



Mesquite Learning Academy

Student & Parent / Guardian Handbook

2025-2026

Table of Contents

Non-Discrimination Policy	1
Purpose of Handbook	1
Mission	1
The primary mission of the Mesquite Learning Academy is to serve at-risk and school dropout youth with substance abuse or legal issues in Texas.	1
Vision	1
GENERAL INFORMATION	2
Attendance: Compulsory Attendance/Exemptions Policy	2
Excused Reasons:	3
Attendance Committee	4
Attendance – Make Up Days for Compulsory Attendance	4
Attendance Officers	4
Backpacks	4
Bilingual/English as a Second Language Education	4
Birthday Parties	5
Bus Policy and Availability	5
Cafeteria Conduct	5
Care of School Property	5
Cell Phones	5
Chewing Gum, Eating, and Drinking	6
Appendix A: Bacterial Meningitis Form	7
Appendix B: Student Success Initiative (SSI) Brochure	8
Appendix C: School – Parent Compact	9
Appendix D: Brief Policy Overview	10

Non-Discrimination Policy

Mesquite Learning Academy does not discriminate against any member of its community on the basis of gender, race, national origin, ancestry, creed, pregnancy, marital or parental status, sexual orientation, or physical, mental, emotional, or learning disabilities or handicap in educational programs or activities. Mesquite Learning Academy does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, color, national origin, gender, or disability in providing education services, activities, and programs, including vocational programs, in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended; Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972; Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act; and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.

Purpose of Handbook

This handbook is to serve as a guide for students and parents of the Mesquite Learning Academy. The information set forth in this handbook is intended to be informational and not contractual in nature. It is not intended and shall not be construed to constitute a contract between the Mesquite Learning Academy and any student, prospective student, agency of the local, state or federal government, or any other person or legal entity of any and every nature whatsoever.

The administration hereby reserves and retains the right to amend, alter, change, delete, or modify any of the provisions of this handbook at any time, without notice, in any manner that the administration and Board of Directors deem to be in the best interest of the school. This handbook is revised periodically, and any questions regarding the policies set forth in this handbook should be directed to the school administration.

Mission

The primary mission of the Mesquite Learning Academy is to serve at-risk and school dropout youth with substance abuse or legal issues in Texas.

Vision

Mesquite Learning Academy- the premier choice in education for all At Risk students

GENERAL INFORMATION

Important: Mesquite Learning Academy has a right to call Child Protective Services, the local Police Department, and/or related authorities for any student who is deemed a threat to other students of staff.

Attendance: Compulsory Attendance/Exemptions Policy

A full description of state attendance issues in the Texas Student Attendance Accounting Handbook is available for inspection in the school office.

Texas Education Code mandates that students must attend 90% of the school days offered each semester.

Sec. 25.095. WARNING NOTICES.

- A school or open-enrollment charter school shall notify a student's parent in writing at the beginning of the school year that if the student is absent from school on 10 or more days or parts of days within a six-month period in the same school year or on three or more days or parts of days within a four-week period and
 - the student's parent is subject to prosecution under Section 25.093; and
 - the student is subject to prosecution under Section 25.094 or to referral to a juvenile court in a county with a population of less than 100,000 for conduct that violates that section.
- A school shall notify a student's parent if the student has been absent from school, without excuse under Section 25.087, on three days or parts of days within a four-week period. The notice must:
 - inform the parent that:
 - it is the parent's duty to monitor the student's school attendance and require the student to attend school; and
 - the parent is subject to prosecution under Section 25.093; and
 - request a conference between school officials and the parent to discuss the absences.
 - The fact that a parent did not receive a notice under Subsection (a) or (b) does not create a defense to prosecution under Section 25.093 or 25.094.
 - In this section, "parent" includes a person standing in parental relation.
- All parties and/or parents will be referred to Truancy Officers. Parents will be notified by letter after the third absence is reached. Excused absences are included in the mandatory attendance law. If a student does not meet the attendance requirements, they may either fail, be denied credit, or be withdrawn.
- Teachers submit attendance records daily, and these records are organized, maintained, and verified by the school administration.
- Students away from school can be counted present if the absence is due to board-approved activities, an approved mentor program, participation in an Early and

