



TEXAS

ONLINE PREPARATORY

SCHOOL

PARENT/STUDENT HANDBOOK
2023-2024


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2022-2023 SCHOOL CALENDAR

2023-2024 Huntsville ISD Instructional Calendar

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

| | |
|---------------|---|
| Jul 31-Aug 14 | Teacher In-Service |
| Aug 15 | First Day of School for Returning Students |
| Aug 17 | New student S1 cohort 1 begins |
| Aug 30 | New student S1 cohort 2 begins |
| Sept 4 | Labor Day (Student/Staff Holiday) |
| Sept 13 | New student S1 cohort 3 begins |
| Sept 27 | New student S1 cohort 4 begins |
| Oct 6 | Asynch Day for Students; Teacher In-Service |
| Oct 9 | Columbus Day (Student/Staff Holiday) |
| Oct 11 | New student S1 cohort 5 begins (ES/MS only) |
| Oct 15 | Mid-Semester Lock Day (MS/HS only) |
| Nov 1 | New student S1 cohort 6 begins (ES/MS only) |
| Nov 20-24 | Thanksgiving Break (Student/Staff Holiday) |
| Dec 5-8 | Anticipated STAAR EOC Re-testing (HS only) |
| Dec 20 | Last day of S1 for students |
| Dec 21-Jan 3 | Winter Break (Student/Staff Holiday) |
| Jan 4-5 | Student Holiday; Teacher In-Service |
| Jan 8 | First Day of S2 for Returning Students |
| | New student S2 cohort 1 begins (ES/MS only) |
| Jan 15 | MLK, Jr. Day (Student/Staff Holiday) |
| Jan 17 | New student S2 cohort 2 begins (ES/MS only) |
| Jan 31 | New student S2 cohort 3 begins |
| Feb 7 | New student S2 cohort 4 begins |
| Feb 16 | Asynch Day for Students; Teacher In-Service |
| Feb 19 | President's Day (Student/Staff Holiday) |
| Feb 26-Mar 1 | Anticipated TELPAS Testing |
| Mar 11-15 | Spring Break (Student/Staff Holiday) |
| Mar 17 | Mid-Semester Lock Day (MS/HS only) |
| Mar 18-22 | Anticipated TELPAS Testing Make-Ups |
| Mar 29 | Good Friday (Student/Staff Holiday) |
| Apr 9-May 3 | Anticipated STAAR/EOC Testing |
| May 23 | Semester 2 Lock Date |
| May 24 | Teacher Check-Out (Student Holiday) |
| May 27 | Memorial Day (Student/Staff Holiday) |
| May 31 | Summer PTO begins for staff |
| TBD | Graduation (virtual) |
| TBD | Graduation (in-person) |
| Jun 18-21 | Anticipated STAAR EOC Re-testing (HS only) |

- School Closed (Student/Staff)
- Asynch Day for Students; Staff-In Service
- Student Holiday; Teacher Workday
- Anticipated State Testing Windows
- First & Last Day of Semester
- Mid-Semester Lock Dates (MS/HS only)
- Graduation (TBD)

| July 2023 | | | | | | |
|-----------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| S | M | T | W | T | F | S |
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| 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 |
| 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 |
| 30 | 31 | | | | | |

| August 2023 | | | | | | |
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| 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 |
| 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 |
| 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | | |

| September 2023 | | | | | | |
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| October 2023 | | | | | | |
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| 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 |
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| November 2023 | | | | | | |
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| December 2023 | | | | | | |
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| 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 |
| 31 | | | | | | |

| Semester 1 | |
|---------------|----------------|
| Aug 15-Dec 20 | First Semester |
| 84 | Student Days |
| 96 | Teacher Days |

| January 2024 | | | | | | |
|--------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
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| February 2024 | | | | | | |
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| 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 |
| 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | | |

| March 2024 | | | | | | |
|------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
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| April 2024 | | | | | | |
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| 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 |
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| May 2024 | | | | | | |
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| 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 |
| 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 |
| 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | |

| June 2024 | | | | | | |
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| 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
| 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 |
| 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 |
| 30 | | | | | | |

| Semester 2 | |
|--------------|-----------------|
| Jan 8-May 23 | Second Semester |
| 91 | Student Days |
| 98 | Teacher Days |

DOWNLOAD HERE: [TOPS Contact Guide](#)

INTRODUCTION

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

TOPS MISSION

Texas Online Preparatory School provides an innovative learning experience by equipping students for life-long success by cultivating high expectations, delivering challenging instruction, and supporting resilience in a goal-oriented community.

TOPS VISION

To be a learner-centered preparatory school empowering students for the future

TOPS MOTTO

Empower to Learn. Equip to Succeed.

MASCOT

Narwhal

QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS?

TOPS staff recognizes that life at school does not always run smoothly. As problems arise, school personnel and parents must collaborate to solve them.

Many questions/concerns may be addressed in our **TOPS CONTACT GUIDE**—click here to view: <https://www.smores.com/gp4y9>

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

Step 1: All concerns should first be directed to the teacher of the course via phone or email. Teachers have 24 business hours to respond to the concern.

Step 2: After 24 business hours, if the concern is not resolved through phone or email communication with the course teacher, then the learning coach should escalate their concern to the student's homeroom teacher. Sometimes a virtual meeting may be needed.

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

- Mr. Tim Wade; EL Assistant Principal, twade@texasonlineprep.org
- Mrs. Erin Cogburn; MS Assistant Principal, ercogburn@texasonlineprep.org
- Mr. Travis Johnson; HS Assistant Principal, tjohnson@texasonlineprep.org

- 12th grade – Mrs. Juli Laechelin; HS Principal, jlaechelin@texasonlineprep.org

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

- Ms. Angie Crow, EL Principal, ancrow@texasonlineprep.org
- Mrs. Crystal Frost, MS Principal, crfrost@texasonlineprep.org
- Mrs. Juli Laechelin, HS Principal, jlaechelin@texasonlineprep.org

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

GENERAL TERMS and ACRONYMS

Whether it be the virtual or brick-and-mortar public school, educational jargon can be confusing. So, with that in mind, here is a helpful list to guide you through:

K12 Specific Terms

CC = Class Connect Session

LC = Learning Coach

OLS = Online Learning System (Grades 3-5)

OMS = Online Middle School (Grades 6-8)

OHS = Online High School (Grades 9-12)

