



# **TEXAS**

## **ONLINE PREPARATORY**

# **SCHOOL**

**PARENT/STUDENT HANDBOOK**  
**2024-2025**

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# 2024-2025 SCHOOL CALENDAR

**TOPS Calendar Highlights**

1825 Lakeway Dr. Ste. 400  
972-420-1404 (FAX) 888- 506-6777  
Lewisville, TX 75057

Jul 31-Aug 16	Teacher In-Service
Aug 19	First Day of School for Returning Students
Aug 21	New student S1 cohort 1 begins
Sept 2	Labor Day (Student/Staff Holiday)
Sept 4	New student S1 cohort 2 begins
Sept 18	New student S1 cohort 3 begins
Sept 25	New student S1 cohort 4 begins
Oct 2	New student S1 cohort 5 begins
Oct 11	Student Holiday, Teacher In-Service
Oct 14	Columbus Day (Student/Staff Holiday)
Oct 16	New student S1 cohort 6 begins (ES/MS only)
Oct 20	Mid-Semester Lock Date (MS/HS only)
Oct 30	New student S1 cohort 7 begins (ES/MS only)
Nov 13	New student S1 cohort 8 begins (ES/6th grade only)
Nov 20	New student S1 cohort 9 begins (ES/6th grade only)
Nov 25-29	Thanksgiving Break (Student/Staff Holiday)
Dec 4	New student S1 cohort 10 begins (ES/6th grade only)
Dec 4-10	Anticipated STAAR EOC Re-testing (HS only)
Dec 16	Semester 1 Lock Date (MS/HS only)
Dec 20	Last day of Semester 1 for Students
Dec 23-Jan 3	Winter Break (Student/Staff Holiday)
Jan 6-7	Student Holiday, Teacher In-Service
Jan 8	First Day of Semester 2 for Returning Students
	New student S2 cohort 1 begins (ES/MS only)
Jan 20	MLK, Jr. Day (Student/Staff Holiday)
Jan 22	New student S2 cohort 2 begins (ES/MS only)
Feb 5	New student S2 cohort 3 begins
Feb 17	President's Day (Student/Staff Holiday)
Feb 19	New student S2 cohort 4 begins
Mar 3-7	Anticipated TELPAS Testing
Mar 10-14	Spring Break (Student/Staff Holiday)
Mar 16	Mid-Semester Lock Date (MS/HS only)
Mar 25-27	Anticipated TELPAS Testing Make-Ups
Apr 7-17	Anticipated STAAR/EOC Testing
Apr 18	Good Friday (Student/Staff Holiday)
Apr 21	Student Holiday, Teacher In-Service
Apr 22-May 2	Anticipated STAAR/EOC Testing
May 7	New student S2 cohort 5 begins (ES/6th grade only)
May 19	Semester 2 Lock Date (MS/HS only)
May 22	Last Day of the School Year for Students
May 23	Student Holiday, Teacher Check-Out
May 26	Memorial Day (Student/Staff Holiday)
May 30	Summer PTO begins for Staff
TBD	Virtual Graduation
Jun 7	Anticipated In-Person Graduation Date
Jun 18-21	Anticipated STAAR/EOC Re-testing (HS only)

Teacher Calendar Days	187
Student Calendar Days	171

July 2024						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

August 2024						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

September 2024						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

October 2024						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

November 2024						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

December 2024						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

January 2025						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

February 2025						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

March 2025						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

April 2025						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

May 2025						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

June 2025						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	☆
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

- School Closed (Student/Staff Holiday)
- Student Holiday, Teacher Workday
- New student cohort start date
- Anticipated State Testing Windows
- First & Last Day of Semester
- Mid-Semester Lock Dates (MS/HS only)
- Graduation (TBD)

## INTRODUCTION

This Parent/Student Handbook sets forth general guidance for parents and students enrolled in the Texas Online Preparatory School (TOPS). TOPS operates under the Texas Virtual School Network (TxVSN) and in partnership with Huntsville ISD and is subject to the rules and regulations of the Texas Education Agency.

Students enrolled in TOPS are expected to follow the Huntsville School District's policies within its Parent/Student Handbook, located here: [HISD Handbook](#)

### Mission

Texas Online Preparatory School is a high performing virtual school where students feel a strong sense of belonging and are well-equipped for the futures of their dreams. TOPS is committed to ensuring that every student masters the essentials of their course or grade level.

### Motto

Empower to Learn! Equip to Succeed!

### Mascot

The Narwhal

Stride K12, ATTN: Texas Online Preparatory School  
1825 Lakeway Drive, Suite 400  
Lewisville, TX 75057  
Phone: 972-420-1404  
Fax: 888-506-6777  
Email: [info@texasonlineprep.org](mailto:info@texasonlineprep.org)

Huntsville Independent School District  
441 FM 2821  
East Huntsville, TX 77320  
Phone: 936-435-6300  
Fax: 936-435-6648  
[communications@huntsville-isd.org](mailto:communications@huntsville-isd.org)

## GENERAL TERMS and ACRONYMS

### K12 Specific Terms

**CC** = Class Connect Session

**LC** = Learning Coach

**OLS** = Online Learning System (Grades 3-5)

**OMS** = Online Middle School (Grades 6-8)

**OHS** = Online High School (Grades 9-12)

### General Terms

**STAAR** = State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness

**TSIA2** = Texas Success Initiative Assessment 2 (TX college readiness assessment)



**IBC** = Industry Based Certification (industry-specific career readiness assessment)  
**CBE** = Credit by Examination (used for acceleration of grade-level or course/subject)  
**AP** = Advanced Placement  
**GPA** = Grade Point Average  
**CTE** = Career and Technical Education  
**EOC** = End of Course Assessment  
**EB** = Emergent Bilingual student  
**WD** = Withdrawal  
**TEA** = Texas Education Agency  
**TEC** = Texas Education Code  
**TEKS** = Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (objectives for mastery based on subject and grade-level)  
**TAC** = Texas Administrative Code  
**TxVSN** = Texas Virtual School Network

### Special Programs

**SPED** = Special Education  
**IEP** = Individualized Educational Program (Document created in conjunction with ARD meeting, used to modify or implement curriculum and services for students with disabilities)  
**ARD** = Admission, Review, Dismissal (meeting used to determine special education and related services for students with disabilities)  
**TELPAS** = Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (assessments given to E students annually until exit criteria is met)  
**504** = Section 504 (related to accommodations for students with disabilities)  
**RTI** = Response to Intervention  
**MTSS** = Multi-Tiered System of Supports  
**GT** = Gifted and Talented  
**LPAC** = Language Proficiency Assessment Committee  
**BIP** = Behavior Intervention Plan (a written improvement plan created for a student based on the outcome of the functional behavior assessment (FBA))

## SCHOOL PROPERTY

TOPS provides materials, computer (if applicable), printer, books and other curricular supplies. These materials are school property and must be kept in good condition. Parents are responsible for the repair or replacement of all lost, stolen or damaged school property. A list of property that must be returned is provided to parents. All property and equipment must be returned in good, working condition upon withdrawal from the program or completion of the school year. If a piece of TOPS electronic equipment isn't working properly, **the parent should contact K12 Customer Care: [help.k12.com](http://help.k12.com)** and troubleshoot with the technical support team. Parents should not repair any of TOPS/K12's equipment. All printed materials are copyrighted

and unauthorized copying of that material is a copyright infringement. Materials cannot be sold or transferred and are to be used solely by the student in his/her studies while enrolled in the school. Parents are to comply with this policy and all the terms and conditions of the Use of Instructional Property Agreement submitted with the enrollment materials.

## COMMUNICATION

### *National Suicide Prevention Lifeline and the Crisis Text Line*

**If you, your student, or someone you know is experiencing a mental health crisis, please immediately call 988. Help is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, in multiple languages.**

**If you, your student, or someone you know is experiencing a medical emergency, please immediately call 911.**

### *Professional Parent/Student/Staff Communication*

Email is a primary source of contact between the TOPS staff and parents/students.

Staff will aim to respond to student and parent emails within 24 business hours of receipt, not including after-hours, holidays, testing days, or weekends.

Parents, students, and teachers are expected to adhere to professional norms in their written and spoken communication with each other. Everyone is expected to use appropriate language and netiquette when communicating with each other. Using excessive exclamation points or capitalization, foul language, or levying accusations against staff can be interpreted as harassment. Staff may not respond to emails with inappropriate content.

Below is an appropriate format to use when emailing staff:

<b>Subject:</b> Student ID, Concern
Greeting,  Issue/Concern/Question.  <i>-Learning Coach Name, phone number</i>

## Continued Engagement Plan

### Planning for occasional outages

The Online Learning School (OLS) or Online Middle/High Schools (OMHS) may be down for maintenance or unexpected outages from time to time. During these times, it is important not to panic and follow this plan! You will know that an emergency plan has been enacted because you will receive communication from your campus administrative team.

Be prepared in advance by doing the following things on the first day of school:

1. Download your course textbooks
2. Save and print a copy of all your teacher's and counselor's phone numbers and contact information.
3. Open your email from the OLS and favorite the link so that you can go directly to your email.
4. Check your course Classkick. This is how teachers will communicate assignments if we were to lose connectivity.

### How to determine when systems are back up and running

Check the following places for updates on all systems outages, and keep checking back to login about every 30 minutes to see if the affected system is back up and running again:

- Student/LC Email
- Customer Care: <http://help.k12.com>
- School Newsletter
- Stride Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/StrideK12/>
- Learning Coach app: Don't have the K12 App? Download the K12 App on your iOS or Android device! Join us today at [www.learningcoachlife.com](http://www.learningcoachlife.com)!
- Learning Coach Community

### Sample Scenarios:

1. *Access to the online school is temporarily interrupted. Students have regularly scheduled class, but students cannot access Class Connect sessions from their plan due to the system interruption.*
  - Teachers will not hold CC sessions.
  - Students can reach their teachers via phone or email.
  - All students are directed to access lessons and other activities within Class Kick during the intermittent outage. Students may also work on any teacher-graded assignments they may have already saved on their computer, such as research projects, essays, labs, or other projects.
  - Students will have their physical and downloaded course textbooks to read during the intermittent outage.
  - Students/Families will be sent an external email warning of the outage and the information will be posted on social media and in school newsletters. If the outage is prolonged, then an automated phone call will go out to families.
  - When course access is restored, families will be notified via email, school newsletter, Stride

Facebook, and the Learning Coach app.

2. *System access to the OLS or the Online MS/HS experiences prolonged interruption.*

- Principals will send newsletters with instructions regarding access to offline or alternative coursework.
- Teachers will teach asynchronously via ClassKick recordings and lessons, with assignments and assessments that students will complete to show progress. Some teachers may also teach live via Teams or Zoom after communicating the schedule in email and posting it in the school newsletter.
- Students can reach their teacher by phone if they cannot use school email. Students are directed to save a hard copy of all teachers' phone numbers on the first day of school in case of an outage or emergency.
- Students are directed to work on offline work during the intermittent outage. This includes research papers, essays and other offline work that is due within the time frame of the occurrence.
- Students will have their downloaded course textbooks to read during the intermittent outage.
- Students/Families will be sent an external email warning of the outage, the information will be posted on Stride Facebook and an auto dialer will go out to families.
- When course access is restored, families will be notified via Stride Facebook, Learning Coach app, email, and an automated phone call.

3. *Access to Engageli is temporarily down. There are no issues with the OLS. Students cannot access Class Connect sessions from their plan due to the system interruption.*

- Teachers will not hold CC sessions.
- Students can reach their teachers via phone or email.
- Students will continue to work on coursework in the OLS/OMHS.
- Students/Families will be sent an external email warning of the outage, the information will be posted on internal Stride Facebook groups. If the outage is prolonged, then an automated phone call will go out to families.
- When access is restored, families will be notified via email, Stride Facebook, Learning Coach app, and automated phone call.

4. *Access to Engageli is down for a prolonged amount of time. There is no access.*

- Principals will send newsletters with instructions regarding access to offline or alternative coursework.
- Teachers will hold class sessions via Teams or Zoom rooms, which will be sent via email. The schedule will be posted in the newsletters.
- Students can reach their teacher if they cannot use school email by phone or email.
- Students will continue to use the OLS/OMHS for all coursework.
- Students/Families will be sent an external email warning of the outage, the information

will be posted on Stride Facebook and an auto-dialer will go out to families.

- When access is restored, families will be notified via email, Stride Facebook, Learning Coach app, and automated phone call.

5. *The Texas Gulf Coast is within path of an approaching tropical storm or hurricane.*

- Teachers directly in storm's path will not hold CC sessions.
- Impacted teachers will cancel CC sessions prior to landfall and post lessons in Classkick.
- Families and Students within storm's path are alerted to impending storm and encouraged to take necessary precautions.
- Students within storm's path are encouraged to continue working if it does not interfere with their safety.
- Students who need resources will be directed to the school counselors.
- Messaging will be sent via automated phone call, as well as email, Stride Facebook, and Learning Coach app.

6. *Students are impacted due to natural disasters, including tornadoes, tropical storms, or hurricanes. Federal or State Government(s) declare a natural disaster for specific areas or the entire state.*

- Executive Director will send **Safety Declaration Survey** via automated phone call and email to families listed as within impacted area(s).
- Teachers who are impacted by natural disasters will have the support of K12 and TOPS within corporate and local policies. This may include accommodations or prolonged leave, pending corporate approvals.
- Teachers without Internet should contact their supervisor as soon as possible.
- Supervisors will accommodate individual situations within corporate policy/guidance.
- Students impacted may be excused from daily work and assessments, including all quizzes, discussions, and TGA's, for up to two weeks.
- Impacted students will be given additional support to complete critical assignments and assessments to ensure mastery of standards and course completion by end of semester.
- Students who need resources will be directed to the school counselors.
- TOPS Executive Director will contact Stride Portfolio Vice President to identify resources available within K12 for staff and students, such as obtaining replacement laptops for any damaged during the natural disaster.
- Within reason, school community may raise funds to support student relief efforts. Any monies raised must be tracked and accounted for with corporate policies.

## Microsoft TEAMS Usage Policy

Microsoft (MS) Teams allows students to communicate with each other and their teacher for the purpose of completing assignments together, asking and answering school-related questions, and providing additional academic or social support.

Students shall **not**:

- Use MS TEAMS outside the scope of the assigned and intended TEAMS course/student organization, including but not limited to using TEAMS to instant message teachers of other non-TEAMS courses/clubs.
- Violate policies, rules, or agreements signed by the student or the student's parent regarding the use of technology resources.
- Attempt to access or circumvent passwords or other security-related information of the district, students, or employees or upload or create computer viruses, including any substantial disruption to the educational environment.
- Use any form of electronic communications to threaten district students, employees, board members, or volunteers.
- Send, post, deliver, or possess electronic messages that are abusive, obscene, sexually oriented, threatening, harassing, damaging to another's reputation, illegal, or any conduct that causes a substantial disruption to the educational environment or infringes on the rights of another student.
- Use any electronic communication to engage in or encourage illegal behavior or threaten school safety, including off school conduct that causes a substantial disruption to the educational environment or infringes on the rights of another student at school.