Periodic Screening Program, Diagnosis and Treatment Programs implemented by the Texas Department of Human Services with contractual cooperation of the Texas Department of Health, observance of religious holidays, a documented appointment with a health care professional, if that student commences classes or returns to school on the same day of the appointment. Adequate documentation must be filed for counting a student present under any of these conditions:

- Any reclassification related to attendance requires proper documentation.
- There are some illnesses or conditions that will require you to keep your student at home while he/she has a contagious condition. These conditions include chicken pox, ringworm, pinkeye, head lice, or fever.
- When a student is absent, Mesquite Learning Academy must have a note from the parent and/or doctor concerning his/her absence(s). It must include the following:
 - student's name
 - grade level
 - days missed and reason
 - parent's/guardian signature
 - parent's/guardian home and work phone numbers

This note needs to be taken to the attendance office upon returning to school. If you, the parent, call and notify us that your child is absent or tardy, a note is still required for documentation purposes, including part-day absences. All students are required to provide documentation authorizing a student to sign out or be checked out before the end of each school day. We keep a file of all notes received for school records. Only four parent notes per semester will be accepted.

The state has provided for us a list of reasons that we must use to determine excused or unexcused notes.

Excused Reasons:

- school-related activities – must have prior approval from Mesquite Learning Academy administrator
- illness – after three consecutive days missed, a doctor's note must be provided
- family illness – immediate family only, subject to approval
- death in family
- family emergency – immediate family only, subject to approval
- religious holidays – must have prior approval from Mesquite Learning Academy Administrator
- doctor's appointments – must have doctor's note
- Other reasons such as traffic, waking up late, car and transportation problems (i.e. missed bus, ride didn't pick up, etc.), are not excused.

If a student is absent and does not have a note when he/she returns, the absence is unexcused. We will give a two-day grace period, which means that the student will be given

an Unexcused Absent Slip until he/she provides us with an excused note. If he/she fails to give us a note between the date absent and the end of the two-day grace period, it will remain unexcused.

Attendance Committee

The School Board shall appoint one or more attendance committees to hear petitions for class credit by students who are in attendance fewer than the number of days required under Subsection (a) of Education Code Ch. 25.

Classroom teachers shall comprise a majority of the membership of the committee. Unusual extenuating circumstances are the basis for appeal to the attendance review committee. These include:

1. Personal illness with note from physician.
2. Hospital confinement.
3. Death in the family.
4. Serious personal and family problems.
5. The absence of a teen parent who is caring for his/her child.
6. Other situations recognized by the principal, superintendent, or committee.

Attendance – Make Up Days for Compulsory Attendance

A student must attend Summer School in order to meet the compulsory attendance requirements.

Attendance Officers

The campus attendance officer has the power to investigate each case of a violation of the compulsory school attendance requirements and to enforce compulsory school attendance by referring a student to a juvenile court or filing a complaint against a student in a county, justice, or municipal court. The attendance officer has the power to file a complaint in a county, justice, or municipal court against a parent who fails to require their child to attend school as required by law. A Class C misdemeanor by the court may require the defendant to provide personal services to a charitable or educational institution as a condition of the deferral and a fine may be collected.

Backpacks

Backpacks are not allowed at Mesquite Learning Academy

Bilingual/English as a Second Language Education

English is the basic language of instruction in our schools. Children who have limited English-speaking skills will have access to programs to help them learn to understand, speak, read, and write the English language. At the time you enroll your children for the first time, you will be asked to complete a Home Language Survey so we know whether to take

additional steps to be sure your child is properly served. At Mesquite Learning Academy, students with limited English will receive ESL instruction.

Birthday Parties

Parents may arrange a birthday celebration with their child's teacher. Refreshments must be store bought. Birthday celebrations are coordinated by the classroom teacher and are held at the last hour of the school day on Fridays.