General Terms

STAAR = State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness

CBE = Credit by Examination (used for acceleration of grade-level or course/subject)

CTE = Career and Technical Education

EOC = End of Course Assessment

EL = English Learner

EB = Emergent Bilingual student

ESL = English as a Second Language

WD = Withdrawal

TEA = Texas Education Agency

TEC = Texas Education Code

TEKS = Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (objectives for mastery based on subject and grade-level)

TAC = Texas Administrative Code

TxVSN = Texas Virtual School Network

Special Programs

SPED = Special Education

IEP = Individualized Educational Program (Document created in conjunction with ARD meeting, used to modify or implement curriculum and services for students with disabilities)

ARD = Admission, Review, Dismissal (meeting used to determine special education and related services for students with disabilities)

TELPAS = Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (assessments given to ELL students annually)

504 = Section 504 (related to accommodations for students with disabilities)

RTI = Response to Intervention

MTSS = Multi-Tiered System of Supports

ADMISSION & ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS

Student eligibility can be found at this location: [SY23-24 TOPS Enrollment Criteria.docx](#)

Admission to TOPS is available only to students who are domiciled within the geographical boundaries of the state or Texas. Students who do not maintain residency in Texas may not attend TOPS. TOPS students who do not appear in-person for statewide assessments, as arranged by TOPS, may be denied admission for the following school year. TOPS students who have been unsuccessful in the Academic Probation program may be denied admission for the following school year.

*Exceptions to this policy may be made for military families.

REQUIRED IMMUNIZATIONS

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

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

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

Note: [Immunization requirementsⁱ](#) and the [recommended immunization scheduleⁱⁱ](#) are on the TDSHS website. <http://www.dshs.texas.gov/immunize/school/default.shtm#requirements>

STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT

Students enrolled in TOPS are expected to follow the Huntsville School District’s student code of conduct, located here:

English: [HISD Student Code of Conduct](#)

Spanish/En Español: [Código de Conducta Estudiantil](#)

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

| The Narwhal Way | As narwhals, we... | This means we... |
|------------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| N | Never swim backwards | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek improvement opportunities • Try again...and again and again • Find and follow your strengths |
| A | Act accountable | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet deadlines and commitments • Reach out for support • Own and learn from our mistakes • Act with integrity |
| R | Respect self and others | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use proper netiquette • Are mindful and considerate of others' thoughts, feelings, and cultures • Demonstrate kindness in words and actions • Make healthy choices for ourselves • Demonstrate active listening skills |
| W | Work to be well-rounded | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively participate • Get involve in experiences outside of our requirements • Seek opportunities to learn things outside our norm • Adapts effectively in various settings |
| H | Help the community | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer support when others are struggling • Encourage others to persist • Proactively name potential pitfalls • Resolve conflict • Collaborate well in Teams |
| A | Always advocate | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speak up, speak out, speak for, speak against |
| L | Leap at opportunities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take academic and social risks • Seek volunteer opportunities to support the community • Graciously receive help, support, and feedback • Actively participate in social experiences |

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

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

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

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

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

| | Level 1 | Level 2 | Level 3 | Level 4 |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|--|--|
| Testing Attendance Infractions | First offensive of not completing a major assessment (Ex: interim) | Second offense of not completing a major assessment (Ex: interim) | Not attending State Testing (TELPAS, STAAR, EOC) or a school-funded assessment (AP, IBC, SAT/ACT) | N/A |
| School Attendance Infractions | 3+ consecutive absences; 5+ total absences | 11+ total absences | Less than 90% attendance | N/A |
| Netiquette and In-Person Infractions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Isolated use of profanity • Virtual background that is distracting to the learning environment • Unprofessional or unkind communication • Completing unrelated work • Refusal to work • Misuse of technology that creates a distraction to the learning environment • Conduct that creates a distraction to the learning environment • Attire that is distracting to the learning environment • Academic dishonesty • Disengagement (ex: limited | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repeat offense of Level 1 infractions • Profanity directed at another individual • Virtual background that has the potential to make others in the learning environment feel unsafe • Misuse of technology that creates a disruption to the learning environment • Destruction or theft of property valued at \$50 or less • False reports or false claim about an individual or group of people • Underaged gambling on school time | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repeat offense of any Level 2 infraction • Severe version of any Level 2 infraction • Profanity of an explicit nature • Hate language • Threatening communication • Conduct that has the potential to make others in the learning environment feel unsafe • Virtual background of an explicit nature • Display of school-prohibited items or images of school-prohibited items • Bullying and cyber-bullying • Retaliation against a person (victim, witness, other) who in good faith provided information in a discipline investigation • Harassment, hazing, or stalking • Destruction of theft of property valued at \$51 or more | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arson • False alarm • Terroristic threat • Any misdemeanor or felony • Hate crimes • Active shooting • Possession of firearm at an in-person event |

| | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| | communication, lack of participation in Academic Probation, limited course progress, etc.) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Soliciting, requesting, commanding, or attempting to induce other students to engage in Level 1 infractions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lude or indecent exposure; possession of intimate visual materials of a minor Security breach to district or school records and/or computer systems Possession, use, distribution, or sale of illicit substance or prohibited item (tobacco, homeopathic-like substances, dietary supplements, energy pills, vitamins, over-the-counter medicine, marijuana, illegal drugs, lighter, matches, vape pen, ammunition, knife, etc.) Physical altercation | |
| Interventions include, but are not limited, to the following: | | Consequences include, but are not limited, to the following: | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher-level review of the related Narwhal Way letter Counselor-level review of the related Narwhal Way letter (1:1 or in small group) Narwhal Way Reflection form Learn & Apply Task Welfare check Academic Probation Conference with appropriate Stride department (ex: IT) Apology letter Advocacy team referral Daily check-ins with designated staff member Counselor referral Social Worker/Crisis Counselor referral Special Programs referral | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Email to LC/LG LC/LG conference LC/LG conference with follow-up email Remove virtual classroom privileges (ex: microphone, camera, chat, breakout room) for a set amount of time Removal from CCs for a set amount of time Removal from CCs for an extended amount of time Removal from K12 Zone for a set amount of time Removal from K12 Zone for an extended amount of time Resubmission of assignment Alternate assignment Conference with appropriate Stride department (ex: IT) Classroom switch Curriculum lock Additional lock-dates Call to local enforcement Expulsion from the school Administrative withdrawal without option to re-enroll | | |

HISD PARENT/STUDENT HANDBOOK

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

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

All work submitted and/or marked complete in the OLS, OMS, or OHS is assumed to have been completed only by students from their own student account. *Students should not have access to the learning coach login credentials.* Students are also responsible for observing the standards on plagiarism and properly crediting all sources relied on in the composition of their work. Failure

to abide by these standards will result in disciplinary action in accordance with the section of this handbook entitled “Student Code of Conduct.”

