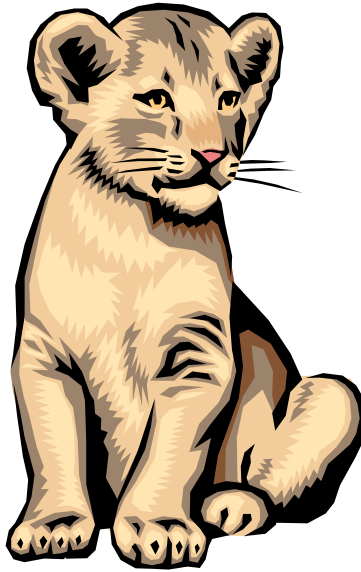


VERNON MIDDLE SCHOOL



2008 – 2009

STUDENT HANDBOOK

**Acknowledgment of Electronic Distribution of
Student Handbook**

My child and I have been offered the option to receive a paper copy or to electronically access at www.vernonisd.org the Vernon Middle School Student Handbook and the Student Code of Conduct for 2008–2009.

I have chosen to:

- Receive a paper copy of the Student Handbook and the Student Code of Conduct.
- Accept responsibility for accessing the Student Handbook by visiting the Web address listed above.

I understand that the handbook contains information that my child and I may need during the school year and that all students will be held accountable for their behavior and will be subject to the disciplinary consequences outlined in the Student Code of Conduct. If I have any questions regarding this handbook or the Student Code of Conduct, I should direct those questions to the principal at 940-552-6231.

Printed name of student: _____

Signature of student: _____

Signature of parent: _____

Date: _____

Acknowledgment Form

My child and I have received a copy of the Vernon Middle School Student Handbook for 2008–2009. I understand that the handbook contains information that my child and I may need during the school year and that all students will be held accountable for their behavior and will be subject to the disciplinary consequences outlined in the **Student Handbook** and the *Student Code of Conduct*.

Printed name of student: _____

Signature of student: _____

Signature of parent: _____

Date: _____

“Please sign and date this page, remove it from the handbook, and return it to the student’s school.”

Notice Regarding Directory Information and Parent's Response Regarding Release of Student Information

State law requires the district to give you the following information:

Certain information about district students is considered directory information and will be released to anyone who follows the procedures for requesting the information unless the parent or guardian objects to the release of the directory information about the student. If you do not want Vernon ISD to disclose directory information from your child's education records without your prior written consent, you must notify the district in writing September 5, 2008.

This means that the district must give certain personal information (called "directory information") about your child to any person who requests it, unless you have told the district in writing not to do so. In addition, you have the right to tell the district that it may, or may not; use certain personal information about your child for specific school-sponsored purposes. The district is providing you this form so you can communicate your wishes about these issues.

Vernon ISD has designated the following information as directory information:

- Student's name
- Address
- Telephone listing
- E-mail address
- Photograph
- Date and place of birth
- Major field of study
- Degrees, honors, and awards received
- Dates of attendance
- Grade level
- Most recent school previously attended
- Participation in officially recognized activities and sports
- Weight and height, if a member of an athletic team
- Enrollment status

Directory information identified only for limited school-sponsored purposes remains otherwise confidential and will not be released to the public without the consent of the parent or eligible student.

Parent: Please circle one of the choices below:

I, parent of _____ (student's name), (**do give**) (**do not give**) the district permission to use the information in the above list for the specified school-sponsored purposes.

Parent signature _____ Date _____

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PREFACE

To Students and Parents:

Welcome to school year 2008–2009! Education is a team effort, and we know that students, parents, teachers, and other staff members all working together can make this a wonderfully successful year for our students.

The VERNON MIDDLE SCHOOL Student Handbook is designed to provide a resource for some of the basic information that you and your child will need during the school year. In an effort to make it easier to use, the handbook is divided into two sections:

Section I—REQUIRED NOTICES AND INFORMATION FOR PARENTS—with notices that the district must provide to all parents, as well as other information to assist you in responding to school-related issues. We encourage you to take some time to closely review this section of the handbook; and

Section II—INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS AND PARENTS—organized alphabetically by topic for quick access when searching for information on a specific issue.

Please be aware that the term “the student’s parent” is used to refer to the parent, legal guardian, or any other person who has agreed to assume school-related responsibility for a student.

Both students and parents should become familiar with the Vernon ISD *Student Code of Conduct*, which is a document adopted by the board and intended to promote school safety and an atmosphere for learning. That document may be found at www.vernonisd.org or available in the principal’s office.

The Student Handbook is designed to be in harmony with board policy and the *Student Code of Conduct*. Please be aware that the handbook is updated yearly, while policy adoption and revision may occur throughout the year. Changes in policy or other rules that affect Student Handbook provisions will be made available to students and parents through newsletters and other communications.

In case of conflict between board policy or the *Student Code of Conduct* and any provisions of the Student Handbook, the provisions of board policy or the *Student Code of Conduct* that were most recently adopted by the board are to be followed.

After reading through the entire handbook with your child, keep it as a reference during this school year. If you or your child has questions about any of the material in this handbook, please contact the counselor or the principal.

Also, please complete and return to your child’s campus the following required forms:

1. Parental Acknowledgment Form;
2. Student Directory Information Form;

Please note that references to policy codes are included so that parents can refer to current board policy. A copy of the district’s policy manual is available for review in the school office or online at www.vernonisd.org.

SECTION I: REQUIRED NOTICES AND INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

This section of the VERNON MIDDLE SCHOOL Student Handbook includes several notices that the district is required to provide to you, as well as other information on topics of particular interest to you as a parent.

STATEMENT OF NONDISCRIMINATION

In its efforts to promote nondiscrimination, Vernon ISD does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, color, national origin, gender, sex, 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 Educational Amendments of 1972; and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.

The following district staff members have been designated to coordinate compliance with these legal requirements:

- Title IX Coordinator, for concerns regarding discrimination on the basis of sex: contact Tom Woody, Superintendent (940-553-1900).
- Section 504 Coordinator, for concerns regarding discrimination on the basis of disability: contact Tom Woody, Superintendent (940-553-1900).
- All other concerns regarding discrimination: See the superintendent: Tom Woody, (940-553-1900).

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Working Together

Both experience and research tell us that a child's education succeeds best when there is good communication and a strong partnership between home and school. Every parent is urged to :

- Encourage your child to put a high priority on education and work with your child on a daily basis to make the most of the educational opportunities the school provides.
- Ensure that your child completes all homework assignments and special projects and comes to school each day prepared, rested, and ready to learn.
- Become familiar with all of your child's school activities and with the academic programs, including special programs, offered in the district.
- Discuss with the counselor or principal any questions you may have about the options and opportunities available to your child.
- Review the requirements of the graduation programs with your child, if your child is entering ninth grade.
- Monitor your child's academic progress and contact their teachers as needed.

Vernon ISD offers electronic grade access to parents of students at the middle school and high school campuses to view current student information.

View Student Info is a web-based program giving parents access to their student's information through the Internet. Parents will be able to see all of the student's grades including the assignments,

quizzes, and test grades. Parents can also see when assignments are due or which day tests will be given.

To request access to this system please contact your child's campus or complete the Parent Request Form (found online at <http://www.vernonisd.org/Grade.asp>) and return to Doyle Close, VISD Director of Technology.

- Attend scheduled conferences and request additional conferences as needed. To schedule a telephone or in-person conference with a teacher, counselor, or principal, please call the school office at 552-6231 for an appointment. A teacher will usually arrange to return your call or meet with a parent during his or her conference period or at a mutually convenient time before or after school.
- Review the child's student records when needed. A parent may review (1) attendance records, (2) test scores, (3) grades, (4) disciplinary records, (5) counseling records, (6) psychological records, (7) applications for admission, (8) health and immunization information, (9) other medical records, (10) teacher and counselor evaluations, (11) reports of behavioral patterns, and (12) state assessment instruments that have been administered to his or her child. See also Student Records.
- Grant or deny any written request from the District to make a videotape or voice recording of the child unless the videotape or voice recording (1) is to be used for school safety; (2) relates to classroom instruction or a co-curricular or extracurricular activity; or (3) relates to media coverage of the school as permitted by law.
- Temporarily remove the child from the classroom, if an instructional activity in which the child is scheduled to participate conflicts with the parent's religious or moral beliefs. The removal cannot be for the purpose of avoiding a test and may not extend for an entire semester. Furthermore, the child must satisfy grade-level and graduation requirements as determined by the school and by the Texas Education Agency (TEA).
- Become a school volunteer. [For further information, see policies at GKG and contact Pam McSpadden, VMS counselor.
- Participate in campus parent organizations. Parents have the opportunity to support and be involved in various school activities, either as leaders or in supporting roles.
- Attend Board meetings to learn more about District operations, including the procedure for addressing the Board when appropriate.

PARENTAL RIGHTS

Obtaining Information and Protecting Student Rights

Your child will not be required to participate without parental consent in any survey, analysis, or evaluation—funded in whole or in part by the U.S. Department of Education—that concerns:

- Political affiliations or beliefs of the student or the student's parent.
- Mental or psychological problems of the student or the student's family.
- Sexual behavior or attitudes.
- Illegal, antisocial, self-incriminating, or demeaning behavior.

- Critical appraisals of individuals with whom the student has a close family relationship.
- Relationships privileged under law, such as relationships with lawyers, physicians, and ministers.
- Religious practices, affiliations, or beliefs of the student or parents.
- Income, except when the information is required by law and will be used to determine the student’s eligibility to participate in a special program or to receive financial assistance under such a program.

You will be able to inspect the survey or other instrument and any instructional materials used in connection with such a survey, analysis, or evaluation. [For further information, see policy EF (LEGAL)].

“Opting Out” of Surveys and Activities

As a parent, you have a right to receive notice of and deny permission for your child’s participation in:

- Any survey concerning the private information listed above, regardless of funding.
- School activities involving the collection, disclosure, or use of personal information gathered from your child for the purpose of marketing or selling that information.
- Any non-emergency, invasive physical examination or screening required as a condition of attendance, administered and scheduled by the school in advance and not necessary to protect the immediate health and safety of the student. Exceptions are hearing, vision, or scoliosis screenings, or any physical exam or screening permitted or required under state law. [See policies EF and FFAA.]

Displaying a Student’s Artwork and Projects

As a parent, you have a right to provide consent before the district can display your child’s artwork, special projects, photographs taken by your child, and the like on the district’s Web site, in printed material, by video, or by any other method of mass communication.

Requesting Professional Qualifications of Teachers and Staff

You may request information regarding the professional qualifications of your child’s teachers, including whether a teacher has met state qualification and licensing criteria for the grade levels and subject areas in which the teacher provides instruction; whether the teacher has an emergency permit or other provisional status for which state requirements have been waived; and undergraduate and graduate degree majors, graduate certifications, and the field of study of the certification or degree. You also have the right to request information about the qualifications of any paraprofessional who may provide services to your child.

Reviewing Instructional Materials

As a parent, you have a right to review teaching materials, textbooks, and other teaching aids and instructional materials used in the curriculum, and to examine tests that have been administered to your child.

Inspecting Surveys

As a parent, you may inspect a survey created by a third party before the survey is administered or distributed to your child.

Accessing Student Records

You may review your child's student records. These records include:

- Attendance records,
- Test scores,
- Grades,
- Disciplinary records,
- Counseling records,
- Psychological records,
- Applications for admission,
- Health and immunization information,
- Other medical records,
- Teacher and counselor evaluations,
- Reports of behavioral patterns, and
- State assessment instruments that have been administered to your child.