## Frequently Asked Questions

The answers to many frequently asked questions can be found in the TOPS Contact Guide:

<https://secure.smore.com/qp4y9>

### **What do I do if my internet goes out?**

Internet is a requirement of TOPS. If your internet temporarily goes out, your student will still need to participate in school. We suggest going to a local library, a local business that provides WIFI, or a friend's house to use their internet, while you resolve your internet issues. If your outage is prolonged, please notify your homeroom teacher immediately.

### **How do I change my password?**

1. Log on to your computer.
2. Press the Ctrl, Alt, and Delete keys on the keyboard at the same time and then release them.
3. Select "Change Password" from the menu that appears on the screen.

4. Make sure the user name is correct.
5. Make sure the account in the second box is correct (whether it's a domain account or local computer account).
6. Type your old (current) password in the third box.
7. Type your new password in the fourth box.
8. Type your new password again in the fifth box.
9. Click "OK."
10. Click "OK" to acknowledge the message that your password has been changed.
11. Press the Esc button, or click "Cancel" to return to the Windows desktop.

### **Who can answer questions about my K12-issued computer?**

All issues regarding K12 computers can be directed to K12 technical support directly. Technical support is available at [help.k12.com](http://help.k12.com) or **866-626-6413** between the hours of 7 am and 7 pm CST.

### **Where can I find information about general computer questions or technical difficulties?**

The following websites may be helpful when computer questions or technical difficulties arise.

- <http://www.google.com> – Widely used search engine
- <http://www.whatis.com> – provides definitions of most technical terms, concepts and ideas
- <http://www.howstuffworks.com> – provides information on how computer hardware and software work in addition to about everything else one could ever want information about
- <http://housecall.antivirus.com> – free online virus scanner that can be used as a "second opinion" to the installed antivirus software
- <http://www.homenethelp.com> – provides information for setting up and troubleshooting a home network environment
- <http://www.computerhope.com> – free computer help for everyone. Drivers, questions & answers, and forums.
- <http://support.microsoft.com> – Microsoft's self-help support web site including data base of common issues and resolutions
- <http://www.webopedia.com> – online dictionary and search engine for computer and internet terms
- <http://www.modemhelp.net> – more advanced site that provides information on error messages and screenshots for troubleshooting technical issues
- <http://www.dslreports.com> – information on DSL, Cable, and other high speed internet connections
- <http://help.k12.com> – K12 website that provides troubleshooting information for common issues experienced by families and download points for technical tools

### **Where can I go to get more help?**

K12 Customer Care is the first point of contact for parents and students who need computer help. Call 1-866-626-6413 to speak with K12 Technical Support or visit [help.k12.com](http://help.k12.com)

## Parent Tips and Tricks

Below is a list of suggestions and advice compiled by TOPS families and staff members:

### Starting School:

- Give yourself time to get familiar with the material, and develop a daily schedule based on due dates and requirements of your student's class schedule.
- Maintain open communication with teachers and make schooling your priority.
- Persevere as a family. Do not allow yourself or your family to become overwhelmed. Work cooperatively and patiently to troubleshoot challenges (i.e., computer or software problems, lifestyle change, etc.).
- Understand that some families need 6 months or more to become completely comfortable with the virtual public school model.
- Keep in mind that parents who have no experience attending public school at home may be surprised to discover that it is time consuming—particularly in the first two or three months as everyone acclimates to the new arrangement. Nevertheless, the reward of knowing that the nature of TOPS's program leads to high-quality education far outweighs the challenges.
- Check email daily and thoroughly read the information sent. This is our main form of communication, and you will have correspondence from many departments.

### Organization:

- Don't be overwhelmed when your school materials arrive. Open the boxes, set aside what is for second semester, and stick to the basics.
- Organize your workspace as early as possible.
- Establish a reward system based on daily attitude and activity.
- Daily schedules are imperative for your child's online learning success. Establish a schedule and stick to it.
- Obtain a notebook and write down questions for discussion with the teacher. Leave space to record responses.

### Coaching:

- Strive to begin school each day at a specified time. Stay on top of your schedule. Catching up can be challenging.
- You might choose to post a motto in the classroom area of your house to motivate.

### General:

- Watch the videos in the Virtual Learning Coach Academy on the TOPS YouTube channel.



- Attend as many in-person outings and participate in as many virtual social experiences as possible. Meeting other families and students helps families create a sense of community and belonging, and provides them with the opportunity to share experiences.
- Take advantage of every opportunity to meet your students' teachers.

## Resolving Concerns

Please follow these procedures for general information or for assistance in resolving a problem:

**Step 1:** All concerns should first be directed to the teacher of the course via phone or email.

**Step 2:** If the concern is not resolved through phone or email communication with the course teacher, then the learning coach should escalate their concern to the student's homeroom teacher. Sometimes a virtual conference may be needed.

**Step 3:** If the learning coach continues to have concerns, they should address their concerns with the campus assistant principal. Please send the concern via email to:

- Mr. Tim Wade; Elementary Assistant Principal, [twade@texasonlineprep.org](mailto:twade@texasonlineprep.org)
- Mrs. Erin Cogburn; Middle School Assistant Principal, [ecogburn@texasonlineprep.org](mailto:ecogburn@texasonlineprep.org)
- Mr. Travis Johnson; High School Assistant Principal, [tjohnson@texasonlineprep.org](mailto:tjohnson@texasonlineprep.org)

**Step 4 :** If the concern continues to be unresolved, they should address their concerns with the campus principal. The learning coach or Principal may request a virtual conference to address the concern.

- Ms. Angie Crow, Elementary Principal, [ancrow@texasonlineprep.org](mailto:ancrow@texasonlineprep.org)
- Mrs. Jill McKeeman, Middle School Principal, [jmckeeman@texasonlineprep.org](mailto:jmckeeman@texasonlineprep.org)
- Mrs. Juli Laechelin, High School Principal, [jlaechelin@texasonlineprep.org](mailto:jlaechelin@texasonlineprep.org)

**Step 5 :** If the concern continues to be unresolved upon meeting with the Principal, either the Principal or the Learning Coach may request an additional meeting with Mrs. Kristina Nanini, Executive Director, [knanini@texasonlineprep.org](mailto:knanini@texasonlineprep.org).

## Complaint/Grievance Response Procedure

Texas Online Preparatory School is interested in achieving and fostering student/family satisfaction. The following procedure ensures that student/family grievances are addressed fairly and in a timely manner. TOPS prohibits discrimination against students/families on the basis of disability, race, creed, color, gender, national origin, or religion.

1. The student and parent(s), custodian(s) or legal guardian(s), address in writing any concern or grievance to the Executive Director.
2. The Executive Director responds in writing within ten (10) working days.
3. If the concern or grievance is not resolved by the Executive Director, the parent(s), custodian(s) or legal guardian(s) may, within ten (10) working days of the Executive Director's response, request in writing a meeting (via phone or in person) with the Executive Director to discuss the concern or grievance. He/she investigates and responds within ten (10) working days.

Additional Information about Complaint Procedures can be found here: [HISD Complaint Forms](#)

### Parent Access to Staff Certifications

Parents may review certifications of Texas Online Preparatory School teachers by visiting the following link:

[SBEC Official Record of Educator Certificate \(state.tx.us\)](#)

## ADMISSION & ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS

All incoming applicants must meet all the following admissions requirements.

### Academic Requirements:

- 3<sup>rd</sup> through 9<sup>th</sup> grade –
  - Must have been promoted to the next grade level
  - Must have final passing grades in all core courses  
*(Math, Reading/Language Arts, Science, Social Studies)*
  - If the student took and passed any HS-EOC courses as an 8<sup>th</sup> grader, the student must not have scored Did Not Meet on any more than one of the EOCs.  
*(Keep in mind that a student can pass the course without meeting standard on the EOC.)*
- 10<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade –
  - Must not have scored Did Not Meet on any more than one of all required STAAR EOC exams
  - Must be on track to graduate with their cohort year  
*(A student's cohort year is the year they entered 9<sup>th</sup> grade.)*

- Must have final passing grades and credit earned in all core courses

### Behavioral Requirements:

- Must have completed any mandatory DAEP/JAEP hours

### Other Requirements:

- TXVSN Chapter 30 – Must have been enrolled in a Texas public school during the preceding school year.  
*(Military exceptions may apply.)*
- Must agree to take all required state assessments while enrolled in TOPS.  
*(Students that refuse to take required state assessments are at risk of losing eligibility during the subsequent school year.)*
- Proof of Texas residency.  
*(Admission to TOPS is available only to students who are domiciled within the geographical boundaries of the state of Texas. Students who do not maintain residency in Texas may not attend TOPS. Military exceptions may apply.)*

### Required Immunizations

A student must be fully immunized against certain diseases or must present an affidavit or statement that, for medical reasons or reasons of conscience, including a religious belief, the student will not be immunized.

For exemptions based on reasons of conscience, only official forms issued by the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS), Immunization Branch, can be honored by the district. This form may be obtained online at Affidavit Request for Exemption from Immunization at (<https://co-request.dshs.texas.gov/>) or by writing the DSHS Immunization Branch (MC 1946), P.O. Box 149347, Austin, Texas 78714-9347. The form must be notarized and submitted to the school office. If the parent is seeking an exemption for more than one student in the family, a separate form must be provided for each student.

The immunizations required are diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis; measles, mumps, and rubella; polio; hepatitis A; hepatitis B; varicella (chickenpox). For a student entering the 7th grade: 1 Tdap booster is required when at least 5 years have passed since the last dose of tetanus vaccine and 1 dose of Meningococcal is required on or after the students' 11th birthday. Proof of immunization may be established by personal records from a licensed physician or public health clinic with a signature or rubber-stamp validation. If a student should not be immunized for medical reasons, the student or parent must present a certificate signed by a U.S. registered and licensed physician stating that, in the doctor's opinion, the immunization required is medically contraindicated or poses a significant risk to the health and

well-being of the student or a member of the student’s family or household. This certificate must be renewed yearly unless the physician specifies a lifelong condition.

**Note:** [Immunization requirements<sup>i</sup>](#) and the [recommended immunization schedule<sup>ii</sup>](#) are on the TDSHS website. <https://www.dshs.texas.gov/immunizations>

## Other Health Screenings

As part of [Health and Safety Code, Chapter 36](#), the Hearing and Vision Screening Program requires that all children enrolled for the first time at TOPS, or who are in 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, or 7<sup>th</sup> grade, must be screened or have a professional examination for possible hearing problems.

The requirements for Spinal Screenings to detect abnormal spinal curvature apply to girls in 5th and 7th grades and boys in 8th grade.

Students should have these tests completed by their health care provider and results sent into the TOPS health screening email address, [health@texasonlineprep.org](mailto:health@texasonlineprep.org).

Families may also check with their local Department of Health agency to see if they provide these services. Check the 2-1-1 website <http://www.211.org/> for facilities in their area that provide these services or this Texas charitable clinics website <http://txcharitableclinics.org/>.

More information can be found here:

- <https://www.dshs.texas.gov/vision-hearing-screening/spinal-screening-program/spinal-screening-program-guidelines>
- <https://www.dshs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/vhs/pdf/VHS%20requirements.pdf>

## Removal from TOPS

Students may be removed from TOPS due to disciplinary action, lack of attendance, multiple core-course failure, persistent disengagement, or failure to attend mandatory in-person state testing.

Students are provided all necessary due process rights before removal.

TOPS Administration will contact the Legal Guardian and provide an appeal form for the parent to document potential reasons or issues for student behavior or lack of active participation in the program. Legal Guardian may request a meeting with the campus principal at this time. The

Legal Guardian has **24 hours** to respond to the appeal form. No response will result in immediate withdrawal from the program.

If appeal is granted and the student continues to display behavior unbecoming of the program (i.e.: lack of attendance, continued course failure, unresponsive to intervention support), then the legal guardian will receive a withdrawal notice. The Legal Guardian has **24 hours** to appeal the withdrawal. No response will result in immediate withdrawal from the program.

## **STUDENT CLUBS, ORGANIZATIONS, and SOCIAL TIMES**

TOPS aims to offer student clubs, organizations and social times that build a sense of community and belonging by providing students with opportunities to engage with each other around common interests and goals, that are not necessarily curricular in nature.

Clubs, organizations, and social times will adhere to the following regulations:

- Will be supervised by campus staff at all times.
- Will have at least 5 student members regularly in attendance.
  - Clubs with fewer than 5 interested students will not be launched.
  - Clubs with fewer than 5 students regularly in attendance will be discontinued.
  - Clubs will not be of a religious nature unless specifically requested by 5 or more students. In that case, the faculty supervisor will be present in a non-participatory function, solely for the purpose of student safety and supervision. The faculty supervisor may not present content in clubs of a religious nature. (ex: They cannot lead the students in prayer or religious songs, nor can they preach or teach or determine any specific theological or religious view.)
- Will be aligned to interests that students have expressed.
- Will not interrupt instructional time.
- Will not materially or substantially interfere with the orderly conduct of the educational environment.
- Will not violate any Texas laws or regulations set forth by the Department of Education, nor will they present content that could threaten the well-being or safety of students and faculty members.
- Will not discriminate by denying participation on the basis of race, gender, language, religion, political affiliation, national or social origin, sexual orientation, or other demographic factors.
- Will not require participation by any student or staff member if the content of the group meeting is contrary to the beliefs of the individual.
- Will not invite outside organizations to participate without the written consent of campus administration. Outside organizations or individual speakers may not direct, conduct, control or regularly attend activities of the group. All outside organizations or

individual speakers must follow the school's established procedure for allowing visitors into the virtual campus. Guests or visitors must be supervised by school employees at all times.

**NOTE:**

Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSOs) are co-curricular and part of the academic program at TOPS, and are therefore not subject to the guidelines in this policy.

## STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT

### Huntsville ISD Student Code of Conduct

Students enrolled in TOPS are expected to follow the Huntsville School District’s student code of conduct, located here: [HISD Handbook](#)

### Conduct and Discipline in the Virtual School Environment

TOPS recognizes that developing character is an ongoing and life-long process. The Narwhal Way is used to teach students appropriate conduct and character in the virtual school setting.