Plagiarism

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

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

Source Citation

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

ATTENDANCE & TRUANCY POLICY

Attendance & Truancy Policy

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

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

- (1) be enrolled in a TxVSN course when he or she begins receiving instruction and actively engages in instructional activities in a TxVSN subject area or course;
- (3) be, and must be reported as, withdrawn from the TxVSN when the student is no longer actively participating in the TxVSN course or program.

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

Compulsory Attendance

Age 18 and Older:

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

Ages 6 to 18:

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

Attendance beyond Academic Calendar:

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

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

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

Note:

- Students are required to attend school on each instructional day as determined by the TOPS academic calendar.
- Attendance will not be logged after the last day of the academic year.
- Students may work ahead. However, students are still required to attend school each day.
- Students that complete all coursework prior to the end of any semester may be assigned additional work by campus principal.

Excused Absences

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

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

- Religious holy days
- Maternity/Paternity Leave
- Bereavement Leave (immediate family, up to 5 days)

- Required court appearances
- Activities related to obtaining United States citizenship
- Documented health-care appointments for the student or a child of the student, including absences for recognized services for students diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders. A note from the health-care provider must be submitted upon the student's arrival or return to campus

For students in the conservatorship (custody) of the state:

- An activity required under a court-ordered service plan
- Any other court-ordered activity, provided it is not practicable to schedule the student's participation in the activity outside of school hours
- Children of military families, absences of up to five days will be excused for a student to visit with a parent, stepparent, or legal guardian who has been called to duty or is on leave from, or immediately returned from certain deployments

In addition, absences will be considered by TOPS administration for the following reasons:

- *Personal Illness:* When a student's absence for personal illness exceeds three consecutive days, the student shall present a statement from a physician or health clinic verifying the illness or condition that caused the student's extended absence from school. If the student has established a questionable pattern of absences, the TOPS administration may also require a physician's or clinic's statement of illness after a single day's absence as a condition of classifying the absence as one for which there are extenuating circumstances.
- *Absences for Serving as an Election Clerk:* Up to two absences in a school year may be exempt from compulsory attendance requirements if the student presents written approval from the parent, obtains written permission from the principal prior to the absences, provides written documentation of the service performed from a governmental office, and completes all make-up work.
- *Absences for a Military Honors Funeral:* An absence of a student in grades 6-12 for the purpose of sounding "Taps" at a military honors funeral for a deceased veteran also will be excused by the district.
- *College Visitation:* Junior or Senior student's absence of up to two days related to visiting a college or university will be considered an exemption, provided this has been authorized by the board under policy FEA(LOCAL), the student receives approval from the campus principal, follows the campus procedures to verify such a visit, and makes up any work missed.
- *National Guard and Military Enlistment:* An absence will also be considered an exemption if a student 17 years of age or older is pursuing enlistment in a branch of the U.S. armed services or Texas National Guard, provided the absence does not exceed four days and the student provides verification to the district of these activities.

An absence is classified as unexcused until we have received documentation from the parent/legal guardian. Parents may complete an absence form, linked below, in order to document an absence.

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

The absence forms then get processed by the Truancy Officer.

Accumulated Unexcused Absences and Truancy Process

Students who do not attend the Online School each instructional day will be considered absent without a valid written excuse. Students who do not log in on each instructional day as determined by the TOPS academic calendar will be considered absent. Absences not identified as “reasonable” above will be considered “unexcused.”

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

3 or more missed days in a 4-week period, a 3-day attendance email is sent to the parent/legal guardian

5 or more consecutive missed School days, a 5-day attendance email is sent to the parent/legal guardian. The email contains a link to the Truancy Prevention presentation. Please note, if a student 18 or older has more than five unexcused absences in a semester, TOPS may revoke the student's enrollment.

- a) Truancy officer sends list to Executive Director.
- b) Parent/legal guardian is expected to view the Truancy Prevention presentation.
- c) Parent/legal guardian completes (DocuSign) attendance contract (states requirements and allows opportunity for parent/legal guardian to give reason for missed days) stating understanding of attendance requirements and consequences of truancy.

10 missed School days over a 6-month period, a Truant Conduct Letter is emailed to the parent/legal guardian. These emails will be sent at the beginning of the 2nd semester. **Per HISD Handbook, students in grades 6-12 that meet these criteria may be referred to truancy court.*

10 or more consecutive missed days, a 10-day attendance email is sent to the parent/legal guardian.

- a) Truancy Officer to send Executive Director a list of students to be reviewed for withdrawal.
- b) Executive Director confirms with Truancy Officer the students that need to be reviewed for withdrawal
- c) Students for withdrawal will have their curriculum locked by Truancy Officer and be given 24 hours to appeal.
 - a. Parents should submit the attendance contract to the appeal.
- d) If no appeal is received, the student will be withdrawn.
- e) Any appeals received are sent to the Executive Director to approve or disapprove.
- f) The parent/legal guardian will be notified of the decision within 72 hours.

* The student's parents or person standing in parental relation to a student are subject to prosecution for the offense of *Parent Contributing to Truancy*, and the child is also subject to prosecution or referral to the Juvenile Court for the offense of *Failure to Attend School*

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

Driver License Attendance Verification (Secondary Grade Levels Only)

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

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND NON-COMPLIANCE

TxVSN Student Engagement Policy (TAC 19 Chapter 70.1015):

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

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

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

Campus Administration will determine the appropriate intervention plan and placement necessary to support the student's individual needs. Interventions may include individual meetings (including Academic Probation meetings), additional required class sessions, or scheduled time with a campus counselor, classroom teacher, interventionist, or engagement specialist. If interventions with the student are unsuccessful, Campus Administration may refer the student to the Executive Director for potential withdrawal. Students who are withdrawn due to engagement have been found to be in violation of TAC 70.1015.

Students with Disabilities

Students served through special programs are expected to meet the same attendance and engagement expectations as general education students.