[See **Student Records** on page 7]

Granting Permission to Video or Audio Record a Student

As a parent, you may grant or deny any written request from the district to make a video or voice recording of your child. State law, however, permits the school to make a video or voice recording without parental permission for the following circumstances:

- When it is to be used for school safety;
- When it relates to classroom instruction or a co-curricular or extracurricular activity; or
- When it relates to media coverage of the school.

Removing a Student Temporarily from the Classroom

You may remove your child temporarily from the classroom if an instructional activity in which your child is scheduled to participate conflicts with your religious or moral beliefs. The removal cannot be for the purpose of avoiding a test and may not extend for an entire semester. Further, your child must satisfy grade-level and graduation requirements as determined by the school and by the Texas Education Agency.

Excusing a Student from Reciting the Pledges to the U.S. and Texas Flags

As a parent, you may request that your child be excused from participation in the daily recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States flag and the Pledge of Allegiance to the Texas flag. The request must be in writing. State law does not allow your child to be excused from participation in the required minute of silence or silent activity that follows. [See **Pledges of Allegiance and A Minute of Silence** on page 35 and policy EC (LEGAL).]

Excusing a Student from Reciting a Portion of the Declaration of Independence

You may request that your child be excused from recitation of a portion of the Declaration of Independence. State law requires students in social studies classes in grades 3–12 to recite a portion of the text of the Declaration of Independence during Celebrate Freedom Week unless (1) you provide a written statement requesting that your child be excused, (2) the district determines that your child has a conscientious objection to the recitation, or (3) you are a representative of a foreign government to whom the United States government extends diplomatic immunity. [See policy EHBK (LEGAL).]

Requesting Notices of Certain Student Misconduct

A non-custodial parent may request in writing that he or she be provided, for the remainder of the school year, a copy of any written notice usually provided to a parent related to your child's misconduct that may involve placement in a Disciplinary Alternative Education Program (DAEP) or expulsion. [See policy FO (LEGAL) and the *Student Code of Conduct*.]

Requesting Transfers for Your Child

As a parent, you have a right:

- To request the transfer of your child to another classroom or campus if your child has been determined by the board to have been a victim of bullying as the term is defined by Education Code 25.0341. Transportation is not provided for a transfer to another campus. See the campus principal for more information. [See policy FDB.]

[See **Bullying** on page 13, and policy FFI (LOCAL).]

- To request the transfer of your child to attend a safe public school in the district if your child attends school at a campus identified by TEA as persistently dangerous or if your child has been a victim of a violent criminal offense while at school or on school grounds. [See policy FDD (LOCAL).]
- To request the transfer of your child to another campus or a neighboring district if your child has been the victim of a sexual assault by another student assigned to the same campus, whether that assault occurred on or off campus, and that student has been convicted of or placed on deferred adjudication for that assault. [See policies FDD (LEGAL) and (LOCAL).]

Requesting Classroom Assignment for Multiple Birth Siblings

As a parent, if your children are multiple birth siblings (e.g., twins, triplets, etc.) assigned to the same grade and campus, you may request that they be placed either in the same classroom or in separate classrooms. Your written request must be submitted no later than the 14th day after the enrollment of your children. [See FDB (LEGAL).]

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

Parents of Students with Disabilities

Parents of students with learning difficulties or who may need special education services may request an evaluation for special education at any time. For more information, see Special Programs on page 42 and contact Rita Collier, Special Education Director, at 940-553-1900.

Options and Requirements for Providing Assistance to Students Who Have Learning Difficulties or Who Need or May Need Special Education

If a child is experiencing learning difficulties, the parent may contact the person listed below to learn about the district's overall general education referral or screening system for support services. This system links students to a variety of support options, including referral for a special education evaluation. Students having difficulty in the regular classroom should be considered for tutorial, compensatory, and other academic or behavior support services that are available to all students including a process based on Response to Intervention. The implementation of Response to Intervention has the potential to have a positive impact on the ability of school districts to meet the needs of all struggling students.

At any time, a parent is entitled to request an evaluation for special education services. Within a reasonable amount of time, the district must decide if the evaluation is needed. If the evaluation is needed, the parent will be notified and asked to provide informed written consent for the evaluation. The district must complete the evaluation and the report within 60 calendar days of the date the district receives the written consent. The district must give a copy of the report to the parent.

If the district determines that the evaluation is not needed, the district will provide the parent with a written notice that explains why the child will not be evaluated. This written notice will include a statement that informs the parent of his or her rights if the parent disagrees with the district. Additionally, the notice must inform the parent how to obtain a copy of the *Notice of Procedural Safeguards—Rights of Parents of Students with Disabilities*.

The designated person to contact regarding options for a child experiencing learning difficulties or a referral for evaluation for special education is Rita Collier at 940-553-1900.

If a student is receiving special education services at a campus outside his or her attendance zone, the parent or guardian may request that any other student residing in the household be transferred to the same campus, if the appropriate grade level for the transferring student is offered on that campus. [See policy FDB (LOCAL).]

Services for Title I Participants

The Parent Involvement Coordinator, who works with parents of students participating in Title I programs is Tom Woody, Superintendent and may be contacted at 940-553-1900.

Student Records

Both federal and state laws safeguard student records from unauthorized inspection or use and provide parents and eligible students certain rights. For purposes of student records, an "eligible" student is one who is 18 or older OR who is attending an institution of postsecondary education.

Virtually all information pertaining to student performance, including grades, test results, and disciplinary records, is considered confidential educational records. Release is restricted to:

- The parents—whether married, separated, or divorced—unless the school is given a copy of a court order terminating parental rights or the right to access a student's education records. Federal law requires that, as soon as a student becomes 18 or is emancipated by a court, control of the records goes to the student. The parents may continue to have access to the records, however, if the student is a dependent for tax purposes.
- District staff members who have what federal law refers to as a "legitimate educational interest" in a student's records. "Legitimate educational interest" in a student's records includes working with the student; considering disciplinary or academic actions, the student's

case, or an individualized education program for a student with disabilities; compiling statistical data; or investigating or evaluating programs. Such persons would include school officials (such as board members, the superintendent, administrators, and principals); school staff members (such as teachers, counselors, diagnosticians, and support staff); a person or company with whom the district has contracted to provide a particular service (such as an attorney, auditor, medical consultant, or therapist); a parent or student serving on a school committee; or a parent or student assisting a school official or staff in the performance of his or her duties.

- Various governmental agencies.
- Individuals granted access in response to a subpoena or court order.
- A school or institution of postsecondary education to which a student seeks or intends to enroll or in which he or she subsequently enrolls.

Release to any other person or agency—such as a prospective employer or for a scholarship application—will occur only with parental or student permission as appropriate.

The principal is custodian of all records for currently enrolled students at the assigned school. The principal is the custodian of all records for students who have withdrawn or graduated.

Records may be inspected by a parent or eligible student during regular school hours. If circumstances prevent inspection during these hours, the district will either provide a copy of the records requested or make other arrangements for the parent or student to review these records. The records custodian or designee will respond to reasonable requests for explanation and interpretation of the records. The address of the superintendent's office is: 1713 Wilbarger Street • Vernon, Texas 76384

The address of the principal's office is: 2200 Yamparika • Vernon, Texas 76384

A parent (or eligible student) may inspect the student's records and request a correction if the records are considered inaccurate or otherwise in violation of the student's privacy rights. A request to correct a student's record should be submitted to the principal. The request must clearly identify the part of the record that should be corrected and include an explanation of how the information in the record is inaccurate. If the district denies the request to amend the records, the parent or eligible student has the right to request a hearing. If the records are not amended as a result of the hearing, the parent or eligible student has 30 school days to exercise the right to place a statement commenting on the information in the student's record. Although improperly recorded grades may be challenged, contesting a student's grade in a course is handled through the general complaint process found in policy FNG (LOCAL). [See **Report Cards/Progress Reports and Conferences** on page 37 and **Student or Parent Complaints and Concerns** on page 15 for an overview of the process.]

Copies of student records are available at a cost of ten cents per page, payable in advance. If the student qualifies for free or reduced-price lunches and the parents are unable to view the records during regular school hours, one copy of the record will be provided at no charge upon written request of the parent.

The district's policy regarding student records found at FL (LOCAL) is available from the principal's or superintendent's office or on the district's Web site at www.vernonisd.org.

The parent's or eligible student's right of access to and copies of student records do not extend to all records. Materials that are not considered educational records—such as a teacher's personal notes

about a student that are shared only with a substitute teacher—do not have to be made available to the parents or student.

Please note:

Parents or eligible students have the right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education if they believe the district is not in compliance with federal law regarding student records. The complaint may be mailed to:

Family Policy Compliance Office
U. S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202-5901

Directory Information

The law permits the district to designate certain personal information about students as “directory information.” This “directory information” will be released to anyone who follows procedures for requesting it.

However, release of a student’s directory information may be prevented by the parent or an eligible student. This objection must be made in writing to the principal within ten school days of your child’s first day of instruction for this school year. [See the “Notice Regarding Directory Information and Parent’s Response Regarding Release of Student Information” included in this handbook OR included in the forms packet.

Directory Information for School-Sponsored Purposes

The district often needs to use student information for school-sponsored purposes. This information will not be released to the public without the consent of the parent or eligible student. Unless you object to the use of your child’s information for these limited purposes, the school will not need to ask your permission each time the district wishes to use this information

Bacterial Meningitis

State law specifically requires the district to provide the following information:

- 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, utensils, toothbrushes, or cigarettes. Limit the number of persons you kiss.

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.

- What should you do if you think you or a friend might have bacterial meningitis?

You should seek prompt medical attention.

- Where can you get more information?

Your school nurse, family doctor, and the staff at your local or regional health department office are excellent sources for information on all communicable diseases. You may also call your local health department or Regional Department of State Health Services office to ask about a meningococcal vaccine. Additional information may also be found at the Web sites for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, <http://www.cdc.gov>, and the Department of State Health Services, <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/>.

SECTION II: INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS AND PARENTS

Topics in this section of the handbook contain important information on academics, school activities, and school operations and requirements. Take a moment with your child to become familiar with the various issues addressed in this section. It is conveniently organized in alphabetical order to serve as a quick-reference when you or your child has a question about a specific school-related issue. Should you be unable to find the information on a particular topic, please contact the campus principal at 940-552-6231.

ABSENCES/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 each day’s learning on the previous day’s, 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. Two state laws, one dealing with compulsory attendance, the other with attendance for course credit, are of special interest to students and parents. They are discussed below:

Compulsory Attendance

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.

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 and is subject to compulsory attendance laws, if the student is under 21 years old. In addition, if a student 18 or older has more than five unexcused absences in a semester the district may revoke the student’s enrollment. The student’s presence on school property thereafter would be unauthorized and may be considered trespassing. [See FEA]

State law requires attendance in an accelerated reading instruction program when kindergarten, first grade, or second grade students are assigned to such a program. Parents will be notified in writing if their child is assigned to an accelerated reading instruction program as a result of the reading diagnosis test.

School employees must investigate and report violations of the state compulsory attendance law. A student absent without permission from school; from any class; from required special programs, such as additional special instruction (termed “accelerated instruction” by the state) assigned by a grade placement committee and basic skills for ninth graders; or from required tutorials will be considered in violation of the compulsory attendance law and subject to disciplinary action.

A court of law may also impose penalties against both the student and his or her parents if a school-aged student is deliberately not attending school. A complaint against the parent may be filed in court if the student:

- Is absent from school on ten or more days or parts of days within a six-month period in the same school year, or
- Is absent on three or more days or parts of days within a four-week period.