<b>The Narwhal Way</b>	<b>As narwhals, we...</b>	<b>This means we...</b>
<b>N</b>	<b>Never swim backwards</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep moving forward, little by little.</li> <li>• Never quit!</li> <li>• Create goals and work to attain those goals.</li> </ul>
<b>A</b>	<b>Act accountable</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Own our mistakes and take responsibility for our actions.</li> <li>• Hold each other to a high standard.</li> <li>• Encourage each other to be accountable.</li> <li>• Are invested in our learning. We don't blame others.</li> <li>• Do what we say we are going to do.</li> <li>• Take risks and have courage to do the right thing.</li> <li>• Ask for and offer positive, constructive feedback. And, we act on that feedback.</li> </ul>
<b>R</b>	<b>Respect self and others</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build ourselves and others up.</li> <li>• Love ourselves. We have confidence in all we do.</li> <li>• Appreciate our unique personalities and embrace who we are.</li> <li>• Choose healthy relationships/friendships.</li> <li>• Make healthy lifestyle choices that support our learning.</li> <li>• Love our community.</li> <li>• Show compassion to everyone.</li> <li>• Engage in participation during live class with our classmates and teacher.</li> </ul>
<b>W</b>	<b>Work to be well-rounded</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on more than academics.</li> <li>• Get involved in our communities and our school.</li> <li>• Try new things that may be outside of our strengths.</li> <li>• Build our strengths up and recognize areas we can continue to grow in.</li> <li>• Be open to new opportunities and ideas.</li> </ul>
<b>H</b>	<b>Help the community</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Care about others and the environment.</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on making positive impacts.</li> <li>• Get involved in our communities and our school.</li> <li>• Share a smile and spread kindness.</li> <li>• Voice our ideas.</li> <li>• Clean up the community by picking up trash and recycling.</li> <li>• Act on helping others like a classmate, teacher, neighbor, local nursing home, soup kitchen, or animal shelter.</li> </ul>
<b>A</b>	<b>Always advocate</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Own our learning and reach out to get help on work when needed.</li> <li>• Support others to ensure everyone finds success.</li> <li>• Check our learning progress often and ask for help when not understanding.</li> <li>• Make sure our classmates are being treated kindly.</li> <li>• Speak up when we see a classmate in need, being treated poorly, or we are worried about them.</li> </ul>
<b>L</b>	<b>Leap at opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Want to be involved in our school and our community.</li> <li>• Take all learning opportunities shared with us.</li> <li>• Look to the future and opportunities to reach our goals.</li> <li>• Stay active in our school by being involved in clubs and organizations.</li> <li>• Attend extra sessions for learning and getting to know each other.</li> <li>• Complete all assignments, even those that are additional opportunities.</li> <li>• Redo our work to ensure it is the best it can be.</li> <li>• Attend and complete all testing and try our best.</li> </ul>

At TOPS, we believe that discipline is a form of instruction, and that missteps are a part of the learning process. We understand that children will make mistakes on their journey to learning to embody the character traits in the TOPS Narwhal Way, so teachers and administrators will intervene with supplemental instruction and corrective consequences in response to leveled infractions.

Depending on the nature and severity of the infraction, discipline may be issued by the student’s classroom teacher, campus administrator, or administrator’s designee. In order to make a determination of misconduct or to issue disciplinary consequences, the authorized school employee must have a reasonable belief that the student engaged in the suspected conduct. The employee’s conclusion may be based on any relevant evidence including, but not limited to, observation, other personal knowledge, verbal or written witness statements, other forms of documentation, or information received from law enforcement.

When assigning an appropriate consequence, TOPS will take the following facts and circumstances into consideration:

- The student’s intent
- The student’s age and grade level
- The student’s past disciplinary history at TOPS
- Whether the student has previously engaged in similar conduct
- The frequency of the conduct
- Whether the student’s conduct may have been the manifestation of a disability (504 or SpEd)
- If a Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) is in place, the extent to which the BIP was appropriately followed
- Whether the student is coded as At Risk
- The extent of the student’s cooperation during the investigation of the matter
- The nature and severity of the alleged conduct
- Whether self-defense was involved
- The student’s remorsefulness for the conduct
- The severity of the effect or harm of the conduct on other people or property

Discipline at TOPS will not be based on a student’s race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, sex, religion, sexual or affectual orientation, disability, or any other unlawful consideration.

If any student, regardless of special programs status or general education, is found to have committed a Level 4 infraction, by law, TOPS will offer a Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) and Full Individual and Initial Evaluation (FIIE).

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Testing Attendance Infractions	First offensive of not completing a major assessment (Ex: interim)	Second offense of not completing a major assessment (Ex: interim), or Not attending a school-funded assessment (AP, IBC, SAT/ACT, TSIA)	Not attending State Testing (TELPAS, STAAR, EOC); or Second offense of not attending a school-funded assessment (AP, IBC, SAT/ACT, TSIA)	N/A
School Attendance Infractions	3+ consecutive absences; 5+ total absences	11+ total absences	Less than 90% attendance	N/A
Netiquette and In-Person Infractions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Isolated use of profanity</li> <li>Virtual background that is distracting to the learning environment</li> <li>Unprofessional or unkind communication</li> <li>Completing unrelated work</li> <li>Refusal to work</li> <li>Misuse of technology that creates a distraction to the learning environment</li> <li>Conduct that creates a distraction to the learning environment</li> <li>Attire that is distracting to the learning environment</li> <li>Academic dishonesty</li> <li>Disengagement (ex: limited communication, lack of participation in</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Repeat offense of Level 1 infractions</li> <li>Severe version of any Level 1 infraction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Profanity directed at another individual</li> <li>Virtual background that has the potential to make others in the learning environment feel unsafe <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Misuse of technology that creates a disruption to the learning environment</li> </ul> </li> <li>Destruction or theft of property valued at \$50 or less</li> <li>False reports or false claim about an individual or group of people</li> <li>Underaged gambling on school time</li> <li>Soliciting, requesting, commanding, or attempting to induce other students to</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Repeat offense of any Level 2 infraction</li> <li>Severe version of any Level 2 infraction</li> <li>Profanity of an explicit nature</li> <li>Hate language</li> <li>Threatening communication</li> <li>Conduct that has the potential to make others in the learning environment feel unsafe</li> <li>Virtual background of an explicit nature</li> <li>Display of school-prohibited items or images of school-prohibited items</li> <li>Bullying and cyber-bullying</li> <li>Retaliation against a person (victim, witness, other) who in good faith provided information in a</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Arson</li> <li>False alarm</li> <li>Terroristic threat</li> <li>Any misdemeanor or felony</li> <li>Hate crimes</li> <li>Active shooting</li> <li>Possession of firearm at an in-person event</li> <li>Bullying that encourages suicide</li> <li>Arrest; felony conviction</li> <li>Possession, use, distribution, or sale of illicit substance or prohibited item (tobacco, homeopathic-like substances, dietary supplements, energy pills, vitamins, over-the-counter medicine, marijuana, illegal drugs, lighter, matches, vape pen, ammunition, knife, etc.)</li> </ul>



	<p>Academic Probation, limited course progress, etc.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aiding and abetting a Level 1 infraction</li> </ul>	<p>engage in Level 1 infractions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inappropriate use of the K12 Zone (ex: arranging opportunities to “sneak off campus” into unsanctioned sites)</li> <li>• Aiding and abetting a Level 2 infraction</li> </ul>	<p>discipline investigation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Harassment, hazing, or stalking</li> <li>• Destruction of theft of property valued at \$51 or more</li> <li>• Lude or indecent exposure; possession of intimate visual materials of a minor</li> <li>• Security breach to district or school records and/or computer systems</li> <li>• Physical altercation</li> <li>• Aiding and abetting a Level 3 infraction</li> </ul>	
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Interventions include, but are not limited, to the following:	Consequences include, but are not limited, to the following:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher-level review of the related Narwhal Way letter</li> <li>• Counselor-level review of the related Narwhal Way letter (1:1 or in small group)</li> <li>• Narwhal Way Reflection form</li> <li>• Learn &amp; Apply Task</li> <li>• Welfare check</li> <li>• Academic Probation</li> <li>• Conference with appropriate Stride department (ex: IT)</li> <li>• Apology letter</li> <li>• Advocacy team referral</li> <li>• Daily check-ins with designated staff member</li> <li>• Counselor referral</li> <li>• Social Worker/Crisis Counselor referral</li> <li>• Special Programs referral</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Email to LC/LG</li> <li>• LC/LG conference</li> <li>• LC/LG conference with follow-up email</li> <li>• Zeros on assignments</li> <li>• Alternate assignment</li> <li>• Remove virtual classroom privileges (ex: microphone, camera, chat, breakout room) for a set amount of time</li> <li>• Removal from live campus spaces</li> <li>• Resubmission of assignment</li> <li>• Alternate assignment</li> <li>• Conference with appropriate Stride department (ex: IT)</li> <li>• Classroom switch</li> <li>• Account lock</li> <li>• Additional lock-dates</li> <li>• Call to local enforcement</li> <li>• Administrative withdrawal (with or without option to re-enroll)</li> </ul>

## Discipline Committee Hearing Process

If an administrator recommends administrative withdrawal as the consequence for a Level 3 or Level 4 infraction, a Discipline Committee Hearing is required.

The administrator must provide written notice to the legal guardian. Notice must include:

- Reason for the recommendation for administrative withdrawal
- Date, time, meeting link
- Description of hearing procedure
- Description of the appeal process

NOTE: If the student is served through special education, a Manifestation Determination Review (MDR) must be held prior to the Discipline Committee Hearing. While awaiting the MDR and Discipline Committee Hearing, the student may serve no more than 10-days of the TOPS equivalent of Out of School Suspension (OSS). Only if it is determined that the behavior is not a manifestation of disability, and only if it is determined that the school did appropriately follow the IEP, will the case be heard by the Discipline Committee.

Brick and Mortar Consequence	TOPS Equivalent
ISS	Removal from live campus spaces with continued access to asynchronous curriculum and CC recordings
OSS	Account lock

The Discipline Committee is made up of the following officers presiding over the hearing:

- Executive Director
- Student Support Manager
- Huntsville ISD District Representative

The Discipline Committee Hearing Process:

1. Introductions
2. Presentation of evidence from campus administration
3. Presentation of evidence from family/student
4. Clarifying questions from the Hearing Committee
5. Following the hearing, the committee has 24 hours to deliberate and communicate a final decision in writing to the family and campus administration.
6. Family has 3 business days from when the Discipline Committee decided to administratively withdrawal the student to decide to appeal.

NOTE: Only decisions to administratively withdrawal a student from TOPS may be appealed. All other discipline decisions are final.

Appeal Process:

1. The parent shall contact the office of the Huntsville ISD Assistant Superintendent of Student Services and Operations at (936) 435-6331 to schedule an appeal hearing within 3 business days following the TOPS Discipline Committee decision to administratively withdraw the student.
2. Notice of the hearing (date/time/location) will be provided to the parent.
3. Generally, the hearing shall be with the Assistant Superintendent.
4. The hearing is intended to be an informal process and traditional courtroom rules of evidence do not apply. In addition, while either side may present witnesses as part of that side's affirmative presentation, the parties are not allowed to question the other side's witnesses.
5. Following the presentation by the campus administration and the student or student's representative, the hearing officer and panel will make a determination to uphold, amend, or rescind the TOPS Discipline Committee's decision. The decision of the appeal hearing office and panel will be communicated to the student's parent.
6. The decision of the hearing officer is final and may not be appealed.

## Academic Integrity in the Virtual School Environment

All work submitted and/or marked complete in the OLS, OMS, or OHS is assumed to have been completed only by students from their own student account. Students should not have access to the learning coach login credentials. Students are also responsible for observing the standards on plagiarism and properly crediting all sources relied on in the composition of their work. Failure to abide by these standards will result in disciplinary action in accordance with the section of this handbook entitled "Student Code of Conduct."

### Plagiarism

The definition of plagiarism is: Copying or imitating the language, ideas, and thoughts of another writer and submitting it as your own original work. Specific examples of plagiarism that is not tolerated are:

- Copying or rephrasing another student's work.
- Taking material from internet sources and using it as your own, even if some words are changed.
- Having someone else write an assignment or re-write any part of an assignment.
- Directly copying student aids (for example, CliffsNotes), critical sources, or reference materials in part or in whole without acknowledgment.
- Indirect reproduction of student aids, such as CliffsNotes and SparkNotes, critical sources, or reference materials by rephrasing ideas borrowed from them without acknowledgment.

### Source Citation

Many courses require written work in which students need to cite sources. Any direct quotations from a textbook can simply be cited as (Author, Page Number). Any quotations from outside sources require full citations, including author, title, publisher, date of publication, and page number. If a student cites information found on a Web site, he/she provides the complete Web page or site title, URL, author if known, page number if applicable, and publication date of the site, if available, and date of access. Should a student have any questions about how to appropriately cite a source, he or she should ask the teacher of the course in which he or she is working.

### **Artificial Intelligence (AI): Responsible and Ethical Use Guidelines**

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is part of the current and future technology landscape. As such, it is important to understand how to use these tools responsibly and ethically. This is a guide to responsible and ethical use for students.

- **Respect for Privacy and Consent:**
  - Obtain permission: Seek permission before using AI technologies that involve data collection or sharing.
  - Protect personal information: Avoid sharing sensitive personal information while interacting with AI systems or platforms. This includes but is not limited to HIPAA, FERPA, IDEA, or any other identifiable information.
- **Avoid Discrimination and Bias:**
  - Recognize biases: Be aware that AI systems may carry biases based on the data they are trained on. Avoid using AI to perpetuate discriminatory behavior or stereotypes.
  - Challenge unfair outcomes: If you notice biased or unfair outcomes from AI systems, report them to your teacher or relevant authority for review and corrective action.
- **Critical Thinking and Validation:**
  - Verify information: Be skeptical of information generated by AI systems and validate it through multiple sources.
  - Question results: Analyze and question the results provided by AI systems to ensure their accuracy and reliability.
  - Exercise critical thinking: Use AI outputs as a starting point for investigation, analysis, and critical thinking rather than relying solely on their conclusions.
- **Responsible Use of AI Tools:**
  - Understand limitations: Recognize the limitations of AI systems and avoid relying solely on their recommendations or decisions.
  - Use AI as a tool: Utilize AI technologies as a tool to enhance your learning and problem-solving abilities, rather than replacing your own critical thinking and creativity.
  - Be accountable: Take responsibility for your actions and decisions made with the assistance of AI systems.
- **Online Etiquette and Cybersecurity:**

- Be respectful: Treat AI systems and virtual agents with respect and use appropriate language and behavior when interacting with them.
- Protect yourself and others: Avoid sharing harmful or misleading content generated by AI systems and report any abusive or inappropriate use of AI technologies.

## Anti-Bullying Policy

### Definitions

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

1. 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;
2. Is sufficiently severe, persistent, or pervasive enough that the action or threat creates an intimidating, threatening, or abusive educational environment for a student;
3. Materially and substantially disrupts the educational process or the orderly operation of a classroom or school; or
4. Infringes on the rights of the victim at school.

This state law on bullying prevention applies to:

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

### Reporting

Students or parents may report acts of alleged bullying by calling or emailing their administrator. Additionally, this link is available for making anonymous reports:

<https://forms.office.com/r/Cs3H7Vaath>

When making an anonymous report, please include as many specific details as possible so that the campus administrators are able to thoroughly investigate your report.

## **Investigation Process**

Upon receipt of a bullying report, campus administrators have 3 school days to communicate to the parents of the alleged victim(s) and alleged perpetrator(s) that a bullying report has been made.

Campus administrators have 10 school days from the date the report was received to complete a thorough investigation of the allegations and to communicate a final conclusion from their findings to parents of both the victim(s) and perpetrator(s). If the behavior in the allegation matches the definition of bullying, campus administrators will communicate which consequences and interventions will be given to the perpetrator(s), and which supports will be provided for the victim(s). In accordance with FERPA, consequences, interventions, and supports for each student will be shared only with the parent of that student. In the event that the investigation concludes that the behavior in the allegation does not match the definition of bullying, campus administrators may still administer consequences, interventions, and supports as they deem necessary and appropriate, in accordance with the Code of Conduct.

## **Acceptable Use of Technology**

Access to the Internet via equipment and resource networks provided to families as a result of their enrollment in TOPS are intended to serve and pursue educational goals and purposes.

In addition, parents are to comply with the Use of Instructional Property Agreement completed as part of the enrollment process.

Communications and Internet access should be conducted in a responsible and professional manner, reflective of the school's commitment to honest, ethical and non-discriminatory practice.