Any student who is experiencing attendance and/or engagement issues may be placed into the TOPS Academic Probation Program for support. The student and their parent are required to attend an Academic Probation meeting. For students with disabilities, their special programs case manager will also be in attendance. Information collected during the Academic Probation meeting will be shared with the respective special programs department(s) to determine if further actions are needed.

TOPS will follow the complete Academic Probation support cycle for any student in the program. Upon completion of that cycle, if the student's attendance and/or engagement has not improved, the student may be administratively withdrawn from TOPS. Students served through special programs may be administratively withdrawn without an ARD for 504 meeting.

STUDENT RECORDS

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

Further information on Student Records and Accessibility may be found under "FERPA" below, or by accessing HISD's Student Handbook here: [HISD Student Handbook](#)

CHANGE OF CONTACT INFORMATION

Mailing Address

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

To confirm your address please follow the steps below:

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

Please submit two of the following documents as new **Proof of Residence**:

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

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

Note:

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

info@texasonlineprep.org

Follow this link to access the Change of Address survey: [Change of Address Survey](#)

WITHDRAWALS

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

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

Note:

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

ACCELERATION

Grades 3-8

For students in grades 3-8 to accelerate in grade level, they must take Credit-By-Examination in all four core subject areas and demonstrate proficiency with a grade of 80 or higher on all examinations. TOPS offers Credit-By-Examination twice yearly (*December/June*). However, to accelerate a grade level, students must take the Credit-By-Examinations in the June offering.

Grades 6-12

Students in grades 6-12 may accelerate courses in order to achieve their graduation planning. To do so, they must take Credit-By-Examination in the applicable subject area and demonstrate proficiency with a grade of 80 or higher. TOPS offers Credit-By-Examination twice yearly (*December/June*).

Students and parents interested in Credit-By-Examination during the school year will need to contact their counselor.

MANDATORY TESTING INFORMATION

Attendance is mandatory at all TOPS testing events.

Virtual assessments

Virtual assessments include:

- Screeners and diagnostics
- Classroom quizzes and tests
- Interims

Requirements and Expectations

- Students may be scheduled to take each assessment with a staff member.
- Assessments may be proctored live.
- Students may be asked to be on camera during the assessment.
- Microphones may be turned off.

- Others (parents/learning coaches) are not to interfere or help students with the assessment.
- Do not use outside sources (Google, etc.) during the assessment.
- Testing accommodations will be provided, as aligned to 504, IEP, and RTI documentation.
- Students who are absent or do not take assessment will be rescheduled until the assessment is complete.

In-person assessments

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

In-person state testing includes:

- STAAR/EOC
- TELPAS

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

A doctor’s note is required for missed in-person state testing:

Vacations, holidays, and/or doctor’s appointments cannot be scheduled during any testing dates.

There is no "option" to permit your child to opt-out of STAAR testing per TEA: (TEC 26.010: <https://statutes.capitol.texas.gov/Docs/ED/htm/ED.26.htm>)

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

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

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

STAAR TESTED SUBJECTS (Grades 3-8)

| <i>Grade</i> | <i>Reading & Writing</i> | <i>Math</i> | <i>Science</i> | <i>Social Studies</i> |
|--------------|------------------------------|-------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| 3 | YES | YES | | |
| 4 | YES | YES | | |
| 5 | YES | YES | YES | |
| 6 | YES | YES | | |
| 7 | YES | YES | | |
| 8 | YES | YES | YES | YES |

END OF COURSE EXAMINATIONS (Grades 9-12)

| | | | | |
|------------------|------------------|------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| <i>Algebra 1</i> | <i>English 1</i> | <i>English 2</i> | <i>Biology</i> | <i>US History</i> |
|------------------|------------------|------------------|----------------|-------------------|

GRADING POLICIES

PROGRESS REPORTING

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

Each Tuesday, Learning Coaches are sent an auto-generated “snapshot/progress report” of their student’s grades as of 5 pm the day previous. Note: Progress reports are not used to calculate final grades and are not included in your student’s official academic record.

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

GRADING POLICY

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

Instructional Practice

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

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

Instructional Achievement

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

- Tests
- Presentations
- Final Written Compositions:

- Research projects
- Performance assessments
- Special projects related to the TEKS

MINIMUM NUMBER OF GRADES

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

Grades 3-5

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

Grades 6-12

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

GRADING SCALES

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

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

A= 90-100

B= 80-89

C= 75-79

D=70-74

F= 69 and below (Failing)

For specific information related to TOPS grading guidelines, please visit the following links:

Elementary:

<https://1.cdn.edl.io/FTAKkkBIetuWyYfLmB3DjG6y8UBWZsvqZXi48VVRyF68OQrv.pdf>

Secondary:

<https://1.cdn.edl.io/VafVOMxRWUSIDvCwhWsVDQ4lJsqTUDIRFe8kmXAlarR7bWZg.pdf>

LATE WORK AND COURSE LOCK DATES POLICY

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

Middle and High school lock assignments 4 times a year in 9-week intervals, (this includes end of Semester 1 and end of Semester 2). Elementary has lock dates two times a year at the end of Semester 1 and end of Semester 2.

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

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

Graduation requirements vary according to the year of entry into 9th grade and the graduation plan selected by the student and parents. New high school students will have their graduation plans shared within 90 days of enrollment.

Valedictory and Salutatory Honors

The graduate having the highest scholastic rating determined by grade point average (GPA) at the conclusion of the fifth six weeks for local courses and the Spring semester for third-party/dual credit classes shall be declared valedictorian of the graduating class. The second ranking student shall be declared salutatorian under the same conditions. To be eligible for valedictory or salutatory honors, the student must have been continuously enrolled in TOPS for the three (3) semesters preceding graduation and must have completed the Advanced/Distinguished Program for graduation.

GRADE APPEAL PROCESS

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

TEACHER GRADED ASSIGNMENTS

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

TEACHER CONSISTENCY PRACTICES

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

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

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

PARENT RIGHT TO OPT OUT

According to TEC Sec. 26.010, a parent or guardian may remove a child temporarily from a class or other school activity that conflicts with the parent's religious or moral beliefs. The parent or guardian must submit to the campus principal documentation requesting removal. **However, a**

parent is not entitled to remove the parent's child from a class or other school activity to avoid a test (e.g. STAAR) or to prevent the child from taking a subject for an entire semester.