If the student is over age 18, the student’s parents shall not be subject to penalties as a result of their child’s violation of state compulsory attendance law. [See FEA (LEGAL)]

Attendance for Credit

To receive credit in a class, a student must attend at least 90 percent of the days the class is offered. A student who attends at least 75 percent but fewer than 90 percent of the days the class is offered may receive credit for the class if he or she completes a plan, approved by the principal, that allows the student to fulfill the instructional requirements for the class. If a student is involved in a criminal or juvenile court proceeding, the approval of the judge presiding over the case will also be required before the student receives credit for the class.

If a student attends less than 75 percent of the days a class is offered or has not completed a plan approved by the principal, then the student will be referred to the attendance review committee to determine whether there are extenuating circumstances for the absences and how the student can regain credit, if appropriate. [See policies at FEC]

In determining whether there were extenuating circumstances for the absences, the attendance committee will use the following guidelines:

- All absences will be considered in determining whether a student has attended the required percentage of days. If makeup work is completed, absences for religious holy days and documented health-care appointments will be considered days of attendance for this purpose. [See policies at FEB.]
- A transfer or migrant student begins to accumulate absences only after he or she has enrolled in the district. For a student transferring into the district after school begins, including a migrant student, only those absences after enrollment will be considered.
- In reaching a decision about a student's absences, the committee will attempt to ensure that it is in the best interest of the student.
- The committee will consider the acceptability and authenticity of documented reasons for the student's absences.
- The committee will consider whether the absences were for reasons over which the student or the student's parent could exercise any control.
- The committee will consider the extent to which the student has completed all assignments, mastered the essential knowledge and skills, and maintained passing grades in the course or subject.
- The student or parent will be given an opportunity to present any information to the committee about the absences and to talk about ways to earn or regain credit.

The student or parent may appeal the committee's decision to the board of trustees by filing a written request with the superintendent in accordance with policy FNG (LOCAL).

The actual number of days a student must be in attendance in order to receive credit will depend on whether the class is for a full semester or for a full year.

Parent's Note After An Absence

When a student must be absent from school, the student—upon returning to school—must bring a note, signed by the parent that describes the reason for the absence. A note signed by the student, even with the parent's permission, will not be accepted unless the student is 18 or older.

Doctor’s Note After An Absence for Illness

Upon return to school, a student absent for more than three (3) consecutive days because of a personal illness must bring a statement from a doctor or health clinic verifying the illness or condition that caused the student’s extended absence from school. [See FEC (LOCAL).]

ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

The school counselor provides students and parents information regarding academic programs to prepare for higher education and career choices. [See **Academic Counseling** on page 18.]

AWARDS AND HONORS

Awards are presented at the end of each marking period and at the awards assembly at the end of the school year. To qualify for the end-of-the year scholastic award, middle school students must have an ending average of 94 or above in each of the following subjects:

Language Arts/English, Science, Math, and Social Studies.

Principal’s Honor Roll awards for students making A’s in all of their classes, and A/B Honor Roll awards for students making A’s and B’s in all of their classes, will be awarded at the end of each marking period.

Perfect Attendance awards are presented at the end of each marking period and at the end of the school year.

Other special awards are presented throughout the year and at the end-of-the-year assembly to students who have made outstanding contributions to student life at the Middle School.

BELL SCHEDULE

Regular Schedule

8:05	First Bell
8:10-8:57	First Period
9:01-9:48	Second Period
9:52-10:22	Third Period- Advisory
10:26-11:13	Fourth Period
11:17-12:47	Fifth Period
11:17-11:47	6 th Grade Lunch
11:47-12:17	7 th Grade Lunch
12:17-12:47	8 th Grade Lunch
12:51-1:37	Sixth Period
1:41-2:28	Seventh Period
2:32-3:20	Eighth Period

Early Dismissal Schedule

8:05	First Bell
8:10-8:40	First Period
8:44-9:14	Second Period
9:18-9:48	Third Period- Advisory
9:52 -10:22	Fourth Period
10:26-10:56	Sixth Period
11:00-12:10	Fifth Period
11:00-11:30	6 th Grade / Half 7 th Grade Lunch
11:40-12:10	Half 7 th Grade/ 8 th Grade Lunch
12:15-12:45	Seventh Period
12:50-1:20	Eighth Period

BULLYING

Bullying occurs when a student or group of students directs written or verbal expressions or physical conduct against another student and the behavior results in harm to the student or the student’s property, places a student in fear of harm to himself or his property, or is so severe that it creates an intimidating, threatening or abusive educational environment.

The board has established policies and procedures to prohibit bullying and to respond to reports of bullying. [See FFI(LOCAL).]

CAFETERIA SERVICES

The District participates in the National School Lunch and Breakfast Program and offers free and reduced-price meals based on a student's financial need. Information can be obtained from cafeteria supervisor at 553-1900.

CELL PHONES AND ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Students are not permitted to possess such items as Ipods, pagers, radios, CD players, tape recorders, camcorders, DVD players, cameras, electronic devices or games at school, unless prior permission has been obtained from the principal. Without such permission, teachers will collect the items and turn them in to the principal's office. The principal will determine whether to return items to students at the end of the day or to contact parents to pick up the items. Meetings to return cell phones will be scheduled on the 1st and 15th of each month.

For safety purposes, the district permits students to possess cell phones; however, cell phones must remain turned off during the instructional day, including during all testing. The use of cell phones in locker rooms or restroom areas at any time while at school is strictly prohibited.

Any cell phone or paging device that is taken up in school and turned into the campus administrator will become the property of Vernon ISD until the following steps are taken:

1. First offense—Parent comes to the campus to pick up cellular device and pay a \$15.00 administrative fee.
2. Second offense—Parent comes to the campus to pick up cellular device and pay another \$15.00 administrative fee.
3. Third offense—The cellular device becomes the property of Vernon ISD to which we may dispose of the device as the school district sees fit. Along with that the discipline action of two days in ISS will administered as well.

CHEATING/PLAGIARISM/ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Plagiarism is the use of another person's original ideas or writing as one's own without giving credit to the true author. Plagiarism will be considered cheating and the student will be subject to academic disciplinary action that may include loss of credit for the work in question. Teachers who have reason to believe a student has engaged in cheating or other academic dishonesty will determine the academic penalty to be assessed. The use of academic penalties is not governed by the policies pertaining to student discipline, but students and parents may appeal the teacher's decision, using the student complaint policy.

CLUBS [VISD Board Policy FMC (Local)]

Student clubs and performing groups such as the band, choir, drill and athletic teams may establish rules of conduct and consequences for misbehavior that are more strict than those for students in general. If a violation is also a violation of school rules, the consequences specified by the school shall apply in addition to any consequences specified by the organization. Each student member of a group shall be notified of the standards of behavior and of the specific consequences of violating the standards.

Formation of school clubs may be approved only by the school principal. Clubs must be under the jurisdiction of the school, sponsored by a member of the school faculty, and contribute to the good

of the school. Under Texas law, club membership must be open. Parents' approval must be obtained for membership in school clubs involving physical activities.

Clubs will not meet during school time but must meet before or after school, during lunch, or during Advisory (with permission from the principal).

COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

To protect children from contagious illnesses, students infected with certain diseases are not allowed to come to school while contagious. Parents of a student with a communicable or contagious disease should phone the school nurse or principal so that other students who may have been exposed to the disease can be alerted. These diseases include:

Amebiasis	Meningitis, Bacterial
Campylobacteriosis	Mumps
Chickenpox	Pinkeye (Conjunctivitis)
Common cold with fever	Ringworm of the scalp
Fifth Disease	Rubella (German Measles)
(Erythema Infectiosum)	including congenital
Gastroenteritis, Viral	Salomonellosis, including
Giardiasis	Typhoid Fever
Head Lice(Pediculosis)	Scabies
Hepatitis, Viral(specify	Shigellosis
type)	Streptococcal disease, invasive
Impetigo	Tuberculosis, Pulmonary
Infectious mononucleosis	Whooping Cough (Pertussis)
Influenza	Measles (Rubeola)

COMPLAINTS AND CONCERNS

VISD Board Policy FMA, FNG (Local)

Usually student or parent complaints or concerns can be addressed by a phone call or a conference with the teacher or principal. For those complaints and concerns that cannot be handled so easily, the district has adopted a standard complaint policy at FNG(LOCAL) in the district's policy manual. A copy of this policy may be obtained in the principal's or superintendent's office www.vernonisd.org. In general, the student or parent should submit a written complaint and request a conference with the campus principal. If the concern is not resolved, a request for a conference should be sent to the superintendent. If still unresolved, the district provides for the complaint to be presented to the board of trustees.

COMPUTER RESOURCES

To prepare students for an increasingly technological society, the district has made an investment in computer technology for instructional purposes. Use of these computer resources is restricted to students working under a teacher's supervision and for approved purposes only. Students and parents will be asked to sign a user agreement (separate from this handbook) regarding use of these resources; violations of this agreement may result in withdrawal of privileges and other disciplinary action.

Students and their parents should be aware that e-mail using district computers is not private and will be monitored by district staff. [For additional information, see policies at CQ.]

CONDUCT

VISD Board Policy FFFF, FNC, FO, GKA, OH (Local)

Applicability of School Rules

As required by law, the board has adopted a *Student Code of Conduct* that prohibits certain behaviors and defines standards of acceptable behavior—both on and off campus—and consequences for violation of these standards. The district has disciplinary authority over a student in accordance with the *Student Code of Conduct*. Students and parents should be familiar with the standards set out in the *Student Code of Conduct*, as well as campus and classroom rules.

To achieve the best possible learning environment for all students, the *Student Code of Conduct* and other campus rules will apply whenever the interest of the district is involved, whether on or off school grounds, in conjunction with classes and school-sponsored activities.

VISD Board Policy FFFF, FNC, FO, GKA, OH (Local)

Students are responsible for conducting themselves properly, in a manner appropriate to their age and level of maturity.

Student responsibilities for achieving a positive learning environment at school or school-related activities shall include:

1. Attending all classes, daily and on time.
2. Being prepared for each class with appropriate materials and assignments.
3. Being properly dressed.
4. Showing respect toward others.
5. Behaving in a responsible manner.
6. Paying required fees and fines, unless they are waived.
7. Refraining from violations of the code of student conduct.
8. Obeying all school rules, including safety rules.
9. Seeking change in school policies and regulations in an orderly and responsible manner, through appropriate channels.
10. Cooperating with staff in investigation of disciplinary cases and volunteering information relating to a serious offense.
11. Avoid violations of Student Code of Conduct.

DISTRICT'S JURISDICTION

VISD Board Policy FNCL (Local)

The District has authority and control over its students during the regular school day and while going to and from school on District transportation. This jurisdiction includes any activity during the school day on school grounds, attendance at any school-related activity, regardless of time or location, and any school related misconduct, regardless of time or location.

The District's rules of student conduct apply to all school sponsored and school-related activities, on or off campus. Students who violate these rules will be subject to disciplinary action and shall be referred when appropriate to legal authorities for criminal prosecution for violations of law.