Therefore, the following is prohibited:

- Any use that violates federal, state, or local law or regulation.
- Knowing or reckless interference with the normal operation of computers, peripherals, or networks.
- The use of TOPS Internet-related systems to access, transmit, store, display, or request inappropriate materials.
- Any use that is deemed to adversely affect TOPS.
- Violation of TOPS or K12's Terms of Use for any TOPS or K12 website.

## Locking Curriculum

A student's curriculum/account may be locked until the following situations/issues are resolved:

- Missing or incomplete required assessments (ex: interims, state testing, etc.)
- Missed required meetings such as scheduled teacher conferences or academic probation meetings
- Not meeting the goals of the Academic Probation program
- Missing immunization records or other enrollment documentation
- Disciplinary consequence

Students should contact their campus administrator to unlock their curriculum.

## TITLE IX

For information on Title IX and Sex Discrimination from the Office of Civil Rights, visit: [Title IX and Sex Discrimination \(ed.gov\)](#)

### Who to Contact

In its efforts to promote nondiscrimination and as required by law, Huntsville ISD and TOPS does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, color, national origin, gender, sex, disability, age, or any other basis prohibited by law, in providing education services, activities, and programs,

including CTE programs, and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups. The following district representatives have been designated to coordinate compliance with these legal requirements:

- Senior Director of Special Programs, for concerns regarding discrimination on the basis of disability: Cynthia Cook, [ccook@texasonlineprep.org](mailto:ccook@texasonlineprep.org)
- Contact Executive Director, for general concerns regarding discrimination: Kristina Nanini, [knanini@texasonlineprep.org](mailto:knanini@texasonlineprep.org)
- The District designates the following person to coordinate its efforts to comply with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, as amended, for students:

Position: Assistant Superintendent of Student Services and Operations  
Address: 441 FM 2821 East, Huntsville, TX 77320  
Telephone: (936) 435-6300

### Definitions

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

**Prohibited harassment** of a student is defined as physical, verbal, or nonverbal conduct based on the student's race, color, religion, sex, gender, 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.
- Prohibited harassment includes dating violence as defined by this policy.

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, intimidating, or humiliating 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.

**Sexual harassment of a student by a District or Stride 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 District or Stride 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:
  - 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
  - Creates an intimidating, threatening, hostile, or abusive educational environment.

Romantic or inappropriate social relationships between students and District or Stride employees are prohibited. Any sexual relationship between a student and a District or Stride employee is always prohibited, even if consensual.

**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 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 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.

Necessary or permissible physical contact such as assisting a child by taking the child’s hand, comforting a child with a hug, or other physical contact not reasonably construed as sexual in nature is not sexual harassment.

**Gender-based harassment** includes physical, verbal, or nonverbal conduct based on the student’s gender, the student’s expression of characteristics perceived as stereotypical for the student’s gender, or the student’s failure to conform to stereotypical notions of masculinity or femininity. For purposes of this policy, gender-based harassment is considered prohibited harassment if the conduct 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 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 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.

## Reporting Procedures

### **Student Report**

Any student who believes that he or she has experienced prohibited conduct or believes that another student has experienced prohibited conduct should immediately report the alleged acts to a teacher, school counselor, principal, other TOPS employee, or the appropriate District official listed in this policy, by email, phone, or conference.

### **Employee Report**

Any TOPS employee who suspects or receives notice that a student or group of students has or may have experienced prohibited conduct shall immediately notify the Executive Director.

### **Alternative Reporting Procedures**

A student shall not be required to report prohibited conduct to the person alleged to have committed the conduct. A report against the Executive Director may be made directly to the

District Assistant Superintendent, who will appoint an appropriate person to conduct an investigation.

### **Timely Reporting**

Reports of prohibited conduct shall be made as soon as possible after the alleged act or knowledge of the alleged act. A failure to immediately report may impair the school's ability to investigate and address the prohibited conduct.

### **Notice to Parents**

The Executive Director or designee shall promptly notify the parents of any student alleged to have experienced prohibited conduct by a TOPS employee or another adult.

### **Investigation of the Report**

TOPS may request, but shall not require, a written report. If a report is made orally, the Executive Director shall reduce the report to written form.

### **Initial Assessment**

Upon receipt or notice of a report, the Executive Director shall determine whether the allegations, if proven, would constitute prohibited conduct as defined by this policy. If so, the Executive Director shall immediately undertake an investigation, unless the investigation requires a report to a local police department for criminal investigation.

### **Interim Action**

If appropriate and regardless of whether a criminal or regulatory investigation regarding the alleged conduct is pending, the Executive Director shall promptly take interim action calculated to address prohibited conduct or bullying prior to the completion of the school's investigation.

## **NON-DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT**

In its efforts to promote nondiscrimination and as required by law, TOPS does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, color, national origin, gender, sex, age, disability, or any other basis prohibited by law in providing education services, activities, and programs, including Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs. TOPS provides equal access to the clubs and other social groups. In accordance with Title IX, TOPS does not and is required not to discriminate on the basis of sex in its educational programs or activities. The requirement not to discriminate extends employment.

Inquiries about the application of the non-discrimination statement may be referred to anyone in the Title IX "who to contact" section above, to the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights of the Department of Education, or both.

Other federal laws that prohibit discrimination include Title VI, Section 504, the Age Discrimination Act, the Boy Scouts Act, and Title II.

For more information about non-discrimination required in public schools, visit: [Civil Rights Division | Nondiscrimination On The Basis Of Race, Color, National Origin, Sex, Religion, Or Age In Law Enforcement Programs, Services, And Activities Receiving Assistance From The United States Department Of Justice](#)

## ATTENDANCE, ENGAGEMENT, AND TRUANCY POLICY

### TxVSN Attendance Policy

Per TxVSN Policy 70.1015 (sections a.1 and a.3):

- (a) A student taking a course through the Texas Virtual School Network (TxVSN) statewide course catalog or a TxVSN Online School (OLS) is considered to:
  - (1) be enrolled in a TxVSN course when he or she begins receiving instruction and actively engages in instructional activities in a TxVSN subject area or course;
  - (3) be, and must be reported as, withdrawn from the TxVSN when the student is no longer actively participating in the TxVSN course or program.

### TxVSN Engagement Policy

TxVSN Student Engagement Policy (TAC 19 Chapter 70.1015):

<http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/rules/tac/chapter070/ch070aa.html>

A student taking a course through the Texas Virtual School Network (TxVSN) statewide course catalog or a TxVSN Online School (OLS) program is considered to:

- (1) be enrolled in a TxVSN course when he or she begins receiving instruction and actively engages in instructional activities in a TxVSN subject area or course;
- (2) have successfully completed a course if the student demonstrates academic proficiency and earns credit for the course, as determined by the TxVSN teacher; and
- (3) be, and must be reported as, withdrawn from the TxVSN when the student is no longer actively participating in the TxVSN course or program.

TOPS teachers and administrators will routinely monitor students' engagement and progress. Intervention plans will be put in place to support students who appear to be disengaged or not making course progress. Intervention may include, but are not limited to: mandatory sessions with teachers/interventionists, engagement specialists, counselors, or administrators; additional required class sessions; participation in the Academic Probation program. If interventions with the student are unsuccessful, Campus Administration may refer the student to the Executive Director for potential administrative withdrawal. Students who are withdrawn due to lack of engagement have been found to be in violation of TAC **70.1015**.

## Summary of TOPS Attendance Requirements

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Present	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Absent
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work daily in coursework for enough time (LMS or OLS)</li> <li>• Attend and participate in live class connects (or view recordings)</li> <li>• When applicable: attend State testing.</li> <li>• Attending Orientation and map testing.</li> <li>• Attending school, Monday through Friday, per school calendar.</li> <li>• Attend optional classes if there are no required classes.</li> <li>• All schoolwork must be accessed via the student's account.</li> <li>• Even if exempt from finals, expected to be in daily attendance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Failure to attend live class or complete coursework assigned that day or from previous days.</li> <li>• Logged in and completed work in Learning coach account.</li> <li>• Only logged into student's home page</li> <li>• Completing schoolwork after 10.59pm</li> <li>• Checking emails</li> <li>• Working offline</li> <li>• <b>Big universe library</b> will not count towards attendance.</li> <li>• <b>Edmentum &amp; Plato</b> for High school will not count</li> <li>• <b>Mindplay</b> for elementary will not count</li> <li>• <b>College Bridge</b> will not count</li> <li>• <b>Progress learning</b> will not count towards attendance</li> <li>• Completing work logged as the learning coach.</li> <li>• Not working for a suitable length of time</li> <li>• Substituting a weekday for a weekend</li> <li>• Accessing work via a link in an email from a teacher</li> <li>• Completing all work ahead of schedule</li> <li>• Work not submitted via student account.</li> <li>• No laptop or no Wi-Fi</li> <li>• Technical issues (unless case number is provided)</li> <li>• Vacation/out of town during school time</li> <li>• Not attending school when exempt from finals/Amnesty</li> </ul>
<p><b>Absences form link:</b>  <a href="https://na2.docusign.net/Member/PowerFormSigning.aspx?PowerFormId=4f8d3d59-ac0b-4890-964e-4f5a75271635">https://na2.docusign.net/Member/PowerFormSigning.aspx?PowerFormId=4f8d3d59-ac0b-4890-964e-4f5a75271635</a></p>	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excused	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unexcused
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Illness (Dr note required after 3 days)</li> <li>• Bereavement (varies between 3 to 5 days)</li> <li>• Dr appointment for student (Dr note required)</li> <li>• Inpatient/Hospitalization (Dr note required)</li> <li>• Maternity/Paternity (10 school days with Dr note)</li> <li>• Religious Holidays</li> <li>• Required court appearances (doc required)</li> <li>• Technical difficulties if case number from technical support provided.</li> <li>• Junior/Seniors 2 days for college or university visits (documentation required and pre-approval)</li> <li>• If over 17, enlistment is a branch of the US Armed Services/National Guard</li> <li>• Early voting clerk</li> <li>• Natural disaster/ Extreme weather (impacting Student address)</li> <li>• Power outage (Documentation required)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vacation during school time/ out of town</li> <li>• No internet</li> <li>• No laptop/computer</li> <li>• Parents/Family member appointments</li> <li>• Exempt from finals/Amnesty</li> <li>• Runaway</li> <li>• Homelessness</li> <li>• Student in Juvenile/Detention center</li> <li>• Waiting on K12 laptop</li> <li>• Power outage without any documentation</li> </ul>

## Importance of Regular Attendance

Regular school attendance is essential for a student to make the most of his or her education—to benefit from teacher-led and school activities, to build a solid academic foundation, and to

grow as an individual. Absences from class may result in serious disruption of a student's mastery of the instructional materials; therefore, the student and parent should make every effort to avoid unnecessary absences.

## Optional Attendance at Outings

TOPS sponsors optional outings for students and families on a regular basis that enhance the K12 curriculum/learning activities. While attendance is not mandatory, it is a wonderful opportunity to meet other school participants and share information about programs and successful practices.

- Parents/guardians/learning coaches are responsible for the cost of transportation and any entrance fees associated with optional outings.
- Parents/guardians/learning coaches are responsible for student access to medication and medical attention, if needed while attending an outing.
- Outings are scheduled in various locations, throughout the state, and where a majority of TOPS students reside.
- Due to the sheer size of the state and TOPS staffing, not all areas will have an outing scheduled.
- Students are expected to dress appropriately and according to HISD Dress Code while attending all TOPS sponsored events, including graduation and prom. [Dress Code | Huntsville Independent School District \(huntsville-isd.org\)](#)
- TOPS parents/guardians/learning coaches and students are expected to conduct themselves appropriately at all outings.
- Parents/guardians/learning coaches are responsible for supervision of their children at all times and must attend the outings with their student. Students 18 or older may attend outings on their own by filling out the waiver: <http://forms.office.com/r/q5TQyb4Fhc>

## Compulsory Attendance Requirements

### **Age 18 and Older**

A student who voluntarily attends or enrolls after his or her 18th birthday is required to attend each school day until the end of the school year. If a student 18 or older has more than five unexcused absences in a semester, the district may revoke the student's enrollment. After that, the student's presence in any of the school's virtual or in-person events or spaces would be unauthorized and may be considered trespassing.

## **Ages 6 to 18**

State law requires that a student between the ages of six and 18 attend school, as well as any applicable accelerated instruction program, extended year program, or tutorial session unless the student is otherwise excused from attendance or legally exempt.

### **Attendance beyond Academic Calendar**

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

### **Attendance at TOPS**

Attendance for TOPS students is accounted for in the following ways:

1. Student working in coursework via the Online School (OLS, OMS, or OHS) or Learning Management System (LMS);
2. Student participation in all required assigned virtual online sessions with state-certified teachers.
3. Student reviews recorded class connects or sessions published by state-certified teachers.
4. Attending required in-person state assessments such as STAAR, TELPAS, and STAAR EOC tests.

Additional attendance notes:

- Students are required to attend school on each instructional day as determined by the TOPS academic calendar.
- Students may log instructional time any time during the day (until 10.59pm) and on any day of the week between the first and the last day of school.
- Attendance will not be logged or modified after the last day of the academic year.
- Students may work ahead. However, students are still required to attend school each day. It is student's responsibility to make sure they have something to complete every day for attendance purposes if they are to complete work ahead of time.
- Online activity during weekends or holidays will not count toward overall attendance or replace missed days.
- Students that complete all coursework prior to the end of any semester may be assigned additional work by campus principal.

NOTE:

An automated attendance notice will be sent to all families whose students do not log in and complete an assignment by 10am each school day.

## Class Connects

Successful TOPS students make every attempt to attend live Class Connect Sessions (CCs).

- Teachers will hold Class Connect sessions throughout the week in all courses.
- Students are expected to attend all REQUIRED Class Connect Sessions. These sessions are mandatory.
- Student Assessment data and overall grades are considered when scheduling Class Connect Sessions.
- In order for teachers to be responsive to student progress data, Students and Learning Coaches should be prepared to see changes to the Class Connect schedule as needed throughout the year.
- Based on individual student needs, teachers may assign additional sessions.

## Excused Absences

When a parent/legal guardian knows that their student will be absent, it is requested that the parent/legal guardian give the school prior written notice of the upcoming absence.

Texas Online Preparatory School (TOPS) considers the following factors, as defined by Texas Education Agency (TEA), to be a “reasonable” excuse and will result in an “excused absence” for time missed from school:

- Illness (up to 3 days without doctor note)
- Bereavement leave (immediate family up to 5 days)
- Maternity/Paternity leave for student
- Observing religious holy days.
- Attending a required court appearance.
- Appearing at a governmental office to complete paperwork required in connection with the student's application for United States citizenship.
- Taking part in a United States naturalization oath ceremony.
- Serving as an election clerk or early voting clerk.
- If the student is in the conservatorship of the Department of Family and Protective Services, participating, as determined, and documented by the department, in an activity order by a court.
- A temporary absence resulting from an appointment with health care professionals for the student or the student's child if the student commences classes or returns to school on the same day of the appointment.
- Absence resulting from a serious or life-threatening illness or related treatment that makes the student's attendance infeasible, if the student or the student's parent or

guardian provides a certification from a physician licensed to practice medicine in this state specifying the student's illness and the anticipated period of the student's absence relating to the illness or related treatment.