STATE PHYSICAL EDUCATION REQUIREMENT

Texas Senate Bill 42 states that students in elementary and middle school grades must have a minimum of 30 minutes of **documented physical activity** each day or a weekly total of 150 minutes. The time requirement is prorated for students enrolling after the first nine weeks. Students are required to complete four (4) semesters of Physical Education in grades six through eight.

Additionally, students must comply and turn in the annual physical examination assessment (**Fitnessgram**) as required by both HISD and TEA.

GENERAL CURRICULUM

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

These may items include, but are not limited to:

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

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

Parents/Learning Coaches may also review each test/unit assessment from their student's account.

COURSES

Important points about required courses:

- Students in grades 3-5 are required to complete Art, Music, Physical Education, and Health.
- Students in grades 6-8 are only required to complete one year of Fine Arts (Music or Art), two years of Physical Education, and 1.5 years of Health (8th graders have the option of enrolling in HS Health upon request)
- Learning coaches can request for electives courses (in grades 6-8 only) to be dropped only within 6 weeks of their enrolment date.

- **Course Selection:** course changes are made in the first ten days of each cohort/start date for MS and HS
- **MS students in Advanced or HS courses** are required to sign a contract. If not passing, students will be dropped from the advanced and/or the HS course at six weeks if not passing. More information on course selection and available courses is within the HISD Student Handbook linked below.
- **Third Party:** If Third-Party course is not passed, students cannot take another Third-Party course without administrative approval.
- **Dual Credit** requirements are mandated by each partner college or university. If a student fails a dual credit course, they will no longer be eligible for the TOPS dual credit program.
- **Credit Recovery:** High School students may be offered credit recovery opportunities during fall and spring semesters as well as in the summer. Credit recovery opportunities are subject to eligibility and counselor approval.
- **Endorsements and Pathways:** Students may choose from a range of endorsements and pathways, as outlined starting on page 17 of the [TOPS Catalog of Courses 23-24](#)

CLASS CONNECTS

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

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

LOCKING CURRICULUM

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

- missing or incomplete required assessments (readiness/benchmarks)
- missed required meetings such as scheduled teacher conferences or academic probation meetings
- missing immunization records or other enrollment documentation

Students should contact their campus administrator to unlock their curriculum.

PARENT/ STUDENT/ TEACHER COMMUNICATION

The teacher is the first point of contact for parents and students with issues related to their course. Email is a primary source of contact between the TOPS teacher and the parents/students. Teachers will respond to student and parent emails within 24 business hours of receipt.

Note:

This does not include after-hours, holidays, testing days, or weekends.

Example(s) of return-email:

“Parent emails at 7 pm on Monday. Teacher returns email at 8 am on Wednesday.” This is permissible because the teacher would not receive email until Tuesday morning at 8 am.

Parents/Learning Coaches should use the following format when emailing all TOPS staff:

Subject: Student ID, Concern

Greeting,

Issue/Concern/Question.

-Learning Coach Name, phone number

Note: Learning Coaches should use appropriate language and netiquette when contacting TOPS staff. Using excessive exclamation points or capitalization, foul language, or levying accusations against staff can be interpreted as harassment. Staff may not respond to emails with inappropriate content.

MICROSOFT TEAMS USAGE POLICY

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

Students shall **not**:

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

CHILD FIND

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

Parents who believe their student may have a disability can make a referral through their Homeroom Teacher for academic assistance provided through the Response to Intervention Program and consideration for accommodations provided under Section 504 or Special Education services.

For questions or concerns, please contact TOPS Special Programs Coordinator, Winter Cason, wcason@texasonlineprep.org

SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

Texas Online Preparatory School (TOPS) is a program of Huntsville Independent School District.

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

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

- find and identify students who have a disability (Child Find);
- involve parents in decision-making;
- evaluate (test) students in a non-discriminatory way;
- develop an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) for each student that will help him/her be involved in and progress in the general curriculum;
- decide what special instruction and related services the school district will provide, and
- provide services in the least restrictive environment (a placement that allows a student with disabilities to be educated to the maximum extent appropriate with students who do not have disabilities).

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

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

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

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

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

What to expect:

- Every special education student will be assigned a special education case manager in addition to their regular education teacher.
- The special education manager will work with the learning coach on IEP goals, expectations for the virtual learning environment, provide consult support as needed; and ensure all instructional staff has copies of the students' relevant IEP documentation.
- The special education case managers will hold Class Connects online to assist students with their specific learning needs; as needed.
- The special education case manager will work with the students' instructional as a resource for instructional strategies and adaptations and modifications to the curriculum.
- ARD meetings will be held either online or through the use of a conference call line.

- The special education and general education instructional staff, along with support from the case manager, will provide a progress report at the end of each grading period noting progress on the student’s IEP goals.
- Special Education students are required to meet the same attendance policies as their peers. The home environment, one on one instruction, and flexible schedule can help the students create a learning environment that meet their specific needs.

For questions or concerns, please contact TOPS Special Education Manager, Blair Litaker-French, flitaker-french@texasonlineprep.org

RELATED SERVICES

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

We understand that it is our responsibility to provide a free and appropriate public education to each enrolled special education student. Because TOPS is a virtual school of choice, we strive to provide speech and other related services virtually whenever possible. However, we understand that each student’s needs are different and the virtual model for related service delivery may not be appropriate for all. Face to face therapy can be considered based on the needs of the individual student. When face-to-face services are necessary, they will be offered at the nearest office to the family’s home or virtually through a licensed provider.

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

For questions or concerns, please contact TOPS Special Education Manager, Blair Litaker-French, flitaker-french@texasonlineprep.org

RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION/MTSS

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

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

- A 3rd grade student that did not perform satisfactorily on a readiness test or assessment
- A 7th – 12th grade student not passing two or more core subjects
- A student that was held back in any grade other than Kindergarten
- A student that scored Did Not Meets on previous STAAR or EOC
- A student that is pregnant or a parent
- A student that has been placed in DAEP
- A student that has been expelled

- A student on parole or probation
- A student that has previously dropped out of school
- A student that is limited English proficiency
- A student is in the custody or care of the Department of Protective and Regulatory Services
- A student is homeless, or
- A student has been placed in a residential placement facility

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

The goals of RTI at TOPS:

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

How to request RTI assistance and what to expect:

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

The process for RTI requires the student to move through three tiers of intervention for an individualized amount of time. The process includes RTI sessions that are mandatory for the student. We encourage Learning Coaches to monitor these sessions and the progress of their student through each tier.