Students at school or school related activities are prohibited from:

1. Cheating or copying the work of another student.
2. Throwing objects, outside supervised school activities, that can cause bodily injury or damage property.
3. Leaving school grounds or school-sponsored events without permission.
4. Directing profanity, vulgar language, or obscene gestures toward other students.
5. Insubordination, such as disobeying directives from school personnel or school policies, rules, and regulations.
6. Being disrespectful or directing profanity, vulgar language, or obscene gestures toward teachers or other school employees.
7. Playing with matches or fire, or committing arson.
8. Committing robbery or theft.
9. Damaging or vandalizing property owned by the District, other students, or District employees.
10. Disobeying school policies about conduct on school buses.
11. Fighting, committing physical abuse, or threatening physical abuse.
12. Committing extortion, coercion, or blackmail; that is obtaining money or other objects of value from an unwilling person, or forcing an individual to act through the use of force or threat of force.
13. Name-calling, making ethnic or racial slurs or derogatory statements that may substantially disrupt the school program or incite violence.
14. Inappropriate physical or sexual contact disruptive to other students or the school environment.
15. Offensive conduct of a sexual nature, whether verbal or physical, which may include requests for sexual favors or other intimidating sexual conduct, directed toward another student.
16. Assaulting a teacher or other individual.
17. Selling, giving, or delivering to another person, possessing, using, or being under the influence of: marijuana or a controlled substance, a dangerous drug, abusable glue or aerosol paint, or volatile chemical, or an alcoholic beverage.
18. Possessing any weapon prohibited by law or by school policy, including a firearm, prohibited knife, explosive weapon, machine gun, short-barrel firearm, switchblade knife, metallic knuckles, ammunition, chemical dispensing device, zip gun, club, fireworks, razors, chains, or any other object used to threaten or injure.
19. Smoking or using tobacco products.
20. Hazing.
21. Possession of a paging device, including cellular telephones.
22. Behaving in any way that disrupts the school environment or educational process.
23. Engaging in a conduct constituting felony criminal mischief as defined by law.

Corporal Punishment

VISD Board Policy FOB (Local)

Corporal punishment is limited to spanking or paddling the student, and occurs only in accordance with the following guidelines:

1. The student is told of the reason corporal punishment is being given.
2. Corporal punishment may be given by the principal, assistant principal or a teacher.
3. The instrument to be used shall be approved by the principal.
4. Corporal punishment shall be done in the presence of one other District professional employee out of view of other students.

A record shall be maintained of each incident of corporal punishment.

Disruptions

As identified by law, disruptions include the following:

- Interference with the movement of people at an exit, entrance, or hallway of a district building without authorization from an administrator.
- Interference with an authorized activity by seizing control of all or part of a building.
- Use of force, violence, or threats in an attempt to prevent participation in an authorized assembly.
- Use of force, violence, or threats to cause disruption during an assembly.
- Interference with the movement of people at an exit or an entrance to district property.
- Use of force, violence, or threats in an attempt to prevent people from entering or leaving district property without authorization from an administrator.
- Disruption of classes or other school activities while on district property or on public property that is within 500 feet of district property. Class disruption includes making loud noises; trying to entice a student away from, or to prevent a student from attending, a required class or activity; and entering a classroom without authorization and disrupting the activity with loud or profane language or any misconduct.
- Interference with the transportation of students in vehicles owned or operated by the district.

Social Events

School rules apply to all school social events. Guests attending these events are expected to observe the same rules as students, and a student inviting a guest will share responsibility for the conduct of his or her guest.

A student attending a social event will be asked to sign out when leaving before the end of the event; anyone leaving before the official end of the event will not be readmitted.

COUNSELING

Academic Counseling

Students and their parents are encouraged to talk with a school counselor, teacher, or principal to learn more about course offerings, graduation requirements, and early graduation procedures. Each spring, students in grades 5 through 7 will be provided information on anticipated course offerings for the next school year and other information that will help them make the most of academic and vocational opportunities.

To plan for the future, each student should work closely with the counselor in order to enroll in the high school courses that best prepare him or her for attendance at a college, university, or training school, or for pursuit of some other type of advanced education. The counselor can also provide information about entrance exams and application deadlines, as well as information about automatic admission to state colleges and universities, financial aid, housing, and scholarships.

Personal Counseling

The school counselor is available to assist students with a wide range of personal concerns, including such areas as social, family, or emotional issues, or substance abuse. The counselor may also make available information about community resources to address these concerns. A student who wishes to meet with the counselor should contact the counselor's office for an appointment.

Psychological Exams, Tests, or Treatment

The school will not conduct a psychological examination, test, or treatment without first obtaining the parent's written consent. Parental consent is not necessary when a psychological examination, test, or treatment is required by state or federal law for special education purposes or by the Texas Education Agency for child abuse investigations and reports.

[For more information, refer to FFE(LEGAL) and FFG(EXHIBIT).]

DATING VIOLENCE, DISCRIMINATION, HARASSMENT, AND RETALIATION

The district believes that all students learn best in an environment free from dating violence, discrimination, harassment, and retaliation and that their welfare is best served when they are free from this prohibited conduct while attending school. Students are expected to treat other students and district employees with courtesy and respect; to avoid behaviors known to be offensive; and to stop those behaviors when asked or told to stop. District employees are expected to treat students with courtesy and respect.

The board has established policies and procedures to prohibit and promptly respond to inappropriate and offensive behaviors that are based on a person's race, color, religion, , gender, national origin, disability, or any other basis prohibited by law. [See policy FFH]

Dating Violence

Dating violence occurs when a person in a current or past dating relationship uses physical, sexual, verbal, or emotional abuse to harm, threaten, intimidate, or control the other person in the

Dating Violence (continued)

relationship. This type of conduct is considered harassment if 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; creates an intimidating, threatening, hostile, or offensive educational environment; or substantially interferes with the student's academic performance.

Examples of dating violence against a student may include, but are not limited to, physical or sexual assaults, name-calling, put-downs, threats to hurt the student or the student's family members or members of the student's household, destroying property belonging to the student, threats to commit suicide or homicide if the student ends the relationship, attempts to isolate the student from friends and family, stalking, or encouraging others to engage in these behaviors.

Discrimination

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

Harassment

The district believes that all students learn best in an environment free from harassment and that their welfare is best served when they can work free from discrimination. Students are expected to treat other students and district employees with courtesy and respect; to avoid behaviors known to be offensive; and to stop those behaviors when asked or told to stop. District employees are expected to treat students with courtesy and respect.

The board has established policies and procedures to prohibit and promptly respond to inappropriate and offensive behaviors that are based on a person's race, religion, color, national origin, gender, sex, or disability. [See policy FFH] Prohibited harassment, in general terms, is conduct so severe, persistent, or pervasive that it affects the student's ability to participate in or benefit from an educational program or activity; creates an intimidating, threatening, hostile, or offensive educational environment; or substantially interferes with the student's academic performance. A copy of the district's policy is available in the principal's office and in the superintendent's office.

Examples of prohibited discrimination may include, but are not limited to, offensive or derogatory language directed at a person's religious beliefs or practices, accent, skin color, or need for accommodation; threatening or intimidating conduct; offensive jokes, name-calling, slurs, or rumors; physical aggression or assault; graffiti or printed material promoting racial, ethnic, or other negative stereotypes; or other kinds of aggressive conduct such as theft or damage to property. Examples of prohibited sexual harassment may include touching private body parts or coercing physical contact that is sexual in nature; sexual advances; jokes or conversations of a sexual nature; and other sexually motivated conduct, communications, or contact.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment of a student by an employee or volunteer does not include necessary or permissible physical contact not reasonably construed as sexual in nature. However, romantic and other inappropriate social relationships, as well as all sexual relationships, between students and district employees are prohibited, even if consensual.

Examples of prohibited sexual harassment may include, but not be limited to, touching private body parts or coercing physical contact that is sexual in nature; sexual advances; jokes or conversations of a sexual nature; and other sexually motivated conduct, communications, or contact.

Retaliation

Retaliation of a student occurs when a student receives threats from another student or an employee or when an employee imposes an unjustified punishment or unwarranted grade reduction.

Retaliation does not include petty slights and annoyances from other students or negative comments from a teacher that are justified by a student's poor academic performance in the classroom.

Retaliation against a person who makes a good faith report of discrimination or harassment, including dating violence, is prohibited. A person who makes a false claim or offers false statements or refuses to cooperate with a district investigation, however, may be subject to appropriate discipline. Retaliation against a person who is participating in an investigation of alleged discrimination or harassment is also prohibited.

Reporting Procedures

Any student who believes that he or she has experienced dating violence, discrimination, harassment, or retaliation should immediately report the problem to a teacher, counselor, principal,

or other district employee. The report may be made by the student's parent. See policy FFH(LOCAL) for the appropriate districts officials to whom to make a report.

Investigation of Report

To the extent possible, the district will respect the privacy of the student; however, limited disclosures may be necessary to conduct a thorough investigation and to comply with law. Allegations of prohibited conduct, which includes dating violence, discrimination, harassment, and retaliation, will be promptly investigated. The district will notify the parents of any student alleged to have experienced prohibited conduct by an adult associated with the district.

In the event prohibited conduct involves another student, the district will notify the parents of the student alleged to have experienced the prohibited conduct when the allegations, if proven, would constitute a violation as defined by policy.

If the district's investigation indicates that prohibited conduct occurred, appropriate disciplinary or corrective action will be taken to address the conduct. The district may take disciplinary action even if the conduct that is the subject of the complaint was not unlawful.

A student or parent who is dissatisfied with the outcome of the investigation may appeal in accordance with policy FNG(LOCAL).

DETENTION

VISD Board Policy FOC (Local)

Students may be detained outside of school hours (for not more than one hour) on one or more days if a student violates the school's rules of conduct. The detention shall not begin, however; until the student's parents have been notified of the reason for the detention and that the parents should make arrangements for the student's transportation on the day(s) of the detention.

DISCIPLINE

Students are encouraged to abide by the following classroom expectations:

- Be in your assigned seat, ready to work when the tardy bell rings.
- Be prepared with all needed supplies.
- HFBO—Keep hands, feet, books, and objects to your self.
- No cussing, rude gestures, cruel teasing or put-downs.
- Follow all teachers' directions.

When a student achieves the above classroom expectations, he/she will be rewarded as follows:

- Students will earn a Paw Print each day in each class if all classroom expectations are met in that class.
- Six week rewards, such as an afternoon at the park, extended lunch, free slushy at lunch, extra day outside during advisory, or free ice cream at lunch, may be earned by meeting the classroom expectations of at least 80%.
- The year reward is a trip to Castaway Cove. Students will pay their own way with lunch provided. (Student will forfeit the right to go if assigned at any time to DAEP.)
- Students will not earn Paw prints on the days they are absent, in ISS, suspended, or at DAEP. **(School related absences will be excused and PAW prints will be rewarded)**

When students choose not to follow the classroom expectations excessively disrupting the learning of other students, there will be consequences.

- Teachers and administrators may assign **15-minute lunch detentions**.
- Administrators may assign **20-minute morning detentions, 20-minute after-school detentions, and In-School Suspension (ISS)** for disrespectful behavior, disruptive behavior, excessive tardies, skipped detentions, and other types of behavior that disrupt the learning process or creates an unsafe environment for learning.
- Administrators may assign **Saturday School** for excessive absences, excessive tardies, excessive detention skips, and excessively disruptive behavior.
- Administrators may **suspend** a student whose is causing an unsafe or excessively disruptive situation. Suspension may be assigned to allow the parents of a student who has been assigned to Disciplinary Alternative Education Program (DAEP) to prepare for an appeal through due process.
- Administrators may assign a student to **Disciplinary Alternative Education Program (DAEP)** for persistent or excessively disruptive behavior among other offences as states in the Student Code of Conduct.

DISCRIMINATION

[See **Dating Violence, Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation** on page 19.]

DISTRIBUTION OF PUBLISHED MATERIALS OR DOCUMENTS

School Materials

Publications prepared by and for the school may be posted or distributed, with the prior approval of the principal, sponsor, or teacher. Such items may include school posters, brochures, flyers, etc.