- A school may excuse a student from attending school to visit an institution of higher education accredited by a generally recognized accrediting organization during the student's junior and senior years of high school for the purpose of determining the student's interest in attending the institution of higher education, provided that:
  - the school may not excuse for this purpose more than two days during the student's junior year and two days during the student's senior year; and
  - the student has received pre-approval from administration to visit an institution; and
  - the institution provides documentation confirming the student's visit
- Temporary absence of a student diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder on the day of the student's appointment with a health care practitioner.
- A school shall excuse a student whose parent, stepparent, or legal guardian is an active duty member of the uniformed services as defined by Section 162.002 and has been called to duty for, is on leave from, or immediately returned from continuous deployment of at least four months outside the locality where the parent, stepparent, or guardian regularly resides, to visit with the student's parent, stepparent, or guardian. A school may not excuse a student under this subsection more than five days in a school year. An excused absence under this subsection must be taken:
  - not earlier than the 60th day before the date of deployment; or
  - not later than the 30th day after the date of return from deployment.
- A school shall excuse a student who is 17 years of age or older from attending school to pursue enlistment in a branch of the armed services of the United States or the Texas National Guard, provided that:
  - the school may not excuse for this purpose more than four days of school during the period the student is enrolled in high school; and
  - the school verifies the student's activities related to pursuing enlistment in a branch of the armed services or the Texas National Guard.
- A school may excuse a student who is 15 years of age or older from attending school to visit a driver's license office to obtain a driver's license or learner license, provided that the school may not excuse more than one day of school during the period the student is enrolled in high school for each of the following purposes:
  - obtaining a driver's license; or
  - obtaining a learner license
- A school may excuse a student from attending school for a career investigation day to visit a professional at the professional's workplace during the student's junior and senior years of high school for the purpose of determining the student's interest in pursuing a career in the professional's field, provided that:
  - the school may not excuse for this purpose more than two days during the student's junior year and two days during the student's senior year; and



- the student has received pre-approval from administration to visit the institution; and
- the institution provides documentation confirming the student's visit

An absence is classified as unexcused until we have received documentation from the parent/legal guardian. Parents may complete an absence form, linked below, in order to document an absence. Absence forms are then processed by the TOPS Attendance Department.

<https://na2.docusign.net/Member/PowerFormSigning.aspx?PowerFormId=4f8d3d59-ac0b-4890-964e-4f5a75271635>

### Accumulated Unexcused Absences and Truancy Process

Students who do not attend the Online School each instructional day will be considered absent without a valid written excuse submitted to the attendance department. Students who do not log in and complete at least one assignment on each instructional day as determined by the TOPS academic calendar will be considered absent. Absences not identified as "reasonable" above will be considered "unexcused."

As per Texas Education Code (TEC) Sec 25.095 and HISD, FEA (Local)-A:

#### **3 or more missed days in a 4-week period**

Students who accumulate a total of three (3) absences within a 4-week period will be sent an attendance notice via personal email by the Attendance Clerk from the address [attendance@texasonlineprep.org](mailto:attendance@texasonlineprep.org).

#### **5 or more consecutive missed school days**

Students who accumulate a total of five (5) consecutive absences will be sent a warning letter via personal email and or text/phone call and be invited to view a mandatory presentation and sign the attendance contract.

Please note, if a student 18 or older has more than five unexcused absences in a semester, TOPS may revoke the student's enrollment.

#### **10 missed School days over a 6-month period**

Students who accumulate at least 10 unexcused missed days in a 6-month will be sent a Truant Conduct Warning via email. A Mandatory presentation is required to be viewed an attendance contract to be signed by Legal Guardian and the student will be reported to the State of Texas.

#### **10 or more consecutive missed days**

When a student reaches 10 consecutive missed days they will be sent a warning letter via personal email and receive text or phone communication to address the issues. Students may be locked from the online school at this point in the process and the student's LC/LG will be allowed to appeal within 48 hours.

**NOTE:**

If a TOPS student's chronic truancy results from homelessness, the student's enrollment rights at TOPS shall be based on the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. Please refer to McKinney Vento Section of this handbook for additional information.

### Students with Disabilities

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

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

For a student between the ages of 16 and 18 to obtain a driver license, written parental permission must be provided for the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) to access the student's attendance records and, in certain circumstances, for a school administrator to provide the student's attendance information to DPS. A verification of enrollment (VOE) and attendance form may be obtained from the office, which the student will need to submit to DPS upon application for a driver license. Please complete this DocuSign to request a VOE: <https://na2.docusign.net/Member/PowerFormSigning.aspx?PowerFormId=d7899428-e154-4c8b-93a7-68ff968c272f&env=na2&acct=19cf31b0-043a-49f2-878e-6b8e17540f09>

## STUDENT RECORDS

Student records are maintained at the TOPS office. Parents/legal guardians may contact the TOPS office to obtain a copy of student records. A copying fee may be assessed. If parents change their address, telephone, e-mail address, or place of employment, they are asked to follow the procedure below.

Further information on Student Records and Accessibility may be found under "FERPA" below.

## Change of Contact Information

In the event your address is different and needs to be changed, TWO new proofs of residence are required in order to update your address in the K12 and state systems. TOPS will need two of the documents listed below. Once these documents have been submitted, our administrative office will be happy to update your new address.

Please submit two of the following documents as new Proof of Residence.

Proof of Residence must be in the name of the parent/legal guardian.

- Mortgage Statement
- Lease
- Utility Bill (gas, water, or electric) – must show service address
- Property Tax Statement
- Internet/Phone/Cable Bill – must show service address. If you have a bundle service, please submit your entire bill to ensure the proper information is received.

Note: If you are submitting a Proof of Residence not in your name, you will need to fill out a form and *have it notarized*. To obtain this form, please contact our office by emailing:

[info@texasonlineprep.org](mailto:info@texasonlineprep.org)

To complete the Change of Address process, complete this form: [Change of Address Survey](#)

To confirm your address please follow the steps below:

- 1) Log into the OLS with your username and password;
- 2) Click “My Account” at the top right of your screen;
- 3) Select “My Account” from the drop-down menu;
- 4) Your address will appear.

## Withdrawals

If a parent/legal guardian wishes to withdraw their student from TOPS, they should first contact their homeroom teacher or email: [info@texasonlineprep.org](mailto:info@texasonlineprep.org)

Once your email is confirmed, a staff member will forward a **Withdrawal Survey** to the legal guardian to complete the process. After this is received, your student’s academic record will be compiled and verified. All academic records are transferred using the state’s internal system (TREx).

Note: Simply emailing a wish to withdraw your student may not immediately complete the withdrawal process.

## Student Protection

### **Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)**

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) provides parents and students over 18 years of age (“eligible students”) certain rights regarding the student’s education records. These rights are:

- (1) The right to inspect and review the student’s education records within 45 days of the day the School receives a request for access.

To request an inspection and review, the parent or eligible student should submit a written request to the Executive Director that identifies the record (s) they wish to inspect. The Executive Director makes arrangements for access and notifies the parent or eligible student of the time and place where the records may be inspected.

- (2) The right to request an amendment of the student’s education records that the parent or eligible student believes are inaccurate.

Parents or eligible students may ask the School to amend a record that they believe is inaccurate. They should write the Executive Director, clearly identify the part of the record they want changed, and specify why it is inaccurate. If the School decides not to amend the record as requested by the parent or eligible student, the School notifies the parent or eligible student of the decision and advises him/her of his/her right to a hearing regarding the request for amendment. Additional information regarding the hearing procedures is provided to the parent or eligible student when notified of the right to a hearing.

- (3) The right to consent to disclosures of personally identifiable information contained in the student’s education records, except to the extent that FERPA allows disclosure without consent.

One exception that permits the School to disclose information without consent is when the School discloses information to school officials with legitimate educational interests. A school official is a person employed by or contracted to provide services to or designated by the contractor to provide services to the School as an administrator, supervisor, instructor, or support staff member (including health or medical staff and law enforcement unit personnel); a person serving on the Board of Directors of the School; a person or company with whom the School has contracted to perform a special task (such as an attorney, auditor, medical consultant, or therapist); or a parent or student serving on an official committee, such as a

disciplinary or grievance committee, or assisting another school official in performing his or her tasks.

A school official has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record in order to fulfill his or her professional responsibility.

Upon request, the School discloses education records without consent to officials of another school district in which a student seeks or intends to enroll.

(4) The right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by the School to comply with the requirements of FERPA.

The name and address of the Office that administers FERPA are:

Family Policy Compliance Office  
U.S. Department of Education 400 Maryland Ave., S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20202-4605

The *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act* (FERPA), a Federal law, requires that Texas Online Preparatory School, with certain exceptions, obtain your written consent prior to the disclosure of personally identifiable information from your child's education records. However, Texas Online Preparatory School may disclose appropriately designated "directory information" without written consent, unless you have advised the Texas Online Preparatory School to the contrary in accordance with Texas Online Preparatory School procedures. The primary purpose of directory information is to allow the Texas Online Preparatory School to include information from your child's education records in certain school publications. Examples include:

- A playbill, showing your student's role in a drama production;
- The annual yearbook;
- Honor roll or other recognition lists;
- Graduation programs; and
- Sports activity sheets, such as for wrestling, showing weight and height of team members.

Directory information, which is information that is generally not considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if released, can also be disclosed to outside organizations without a parent's prior written consent. Outside organizations include, but are not limited to, companies that manufacture class rings or publish yearbooks. In addition, two federal laws require local educational agencies (LEAs) receiving assistance under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (ESEA) to provide military recruiters, upon request, with the following information – names, addresses and telephone listings – unless parents have advised

the LEA that they do not want their student's information disclosed without their prior written consent. These laws are Section 9528 of the ESEA (20 U.S.C. § 7908) and 10 U.S.C. § 503(c).

If you do not want Texas Online Preparatory School to disclose any or all of the types of information designated below as directory information from your child's education records without your prior written consent, you must notify the Texas Online Preparatory School in writing within 30 days of the student enrollment date. Please send an e-mail identifying the information they do not want disclosed, the student's name, and the name of the virtual academy or affiliate school in which the student is enrolled to: [info@texasonlineprep.org](mailto:info@texasonlineprep.org). This e-mail must be sent within 30 days of the student enrollment date. For questions or concerns, please contact TOPS Student Based Enrollment Coordinator, Shelli Stifle, [sstifle@texasonlineprep.org](mailto:sstifle@texasonlineprep.org)

Texas Online Preparatory School has designated the following information as directory information:

- Student's name
- Address
- Telephone listing
- Electronic mail address
- Photograph
- Date and place of birth
- Major field of study
- Dates of attendance
- Grade level
- Participation in officially recognized activities and sports
- Weight and height of members of athletic teams
- Degrees, honors, and awards received
- The most recent educational agency or institution attended
- Student ID number, user ID, or other unique personal identifier used to communicate in electronic systems but only if the identifier cannot be used to gain access to education records except when used in conjunction with one or more factors that authenticate the user's identity, such as a PIN, password, or other factor known or possessed only by the authorized user
- A student ID number or other unique personal identifier that is displayed on a student ID badge, but only if the identifier cannot be used to gain access to education records except when used in conjunction with one or more factors that authenticate the user's identity, such as a PIN, password, or other factor known or possessed only by the authorized user.

Notice of these rights is available, upon request, on audiotape, in Braille, and in languages other than English.

## **The Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA)**

The Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA) applies to the programs and activities of a state education agency (SEA), local education agency (LEA), or other recipient of funds under any program funded by the U.S. Department of Education. It governs the administration to students of a survey, analysis, or evaluation that concerns one or more of the following eight protected areas:

1. political affiliations or beliefs of the student or the student's parent;
2. mental or psychological problems of the student or the student's family;
3. sex behavior or attitudes;
4. illegal, anti-social, self-incriminating, or demeaning behavior;
5. critical appraisals of other individuals with whom respondents have close family relationships;
6. legally recognized privileged or analogous relationships, such as those of lawyers, physicians, and ministers;
7. religious practices, affiliations, or beliefs of the student or student's parent; or
8. income (other than that required by law to determine eligibility for participation in a program or for receiving financial assistance under such program).

PPRA also concerns marketing surveys and other areas of student privacy, parental access to information, and the administration of certain physical examinations to minors. The rights under PPRA transfer from the parents to a student who is 18 years old or an emancipated minor under state law.

## **Texas Student Privacy Act**

(Tex. Educ. Code § 32.151(3))

**Under the Texas Student Privacy Act, TOPS is responsible for protecting students' personal information from unauthorized use, access, or disclosure. These responsibilities include:**

- TOPS will not use students' personal information to create an online profile for a particular student, unless this profile is strictly used for a school purpose, as defined under the law.
- TOPS will not use students' personal information for the purposes of targeted advertising.

- TOPS will follow security measures that are designed to protect students' personal information from unauthorized use, access, disclosure, modification, and deletion.
- TOPS will not sell or rent students' personal information, subject to certain exceptions. Such exceptions include instances where the sale or renting of personal information is in regards to post-secondary educational opportunities or scholarships, among others.

Conversely, under the Texas Student Privacy Act, TOPS is permitted to disclose personal information relating to students under the following circumstances:

- To protect against liability.
- To participate or respond to the judicial process.
- To ensure legal and regulatory compliance.
- To protect the safety and integrity of an online operator's website, application, or online service.
- To assist in a legitimate research purpose.
- To assist a student in pursuing post-educational opportunities.

Under the Texas Student Privacy Act, the categories of personal information that are covered under the provisions of the law include but are not limited to:

- Email addresses.
- Physical addresses.
- Educational records.
- First and last names.
- Telephone numbers.
- Health and medical records.
- Social security numbers.
- Political affiliations.
- Religious information.
- Biometric information.
- Discipline records.
- Grades and evaluations.

## **MANDATORY ASSESSMENTS**

### **Virtual Assessments**

Virtual assessments include:

- Screeners
- Interims (this is a mandatory assessment for all TOPS students)
- TSIA2



- IBCs
- TFARs (this is a mandatory assessment for all TOPS students)

Requirements and expectations:

- Students may be scheduled to take each assessment with a staff member.
- If assessments are proctored live, students are required to take their assessment with cameras on during the testing time period.
- Students may be asked to be on camera during the assessment.
- Microphones may be turned off for interims, but may not be turned off for TSIA2, screeners, and some IBCs.
- Others (parents/learning coaches) are not to interfere or help students with the assessment.
- Do not use outside sources (Google, etc.) during the assessment.
- Testing accommodations will be provided, as aligned to 504, IEP, and RTI documentation.
- Students who are absent or do not take assessment may be rescheduled until the assessment is complete.

## In-Person Assessments

Continued enrollment with TOPS is contingent upon attending all required in-person state testing.

In-person assessments include:

- STAAR/EOC
- TELPAS
- Advanced Placement (AP) - If student signs up but does not attend, the family will be responsible for the testing fees.
- ACT - If student signs up but does not attend, the family will be responsible for the testing fees.

Parents are responsible for transportation to and from all in-person testing, regardless of distance.

A doctor's note is required for missed in-person state testing.

**Vacations, holidays, and/or doctor's appointments are not to be scheduled during any mandatory assessment dates.**

**There is no "option" to permit your child to opt-out of STAAR testing per TEA:**

TEC 26.010: <https://statutes.capitol.texas.gov/Docs/ED/htm/ED.26.htm>

STAAR results from grades 3–8 may be used as one data point in the decision for promotion to the next grade level and are intended to provide schools with an assessment of student understanding in order to guide future instructional decisions for students during the following school year.