For questions or concerns, please contact TOPS SCE Manager, Kaila Fuller, kafuller@texasonlineprep.org

ADVANCED LEARNERS

Many TOPS students have participated in Gifted and Talented or Advanced Learner programs before enrolling in our program. If you feel that your student needs enrichment or more challenging work, please speak with your TOPS teacher and they will assist you in determining next steps.

For questions or concerns, please contact Leigh Radichel, TOPS GT Manager: lradichel@texasonlineprep.org

SECTION 504 PROGRAM

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

major life activities. Individuals who have a history of, or who are regarded as having a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, are also covered.

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

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

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

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

You can also find more information on Section 504 within the HISD handbook: [HISD Handbook](#)

If you would like to further investigate your student’s eligibility under Section 504, please contact TOPS 504 Coordinator, Kristy Decker-Baird, kdecker-baird@texasonlineprep.org

TOPS DYSLEXIA SERVICES

Children learn to read in different ways. When conventional instruction is not working, we must intervene on behalf of that child’s future education. Students who show signs of dyslexia may need intervention to be successful in school. The TOPS Dyslexia Intervention Program is offered for those students who meet program specifications according to the State of Texas. To view a copy of the Texas Dyslexia Handbook and identification process, please go here: <https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/texas-dyslexia-handbook-2021.pdf> (revised 2021). Para ver una copia del Manual de Dislexia de Texas y el proceso de identificación, vaya aquí: <https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/texas-dyslexia-handbook-2021.pdf> (revisado en 2021).

Referral to Dyslexia Program:

Students may be referred to the Dyslexia Program after being identified by any of the following referral committees or methods:

- RTI committee
- ARD committee
- 504 committee
- Dyslexia screener
- Parent request

Once the TOPS Dyslexia Department receives a dyslexia referral, a full dyslexia evaluation will be completed.

Common Evidence of Dyslexia can include:

- [Student who] Fails to understand that words come apart; for example, that snowman can be pulled apart into snow and man and, later on, that the word man can be broken down still further and sounded out as /m/ /ă/ /n/
- Has difficulty learning the letter names and their corresponding sounds
- Has difficulty decoding single words (reading single words in isolation)—lacks a strategy
- Has difficulty spelling phonetically
- Reads dysfluently (choppy and labored)
- Relies on context to recognize a word
- Has a history of reading and spelling difficulties
- Avoids reading aloud
- Reads most materials slowly; oral reading is labored, not fluent
- Avoids reading for pleasure
- May have an inadequate vocabulary
- Has difficulty spelling; may resort to using less complicated words in writing that are easier to spell (*The Dyslexia Handbook*, pp 11-12)

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

(1) Dyslexia means a disorder of constitutional origin manifested by a difficulty in learning to read, write, or spell, despite conventional instruction, adequate intelligence, and sociocultural opportunity.

(2) Related disorders includes disorders similar to or related to dyslexia such as developmental auditory imperception, dysphasia, specific developmental dyslexia, developmental dysgraphia, and developmental spelling disability.

Dyslexia Program

The TOPS Dyslexia program is much like the pullout classes that are offered for students in a traditional school setting. We offer class connects and an online reading program based in phonics instruction. Dyslexia classes are offered throughout the grade levels (3-12). The dyslexia teacher coordinates office hours and optional classes to help students in other courses as well.

Lexia is the name of the direct dyslexia instruction program used by TOPS. Instruction is provided in small groups (5 or less students), 5 days a week for 45 minutes each session.

For questions or concerns, please contact Debbie Kraus, Dyslexia Program Manager, TXSS, dkraus@texasonlineprep.org.

FAMILY EDUCATION RIGHTS AND PRIVACY ACT (FERPA)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act* (FERPA), a Federal law, requires that Texas Online Preparatory School, with certain exceptions, obtain your written consent prior to the disclosure of personally identifiable information from your child's education records. However, Texas Online Preparatory School may disclose appropriately designated "directory information" without

written consent, unless you have advised the **Texas Online Preparatory School** to the contrary in accordance with Texas Online Preparatory School procedures. The primary purpose of directory information is to allow the Texas Online Preparatory School to include information from your child's education records in certain school publications. Examples include:

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

Directory information, which is information that is generally not considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if released, can also be disclosed to outside organizations without a parent's prior written consent. Outside organizations include, but are not limited to, companies that manufacture class rings or publish yearbooks. In addition, two federal laws require local educational agencies (LEAs) receiving assistance under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (ESEA) to provide military recruiters, upon request, with the following information – names, addresses and telephone listings – unless parents have advised the LEA that they do not want their student's information disclosed without their prior written consent. These laws are Section 9528 of the ESEA (20 U.S.C. § 7908) and 10 U.S.C. § 503(c).

If you do not want Texas Online Preparatory School to disclose any or all of the types of information designated below as directory information from your child's education records without your prior written consent, you must notify the Texas Online Preparatory School in writing by their 10th school day after beginning school. Texas Online Preparatory School has designated the following information as directory information:

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

If there are certain items the School has chosen to designate as directory information that parents do not want disclosed from their student's education records, without their prior written consent, parents are encouraged to send an e-mail identifying the information they do not want disclosed, the student's name, and the name of the virtual academy or affiliate school in which the student is enrolled to: info@texasonlineprep.org. This e-mail must be sent within 30 days of the student enrollment date.

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

For questions or concerns, please contact TOPS Student Enrollment Based Coordinator, Audrey Felice, at afelice@texasonlineprep.org.

SCHOOL PROPERTY

TOPS provides materials, computer (if applicable), printer, books and other curricular supplies. These materials are school property and must be kept in good condition. Parents are responsible for the repair or replacement of all lost, stolen or damaged school property. A list of property that must be returned is provided to parents. All property and equipment must be returned in good, working condition upon withdrawal from the program or completion of the school year. If a piece of TOPS electronic equipment isn't working properly, ***the parent should contact K12 Customer Care: help.k12.com*** and troubleshoot with the technical support team. Parents should not repair any of TOPS/K12's equipment. All printed materials are copyrighted and unauthorized copying of that material is a copyright infringement. Materials cannot be sold or transferred and are to be used solely by the student in his/her studies while enrolled in the school. Parents are to comply with this policy and all the terms and conditions of the Use of Instructional Property Agreement submitted with the enrollment materials.