The school newspaper, school yearbook, and the school website are available to students.

All school publications are under the supervision of a teacher sponsor and the principal.

Non-school Materials...from students

Students must obtain prior approval from the principal before posting, circulating, or distributing written materials, handbills, photographs, pictures, petitions, films, tapes, posters, or other visual or auditory materials that were not developed under the oversight of the school. To be considered, any nonschool material must include the name of the sponsoring person or organization. The decision regarding approval will be made in two school days.

A student may appeal a principal's decision in accordance with policy FNG(LOCAL). Any student who posts nonschool material without prior approval will be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with the *Student Code of Conduct*. Materials displayed without the principal's approval will be removed.

Non-school Materials...from others

Written or printed materials, handbills, photographs, pictures, films, tapes, or other visual or auditory materials not sponsored by the district or by a district-affiliated school-support organization will not be sold, circulated, distributed, or posted on any district premises by any district employee or by

persons or groups not associated with the district, except as permitted by policies at GKDA. To be considered for distribution, any nonschool material must meet the limitations on content established in the policy, include the name of the sponsoring person or organization, and be submitted to the principal for prior review. The principal will approve or reject the materials within two school days of the time the materials are received. The requestor may appeal a rejection in accordance with the appropriate district complaint policy. [See policies at DGBA, FNG, or GF.]

Prior review will not be required for:

- Distribution of materials by an attendee to other attendees of a school-sponsored meeting intended for adults and held after school hours.
- Distribution of materials by an attendee to other attendees of a community group meeting held after school hours in accordance with policy GKD(LOCAL) or a noncurriculum-related student group meeting held in accordance with FNAB(LOCAL).
- Distribution for electioneering purposes during the time a school facility is being used as a polling place, in accordance with state law.

All nonschool materials distributed under these circumstances must be removed from district property immediately following the event at which the materials are distributed.

DRESS AND GROOMING

The district's dress code is established to teach grooming and hygiene, prevent disruption, and minimize safety hazards. Students and parents may determine a student's personal dress and grooming standards, provided that they comply with the following:

Hair

- No hair picks, comb
- No nets
- No sideburns below the earlobes
- Clean, well groomed
- No pins, curlers
- Not to cover eyes
- No unusual or distracting hairstyles or colors
- No symbols/initials cut into hair

Footwear**

- Acceptable footwear that does not create a health or safety hazard or does not disrupt the learning environment
- No house shoes

Hats**

- Hats or head coverings including head bands may not be worn during school hours and must be left at home or in vehicles.

Shirts**

- Collared, polo, or crew neck shirts with sleeves are required.
- No clothing; advertising playboy, tobacco, alcohol, prohibited substances/items, vulgar, obscene topics or implications of above list.
- Tops must overlap waist bands so no midriff is showing at anytime.
- Clothing that reveals underwear or cleavage is prohibited.
- With young men, shirts must be tucked in to their pants

Other Clothing

- Pants and shorts will be worn at the natural waist line...NO sagging.
- Large bulky coats and hooded sweatshirts must be stored in the student's locker during school hours.
- Clothing that is torn or ripped or larger than one size extra is prohibited.
- Chains of any kind on billfolds, checkbooks, belts, or pants are prohibited.
- Sunglasses are not to be worn in school unless medically prescribed.
- Back packs must be clear, mesh, or the contents in the bag are visible.

Earrings/piercing

- Body piercing other than the ears is prohibited
- Young men may wear only one stud-type earring per ear.

Other hair

- Facial hair must be clean, neatly trimmed and well groomed.

Odor

- Students are required to keep themselves clean and free of body odor.

Shorts/Dresses**

- Skirts/dresses must be at or below the knee, with no slits above the knee.
- Pants and shorts must be at or below the knee.

Tattoos

- Tattoos with lewd writing, gang related, obscene or offensive pictures or emblems should be covered.

****Exceptions:**

- School events designated by the principal.

DRUG TESTING STATEMENT

Students involved in extracurricular activities will be subject to random drug testing. This process will be determined in the Student Code of Conduct. Any questions will be addressed to the Administrative Office.

DROPPING COURSES

Before a student may drop a course (band, sports, chorus), he or she must submit to the principal a written request signed by the parent. Once the request is received, the following procedure will be followed:

1. The student will have a conference with the teacher of the course he/she is dropping.
2. The student will have a conference with the counselor.
3. The student will meet with the teacher, counselor and principal before they will be allowed to drop a course.

Once the course has been dropped, new placement will be left up to the discretion of the principal and/or counselor.

EMERGENCY CLOSING INFORMATION

VISD Board Policy CKC (Local)

In the event of inclement weather, please listen to KVWC AM 1490 for instructions.

EMERGENCY MEDICAL TREATMENT

VISD Board Policy FFAC (Local)

Parents shall complete an emergency care form each year that includes a place for parental consent for school officials to request medical treatment for the student, as provided by law. Parents shall also be asked to supply other information that could be required in case of an emergency; parents should update this information as often as necessary.

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES, CLUBS, AND ORGANIZATIONS

Participation in school and school-related activities is an excellent way for a student to develop talents, receive individual recognition, and forge strong friendships with other students. Participation is a privilege. While many of the activities are governed by the University Interscholastic League--a statewide association of participating districts--eligibility for participation in many of these activities is governed by state law as well as UIL rules:

- A student who receives, at the end of any grade evaluation period, a grade below 70 in any academic class, other than an identified honors or advanced class, or a student with disabilities who fails to meet the standards in the Individual Education Plan (IEP) may not participate in extracurricular activities for at least three weeks. An ineligible student may practice or rehearse, however. The student regains eligibility when the principal and teachers determine that he or she has: (1) earned a passing grade (70 or above) in all academic classes, other than those that are honors or advanced, and (2) completed the three weeks of ineligibility.
- A student is allowed up to ten absences from a class during the school year for extracurricular activities or public performances. All UIL activities and other activities approved by the Board are subject to these restrictions. A student who misses class because of participation in a non-approved activity will receive an unexcused absence.
- Any restrictions on participation related to discipline are set out in the Student Code of Conduct.

Only uniformed players will be allowed on the playing field or playing floor at all athletic events unless they possess a written pass from the principal. This rule is in effect for home and away games. This rule is necessary to insure proper crowd control at all events and to conform to UIL regulations.

Please note: Sponsors of student clubs and performing groups such as the band, choir, and athletic teams may establish standards of behavior—including consequences for misbehavior—that are stricter than those for students in general. If a violation is also a violation of school rules, the

consequences specified by the *Student Code of Conduct* or by local policy will apply in addition to any consequences specified by the organization's standards of behavior.

[For further information, see policies at FM and FO.]

Offices and Elections

The nominees must meet the following criteria in order to be considered for an elected office or honor position:

1. Must have no grade below a 70 for any six weeks' period during the current school year.
2. May not receive more than two unfavorable teacher recommendations.
3. Must be involved in at least ONE extracurricular activity.
4. Must NOT have a documented discipline history in the office.
5. Must have attended 90% of the days school has been in session.
6. Shall not be guilty of truancy.

FEES

Materials that are part of the basic educational program are provided with state and local funds at no charge to a student. A student, however, is expected to provide his or her own pencils, paper, erasers, and notebooks and may be required to pay certain other fees or deposits, including:

- Costs for materials for a class project that the student will keep.
- Membership dues in voluntary clubs or student organizations and admission fees to extracurricular activities.
- Security deposits.
- Personal physical education and athletic equipment and apparel.
- Voluntarily purchased pictures, publications, class rings, yearbooks, graduation announcements, etc.
- Voluntarily purchased student accident insurance.
- Musical instrument rental and uniform maintenance, when uniforms are provided by the district.
- Personal apparel used in extracurricular activities that becomes the property of the student.
- Fees for lost, damaged, or overdue library books.
- Summer school for courses that are offered tuition-free during the regular school year.
- A reasonable fee for providing transportation to a student who lives within two miles of the school. [See **Buses and Other School Vehicles** on page 41.]
- A fee not to exceed \$50 for costs of providing an educational program outside of regular school hours for a student who has lost credit because of absences and whose parent chooses the program in order for the student to meet the 90 percent attendance requirement. The fee will be charged only if the parent or guardian signs a district-provided request form.

Any required fee or deposit may be waived if the student and parent are unable to pay. Application for such a waiver may be made to the Sponsor of the activity or teacher. [For further information, see policies at FP.]

FOREIGN EXCHANGE STUDENTS

Foreign exchange students must have the approval of the principal prior to June 1. In order for students to receive approval, the principal must meet with the company representative and the host parents. Students should be aware that they will probably not be able to meet graduation requirements for Texas schools.

FUND-RAISING

VISD Board Policy DHA, FJ (Local)

Occasionally, student clubs, classes, organizations and parent groups will be permitted to conduct fund-raising drives. An application for permission must be made to the Principal at least 30 days before the event. Fund raising shall not take place on school property unless it is approved by the principal.

GRADING GUIDELINES

Grading System

Number grades are recorded in 6th – 8th grades

90 – 100 A

80 – 89..... B

70 – 79..... C

69 below F

Any average below 50% earned in a class, shall be recorded on the report card as 50%. All other grade averages will be recorded as earned.

Six weeks Benchmark tests will count 10% of the total average of each marking period.

Semester exam grades and final exam grades will count as 1/6 of the total average of each semester.

GUARDIANSHIP

LIVING WITH PARENT OR GUARDIAN--All students attending school in Vernon Independent School District must live with a parent or an adult who has signed legal guardianship of the student. Legal guardianship must be a signed and notarized affidavit stating that the adult is accepting full responsibility for the student. Any guardianship case is subject to review by school officials and must be approved by them.

If, for some reason, the parent or guardian does not reside in the Vernon School District, a transfer must be obtained for the student from the superintendent's office. The application for transfer may be accepted or rejected by the superintendent. When a student ceases to fulfill the above requirements; he/she will be withdrawn from school.

H.B. 247 - If a child is less than 18 years of age on or before September 1 of the year for which admission is sought, and resides separate and apart from parents, guardian, or other persons having lawful control of the child under order of the court, it must be established that the child's presence in the school district is not for the primary purpose of attending the public free schools. The local school district is responsible for making this determination.

HARASSMENT

[See **Dating Violence, Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation** on page 19.]

HEALTH-RELATED MATTERS

Physical Activity for Students in Elementary and Middle School

In accordance with policies at EHAB, EHAC, and FFA, the district will ensure that students in kindergarten through grade 5 engage in moderate or vigorous physical activity for at least 30 minutes per day or 135 minutes per week.

Students in middle or junior high school shall engage in 30 minutes of moderate or vigorous physical activity per day for at least four semesters OR at least 225 minutes of moderate or vigorous physical activity within a two-week period for at least four semesters.

For additional information on the district's requirements and programs regarding elementary, middle, and junior high school student physical activity requirements, please see the principal.

Physical Fitness Assessment

Annually, the district will conduct a physical fitness assessment of students in grades 3–12. At the end of the school year, a parent may submit a written request to the campus physical education teacher to obtain the results of his or her child's physical fitness assessment conducted during the school year.

Other Health-Related Matters

Tobacco Prohibited

The district and its staff strictly enforce prohibitions against the use of tobacco products by students and others on school property and at school-sponsored and school-related activities. [See the *Student Code of Conduct* and policies at FNCD and GKA.]

Asbestos Management Plan

The district's Asbestos Management Plan, designed to be in compliance with state and federal regulations, and is available in the high school main office. If you have any questions, please contact Max Tatum at 940-553-1900.