Per HB1416, students who do not meet standard on STAAR/EOC will be required to participate in up to 30 hours of mandatory tutoring per subject during the summer and/or during the following school year.

### **STAAR TESTED SUBJECTS (Grades 3-8)**

Grade	Reading & Writing	Math	Science	Social Studies
3	YES	YES		
4	YES	YES		
5	YES	YES	YES	
6	YES	YES		
7	YES	YES		
8	YES	YES	YES	YES

### **END OF COURSE EXAMINATIONS (Grades 9-12)**

Algebra 1	English 1	English 2	Biology	US History
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EOCs will be offered to students in the spring they take the corresponding course. Students who do not meet standard on the assessment will be provided with additional opportunities to pass every December and June until standard is met.

Passing all five mandatory EOCs is a graduation requirement in the State of Texas.

## **GRADING POLICIES**

### **Progress Reporting**

Parents can access student grades at any time through their Learning Coach Account login.

Weekly, Learning Coaches are sent an auto-generated “snapshot/progress report” of their student’s grades as of 5 pm the day previous.

Note: Progress reports are not used to calculate final grades and are not included in your student's official academic record.

TOPS issues formal report cards two times a year through DocuSign at the end of Semester 1 and Semester 2.

## Grading Policy

Grades are a reflection of students' mastery of learning standards.

### **Instructional Practice**

When a student learns new material, he or she goes through a time of productive struggle with the material before eventually mastering the information or skills. It is expected that a student will make some mistakes during this learning process. Any work done during this learning period is considered Instructional Practice. The purpose of Instructional Practice is not to evaluate a student's final achievement of a topic, but to determine where he or she is in the learning process, diagnose any problems, and aid in getting the help needed to learn the material. Instructional Practice could consist of different types of assessments including, but not limited to:

- Rubric graded notebooks and journals based on state standards
- Teacher observations
- Formative assessments
- Learning centers/stations
- Writing Processes

### **Instructional Achievement**

The purpose of Instructional Achievement is to evaluate how well a student is meeting the learning standards. Some student work for Instructional Achievement may take place outside of the classroom. Instructional Achievement could consist of many different types of assessments including, but not limited to:

- Tests
- Presentations
- Final Written Compositions:
- Research projects
- Performance assessments
- Special projects related to the TEKS

## Minimum Number of Grades

For each report card period, the minimum number of grades to be used in calculating the average for each core subject and/or course is as follows:

### **Grades 3-5**

A minimum of nine grades per subject per nine weeks will be recorded.

### **Grades 6-12**

A minimum of twelve grades per subject is required every nine weeks. At least one grade must be recorded within the first three weeks. A minimum of three Instructional Achievement grades will be given per 9 weeks. Each Instructional Achievement grade will be preceded by a minimum of three Instructional Practice grades.

## Grading Scales

Grades will be calculated by taking the overall score from both categories: 50% from Instructional Practice and 50% from Instructional Achievement gradebooks.

A 100 is the highest grade that can be recorded. The lowest passing grade is a 70. The grading scale is:

A= 90-100

B= 80-89

C= 75-79

D=70-74

F= 69 and below (Failing)

## GPA Scales and Class Rank

**Please see this link for a description of TOPS GPA scales and how class rank is calculated:**

[GPA EIC Local Table.pdf](#)

## Valedictory and Salutatory Honors

The graduate having the highest scholastic rating determined by grade point average (GPA) at the conclusion of the fifth six weeks for local courses and the Spring semester for third-party/dual credit classes shall be declared valedictorian of the graduating class. The second ranking student shall be declared salutatorian under the same conditions. To be eligible for valedictory or salutatory honors, the student must have been continuously enrolled in TOPS for

the three (3) semesters preceding graduation and must have completed the Advanced/Distinguished Program for graduation.

### Late Work and Course Lock Date Policy

Students should submit all work by the assigned due date. Overdue assignments due to attendance or other matters may be discussed with the classroom teacher.

TOPS Middle and High School lock assignments 4 times a year in 9-week intervals:

- End of Quarter 1
- End of Quarter 2/Semester 1
- End of Quarter 3
- End of Quarter 4/Semester 2

TOPS Elementary School has lock dates two times a year:

- End of Semester 1
- End of Semester 2.

Once the assignments are locked, students will no longer have access to the assignments and cannot submit work, but can continue to review content.

### Extensions for High School Credit Bearing Courses

Students that are enrolled in high school credit-bearing courses but finish the semester with a failing grade within the eligible grade range, may continue to complete work within their course after the lock date during the course extension window to receive a grade up to 70% in the course. For students who receive additional time as part of their 504 plan or IEP, the additional time will be prior to the lock date, and not afterward. Extensions due to medical conditions and extenuating life circumstances require documented proof and will be approved by campus administration on a case-by-case basis.

### Grade Appeal process

Grades issued by a classroom teacher are final and may not be changed unless the grade is arbitrary, erroneous, or not consistent with the district grading policy. If you have a question regarding your student's final grade, please contact the teacher to request a conference. If an error is found after a report card is issued, a corrected report card will be issued through DocuSign.

## Teacher Graded Assignments

Students will be required to submit teacher graded assignments (TGAs) as requested by their teachers. TGA due dates will be communicated during Class Connects, in email, and designated in the Online School platform. TGAs submitted on or before the due date will be graded within 5 business days of submission. TGAs submitted after the due date will be graded before the end of the semester.

## Teacher Consistency Practices

Every teacher at TOPS takes the Stride K-12 Grade Calibration course.

Only Teachers of Record (TOR) may enter grades into the gradebooks. All TORs within the same content/grade band assign and grade the same predetermined assignments.

Special Programs teachers attend content team meetings together with their general education counterparts to norm and calibrate grading practices. Special Programs inclusion teachers have access to the course to assist with gradebook norming conversations.

## Retention/Promotion

**Promotion** refers to advancing a student to the next grade level after successfully completing their current grade level.

**Retention** refers to holding a student back in their current grade level for an additional school year because the requirements of their current grade level were not met.

Retention/Promotion decisions are made at the end of each school year for students in grades 3-8. Students are considered for retention if all of the following criteria are not met:

- Minimum final average of 70% in math
- Minimum final average of 70% in reading
- Minimum final average of 70% in all courses combined

Retention decisions are handled on a case-by-case basis. In some cases, retention is in the best interest of the student. In other cases, it is not. Once grades are finalized at the end of each school year, the TOPS Retention Committee will meet to review students who did not meet the criteria.

The Committee is made up of the following members:

- Principal or the principal's designee
- Teacher(s) who taught the student in the current school year
- Representative from special programs, if applicable

The TOPS Retention Committee will review students who did not meet the criteria, and will make their final recommendation taking this additional information into consideration:

- STAAR results
- Attendance/engagement
- Special programs (if the student is currently served through special education, 504, EB, or is classified as “at risk”)
- Age or previous retention

If the TOPS Retention Committee believes that retention is in the best interest of the student, a meeting with the student’s parent or guardian will be held. The Retention Committee will provide evidence to support their recommendation, and then, in accordance with TX House Bill 3803, the parent or guardian will decide whether the student will be retained. The school will abide by the parent’s decision.

In the case that the TOPS Retention Committee does not recommend that a student be retained, but a parent believes that retention is in their student’s best interest, a meeting will be held in which the TOPS Retention Committee will provide evidence to support their recommendation to promote the student to the next grade level, and then, in accordance with TX House Bill 3803, the parent or guardian will decide whether the student will be retained or promoted. The school will abide by the parent’s decision.

**NOTE:**

Retention decisions follow students from one school to the next. Withdrawing from TOPS to enroll in another school after a retention decision has been made does not prevent a student from being retained.

**Any modified promotion standards for a student receiving special education services** shall be determined by the student’s admission, review, and dismissal (ARD) committee and documented in the student’s individualized education program/plan (IEP).

**High school students** will be retained in a grade level if they do not earn the sufficient number of credits to promote. High school retention means that students will still have the classification of the prior grade level, but will only retake courses with final averages of less than 70%. Students who recuperate missing credits will be reclassified into the appropriate grade level according to their number of credits earned, at the start of the following school year.

- 9<sup>th</sup> grade, freshman year, 0-5.5 credits
- 10<sup>th</sup> grade, sophomore year, 6-11.5 credits
- 11<sup>th</sup> grade, junior year, 12-18.5 credits
- 12<sup>th</sup> grade, senior year, 19+ credits

In accordance with TX House Bill 3803, a parent or guardian of a high school student may elect for a student to repeat any course in which the student was enrolled in during the previous school year. A parent or guardian may not elect for a student to repeat a course if the school determines the student has met all of the requirements for graduation. Students who repeat a

course they already have credit for will not receive additional credit for retaking the course, and their final grade in that course will not count to GPA.

## CURRICULUM

### Parent Access

Parents/Learning Coaches have complete access to all learning materials, teaching tools, and platforms used on each TOPS campus.

These items may include, but are not limited to:

- K12's Online School (OLS)
- K12's Online Middle and High School (OMHS)
- Progress Learning or Reading Eggs (Supplemental practice platforms)
- Classkick or Near Pod (Supplemental assignment completion platforms)
- Gizmos (Supplemental science labs)
- K12 workbooks and physical materials (mailed at beginning of school year)

Parents/Learning Coaches are able to view student grades, assignments, and graduation plans (Grades 9-12) at any time through their Learning Coach login. For help navigating the platform, please contact your homeroom teacher.

Parents/Learning Coaches may also review each test/unit assessment after it has been assigned and completed. This can typically be done via learning coach login. However, if questions remain, parents/learning coaches may request access or a copy from the appropriate teacher.

### Parent Right to Opt Out

According to TEC Sec. 26.010, a parent or guardian may remove a child temporarily from a class or other school activity that conflicts with the parent's religious or moral beliefs. The parent or guardian must submit to the campus principal documentation requesting removal. **However, a parent is not entitled to remove the parent's child from a class or other school activity to avoid a test (e.g. STAAR) or to prevent the child from taking a subject for an entire semester.**

### Acceleration

#### Grades 3-5



For students in grades 3-5 to accelerate in grade level, they must take Credit-By-Examination in all four core subject areas prior to the start of the school year and demonstrate proficiency with a grade of 80 or higher on all examinations.

### **Grades 6-12**

Students in grades 6-12 may accelerate courses or grade levels in order to achieve their graduation planning. To do so, they must take Credit-By-Examination in the applicable subject area and demonstrate proficiency with a grade of 80 or higher.

Note: TOPS offers Credit-By-Examination twice yearly (*December/June*). To accelerate a grade level, students must take the Credit-By-Examinations in the June offering. Students and parents interested in Credit-By-Examination during the school year will need to contact their counselor.

## Courses

**For a list of which courses students are required to take each year, please see this document:** [TOPS Program of Studies SY2024-25.docx](#)

**For a description of middle school level courses, see the MS Course Catalog:** [Middle School Course Catalog SY 24-25 2 21 24 \(1\).pdf](#)

**For a description of high school level courses, see the HS Course Catalog:** [https://k12inc-my.sharepoint.com/:b:/g/personal/ssumrall\\_k12\\_com/EcFWgbzbNJtLgH3yeYnaXewB5SSufqHvxrhUqsitSACsDw](https://k12inc-my.sharepoint.com/:b:/g/personal/ssumrall_k12_com/EcFWgbzbNJtLgH3yeYnaXewB5SSufqHvxrhUqsitSACsDw)

## Additional notes about TOPS courses

- **Course Changes:** Learning coaches can request for their student to change a course on their schedule within the first 10 days of enrollment in the course. Approval will be based on campus counselor review of grade level requirements.
- **MS students in Advanced or HS courses** are required to sign a contract. If not passing, students may be dropped from the advanced and/or the HS course at the mid-semester lock date if not passing.
- **Third Party:** If a Third-Party course is not passed, students cannot take another Third-Party course without administrative approval.
- **Dual Credit** requirements are mandated by each partner college or university. TOPS offers dual credit courses online through UTPB. See [Course Catalogue](#) for UTPB entrance requirements. For a list of all available in-person dual credit options and each

university's entrance requirements, visit the Participating Colleges section of the [Dual Credit Info site](#). If a student fails a dual credit course, they will no longer be eligible for the TOPS dual credit program.

- **Credit Recovery:** High School students may be offered credit recovery opportunities during the school year, between semesters, and during summer.
- **Endorsements and Pathways:** Students may choose from a range of endorsements and pathways, as outlined in the TOPS Course Catalog.
- **Physical Education Requirements:** Texas Senate Bill 42 states that students in elementary and middle school grades must have a minimum of 30 minutes of **documented physical activity** each day or a weekly total of 150 minutes. The time requirement is prorated for students enrolling after the first nine weeks. Students are required to complete four (4) semesters of Physical Education in grades six through eight.  
Additionally, students must comply and turn in the annual physical examination assessment (**Fitness Gram**) as required by both HISD and TEA.
- **College and Career Preparation:** Students in 7-12th grade are automatically scheduled for Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses. Enrollment in the course includes access to all other program benefits, including Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSOs), Work-Based Learning (WBL), Industry-Based Certifications (IBCs), dual-credit, etc. Families will be given the opportunity to opt-out of participating in Career and Technical Education at the beginning of each semester utilizing a form provided during orientation. At the parent's request, a member from the College and Career Prep Team will reach out to answer questions.

## Graduation Requirements

Graduation requirements vary according to the year of entry into 9th grade and the graduation plan selected by the student and parents. All graduation requirements according to each endorsement and year of entry into 9<sup>th</sup> grade are listed in detail in the course catalog. Students are expected to meet a minimum of quarterly with their school counselor to review their graduation plan and requirements.

High school course catalog: [https://k12inc-my.sharepoint.com/:b/g/personal/ssumrall\\_k12\\_com/EcfWgbzbNJtLgH3yeYnaXewB5SSufqHvxrhUqsitSACsDw](https://k12inc-my.sharepoint.com/:b/g/personal/ssumrall_k12_com/EcfWgbzbNJtLgH3yeYnaXewB5SSufqHvxrhUqsitSACsDw)

## Individual Graduation Committee

Students enrolled in 11th or 12th grade who have taken all five End of Course state assessments required for high school graduation and have failed to perform satisfactorily on no

more than two of the required End of Course state assessments may be eligible to receive a Texas high school diploma by means of an individual graduation committee (IGC) determination. The IGC will determine the timeline and assignment requirements to take the place of the failed EOC(s) to fulfill this graduation requirement.

## Endorsements

A student must earn at least 26 credits, including a 4<sup>th</sup> math and science, to earn an endorsement. Each endorsement has different graduation requirements. See the high school course catalogue for details: [https://k12inc-my.sharepoint.com/:b:/g/personal/ssumrall\\_k12\\_com/EcfWgbzbNJtLgH3yeYnaXewB5SSufqHvxrhUqsitSACsDw](https://k12inc-my.sharepoint.com/:b:/g/personal/ssumrall_k12_com/EcfWgbzbNJtLgH3yeYnaXewB5SSufqHvxrhUqsitSACsDw)

## Performance Acknowledgements

A student may earn a performance acknowledgement for outstanding performance in any of the following as laid out in state guidelines: Dual credit, bilingualism and biliteracy, College Board Advanced Placement test or International Baccalaureate examination, a college placement assessment, or a state recognized or nationally or internationally recognized business or industry certification or license. Performance acknowledgements are listed on final senior transcripts.