REMOVAL FROM TOPS

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

Students are provided all necessary due process rights before removal.

TOPS Administration will contact the Legal Guardian and provide an appeal form for the parent to document potential reasons or issues for student behavior or lack of active participation in the program. Legal Guardian may request a meeting with the campus principal at this time. The Legal Guardian has **3 days** to respond to the appeal form. No response will result in immediate Withdrawal from the program.

If appeal is granted and the student continues to display behavior unbecoming of the program (i.e.: lack of attendance, continued course failure, unresponsive to intervention support), then the legal guardian will receive a Withdrawal notice. The Legal Guardian has **3 days** to appeal the Withdrawal. No response will result in immediate Withdrawal from the program.

IDENTIFICATION AND SERVICES FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

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

A **Limited English Proficient** (LEP or ELL) student means an individual:

(A) who is aged 3 through 21;

(B) who is enrolled or preparing to enroll in an elementary school or secondary school;

(C)(i) who was not born in the United States or whose native language is a language other than English;

(ii)(I) who is a Native American or Alaska Native, or a native resident of the outlying areas; and (II) who comes from an environment where a language other than English has had a significant impact on the individual's level of English language proficiency; or

(iii) who is migratory, whose native language is a language other than English, and who comes from an environment where a language other than English is dominant; and

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

(i) the ability to meet the State's proficient level of achievement on State assessments described in section 1111(b)(3);

(ii) the ability to successfully achieve in classrooms where the language of instruction is English; or

(iii) the opportunity to participate fully in society.

Students that meet the definition and qualify for English Language instruction will receive additional support through the **Emergent Bilingual** Department (EB). Additionally, those students identified for services will receive the support through an Individualizing English Learning Plan. To ensure the student is making growth academically and with their English language skills, annually the students will take the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment.

TEXAS ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY ASSESSMENT SYSTEM (TELPAS)

Title III, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Act requires states to conduct annual statewide English language proficiency assessments for ELLs in grades K–12 in the linguistic domains of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. TELPAS is designed to assess the progress that limited English proficient (LEP) students make

in learning the English language and to drive instruction for ELLs. TELPAS reading, listening, speaking, and writing assessments enable teachers to holistically rate a LEP student’s English language proficiency based on interactions and observations of the student during classroom instruction. TELPAS measures English language proficiency in the following domains:

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

Student identified with an English Language need will need to take the TELPAS annually or until the student no longer requires English language instruction and is exited from the EL program. Information about testing dates, locations and times will be sent to each family 6-8 weeks prior to the assessment date.

For more information, please contact Ms. Laura Thiess, lthiess@texasonlineprep.org or Feyi Obamehinti, fobamehinti@texasonlineprep.org

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

TITLE IX AND NON-DISCRIMINATION NOTICE

The District designates the following person to coordinate its efforts to comply with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, as amended, for students:

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

In its efforts to promote nondiscrimination and as required by law, Huntsville ISD and TOPS does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, color, national origin, gender, sex, disability, age, or any other basis prohibited by law, in providing education services, activities, and programs, including CTE programs, and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups. The following district representatives have been designated to coordinate compliance with these legal requirements:

- Senior Director of Special Programs, for concerns regarding discrimination on the basis of disability: Cynthia Cook, ccook@texasonlineprep.org
- Contact Executive Director, for general concerns regarding discrimination: Kristina Nanini, knanini@texasonlineprep.org

DISCRIMINATION

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

PROHIBITED HARASSMENT

Prohibited harassment of a student is defined as physical, verbal, or nonverbal conduct based on the student's race, color, religion, sex, gender, national origin, disability, age, or any other basis prohibited by law that is so severe, persistent, or pervasive that the conduct:

- Affects a student's ability to participate in or benefit from an educational program or activity, or creates an intimidating, threatening, hostile, or offensive educational environment;
- Has the purpose or effect of substantially or unreasonably interfering with the student's academic performance; or
- Otherwise adversely affects the student's educational opportunities.
- Prohibited harassment includes dating violence as defined by this policy.

EXAMPLES

Examples of prohibited harassment may include offensive or derogatory language directed at another person's religious beliefs or practices, accent, skin color, or need for accommodation; threatening, intimidating, or humiliating conduct; offensive jokes, name calling, slurs, or rumors; physical aggression or assault; display of graffiti or printed material promoting racial, ethnic, or other negative stereotypes; or other kinds of aggressive conduct such as theft or damage to property.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT BY AN EMPLOYEE

Sexual harassment of a student by a District or Stride employee includes both welcome and unwelcome sexual advances; requests for sexual favors; sexually motivated physical, verbal, or nonverbal conduct; or other conduct or communication of a sexual nature when:

- A District or Stride employee causes the student to believe that the student must submit to the conduct in order to participate in a school program or activity, or that the employee will make an educational decision based on whether or not the student submits to the conduct; or
- The conduct is so severe, persistent, or pervasive that it:
 - Affects the student's ability to participate in or benefit from an educational program or activity, or otherwise adversely affects the student's educational opportunities; or
 - Creates an intimidating, threatening, hostile, or abusive educational environment.

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

BY OTHERS

Sexual harassment of a student, including harassment committed by another student, includes unwelcome sexual advances; requests for sexual favors; or sexually motivated physical, verbal, or nonverbal conduct when the conduct is so severe, persistent, or pervasive that it:

- Affects a student's ability to participate in or benefit from an educational program or activity, or creates an intimidating, threatening, hostile, or offensive educational environment;
- Has the purpose or effect of substantially or unreasonably interfering with the student's academic performance; or
- Otherwise adversely affects the student's educational opportunities.

EXAMPLES

Examples of sexual harassment of a student may include sexual advances; touching intimate body parts or coercing physical contact that is sexual in nature; jokes or conversations of a sexual nature; and other sexually motivated conduct, communications, or contact.

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

GENDER-BASED HARASSMENT

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

- Affects a student's ability to participate in or benefit from an educational program or activity, or creates an intimidating, threatening, hostile, or offensive educational environment;
- Has the purpose or effect of substantially or unreasonably interfering with the student's academic performance; or
- Otherwise adversely affects the student's educational opportunities.

EXAMPLES

Examples of gender-based harassment directed against a student, regardless of the student's or the harasser's actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity, may include offensive jokes, name-calling, slurs, or rumors; physical aggression or assault; threatening or intimidating conduct; or other kinds of aggressive conduct such as theft or damage to property.

