportive environment where all students can thrive.


ST. HELEN SCHOOL
BEHAVIOR RESPONSE SYSTEM
MINOR
(STAFF MANAGED)
MAJOR
(ADMIN MANAGED)
1
Proximity
Non-verbal Redirect)
Does this behavior change?
NO
YES
Positive Reinforcement and monitoring
2
Verbal Redirection
Ongoing monitoring
Prompt expected behavior
Teaching interaction
Does this behavior change?
NO
YES
Positive Reinforcement and monitoring
3
Verbal Redirection
Relocation in classroom
Private conference
Possible loss of priviledge
Does this behavior change?
NO
YES
Positive Reinforcement and monitoring
4
FACTS Demerit
Demerit issued (level 1) in FACTS
Parents contacted
Meeting with Admin
1 LEVEL
3 minors = 1 major
1 major= detention/loss of privilege and meeting with admin
Egregious?
NO
YES
3 LEVEL
Non-Egregious
1. Inform student that the office will be notified
Remove student if necessary
2. Contact appropriate staff member:
Intervention Specialist
Dean of Students
Assistant Principal
Principal
3. Demerit logged in FACTS (level 3)
Parents contacted
Admin team will follow up with parents and teachers
4. Teacher will follow up with student to rebuild relationship
5 LEVEL
Egregious
1. Immediate intervention from admin or authorities (if appropriate)
2. Removal of student (if appropriate)
3. Demerit logged in FACTS (level 5)
4. Admin will schedule meeting with parents and teachers

ST. HELEN SCHOOL
BEHAVIOR RESPONSE SYSTEM

MINOR INCIDENT (STAFF MANAGED)

1 LEVEL

Defiance (low level)
- Not following directions
- Refusal to do work or task

Disrespect (low level)
- Insults
- Name calling
- Taking others things
- Talking back
- Yelling at others
- Argumentative

Disruptions
- Distracting others
- Not patiently waiting turn
- Excessively out of seat
- Off task
- Talking out/ blurting out
- Interrupting
- Tardy

Dress Code Violations
- Hoodies or other nonuniform attire

Inappropriate Language

Physical Contact
- Not keeping hands to self
- Running
- Throwing objects

Technology Violation
- In possession of phone
- Inappropriate use of technology

Other
- Not prepared for class
- Cheating/plagiarism

MAJOR INCIDENT (ADMIN MANAGED)

3 LEVEL

Non-Egregious
- Defiance (High Level)
- Harassment
- Bullying
- Racial Slurs
- Disrespect (High Level)
- Stealing
- Vandalism
- Mocking staff
- Leaving class without permission
- Physical contact

5 LEVEL

Egregious
- Exceptional misconduct
- Criminal Acts
- Assault
- Drugs/alcohol
- False alarms
- Sexual Harassment
- Major theft
- Threats/intimidation
- Weapons

Note:
- Relationships are everything- Regardless of what the behavior or incident, the staff member who assigned the demerit will follow up with the student as soon as appropriate to rebuild the relationship.
- Consistent enforcement of established expectations create a safe and secure environment.
- All consequences will be implemented with restorative practices in mind.

Academic Probation Policy

In middle school, academic success is a shared responsibility between students, teachers, and families. When a student is not meeting academic expectations—due to missing work, low performance, or a lack of academic engagement—a structured Academic Probation plan may be put in place. This plan is intended to provide additional support, accountability, and clear expectations to help the student get back on track.

Purpose

Academic Probation is not a punishment, but a serious intervention designed to help students regain focus, improve academic habits, and demonstrate growth. **It is used when a student is failing two or more core subjects or has an excessive number of missing assignments.**

Implementation

For the duration of time a student is on Academic Probation, the following expectations and restrictions will apply:

- **Loss of Extracurricular Privileges**
  The student will not be permitted to participate in extracurricular activities, including sports, clubs, dances, or other school-sponsored events. This may include pep rallies, field day, or field trips.
- **Home-Based Support**
  Parents/guardians are expected to provide **reasonable consequences and support at home** to reinforce the goals of the Academic Probation plan. Collaboration between school and home is essential to ensure the student receives consistent messages about accountability and growth.

Timeline

The Academic Probation plan will be implemented **immediately upon notification** and will remain in effect until it is formally reviewed. In most cases, this review will occur at the **conclusion of the Quarter**, unless earlier progress or concerns prompt an adjustment.

Failure to Show Necessary Progress

If a student fails to demonstrate the expected academic growth outlined in their individual goal-setting plan, the following actions may be taken:

- Retention at the current grade level
- Removal from the school, based on lack of academic engagement and progress

Our hope is that Academic Probation serves as a structured and supportive tool for change. The goal is always to help the student succeed, regain privileges, and return to full academic standing through sustained effort and responsibility.