## College, Career, and Military Readiness (CCMR)

Students will engage in college, career, and military awareness and planning activities each year starting with third grade.

Our primary goal is that every student graduates as a future-ready citizen.

### **Grades 3-6**

Investigate college/careers goals and objectives aligned with personal interests. Consider careers that fit your personality and ability. Attend weekly counselor assemblies regarding academic planning and future readiness awareness.

### **Grades 7-8**

Continue to investigate college, career, and military information in order to choose a College and Career Preparation Program of Study and an endorsement that aligns with your chosen career pathway. Attend weekly counselor assemblies regarding academic planning and high school graduation requirements. Get involved in Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSOs) and College and Career Preparation activities.

### **Grades 9-10**

Review college and career preparation goals and industry-based certifications within College and Career Programs of Study, while continuing to research colleges and careers of interest. Revisit your graduation plan and your post high school focus to ensure it still aligns with your future college and career interests. Be aware of the importance of your high school transcript, grades, and credits earned by semester and year. Attend weekly counselor assemblies regarding post-secondary planning and including college admission, scholarships, and financial aid availability, and meeting graduation requirements.

### **Grade 11**

Review academic plans and narrow college and career choices. If applicable, register in August with local ISD to take the PSAT/NMSQT® in October (National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test). Consider taking the ACT and/or SAT or TSIA2 in the spring. Find free test review materials at Khan Academy. For those interested in military service take the ASVAB test. Attend weekly counselor assemblies regarding postsecondary planning including college admissions requirements, scholarships, financial aid availability, and graduation requirements. Revisit your graduation plan and your post high school focus to ensure that you are on track to meet your goals and graduation requirements.

### **Grade 12**

Finalize your post high school focus and post-secondary plans. In the fall, meet with your counselor for your senior meeting to ensure you are on track to meet your goals and graduation requirements. Attend weekly counselor assemblies and stay up to date on the Senior Smore for all updates. If attending college or post-secondary education, apply to your top 5 colleges or programs. Take the SAT® and/or ACT® or TSIA2 in early fall if needed. Ensure that the CPR, Peace Officer, and FAFSA graduation requirements are met. For those interested in military service, take the ASVAB test. Be mindful of deadlines for college admission, housing, and university scholarship applications. Submit scholarship applications throughout the school year. Complete the senior survey in the spring.

## **IDENTIFICATION OF STUDENTS IN NEED OF SPECIAL PROGRAMS AND SERVICES**

### **Child Find**

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act includes the Child Find mandate. Child Find requires all school districts to identify, locate and evaluate all children with disabilities, regardless of the severity of their disabilities.

Parents who believe their student may have a disability can make a referral through their Homeroom Teacher for academic assistance provided through the Response to Intervention

Program and consideration for accommodations provided under Section 504 or Special Education services.

For questions or concerns, please contact TOPS Special Programs Manager, Winter Cason. [wcason@texasonlineprep.org](mailto:wcason@texasonlineprep.org)

## Response to Intervention (RTI) / Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)

Response to Intervention (RTI) Services at TOPS are available for students who have been identified as academically “at-risk”.

A student can be determined as “at-risk” if they meet any of the following:

- Significant deficiencies on assessments
- Struggling with the current curriculum
- At-risk identifiers on benchmarks
- Low performance on the STAAR exams
- Some other need found on the Child Find screening
- Or other identified area of concern

RTI is based on the concept of providing evidence-based instructional and behavioral strategies by highly qualified personnel that are matched to the student’s needs, and those needs are monitored frequently.

### **The goals of RTI at TOPS:**

- Create a productive learning experience for all TOPS students
- Support students in reaching grade-level performance
- Use prevention rather than reaction to address student difficulties

### **How to request RTI assistance and what to expect:**

Students can be placed into the RTI program through a referral of a teacher, administrator, or learning coach. Students can also be placed into the RTI program based on their performance on STAAR and EOC exams. The learning coach can make a request through the teacher for RTI support.

The process for RTI provides three tiers of intervention and remediation for an individualized amount of time.

- Tier 1 support is provided through the feedback that students receive from assignments in the asynchronous course and in live Class Connection sessions.

- Tier 2 intervention is provided through specialized Class Connection sessions and are designed to assist students in mastering the essential standards of their course. Attendance is mandatory and groups are established based on recent formative assessment data.
- Tier 3 remediation is provided through specialized Class Connection sessions are designed to assist students in mastering math and reading skills that the student did not master from prior grade levels. Attendance is mandatory and groups are based on performance on prior year STAAR/EOC exams.

For questions or concerns, please contact TOPS RTI Coordinator, Kaila Fuller, [kafuller@texasonlineprep.org](mailto:kafuller@texasonlineprep.org)

## **SPECIAL PROGRAMS AND SERVICES**

Texas Online Preparatory School (TOPS) is a program of Huntsville Independent School District. Every eligible Huntsville ISD student with a disability is entitled to a free appropriate public education (FAPE). Each special education student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) is the centerpiece of the District's plan for providing special education and related services that are reasonably calculated to enable the student to make progress appropriate in light of the student's unique and individual circumstances.

Students with disabilities shall not be excluded from, or be denied the benefits of, virtual instruction on the basis of disability. Huntsville IDS has a continuum of services for students with disabilities. TOPS is just one program within Huntsville Independent School District's continuum of services.

### **Transferring in the Virtual School Setting**

TOPS is exclusively a virtual program and does not provide in-person instruction. Students who need in-person support will not be admitted to TOPS. A student's participation in the TOPS program is dependent on each special education student's IEP team, and each student's 504 team, determining that the student can receive a FAPE through a virtual program, to include any necessary and appropriate individualized accommodations, modifications, aids, and/or special education and related services. If a student's IEP or 504 team determines that a student cannot receive a FAPE in a virtual setting, the student may be placed at the Huntsville ISD campus in which the student is a resident or, if the student is not a resident within Huntsville ISD, withdrawn and referred to his or her local district residence.

## Legal Citations

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is a non-discrimination civil rights law that prohibits agencies that receive federal funding from discriminating against persons with disabilities based on disability. Section 504 provides: “No otherwise qualified individuals with a disability in the United States...shall, solely by reason of her or his disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance...”

The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) guarantees every eligible student a “free appropriate public education” (FAPE). The law states that all public schools must:

- Find and identify students who have a disability (Child Find)
- Involve parents in decision making
- Evaluate (test) students in a non-discriminatory way
- Develop an Individual Education Plan (IEP) for every student that will help him/her be involved in and progress in the general curriculum
- Decide what special instruction and related services the school will provide
- Provide services in the least restrictive environment (a placement that allows a student with disabilities to be educated to the maximum extent appropriate with students who do not have disabilities).

## Special Education Services

Documentation of the student’s disability must be secured; including a previous Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and a Full and Individual Evaluation. Special Education professionals assist parents in accessing and coordinating services pursuant to a current Individualized Education Plan. TOPS offers a continuum of services which includes:

Least Restrictive to Most Restrictive	Teacher of Record	CC Sessions	Descriptor of Services/Implementer
General Education	General Education	General Education	General Education accessing grade level curriculum with no additional accommodations or supports
General Education with accommodations	General Education	General Education	General Education accessing grade level curriculum; Gen Ed and Special Education teacher are notified and responsible for implementing accommodations; student attends all gen ed sessions; General Education and Special Education co-plan, instruct, and assess together
General Education with Co-Teach	General Education	Special Education	General Education setting accessing grade level curriculum; Teacher of record is notified and responsible for implementing accommodations; student attends all general education sessions; student has an additional support classconnect hosted by a Special Education teacher where content specific support is provided weekly
General Education with DTS (High School Only; certain courses)	General Education	Special Education	General Education setting accessing grade level curriculum; Teacher of record is notified and responsible for implementing accommodations; student attends all general education sessions; student has an additional support classconnect hosted by a Special Education teacher where content specific support is provided weekly
Special Education Resource	Special Education	Special Education	Special Education instruction; accessing grade level curriculum with modifications to content; Special Education teacher is teacher of record; is notified and responsible for individual modifications and accommodations; student is receiving instruction with other special education students and is not included in the general education setting with same age peers for specific content areas; this setting can be for one content area or more; placement should be driven by eligibility and individual needs
Self Contained/ALT Assessed	Special Education	Special Education	Special education instruction; students meet eligibility for significant cognitive delays; student do not access grade level curriculum; students require learning through pre-requisite skills and instruction; Special Education teacher of record for all content areas; students require significant modifications in all areas of learning, including electives in order to be successful; students removed from same age peers for all instructional needs; students require ALT assessments and curriculum based on IEPs and functional learning needs

#### What to expect:

- Every identified special education student will be assigned a special education case manager in addition to their regular education teachers.
- The special education teacher will work with the learning coach on IEP goals; how to modify and adapt the learning environment; and curriculum paths for success.
- The special education teachers will hold Class Connects online to assist students with their specific learning needs.
- The special education case manager is available to be used as a resource for instructional strategies and adaptations and modifications to the curriculum.
- ARD meetings will be held either online or through the use of a conference call line.
- The special education case manager will provide a progress report at the end of each grading period noting progress, provided by the appropriate parties, on the student's IEP goals.
- Special Education students are required to meet the same attendance policies as their peers. The home environment, one on one instruction, and flexible schedule can help the students create a learning environment that meet their specific needs.

For questions or concerns, please contact TOPS Special Education Manager, Blair Litaker-French, [flitaker-french@texasonlineprep.org](mailto:flitaker-french@texasonlineprep.org)

#### Complaint Process

Texas Online Prep School recognizes that despite best intentions of all parties, disagreements or miscommunications may arise between the school-based team and TOPS's families or



students. Should this situation occur, the Texas Online Prep Special Education case manager will schedule an Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) Committee meeting where the specific details contributing to any educational concern are fully discussed and addressed as an entire team, to determine what supports or actions are the most appropriate for the student. Collaboration is our primary focus for this type of meeting, and the Texas Online Prep School Special Education Team seeks to establish and maintain the confidence of its families to always serve its students in order to maximize their educational success.

For details on how to file a complaint, please click [HERE](#) to visit the Texas Education Agency (TEA) site.

## Related Services

Related services placement and goals are determined by the ARD Committee. TOPS provides related services through contracts with service providers (speech pathologists, occupational therapists, etc.). It is important for students and parents to attend all related services appointments in order for the student to receive maximum benefit and achieve IEP goals.

We understand that it is our responsibility to provide a free and appropriate public education to each enrolled special education student. Because TOPS is a virtual school of choice, we strive to provide speech and other related services virtually whenever possible.

Any questions regarding Special Education services for a specific student should be directed to the student's Special Education Case Manager.

For questions or concerns, please contact TOPS Special Education Manager, Blair Litaker-French, [flitaker-french@texasonlineprep.org](mailto:flitaker-french@texasonlineprep.org)

## SECTION 504 PROGRAM

Section 504 is a federal law designed to protect the rights of individuals with disabilities in programs and activities that receive Federal financial assistance from the U.S. Department of Education (such as a public school like TOPS). Under this law, **individuals with disabilities** are defined as persons with a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities. Individuals who have a history of, or who are regarded as having a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, are also covered.

Major life activities include caring for one's self, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, working, performing manual tasks, and learning.

"No otherwise qualified individual with handicaps in the United States... shall, solely by reason of his or her handicap, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance..." 9 U.S.C. 794(a)

This means that if your student has a physical or mental impairment, they may qualify for services under Section 504. This allows TOPS to provide accommodations to help your student better access the curriculum if their physical or mental impairment is preventing them from being successful.

To determine if your student is eligible for Section 504 services, TOPS will need to conduct an evaluation which may include gathering information from teachers, medical professionals, and you as the parent.

You can also find more information on Section 504 on the TEA Fact Sheets:

- <https://tea.texas.gov/academics/special-student-populations/special-education/section-504.pdf>
- <https://tea.texas.gov/academics/special-student-populations/special-education/section-504-spanish.pdf>

If you would like to further investigate your student's eligibility under Section 504, please contact TOPS 504 Manager Kristy Decker-Baird, [kdecker-baird@texasonlineprep.org](mailto:kdecker-baird@texasonlineprep.org)

For more information, see the 504 Handbook:

<https://acrobat.adobe.com/id/urn:aaid:sc:VA6C2:9aa4c674-78d8-4ede-a7f9-fbc051fb4aab>

## **TOPS DYSLEXIA SERVICES**

Children learn to read in different ways. Reading is complex. It requires our brains to connect letters to sounds, put those sounds in the right order, and pull the words together into sentences and paragraphs we can read and comprehend. Children with dyslexia have trouble matching the letters they see on the page with the sounds those letters and combinations of letters make. And when they have trouble with that step, all the other steps are harder. Therefore, when conventional instruction is not working, we must intervene on behalf of that child's future education. Students who show signs of dyslexia may need intervention to be successful in school. The TOPS Dyslexia Intervention Program is offered for those students who meet program specifications according to the State of Texas.

To view a copy of the Texas Dyslexia Handbook and identification process, please go here: <https://acrobat.adobe.com/id/urn:aaid:sc:us:fd31790f-9dbc-4ef2-b5a6-691f8508023b>

### **Referral to Dyslexia Program**

Dyslexia referral and identification under IDEA must be individualized and based on multiple pieces of information. Students should be referred to the Special Education Department after being identified through any of the following referral committees and/or methods:

- Data-Driven Meeting of Knowledgeable Persons  
These individuals include, but are not limited to, the classroom teacher, administrator, dyslexia specialist, and/or interventionist.
- RTI/MTSS Committee
- ARD Committee
- 504 Committee
- Parent/Guardian Request

The referral should consider that the Texas Education Code (TEC) §38.003 defines dyslexia in the following ways:

1. Dyslexia is a disorder of constitutional origin manifested by a difficulty in learning to read, write, or spell, despite conventional instruction, adequate intelligence, and sociocultural opportunity.
2. Related disorders include disorders similar to or related to dyslexia such as developmental auditory imperception, dysphasia, specific developmental dyslexia, developmental dysgraphia, and developmental spelling disability.

NOTE: It is important to remember that a referral for a dyslexia evaluation can be considered at any time kindergarten–high school.

### **Universal Dyslexia Screener**

The Dyslexia Department conducts dyslexia screener for any TOPS 7<sup>th</sup> grade student that did not meet standards on the 6<sup>th</sup> grade STAAR ELA. If a student scores Critical on the dyslexia screener, a full dyslexia evaluation may be warranted. The full evaluation will be conducted through a FIIE.

### **Common Evidence of Dyslexia**

#### Second and Third Grade

- Difficulty recognizing common sight words (e.g., “to,” “said,” “been”)
- Difficulty decoding single words.
- Difficulty recalling the correct sounds for letters and letter patterns in reading.
- Difficulty connecting speech sounds with appropriate letter or letter combinations and omitting letters in words for spelling (e.g., “after” spelled “eftr”)

- Difficulty reading fluently (e.g., reading is slow, inaccurate, and/or without expression)
- Difficulty decoding unfamiliar words in sentences using knowledge of phonics.
- Reliance on picture clues, story theme, or guessing at words.
- Difficulty with written expression

#### Fourth and Fifth Grade

Many of the previous described behaviors remain problematic along with the following:

- Difficulty reading aloud (e.g., fear of reading aloud in front of classmates)
- Avoidance of reading (particularly for pleasure)
- Difficulty reading fluently (e.g., reading is slow, inaccurate, and/or without expression)
- Difficulty decoding unfamiliar words in sentences using knowledge of phonics.
- Acquisition of less vocabulary due to reduced independent reading.
- Use of less complicated words in writing that are easier to spell than more appropriate words (e.g., “big” instead of “enormous”)
- Reliance on listening rather than reading for comprehension.