Pest Management Plan

The district applies only pest control products that comply with state and federal guidelines. Except in an emergency, signs will be posted 48 hours before application. Parents who want to be notified prior to pesticide application inside their child's school assignment area may contact Max Tatum at 940-553-1900.

HOMELESS STUDENTS

For more information on services for homeless students, contact the district's Liaison for Homeless Children and Youths, Trisha Dillingham, at 940-553-1900.

HOMEWORK

There are many good reasons for the assignment of work to be done outside of the class. One is extra practice on skills. Another is research where materials are not available in class. Home study is a necessary part of each pupil's educational program. Each student is expected to spend some time in addition to scheduled class instruction to achieve satisfactory work. Some assignments are long range in nature and require planned study time for their completion. Planned study eliminates the necessity of spending too much time completing an assignment the day before it is due. Individual assignments are made by the classroom teacher and should be done when assigned and

turned in promptly.

IMMUNIZATION

A student must be fully immunized against certain diseases or must present a certificate 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 by writing the DSHS Immunization Branch (MC 1946), P.O. Box 149347, Austin, Texas 78714-9347; or online at <https://webds.dshs.state.tx.us/immco/affidavit.shtm>. The form must be notarized and submitted to

IMMUNIZATION (continued)

the principal or school nurse within 90 days of notarization. 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, rubeola (measles), rubella (German measles), mumps, tetanus, pertussis, poliomyelitis (polio), hepatitis A, hepatitis B, and varicella (chicken pox). The school nurse can provide information on age-appropriate doses or on an acceptable physician-validated history of illness required by the Department of State Health Services. 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. licensed physician stating that, in the doctor's opinion, the immunization required poses a significant risk to the health and well-being of the student or member of the student's family or household. This certificate must be renewed yearly unless the physician specifies a life-long condition. [For further information, see policy FFAB(LEGAL) and the Department of State Health Services Web site:

<http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/immunize/school/default.shtm>.]

INCOMPLETE GRADES

1. A six-weeks "incomplete grade" must be made up within the next six-weeks reporting period or the missing work will be given zero (0) credit and averaged with the other work. The length of time before a zero is recorded is at the discretion of the teacher.
2. Students who miss final exams will be required to take these exams in the school cafeteria at 1:00 p.m. on the first Thursday and Friday after school is dismissed for the year. Any deviations from this procedure should be approved by the principal.

LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

Questioning of Students

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

- The principal will verify and record the identity of the officer or other authority and ask for an explanation of the need to question or interview the student at school.

- The principal ordinarily will make reasonable efforts to notify the parents unless the interviewer raises what the principal considers to be a valid objection.
- The principal ordinarily will be present unless the interviewer raises what the principal considers to be a valid objection.

Students Taken Into Custody

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

- To comply with an order of the juvenile court.
- To comply with the laws of arrest.
- By a law enforcement officer if there is probable cause to believe the student has engaged in delinquent conduct or conduct in need of supervision.
- By a probation officer if there is probable cause to believe the student has violated a condition of probation imposed by the juvenile court.
- By an authorized representative of Child Protective Services, Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, a law enforcement officer, or a juvenile probation officer, without a court order, under the conditions set out in the Family Code relating to the student's physical health or safety.
- To comply with a properly issued directive to take a student into custody.

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

The principal will immediately notify the superintendent and will ordinarily attempt to notify the parent unless the officer or other authorized person raises what the principal considers to be a valid objection to notifying the parents. Because the principal does not have the authority to prevent or delay a student's release to a law enforcement officer, any notification will most likely be after the fact.

Notification of Law Violations

The district is required by state law to notify:

- All instructional and support personnel who have responsibility for supervising a student who has been arrested or referred to the juvenile court for any felony offense or for certain misdemeanors.
- All instructional and support personnel who have regular contact with a student who has been convicted, received deferred prosecution, received deferred adjudication, or was adjudicated for delinquent conduct for any felony offense or certain misdemeanors.

[For further information, see policy GRA(LEGAL).]

LIBRARY BOOKS LOST, DAMAGED, OR OVERDUE

Students are required to pay for lost, damaged, or overdue books. The cost of books lost will be charged. The librarian will determine the fee for damaged books, with the fee not to exceed the original cost of the book. Fines for overdue library books are five cents (5 cents) per day for each day with the cost not to exceed \$5.00. Twenty-five cents (25 cents) for first period, ten cents (10

cents) per period thereafter will be charged for overnight materials. No fines are collected for holidays, weekends, or excused absences.

LOCKERS VISD

VISD Board Policy FNF (Local)

Lockers remain under the jurisdiction of the school, notwithstanding the fact that they are assigned to individual students. The school reserves the right to inspect all lockers at any time. Students have full responsibility for the security of lockers and will make certain they are locked and that the combination is not given to others. Searches of lockers, as well as general searches of school property, may be conducted at any time there is reasonable cause to do so with or without the presence of students.

MAKEUP WORK

Routine and In-depth Makeup Work Assignments

For any class missed, the teacher may assign the student makeup work based on the instructional objectives for the subject or course and the needs of the individual student in mastering the essential knowledge and skills or in meeting subject or course requirements.

A student will be responsible for obtaining and completing the makeup work in a satisfactory manner and within the time specified by the teacher. [For further information, see policy EIAB(LOCAL).]

A student who does not make up assigned work within the time allotted by the teacher will receive a grade of zero for the assignment.

A student will be permitted to make up tests and to turn in projects due in any class missed because of absence. Teachers may assign a late penalty to any long-term project in accordance with time lines approved by the principal and previously communicated to students.

DAEP or In-school Suspension Makeup Work

A student removed to a Disciplinary Alternative Education Program (DAEP) during the school year will have an opportunity to complete, before the beginning of the next school year, coursework needed to fulfill the student's grade placement for the next year. The district may provide the opportunity to complete the coursework through an alternative method, including a correspondence course, distance learning, or summer school. The district will not charge the student for any method of completion provided by the district. [See policy FOCA(LEGAL).]

MEDICINE AT SCHOOL

VISD Board Policy FFAC (Local)

A student who must take a prescription or nonprescription medicine during the school day must bring a written request from his or her parent and the medicine, in its properly labeled bottle, to the main office. The secretary or school nurse will either give the medicine at the proper times or give the student permission to take the medication as directed.

Psychotropic Drugs

A psychotropic drug is a substance used in the diagnosis, treatment, or prevention of a disease or as a component of a medication. It is intended to have an altering effect on perception, emotion, or behavior and is commonly described as a mood- or behavior-altering substance.

Teachers and other district employees may discuss a student's academic progress or behavior with the student's parents or another employee as appropriate; however, they are not permitted to recommend use of psychotropic drugs. A district employee who is a registered nurse, an advanced nurse practitioner, a physician, or a certified or credentialed mental health professional can recommend that a student be evaluated by an appropriate medical practitioner, if appropriate. [For further information, see policies at FFAC.]

NATIONAL JUNIOR HONOR SOCIETY

Vernon Middle School has a National Junior Honor Society Chapter. Each year members are chosen by scholastic averages, leadership, service, and character (according to National Honor Society bylaws).

Criteria for Membership:

To be eligible for membership, a candidate must be a seventh or an eighth grader. The academic records of all seventh and eighth grade students will be reviewed to determine scholastic eligibility. Candidates must have a cumulative scholastic average of at least 92.0 for the preceding semesters with the exception of the sixth grade year. (Physical Education, summer school, sports, and elective courses shall not be averaged).

The candidate must have been in attendance at Vernon Middle School for at least one semester and must attend both induction practice and ceremony unless excused by the advisor.

DISMISSAL

1. The chapter advisor monitors members for compliance with obligations.
2. Members will receive a warning for noncompliance or infractions, the third warning will result in removal of the privilege of being a member of NJHS.
3. For flagrant violations of civil law or school rules, no warning is necessary.
4. Disciplinary measures will be taken by faculty council and advisor.
5. Dismissal will be reserved for flagrant or chronic offenders.
6. Offenders will be given an opportunity to address the faculty council before they are dismissed.

PARTIES AND SOCIALS

VISD Board Policy FMD (Local)

The rules of good conduct and grooming shall be observed for school social events. Guests will be expected to observe the same rules as students attending the event; the person inviting the guest will share responsibility for the conduct of the guest. Students attending a party or social may be required to sign out when leaving before the scheduled end of the party; anyone leaving before the scheduled end of the party will not be readmitted.

Specific rules will be posted for each event.

PLEDGES OF ALLEGIANCE AND A MINUTE OF SILENCE

Each school day, students will recite the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States flag and the Pledge of Allegiance to the Texas flag. Parents may submit a written request to the principal to excuse their child from reciting a pledge.

One minute of silence will follow recitation of the pledges. Each student may choose to reflect, pray, meditate, or engage in any other silent activity during that minute so long as the silent activity does not interfere with or distract others. [See policy EC(LEGAL) for more information.]

PRAYER

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

PROMOTION AND RETENTION

A student will be promoted only on the basis of academic achievement or demonstrated proficiency in the subject matter of the course or grade level. To earn credit in a course, a student must receive a grade of at least 70 based on course-level or grade-level standards.

In grades 6 – 8, students shall be promoted from one grade to the next on the basis of academic achievement. Middle School students must have an overall average of 70 or above for the next year in all courses taken, as well as an average of 70 or above in at least three of the following subjects: language arts (including reading improvement if required), mathematics, social studies, and science. If a student's grade average in any subject or course is "borderline" or below 70 at the end of the first three weeks of any grade period, the student's parents shall be notified by mail in the form of a printed progress report.

A student in grades 6-8 who is not promoted shall be retained in the same grade or placed in an alternative education program. No student shall be retained more than once in grade 5 – 8 unless a committee of the student's teacher(s) and two administrators approve and the parent(s) agree because of special circumstances.

In addition, at certain grade levels a student—with limited exceptions—will be required to pass the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS), if the student is enrolled in a public Texas school on any day between January 1 and April 15 and is a Texas resident during the week that the TAKS is administered the first time.

- In order to be promoted to grade 9, students enrolled in grade 8 must perform satisfactorily on the mathematics and reading sections of the grade 8 assessment in English.

Parents of a student in grade 8 who does not perform satisfactorily on his or her exams will be notified that their child will participate in special instructional programs designed to improve performance. Such students will have two additional opportunities to take the test. If a student fails a second time, a grade placement committee, consisting of the principal or designee, the teacher, and the student's parent, will determine the additional special instruction the student will receive. After a third failed attempt, the student will be retained; however, the parent can appeal this decision to the committee. In order for the student to be promoted, based on standards previously established by the district, the decision of the committee must be unanimous. Whether the student is retained or promoted, an educational plan for the student will be designed to enable the student to perform at grade level by the end of the next school year. [See policies at EIE.]

Certain students—some with disabilities and some with limited English proficiency—may be eligible for exemptions, accommodations, or deferred testing. For more information, see the principal, counselor, or special education director.

A Personal Graduation Plan (PGP) will be prepared for any student in a middle school or beyond who did not perform satisfactorily on a state-mandated assessment or is determined by the district as not likely to earn a high school diploma before the fifth school year following enrollment in grade 9. The PGP will be designed and implemented by a guidance counselor, teacher, or other staff member designated by the principal. The plan will, among other items, identify the student's educational goals, address the parent's educational expectations for the student, and outline an intensive instruction program for the student. [For additional information, see the Pam McSpadden, VMS counselor and policy EIF(LEGAL).]