REPORTING PROCEDURES:

STUDENT REPORT

Any student who believes that he or she has experienced prohibited conduct or believes that another student has experienced prohibited conduct should immediately report the alleged acts to a teacher, school counselor, principal, other District employee, or the appropriate District official listed in this policy. To report an incident of alleged bullying, please fill out the anonymous survey:

[Anonymous Bullying Reporting Survey](#)

EMPLOYEE REPORT

Any District employee who suspects or receives notice that a student or group of students has or may have experienced prohibited conduct shall immediately notify the appropriate District official listed in this policy and take any other steps required by this policy.

ALTERNATIVE REPORTING PROCEDURES

A student shall not be required to report prohibited conduct to the person alleged to have committed the conduct. Reports concerning prohibited conduct, including reports against the Title IX coordinator, may be directed to the Superintendent.

A report against the Superintendent may be made directly to the Board. If a report is made directly to the Board, the Board shall appoint an appropriate person to conduct an investigation.

TIMELY REPORTING

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

NOTICE TO PARENTS

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

INVESTIGATION OF THE REPORT

The District may request, but shall not require, a written report. If a report is made orally, the District official shall reduce the report to written form.

INITIAL ASSESSMENT

Upon receipt or notice of a report, the District official shall determine whether the allegations, if proven, would constitute prohibited conduct as defined by this policy. If so, the District shall immediately undertake an investigation, except as provided below at CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION.

If the District official determines that the allegations, if proven, would not constitute prohibited conduct as defined by this policy, the District official shall refer the complaint for consideration under FFI.

INTERIM ACTION

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

Complaint Process can be found here: [HISD Student Handbook](#)

Complaint Forms can be found under Required Postings here: [TOPS Contact Guide](#)

ADMISSION OF HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH

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

for homeless students living with foster parents or relatives other than their legal guardians.

The McKinney-Vento Definition of Homeless

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

The term "homeless children and youths":

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

(B) includes--

(i) children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; or are abandoned in hospitals;*

(ii) children and youths who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings (within the meaning of section 103(a)(2)(C));

(iii) children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and

(iv) migratory children (as such term is defined in section 1309 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965) who qualify as homeless for the purposes of this subtitle because the children are living in circumstances described in clauses (i) through (iii).

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

View the [full text of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act](#).

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

FOSTER CARE

Under Texas law, students in foster care are entitled to immediate enrollment when arriving at a new school or district — regardless of whether they have the necessary

documentation and paperwork.⁵² CPS caseworkers are required to enroll a child in school within three (3) school days of the child either: a) being placed in CPS custody; or b) moving to a new school or placement.⁵³ The caseworker then has up to 30 days to provide all necessary enrollment paperwork to the new school.⁵⁴

Follow up to ensure a student:

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

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

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

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

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

CHILDREN OF MILITARY FAMILIES

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

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

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

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

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

PARENT ACCESS TO STAFF CERTIFICATIONS

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

<http://secure.sbec.state.tx.us/SBECOnline/virtcert.asp>

COMPLAINT RESPONSE PROCEDURE

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

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

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

SCHOOL OUTINGS & STUDENT ACTIVITY CLUBS

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

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

TECHNOLOGY ISSUES AND USAGE

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

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

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

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

Therefore, the following is prohibited:

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

INFORMATIONAL WEBSITES

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

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

POWER OUTAGE AND CRISIS PLAN

What do I do if my internet goes out?

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

How do I change my password?

1. Log on to your computer.
2. Press the Ctrl, Alt, and Delete keys on the keyboard at the same time and then release them.
3. Select “Change Password” from the menu that appears on the screen.
4. Make sure the user name is correct.
5. Make sure the account in the second box is correct (whether it's a domain account or local computer account).
6. Type your old (current) password in the third box.
7. Type your new password in the fourth box.

8. Type your new password again in the fifth box.
9. Click “OK.”
10. Click “OK” to acknowledge the message that your password has been changed.
11. Press the Esc button, or click “Cancel” to return to the Windows desktop.

Where can I go to get more help?

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

PARENT TIPS AND TRICKS

Some of the most valuable tips and tricks are provided by experienced TOPS families.

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

Starting School:

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

Organization:

- Don’t be overwhelmed when your school materials arrive. Open the boxes, set aside what is for second semester, and stick to the basics.
- Organize your workspace as early as possible.
- Establish a reward system based on daily attitude and activity.

- Daily schedules are imperative for your child’s online learning success. Establish a schedule and stick to it.
- Obtain a notebook and write down questions for discussion with the teacher. Leave space to record responses.

Coaching:

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

General:

- Attend Learning Coach Orientation or Learning Coach Live sessions.
- Attend as many outings as possible. Meeting other families and students helps families create a sense of community and belonging, and provides them with the opportunity to share experiences.
- Make the scheduled teacher conferences a priority. Your teacher is an important component of this program and can really contribute a lot. Please take advantage of their professionalism and willingness to help.

I UNDERSTAND AND AGREE

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

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

- Engage in the online coursework in the OLS/OMS/OHS platforms, and complete all assessments and assignments by the due date
- Complete all beginning-of-year assessments, screenres,
- Regularly attend Class Connect Sessions
- Log-in and work each day
- Check email twice-daily
- I understand that as public-school students, TOPS Students are under the guidance of certified public-school teachers. As such, Learning Coaches agree to partner with their student’s teachers for their student’s success.
- I understand and agree to attend STAAR/EOC testing as a requirement of enrollment in Texas public schools, and I understand that I am required to provide transportation to all testing sites regardless of distance.
- I understand and agree to attend TELPAS testing as a requirement of enrollment in Texas public schools, if my student is part of the Emergency Bilingual program.
- I understand and agree that it is my responsibility to secure an Internet service provider, and I understand that failure to secure working Internet may result in withdrawal from the TOPS program.
- I understand that if my student receives special or related services that those services are provided by TOPS and through virtual platforms. However, the ARD committee will discuss the most appropriate setting for these services based on each individual student’s data.

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

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THIS DOCUMENT

Please fill out the following survey to acknowledge receipt of this document:

<https://na2.docusign.net/Signing/?insession=1&ti=a2f076bbb2194b1c9d29ecac1a3dcb15>

Note:

This handbook is a “living” document and may be changed, amended, or edited to reflect policy or procedural updates at any time. Parents/Learning Coaches will be notified of changes



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