Bus Policy and Availability

The regional bus or van is for field trips, sporting, and other UIL events. Students are expected to follow all school policies and procedures or directives from the bus driver while being transported on the bus. Students may lose the privilege to ride the school bus for failing to comply with the rules and regulations of Mesquite Learning Academy.

Cafeteria Conduct

Students will clear their table and dispose of trash in garbage containers. Students will not be allowed to leave their table until table, seats, and floors are clean. Talking in a classroom voice is permissible. Shouting is unacceptable.

In order to eliminate disturbances to the neighboring classes, talking is not permitted in the hallway while going to/from the cafeteria. Cafeteria lines are to be orderly: no pushing, running, or cutting in lines. School staff on duty (administrators, teachers, custodians, and food service personnel) will hold students responsible for their behavior. Students who deface cafeteria furnishings will pay to restore the damaged property. A student will not be permitted to return to class until the payment has been made or arrangements for payment are made.

Care of School Property

Any student who defaces, disfigures, or destroys school property will be required to repair the damage or pay full monetary restitution for the damage. This includes any part of the restroom, desk or any type of furniture, lockers, or any other school property. Student will not be allowed to return to class until payment has been made or until arrangement to make the payment is made.

Cell Phones

Students are not allowed to use cell phones for any reason during school hours. This includes text messaging. Cell phones shall remain off during school hours. If cell phones are confiscated as a result of cell phone use violation, parents will be required to pick up the cell phone and pay a \$10.00 fine. If persistent violations occur, students will not be allowed to bring their cell phone to school. All fines will be deposited into the campus technology account. When a cell phone is confiscated, the administrator has a right to review cell phone text messages. Sending, receiving, or forwarding sexually suggestive or explicit words and/or photos via a text message on a cell phone may

result in expulsion from Mesquite Learning Academy. In Texas, “sexting” can result in state felony charges and/or imprisonment, including obscenity. Local law enforcement will be called.

Chewing Gum, Eating, and Drinking

There will be no gum chewing, eating, or drinking on the school grounds or in school buildings, unless designated by the school administrators.

No outside food or drink will be allowed in the classroom, except for approved celebrations. Students may bring water to school as long as it is in a bottle with a twist-off or pop-up cap/top. Water bottles should remain capped at all times. Sodas are NOT allowed on campus at any time. Water bottles are not allowed around computers or other electronic devices. Students caught chewing gum, eating or drinking, will be disciplined

Appendix A: Bacterial Meningitis Form

WHAT IS MENINGITIS?

Meningitis is an inflammation of the covering of the brain and spinal cord. It can be caused by viruses, parasites, fungi, and bacteria. Viral meningitis is most common and the least serious. Bacterial meningitis is the most common form of serious bacterial infection with the potential for serious, long-term complications. It is an uncommon disease, but requires urgent treatment with antibiotics to prevent permanent damage or death.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

Someone with meningitis will become very ill. The illness may develop over one or two days, but it can also rapidly progress in a matter of hours. Not everyone with meningitis will have the same symptoms. Children (over 1 year old) and adults with meningitis may have a severe headache, high temperature, vomiting, sensitivity to bright lights, neck stiffness or joint pains, and drowsiness or confusion. In both children and adults, there may be a rash of tiny, red-purple spots. These can occur anywhere on the body. The diagnosis of bacterial meningitis is based on a combination of symptoms and laboratory results.

HOW SERIOUS IS BACTERIAL MENINGITIS?

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

HOW IS BACTERIAL MENINGITIS SPREAD?

Fortunately, none of the bacteria that cause meningitis are as contagious as diseases like the common cold or the flu, and they are not spread by casual contact or by simply breathing the air where a person with meningitis has been. The germs live naturally in the back of our noses and throats, but they do not live for long outside the body. They are spread when people exchange saliva (such as by kissing; sharing drinking containers, utensils, or cigarettes).

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

HOW CAN BACTERIAL MENINGITIS BE PREVENTED?