PROTECTION OF STUDENT RIGHTS

No student will be required to participate without parental consent in any survey, analysis, or evaluation--funded in whole or in part by the U.S. Department of Education--that concerns:

- Political affiliations.
- Mental and psychological problems potentially embarrassing to the student or family.
- Sexual behavior and attitudes.
- Illegal, anti-social, self-incriminating, and demeaning behavior.
- Critical appraisals of other individuals with whom the student or the student's family has close family relationship.
- Relationships privileged under law, such as relationships with lawyers, physicians, and ministers.
- Income, except when the information will be used to determine the student's eligibility to participate in a special program or to receive financial assistance under such a program.

RELEASE OF STUDENTS FROM SCHOOL

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

A student who will need to leave school during the day must bring a note from his or her parent that morning and follow the campus sign-out procedures before leaving the campus. Otherwise, a student will not be released from school at times other than at the end of the school day. Unless the principal has granted approval because of extenuating circumstances, a student will not regularly be released before the end of the instructional day.

If a student becomes ill during the school day, the student should receive permission from the teacher before reporting to the school nurse. The nurse will decide whether or not the student should be sent home and will notify the student's parent.

REPORT CARDS / PROGRESS REPORTS AND CONFERENCES

Written reports of students' grades and absences shall be issued to parents at least once every six weeks. At the end of the first three weeks of a grading period, parents will be notified if the student's grade average is near or below 70. If a student received a six-week grade of less than 70 in any class or subject, the parent will be requested to schedule a conference with the teacher of that class or subject. Tutorials are recommended for a student who receives a grade below 70 in a class or subject.

RETALIATION

[See **Dating Violence, Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation** on page 19.]

SAFETY

Student safety on campus and at school-related events is a high priority of the district. Although the district has implemented safety procedures, the cooperation of students is essential to ensuring school safety. A student should:

- Avoid conduct that is likely to put the student or other students at risk.
- Follow the behavioral standards in this handbook and the *Student Code of Conduct*, as well as any additional rules for behavior and safety set by the principal, teachers, or bus drivers.

SAFETY (continued)

- Remain alert to and promptly report to a teacher or the principal any safety hazards, such as intruders on campus or threats made by any person toward a student or staff member.
- Know emergency evacuation routes and signals.
- Follow immediately the instructions of teachers, bus drivers, and other district employees who are overseeing the welfare of students.

Accident Insurance

VISD Board Policy FFD (Local)

At the beginning of the school year, the District will make available to students and parents a low-cost student accident insurance program. Premiums will be paid to and claims will be submitted through the Principal's office, but the District shall not be responsible for costs of treating injuries or assume liability for any other costs associated with an injury. Before participating in a school-sponsored trip outside the District or in school-sponsored athletics, students and parents must sign a form rejecting the insurance offer and waiving any claim against the District for any injury which may result.

Drills: Fire, Tornado, and Other Emergencies

From time to time, students, teachers, and other district employees will participate in drills of emergency procedures. When the alarm is sounded, students should follow the direction of teachers or others in charge quickly, quietly, and in an orderly manner.

Fire Drill Bells

- Continuous alarm leave the building
- Regular class bell return to the classroom

Tornado Drill Bells

- Continuous siren move quietly but quickly to the designated locations
- Regular class bell return to the classroom

Emergency Medical Treatment and Information

If a student has a medical emergency at school or a school-related activity when the parent cannot be reached, the school would need to have written parental consent to obtain emergency medical treatment, and information about allergies to medications, foods, insect bites, etc. Therefore, parents are asked each year to complete an emergency care consent form. Parents should keep emergency care information up-to-date (name of doctor, emergency phone numbers, allergies, etc.). Please contact the school nurse to update any information that the nurse or the teacher needs to know.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Use By Students Before and After School

Certain areas of the school will be accessible to students before and after school for specific purposes. Students are required to remain in the area where their activity is scheduled to take place.

The following areas are open to students before school, beginning at 7:15 a.m.

- Snack Bar/Cafeteria
- Football field
- South area between school and gym
- Library on inclement weather days
- Gym on inclement weather days

Unless the teacher or sponsor overseeing the activity gives permission, a student will not be permitted to go to another area of the building or campus.

After dismissal of school in the afternoon, and unless involved in an activity under the supervision of a teacher, students must leave campus immediately.

Conduct Before and After School

Teachers and administrators have full authority over student conduct at before- or after-school activities on district premises and at school-sponsored events off district premises, such as play rehearsals, club meetings, athletic practices, and special study groups or tutorials. Students are subject to the same rules of conduct that apply during the instructional day and will be subject to consequences established by the *Student Code of Conduct* or any stricter standards of behavior established by the sponsor for extracurricular participants.

Use of Hallways During Class Time

Loitering or standing in the halls during class is not permitted. During class time, a student must have their planner/hall pass to be outside the classroom for any purpose. Failure to obtain a pass will result in disciplinary action in accordance with the *Student Code of Conduct*.

Cafeteria Services

The district participates in the National School Lunch Program and offers students nutritionally balanced lunches daily. Free and reduced-price lunches are available based on financial need. Information about a student's participation is confidential. See campus main office to apply.

The district follows the federal and state guidelines regarding foods of minimal nutritional value being served or sold on school premises during the school day. [For more information, see policy CO(LEGAL).]

Library

The library is a learning laboratory with books, computers, magazines, and other materials available for classroom assignments, projects, and reading or listening pleasure.

SCHOOL RECORDS

VISD Board Policy GBA, EHBA, FL (Local)

A student's school records are private and are protected from unauthorized inspection or use. A cumulative record is maintained for each student from the time the student enters the District until the student withdraws or graduates. This record moves with the student from school to school.

By law, both parents, whether married, separated, or divorced, have access to the records of student who is a minor or a dependent for tax purposes, as do students who are 18 years of age or older. A

SCHOOL RECORDS (continued)

parent whose rights have been legally terminated will be denied access to the records if the school is given a copy of the court order terminating these rights.

The principal is custodian of all records for currently enrolled students at the assigned school. The Superintendent is the custodian of all records for students who have withdrawn or graduated. Records may be reviewed during regular school hours. The records custodian or designee will respond to reasonable requests for explanation and interpretation of the records. The phone numbers and addresses of the Superintendent and principals are listed on the front cover of this handbook.

Parents of a minor or of a student who is a dependent for tax purposes, the student (if 18 or older), and school officials with legitimate educational interests are the only persons who have general access to a student's records. School officials include any employees, agents, or Trustees of the District, cooperatives, or contractual placement facilities, as well as their attorneys and consultants, who are:

1. Working with the student;
2. Considering disciplinary or academic actions, the student's case, or a handicapped student's individual education plan;
3. Compiling statistical data; or
4. Investigating or evaluating programs.

Certain other officials from various governmental agencies may have limited access to the records. The District forwards a student's record without prior consent on request to a school in which a student seeks or intends to enroll. Parental consent is required to release the records to anyone else. The right to consent the release of records transfers to the student when they reach the age of 18.

The parent's or student's right of access to, and copies of, student records does not extend to all records. Materials that are not considered educational records, such as teachers' personal notes on a student that are shared only with a substitute teacher and records on ex-students, do not have to be made available to the parents or student.

Students over 18 and parents of minor students may inspect the student's records and request a correction if the records are inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the student's privacy

or other rights. If the District refuses the request to amend the records, the requestor has the right to a hearing and to place in the student's record a statement commenting on the information. Although improperly recorded grades may be challenged, parents and students are not allowed to contest a student's grade in a course through this process. Parents or students have the right to file a complaint with the Superintendent if they feel that the District is not in compliance with the law regarding student records.

Copies of student records are available at a cost of 10 cents per page, payable in advance. Parents may be denied copies of a student's records (1) after the student reaches age 18 and is no longer a dependent for tax purposes; (2) when the student is attending an institution of post-secondary education; or (3) if the parent fails to follow proper procedures and pay the copying charge. If the student qualifies for free or reduced-price lunches and the parents are unable to view the records during regular school hours, upon written request of the parent, one copy of the record will be provided at no charge.

Certain information about District students is considered directory information and will be released to anyone who follows procedures for requesting it, unless the parent objects in writing to the principal within ten school days after the issuance of this handbook.

SEARCHES

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

Searches by Drug Dogs

VISD Board Policy FNFA (Local)

Purpose

In order to respond to the drug and alcohol abuse problems in the schools and maintain a safe school environment conducive to education, the District shall use specially trained dogs to sniff out concealed contraband, drugs, or alcohol on school property.

Dog Handler

The dog handler selected shall use non-aggressive dogs trained to alert to illicit substances under policy FNCF (Local).

Search of Property

Visits to schools shall be unannounced. The dogs shall be used to sniff the air in vacant classrooms and other common areas and around student lockers and automobiles parked on school property.

If the dog alerts to a particular locker, a car, or an item in classrooms or other common areas, it may be searched. If the dog alerts to a car, the student shall be asked, if necessary, to unlock the car doors and trunk for an internal inspection. If the student refuses, the parents shall be notified.

Search of Students

The dogs shall not be used for random sweep searches of students. The dogs shall be allowed to sniff an individual student only if there is reasonable cause to believe the student possesses illicit substances. If the dog alerts to a student, the student's outer garments shall be subject to search.

Notice

Students shall be notified at the beginning of each school year that:

1. The lockers remain under the jurisdiction of the District even though possessed by the students and are subject to a sniff search at any time. Students are responsible for anything found in their lockers.
2. Students will be subject to a sniff search if there is reasonable cause to believe that the student possesses illegal substances.
3. Classroom and other common areas are subject to a sniff search at any time when students are not present.
4. If any prohibited substances are found, the student may be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, including removal, suspension, or expulsion. (See FO, FOA, FOD).

The student's parent(s) or guardian shall be notified if prohibited substances are found in searches conducted under this policy.

Students found to be in violation of FNCF shall be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, including removal, suspension, or expulsion. (See FO, FOA, FOD).

Students' Desks and Lockers

Students' desks and lockers are school property and remain under the control and jurisdiction of the school even when assigned to an individual student.

Students are fully responsible for the security and contents of their assigned desks and lockers. Students must be certain that their lockers are locked, and that the combinations are not available to others.

Searches of desks or lockers may be conducted at any time there is reasonable cause to believe that they contain articles or materials prohibited by policy, whether or not a student is present.

The parent will be notified if any prohibited items are found in the student's desk or locker.

SPECIAL PROGRAMS

VISD Board Policy EHBA, EHBB, EHBE (Local)

The District provides special programs for gifted and talented students, homeless students, bilingual students, migrant students, students with limited English proficiency, dyslexic students, and students with disabilities. The coordinator of each program can answer questions about eligibility requirements, as well as programs and services offered in the district or by other organizations.

STEROIDS

State law prohibits students from possessing, dispensing, delivering, or administering an anabolic steroid. Anabolic steroids are for medical use only, and only a physician can prescribe use.

Body building, muscle enhancement, or the increase of muscle bulk or strength through the use of an anabolic steroid or human growth hormone by a healthy student is not a valid medical use and is a criminal offense.

Students participating in UIL athletic competition may be subject to random steroid testing. More information on the UIL testing program may be found on the UIL Web site at http://www.uil.utexas.edu/athletics/health/steroid_information.html.

STUDENT OFFICES AND ELECTIONS

Students desiring to be elected to an office or position at Vernon Middle School shall contact the organization's sponsor. A list of sponsors can be obtained through the main office. It is strongly

advised that students make contact with these sponsors early in the year and obtain a copy to the requirements for becoming a candidate and holding the office.