#### Middle and High School

Many of the previous described behaviors remain problematic along with the following:

- Difficulty with the volume of reading and written work
- Frustration with the amount of time required and energy expended for reading.
- Difficulty reading fluently (e.g., reading is slow, inaccurate, and/or without expression)
- Difficulty decoding unfamiliar words in sentences using knowledge of phonics.
- Difficulty with written assignments
- Tendency to avoid reading (particularly for pleasure)
- Difficulty learning a foreign language.

#### **Direct Dyslexia Instruction**


Direct Dyslexia Instruction at TOPS is for students (identified with dyslexia) to be pulled for small group (5 or less students in a group), 45 minutes, 4 days per week for direct instruction with a dyslexia trained teacher. On the fifth day, TOPS dyslexia teachers also facilitate office hours and optional classes to offer additional review, reteach, and reading support for students with dyslexia. Dyslexia Direct Instruction classes are offered for grade levels 3-12 at TOPS.

For questions or concerns, please contact the Texas Shared Services (TXSS) Dyslexia Manager, Debbie Kraus, [dkraus@texasonlineprep.org](mailto:dkraus@texasonlineprep.org).

## Gifted and Talented Program

### Program Description

At TOPS, gifted and talented students receive differentiated learning opportunities in math, science, English language arts, and social studies. Our program offers structured and challenging activities across these four core curricular areas to ensure a comprehensive experience for gifted students. Through this program, students have the chance to collaborate in group settings, work with peers, and engage in independent learning activities. Additionally, independent investigations and enrichment activities are integrated into the program to further support educational growth.

You can also find more information on Gifted and Talented within our  [24-25 K12 Stride Gifted Talented Manual-Final.pdf](#)

For questions or concerns, please contact Leigh Radichel, TOPS GT Manager.  
[lradichel@texasonlineprep.org](mailto:lradichel@texasonlineprep.org)

### Referral and Identification Process for Gifted and Talented Services

Anyone can refer a student for Gifted and Talented services, including parents, learning coaches, administrators, counselors, and other school staff. Students may also self-refer. The process happens once in the fall and once in the spring. Once the referral form is submitted, we request permission from the parent or guardian to proceed with the testing and identification process.

Upon receiving consent, the student completes the online version of the Cognitive Abilities Test (COGAT) assessment. When this has been completed, the specially trained, school-based G/T Committee meets to review all collected data, including the COGAT results, to determine the need for G/T services. The parent or guardian is promptly informed of the committee's decision.

If the student qualifies, services will commence the following semester. Parents are also briefed on the appeals process in case the student is not eligible at this time.

### Advanced Course Offerings

TOPS Elementary School offers Advanced 5<sup>th</sup> grade ELA and Advanced 5<sup>th</sup> grade Math.

For a list advanced courses available at TOPS Middle School and High School, please see the Course Catalogs:

- [Middle School Course Catalog SY 24-25 2 21 24 \(1\).pdf](#)
- [HS Course Catalog](#)

## Credit by Examination (CBE)

Credit by exam (CBE) is one method for students to demonstrate proficiency in grade level or course content. The Texas Education Code (TEC), §28.023, allows students to either accelerate a grade level or earn credit for a course based on credit by examination. At TOPS, credit by examination is available twice per year: at the end of fall semester, and again at the end of spring semester.

## Early High School Graduation

TOPS students are permitted to graduate with their high school diploma upon completion of all TX State high school graduation requirements.

## ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

### Identification

TOPS works closely with each family to identify students whose first or primary language is not English. Through the information obtained on a Home Language Survey complete during the initial enrollment process, students are assessed to determine if additional research-based instruction and support is warranted for English language instruction.

An Emergent Bilingual (EB) student means an individual:

- (A) who is aged 3 through 21;
- (B) who is enrolled or preparing to enroll in an elementary school or secondary school;
- (C)(i) who was not born in the United States or whose native language is a language other than English;
  - (ii)(I) who is a Native American or Alaska Native, or a native resident of the outlying areas; and (II) who comes from an environment where a language other than English has had a significant impact on the individual's level of English language proficiency; or
  - (iii) who is migratory, whose native language is a language other than English, and who comes from an environment where a language other than English is dominant; and

(D) whose difficulties in speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language may be sufficient to deny the individual—

- (i) the ability to meet the State's proficient level of achievement on State assessments described in section 1111(b)(3);
- (ii) the ability to successfully achieve in classrooms where the language of instruction is English; or
- (iii) the opportunity to participate fully in society.

Students that meet the definition and qualify for English Language instruction will receive additional support through the Emergent Bilingual (EB) department. Additionally, those students identified for services will receive support through an assigned case manager and classroom accommodations determined by the Language Proficiency Assessment Committee (LPAC). To ensure the student is making growth academically and with their English language skills, annually the students will take the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment (TELPAS).

## Assessment

Title III, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Act requires states to conduct annual statewide English language proficiency assessments for EB students in grades K–12 in the linguistic domains of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS) is designed to assess the progress that EB students make in learning the English language and to drive instruction for EB students. TELPAS reading, listening, speaking, and writing assessments enable teachers to holistically rate an EB student's English language proficiency based on interactions and observations of the student during classroom instruction. TELPAS measures English language proficiency in the following domains:

<b>Listening</b> – administered in grades K–12	
<b>Speaking</b> – administered in grades K–12	
<b>Reading (K-1*)</b> is holistically assessed. The rater considers how well the student can use the English language to build foundational reading skills.	<b>Reading (2-12)</b> is administered to students as an online assessment that measures annual growth in English language proficiency of ELL students.
<b>Writing</b> – administered to ELLs in grades 2–12	
<b>ARD committee and LPAC Collaboration</b> – In rare cases, it may be determined that an ELL receiving special education services should not be assessed in one or more domains due to the student’s unique learning and/or cognitive disability; students are reported at the time of testing with a score code of “ARD Decision.”	

Students identified as Emergent Bilingual will take the TELPAS test annually until they meet exit criteria predetermined by the Texas Education Association (TEA). Information about testing dates, locations and times will be sent to each family 6-8 weeks prior to the assessment date.

For more information, please contact, Emerging Bilingual Manager, Ms. Laura Thiess, [lthiess@texasonlineprep.org](mailto:lthiess@texasonlineprep.org).

If you need assistance of a language interpreter, please call 1-800-225-5254 and request an interpreter for TOPS.

If you need a document translated into your native language, you may email the school staff person who sent it to you to request a translated copy.

## HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH

The McKinney Act of 1987, or P.L. 100-77, ensures that each child of a homeless individual and each homeless youth shall have equal access to the same free, appropriate public education as provided to other children and youth. Under the Act, schools are prohibited from delaying a homeless child's entry into school due to delays in obtaining school records. Rules regarding guardianship must be waived for homeless students living with foster parents or relatives other than their legal guardians.



Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (per Title IX, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act) defines *homeless* and *homeless children and youths* as follows:

(A) means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence (within the meaning of section 103(a)(1)); and

(B) includes--

- (i) children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; or are abandoned in hospitals;\*
- (ii) children and youths who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings (within the meaning of section 103(a)(2)(C));
- (iii) children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and
- (iv) migratory children (as such term is defined in section 1309 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965) who qualify as homeless for the purposes of this subtitle because the children are living in circumstances described in clauses (i) through (iii).

Per Title IX, Part A of the Every Student Succeeds Act, "awaiting foster care placement" was removed from the definition of *homeless* on December 10, 2016; the only exception to his removal is that "covered states" have until December 10, 2017 to remove "awaiting foster care placement" from their definition of *homeless*.

For more information: [McKinney-Vento – National Center for Homeless Education](#)

Additional information about supports are available by calling the school office at 972-420-1404 and requesting to speak with the School-Based Enrollment Coordinator or McKinney Vento Liaison.

In the case that parents, guardians, or unaccompanied youth disagree with the school over eligibility of services, school selection, or school enrollment, the following dispute resolution process will be followed with the intention to represent each party's views for objective consideration so that disagreements can be resolved expeditiously.

1. The student will be immediately enrolled in TOPS, pending final resolution of the dispute, including appeals. While dispute are pending, students have the right to participate fully in the school and to receive all services for which they are eligible.
2. The parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth must be provided with a written explanation of any dispute-related decisions made by the school, including the right to appeal such decisions.

3. The parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth will be referred to the McKinney Vento Liaison, Shelli Stifle, [sstifle@texasonlineprep.org](mailto:sstifle@texasonlineprep.org), who will carry out the dispute resolution process within 20 business days of the request.

## FOSTER CARE

Under Texas law, students in foster care are entitled to immediate enrollment when arriving at a new school or district — regardless of whether they have the necessary documentation and paperwork.<sup>52</sup> CPS caseworkers are required to enroll a child in school within three (3) school days of the child either: a) being placed in CPS custody; or b) moving to a new school or placement.<sup>53</sup> The caseworker then has up to 30 days to provide all necessary enrollment paperwork to the new school.<sup>54</sup> Follow up to ensure a student:

- Has his or her records requested and received;
- Is placed in the appropriate grade level and classes;
- Receives his or her books; and
- Receives special education services, if appropriate.

Who may enroll a student living in foster care in school? If a child is in a foster care placement, DFPS has legal authority to enroll the child in school. DFPS may delegate that authority to another person, usually the person who will be responsible for day-to-day care of the child, such as the:

- Foster parent or designated caregiver;
- CPS caseworker or other staff;
- CASA or student’s guardian ad litem;
- Residential facility staff;
- Child Placing Agency staff, including case manager, or
- Biological parent, in some cases.

For additional information on the necessary items to enroll a youth in foster care in a public, Texas school please refer to <http://tea.texas.gov/FosterCareStudentSuccess/>

Additional information about supports are available by calling the school office at 972-420-1404 and requesting to speak with the School-Based Enrollment Coordinator or Foster Care Liaison.

## CHILDREN OF MILITARY FAMILIES

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

- Immunization requirements

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

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

Additional information may be found at <http://tea.texas.gov/index2.aspx?id=7995>

Additional information can be obtained by calling the school office at 972-420-1404 and requesting to speak with the School-Based Enrollment Coordinator.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT STATEMENTS**

The purpose of this section is to set expectations for both TOPS Learning Coaches (LCs) and TOPS Students. To be successful at TOPS, it is important that LCs and students understand and agree with the following:

- I have read this handbook and have had an opportunity to ask questions.
- I understand that my student is enrolled in a public school within Huntsville Independent School District (HISD) and that my student is expected to meet all educational requirements set by the District and the State of TX.
- I understand and agree that my student is required to follow the Code of Conduct.
- I understand and agree that as a student enrolled at TOPS, a public-school within HISD, my student may not be enrolled in any other full-time or part-time private or public schools. This may include affiliated correspondence and dual credit programs. Students found to have duplicate enrollments will be immediately withdrawn.
- I understand and agree to supervise my student in using K12 curriculum. Supervision may include:
  - maintaining and creating a daily schedule
  - monitoring course progress
  - checking grades
  - reviewing assignments
  - troubleshooting technical difficulties
  - checking email, phone calls, and texts from the school
- I understand and agree that for students to be successful at TOPS, they must:

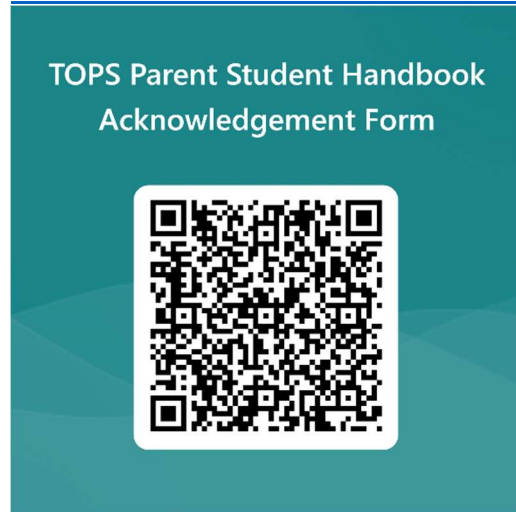
- Engage in the online coursework in the OLS/OMS/OHS platforms, and complete all assessments and assignments by the due date
- Complete all assessments and screeners
- Regularly attend live Class Connect sessions
- Log-in and work each day
- Check email twice-daily
- I understand and agree to attend in person STAAR/EOC testing as a requirement of enrollment in Texas public schools, and I understand that I am required to provide transportation to all testing sites regardless of distance.
- I understand and agree to attend in person TELPAS testing as a requirement of enrollment in Texas public schools, if my student has been identified as an Emergent Bilingual student. I understand that I am required to provide transportation to all testing sites regardless of distance.
- I understand and agree to attend any additional tests I sign up to take, such as AP in person or TSIA2/IBC virtually. I understand that there may be financial or disciplinary consequences for not attending a scheduled assessment.
- I understand and agree that it is my responsibility to secure an Internet service provider, and I understand that failure to secure working Internet may result in withdrawal from the TOPS program.
- I understand that if my student receives special or related services, that those services are provided by TOPS through virtual platforms. However, the ARD committee will discuss the most appropriate setting for these services based on each individual student's data.
- I understand that the Learning "Coach (LC) is typically a parent or Legal Guardian of the student, but that if a parent or Legal Guardian is not available, the Legal Guardian can select a family member, friend or trusted adult to be the Learning Coach.
- I understand and agree that alongside certified teachers, the student's LC provides academic and technical support, spends time preparing for and engaging in each academic day, and motivates and guides the student during the full school year.
- I understand and agree to follow the attendance policies, and to communicate directly with teachers and staff, as needed.
- I understand that Learning Coaches are able to observe the student's participation in remote instruction, but I agree that Learning Coaches are not to interrupt remote instruction.
- I understand and agree that Learning Coaches are to address any concerns related to instruction with appropriate District personnel outside of instruction time.
- I understand that Learning Coaches are to agree to attend the orientation program designated by the District that is designed to educate students and LCs on necessary tools to access the program.
- The understand and agree that it is the LC's responsibility to ensure student access to remote instruction and that repeated inability to access remote instruction may results in a transfer to an in person learning environment on a District campus, should the Student be a

resident of the District, or withdrawn and referred to his or her district of residence in the student in not a District resident.

***TOPS does not encourage students be left home alone  
or unsupervised during the school day.***

To complete your annual Handbook Agreement, please fill out the following survey to acknowledge your agreement with the statements in this section.

[TOPS Parent Student Handbook Acknowledgement Form \(office.com\)](#)



**Note:**

This handbook is a living document and may be changed, amended, or edited to reflect policy or procedural updates at any time. Parents/Learning Coaches will be notified of any changes made in the middle of a school year. The handbook will be reviewed for accuracy annually, and thus, Parents/Learning Coaches will be required to sign the Acknowledgement of this Document at the start of each school year.



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