Do not share food, drinks, dishes, utensils or toothbrushes. While there are vaccines for some other strains of bacterial meningitis, they are used only in special, circumstances. These include when there is a disease outbreak in a community or for people traveling to a country where there is a high risk of getting the disease. Also, a vaccine is recommended by some groups for college students, particularly freshmen living in dorms or residence halls. The vaccine is safe and effective (85-90 percent). It can cause mild side effects, such as redness and pain at the injection site lasting up to two days. Immunity develops within seven to ten days after the vaccine is given and lasts for up to five years.

Appendix B: Student Success Initiative (SSI) Brochure

Student Success Initiative

The Student Success Initiative (SSI) was created by the Texas Legislature to ensure that all students receive the instruction and support they need to be successful in reading and mathematics.

The SSI grade advancement requirements apply to the grade 5 mathematics and reading tests and the grade 8 mathematics and reading tests. As specified by these requirements, a student may advance to the next grade level only by passing these tests or, if the parent appeals, by unanimous decision of his or her grade placement committee (GPC) that the student is likely to perform at grade level after accelerated instruction.

Students have three opportunities to meet the passing standard on each of the tests and will receive additional instruction after each testing opportunity on which they do not meet the standard. A GPC, consisting of the principal, teacher, and parent or guardian, meets when a student has not met the passing standard after two testing opportunities and is responsible for determining the accelerated instruction the student needs before the third testing opportunity. A student who does not meet the passing standard after three testing opportunities is automatically retained. However, if the parents appeal the retention, the GPC may choose to promote the student if all members agree that the student is likely to perform on grade level with additional accelerated instruction and if the student completes the required accelerated instruction. Students subject to SSI requirements include those served by special education who take STAAR, STAAR (Accommodated), or STAAR–Modified (STAAR–M). The ARD committee will determine which assessment, STAAR, STAAR (Accommodated), or STAAR–M, is appropriate for the individual student in each SSI content area and grade level and will make all decisions involving accelerated instruction and promotion.

Appendix C: School – Parent Compact

2025-2026 School Year

What’s A School-Parent Compact?

It is a tool that helps children do well in school!

A compact is:

A PLAN OF ACTION

It is a jointly developed plan that spells out what teachers, other school staff, and parents need to do to help students meet state education standards.

Why Should I Learn About School-Parent Compacts?

Because a compact helps everyone, including:

PARENTS

A compact gives parents an opportunity to be involved in their children’s education. It lets parents know what the school is doing for their children.

STUDENTS

Students do better in school when they have the kind of combined support from teachers, other school staff and parents that a compact promotes.

SCHOOLS

Schools want parents to be involved. Teachers and other staff can do their jobs better when parents are “part of the team.” A compact can help your child get the skills he or she needs.

Parent Involvement Agreement

This compact helps our parents to be actively involved in our school-wide program. We are asking every parent or guardian to sign an agreement to assist us with the education and training of your child/children. Parents & Students Agree To:

- Support the compact’s strategies
- Attend parent teacher meetings and “Open House”
- Be an active member of the school P.T.O. and support fundraising activities
- Assist and supervise completion of homework
- Support the discipline procedures of the school
- Discipline their children, when necessary
- Assist with recruitment of students
- Support your child and the school in a positive manner
- Support the school uniform policy

I have read this compact thoroughly. A school administrator has explained the contents and expectations to me. I understand and agree to all the outlined terms, and I will faithfully execute the compact. A form is available in the registration packet agreeing to the School Parent Compact

Appendix D: Brief Policy Overview

Dress Code

Uniforms are an equalizer. They encourage pride in personal appearance and promote school spirit. In addition, uniforms help lessen negative self-consciousness. Uniforms are mandatory for all students at Mesquite Learning Academy. Each student is expected to strictly abide by the uniform guidelines. Every student is required to come to school in complete uniform each day.

Discipline

Our discipline policy is designed to meet the needs of all types of students. We feel that any student who learns to interact and behave within set boundaries can successfully interact productively in the world.