[See FNA (LOCAL)]

SUMMER SCHOOL

1. A student must have completed a core course and received a failing grade of 50 or above in order to attempt to receive credit in that course in summer school.
2. Students receiving a grade of less than 60 may apply to attend summer school for a fee of \$50.00.
3. Eighth grade students failing the Math or Reading TAKS test will be required to attend summer school.

TAKS (TEXAS ASSESSMENT OF KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS)

In addition to routine tests and other measures of achievement, students at certain grade levels will take state-mandated tests (such as TAKS: the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills) in the following subjects:

- Mathematics, annually in grades 3–11
- Reading, annually in grades 3–9
- Writing, including spelling and grammar, in grades 4 and 7
- English language arts in grades 10 and 11
- Social studies in grades 8, 10, and 11
- Science in grades 5, 8, 10, and 11
- Any other subject and grade required by federal law

[See policy EKB(LEGAL).]

TARDINESS

Tardies are not acceptable. Students that are tardy to class will be assigned to detention and/or Saturday school.

TEXTBOOKS

VISD Board Policy CMD (Local)

State-approved textbooks are provided to students free of charge for each subject or class. Books must be covered by the student, as directed by the teacher, and treated with care. A student who is issued a damaged book should report the damage to the teacher. Any student failing to return a book issued by the school loses the right to free textbooks until the book is returned or paid for by the parent; however, the student will be provided textbooks for use at school during the school day.

Fines for lost or damaged books will be paid in the main office and must be taken care of prior to receiving any textbooks for the next semester's classes.

TRANSPORTATION

School-Sponsored Trips

Students who participate in school-sponsored trips are required to use transportation provided by the school to and from the event. The principal, however, may make an exception if the parent makes a written request that the student be released to the parent or to another adult designated by the parent.

Buses and Other School Vehicles

The district makes school bus transportation available to all students living two or more miles from school. This service is provided at no cost to students. Bus routes and any subsequent changes are posted at the school.

A parent may also designate a child-care facility or grandparent's residence as the regular pickup and drop-off location for his or her child. The designated facility or residence must be on an

Buses and Other School Vehicles (continued)

approved stop on an approved route. For information on bus routes and stops or to designate an alternate pickup or drop-off location, you may (940) 553-4922.

The District makes school bus transportation available to all students living two or more miles from school. This service is provided at no cost to students; its cost is reimbursed by the state of Texas. Bus routes and any subsequent changes are posted at the school. Further information may be obtained by calling 553-4922.

Students being transported in school – owned vehicles shall comply with the Student Code of Conduct. Any student who fails to comply with that code or established rules of conduct while on school transportation may be denied transportation services and shall be subject to disciplinary action.

The following rules shall apply to student conduct on school transportation:

1. Passengers shall follow the driver's directions at all times.
2. Passengers shall board and leave the bus in any orderly manner at the designated bus stop nearest their home.
3. Passengers shall not stand if there is a seat available. If a passenger must ride standing the passenger shall face the front and hold on to the seat rails.
4. Passengers shall keep books, band instrument cases, feet, and other objects out of the aisle of the bus.
5. Passengers shall not deface the bus and/or its equipment.
6. Passengers shall not extend head, hands, arms, or legs out of the window nor hold any object out of the window nor throw objects within or out of the bus.
7. Passengers shall not smoke or use any form of tobacco.
8. Usual classroom conduct shall be observed. Unruly conduct, including the use of obscene language, will subject the passenger to disciplinary action.
9. Upon leaving the bus, the student will wait for the driver's signal before crossing in front of the bus.
10. When students ride in an District van or passenger car, seat belts must be used at all times.

The following procedures shall be followed when a discipline concern arises on a bus serving a regular route or an extracurricular activity:

1. The Driver shall attempt to correct the misbehavior of the passenger.

2. If the driver is unable to resolve the problem, the principal shall be notified immediately or if the incident occurs in the afternoon, not later than the morning of the next school day.
3. The principal shall investigate the incident and notify the driver of the action taken.
4. A conference involving the principal, the student passenger, the driver and parent(s) may be required.
5. The principal may suspend the student's bus – riding privileges. If such a suspension occurs, the parents shall notified prior to the time the suspension takes effect.
6. In the case of serious misconduct that endangers the safety of other passengers or the driver, the driver shall have the authority to put the student off the bus or to call for law enforcement assistance; the principal and parents shall be notified of the situation as soon as possible. The student shall not be provided bus service again until a conference involving all persons listed above has been held.

Disciplinary sanctions and charges in transportation for a student with disability shall be made in accordance with the provisions of the student's Individual Education Plan (IEP) for students considered disabled under IDEA or the individually designed program for students considered disabled under Section 504.

See the *Student Code of Conduct* for provisions regarding transportation to the Disciplinary Alternative Education Program (DAEP).

Students are expected to assist district staff in ensuring that buses remain in good condition and that transportation is provided safely. When riding in district vehicles, students are held to behavioral standards established in this handbook and the *Student Code of Conduct*. Students must:

- Follow the driver's directions at all times.
- Enter and leave the bus or van in an orderly manner at the designated stop nearest home.
- Keep feet, books, instrument cases, and other objects out of the aisle.
- Not deface the bus, van, or its equipment.
- Not put head, hands, arms, or legs out of the window, hold any object out of the window, or throw objects within or out of the bus or van.
- Not possess or use any form of tobacco on school buses.
- Observe all usual classroom rules.
- Be seated while the vehicle is moving.
- Fasten their seat belts.
- Wait for the driver's signal upon leaving the bus or van and before crossing in front of the vehicle.

Misconduct will be punished in accordance with the *Student Code of Conduct*; bus-riding privileges may be suspended.

TUTORIALS

Tutorials are offered in all core subject areas (Language Arts, Math, Science, Social Studies)

at the following times:

Monday – Friday, 7:45 – 8:05

Monday – Thursday, after school tutoring to be schedule with individual teacher

VANDALISM

The taxpayers of the community have made a sustained financial commitment for the construction and upkeep of school facilities. To ensure that school facilities can serve those for whom they are intended—both this year and for years to come—littering, defacing, or damaging school property is not tolerated. Students will be required to pay for damages they cause and will be subject to criminal proceedings as well as disciplinary consequences in accordance with the *Student Code of Conduct*.

VIDEO CAMERAS

For safety purposes, video/audio equipment may be used to monitor student behavior on buses and in common areas on campus. Students will not be told when the equipment is being used.

The principal will review the video/audio recordings routinely and document student misconduct. Discipline will be in accordance with the *Student Code of Conduct*.

VISITORS TO THE SCHOOL

Visitors are required to check in at the office and conduct themselves according to the student rules. Students absent from their own school may not visit another. The principal may request identification from any person on school property and may ask any person not having legitimate business to leave.

There will be no visitors to class.

WITHDRAWING FROM SCHOOL

A student under 18 may be withdrawn from school only by a parent. The school requests notice from the parent at least three days in advance so that records and documents may be prepared. The parent may obtain a withdrawal form from the principal's office.

On the student's last day, the withdrawal form must be presented to each teacher for current grade averages and book clearance; to the librarian to ensure a clear library record; to the clinic for health records; to the counselor for the last report card and course clearance; and finally, to the principal. A copy of the withdrawal form will be given to the student, and a copy will be placed in the student's permanent record.

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

ZEROS AREN'T PERMITTED (ZAP)

Students who fail to complete assignments in class or assignments given as homework, can be assigned to an after school class where they will be permitted and expected to complete the assignment.

Parents will be notified the day before ZAP is assigned and should sign and return the notice to school with their child. If the assignment is turned in to the teacher by class time the following day, the teacher can dismiss the student from ZAP.

ZAP is from 3:25 – 4:45, Monday – Thursday

Students may be dismissed early from ZAP if the assignment is satisfactorily completed.

Students must have their own transportation home.

GLOSSARY

Accelerated instruction is an intensive supplemental program designed to address the needs of an individual student in acquiring the knowledge and skills required at his or her grade level.

Alternative assessment instrument, developed by the state, may be given to students in special education and students identified as limited English proficient.

ARD is the admission, review, and dismissal committee convened for each student who is identified as needing a full and individual evaluation for special education services. The eligible student's parents are part of the committee.

Attendance Review Committee is sometimes responsible for reviewing a student's absences when the student's attendance drops below 90 percent of the days the class is offered. Under guidelines adopted by the board, the committee will determine whether there were extenuating circumstances for the absences and whether the student needs to complete certain conditions to master the course and regain credit lost because of absences.

DAEP stands for disciplinary alternative education program, a placement for students who have violated certain provisions of the *Student Code of Conduct*. Students in the DAEP will be separated from students not assigned to the program. The DAEP will focus instruction on English language arts, mathematics, science, history, and self-discipline, and provide for students' educational and behavior needs, as well as supervision and counseling.

FERPA refers to the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act that grants specific privacy protections to student records. The law contains certain exceptions, such as for directory information, unless a student's parent or a student 18 or older directs the school not to release directory information.

IEP is the written record of the Individualized Education Program prepared by the ARD committee for a student with disabilities who is eligible for special education services. The IEP contains several parts, such as a statement of the student's present educational performance; a statement of measurable annual goals, with short-term objectives; the special education and related services and supplemental aids and services to be provided, and program modifications or support by school personnel; a statement regarding how the student's progress will be measured and how the parents will be kept informed; modifications to state or districtwide tests, etc.

ISS refers to in-school suspension, a disciplinary technique for misconduct found in the *Student Code of Conduct*. Although different from out-of-school suspension and placement in a DAEP, ISS removes the student from the regular classroom.

NCLB Act is the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

Personal Graduation Plan (PGP) is recommended for all students entering grade 9 and is required by state law for any student in middle school or higher who fails a section on a state-mandated test or is identified by the district as not likely to earn a high school diploma before the fifth school year after he or she begins grade 9.

Section 504 is the federal law that prohibits discrimination against a student with a disability, requiring schools to provide opportunities for equal services, programs, and participation in activities. Unless the student is determined by an ARD committee to be eligible for special education services, appropriate regular educational services will be provided.

State-mandated tests are required of students at certain grade levels and in specified subjects. Successful performance sometimes is a condition of promotion, and passing the grade 11 exit-level

test is a condition of graduation. Students have multiple opportunities to take the tests if necessary for promotion or graduation.

Student Code of Conduct is developed with the advice of the district-level committee and adopted by the board; identifies the circumstances, consistent with law, when a student may be removed from the classroom or campus. It also sets out the conditions that authorize or require the principal or another administrator to place the student in a DAEP. It outlines conditions for out-of-school suspension and for expulsion, and states whether self-defense is a consideration in suspension, DAEP placement, or expulsion. The *Student Code of Conduct* also addresses notice to the parent regarding a student's violation of one of its provisions.

TAKS is short for the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills, the state's standardized achievement test currently given to students in certain subjects in grades 3–11.

UIL refers to the University Interscholastic League, the statewide voluntary nonprofit organization that oversees educational extracurricular academic, athletic, and music contests.

APPENDIX I:
Acknowledgment Form—Amendment

My child and I have received a copy of the Vernon Middle School *Student Handbook* Amendment # [REDACTED] dated [REDACTED].

Print name of student: _____

Signature of student: _____

Signature of parent: _____

Date: _____

**APPENDIX II:
Use of Student Work in District Publications**

Occasionally, the Vernon Independent School District wishes to display or publish student artwork or special projects on the district's Web site and in district publications. The district agrees to only use these student projects in this manner.

Parent: Please circle one of the choices below:

I, parent of _____ (student's name), (**do give**) (**do not give**) the district permission to use my child's artwork or special project on the district's Web site and in district publications.

Parent signature: _____

Date: _____