



PARENT AND STUDENT HANDBOOK | 2009 - 2010

The Girls' School of Austin

2007 McCall

Austin, TX 78703

www.thegirlsschool.org

MISSION

The Girls' School of Austin provides an intellectually challenging education for girls in a supportive and creative environment. Our mission is to inspire girls to achieve personal excellence and prepare them to lead distinguished and fulfilling lives.

Values

- ★ Academic excellence is entirely consistent with civic responsibility and human decency.
- ★ Seriousness of purpose and fun go hand in hand in a well-formed educational environment.
- ★ Good teachers are tough-minded and warm-hearted.
- ★ Intellect is given life by curiosity, creativity, and a willingness to take risks.
- ★ Literacy in our time includes facility in mathematics and science.
- ★ The arts are a vital and rewarding part of human expression.
- ★ A young woman's place is anywhere she wants to be, and a good education is the best passport for getting there.

WELCOME

This handbook is your guide to the policies and procedures of The Girls' School of Austin. We have assembled this comprehensive information to help ease you and your family into a new year at GSA. Please read these pages with your daughter(s) before the beginning of the school year so that the policies of our school are clearly understood by both you and your incoming student(s). The important rules and regulations listed within this handbook provide much of the infrastructure that keeps our school running smoothly and with comfort and ease for everyone.

The Girls' School of Austin, founded in 2002, is an independent school offering a comprehensive education for the whole child. Our approach engages each girl fully in an environment that promotes independence, self-esteem and a love for learning. We are also committed to fostering a community in which all individuals interact with mutual respect and cooperation.

The Girls' School of Austin welcomes our returning and new students to the 2009-10 school year. **We ask that you and your daughter please sign the appended acknowledgement form after reading this handbook and return it to the school office by the date indicated on the form.** Thank you.

The Girls' School of Austin values the diversity of our community and of our world, and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sexual orientation, or national origin. In addition, the Girls' School of Austin will make reasonable accommodations for disabilities and sincerely held religious beliefs, including modifications to the policies herein, provided the accommodations do not impose an undue burden.

AFFILIATIONS/ACCREDITATION

The Girls' School of Austin is a proud member of The National Coalition of Girls' Schools and the National Association of Independent Schools. The School is accredited by SACS/AdvancED.

Calendar for 2009-2010

2009

Aug 17-21	Teacher workdays
Aug 22	Family workday
Aug 24	New family orientation
Aug 25	“Open house” for returning families
Aug 26	First full day of school (half day for Kindergarten)
Sept 7	School Holiday
Sept 10	Math Night
Sept 17	BTSN (Lower school)
Oct 12	School Holiday
Oct 30	Literary Figure Parade
Nov 13	Student Holiday (End of first trimester)
Nov 23	Half day lower school: parent-teacher conferences LS
Nov 24	Half day school: parent-teacher conferences all grades
Nov 25-27	Thanksgiving Break
Dec 1	Half day for middle school: parent-teacher conferences for MS
Dec 11	Science Fair
Dec 15	Rising Stars Concert (Dec 16 alternate)
Dec 17	Winter Concert
Dec 21-Jan 1	Winter Break

2010

Jan 4	Teacher Workday/Student Holiday
Jan 5	Classes Resume
Jan 18	School Holiday
Feb 12	Chinese New Year celebration
Feb 15	School Holiday
Mar 5	Student Holiday (end of second trimester)
Feb 25	Talent Show
Mar 15-Mar 19	Spring Break
Mar 22	Classes Resume
April 2	School Holiday
April 18	Gala (tentative)
April 24	Self-Portrait show (tentative)
May 4-6	CTP-4 testing
May 13	Spring concert (grades 4-8)
May 14	Research papers
May 20	Rising Stars concert (K-3)
May 21	Student Holiday (Trimester Reviews)
May 25	Field Day
May 28	Graduation
June 1	Teacher Workday

Board Meetings are generally the third Tuesday of every month at 7:00 p.m. on The Girls' School campus.

SCHOOL HOURS

Lower School (Grades K-4)	8:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.*
Middle School (Grades 5-8)	8:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

*Dismissal for lower school begins at 2:55 p.m.

SCHOOL DAY SCHEDULE

Arrival

Regular student arrival begins at 7:30 a.m. Except in cases of unusually inclement weather, arriving students are expected to proceed to the courtyard breezeway and remain until 7:55 a.m. at which time they may proceed to their first class.

Because the time prior to the first period class is valuable preparation time for teachers, students are not permitted in classrooms before the bell rings at 7:55 a.m. Teachers are asked to support one another in enforcing this important policy. Parents wishing to meet with teachers are asked to schedule an appointment during office hours, when teachers will have more time to adequately address parental concerns.

Attendance

We believe that regular attendance is not only essential to the academic and social growth of individual students but, given the collaborative nature of our program, essential to the growth of our students as a whole. The Girls' School community and the growth of all our students must be held in the highest regard. For this reason, we will not tolerate behaviors that are destructive to the community such as repeated unexcused absences and lack of preparation for and participation in classes. Such activities call into question a family's commitment to the Girls' School.

Accurate attendance records are a Texas legal requirement and therefore student attendance will be taken every morning. Teachers will submit absences to the main office by the end of first period (before 9:00 a.m.). A student is considered tardy if she is not in her assigned classroom by 8:00 a.m. Parents are expected to notify the school (by phone or email by 8:00 a.m.) of a student's absence or if a student will be late to school. A Student Activity form will be completed upon notice from the parent and provided to the appropriate staff.

Types of Absences

Excused absences: Absences may be excused for illness, family emergency, and events such as religious observances, medical appointments, weddings and graduations of immediate family members. **All other absences are unexcused unless specifically approved by the Head of School.** It is understood that a student who anticipates taking an excused absence must arrange with her teachers a plan to make up missed work. A physician's note is required when a child returns to school after an extended absence of five days or more, and a physician's note may be required for students with frequent illness or pattern (e.g. Mondays, Fridays, days following holidays) or when the Head of School otherwise determines that a physician's note is appropriate.

Unexcused absences: An unexcused absence is determined by the Head of School. Typically, family trips and extended vacations fall into this category, and families must notify the school in writing at least one week prior to the trip. General assignments may be picked up from the teachers if proper lead-time (one week) is given. The teacher will not be required to give extra help on make-up assignments. If trips are made while standardized tests are being given, make-up tests will not be administered.

- Teachers will record excused and unexcused absences for classes during the school year.
- Teachers are not expected to re-teach missed material to students with unexcused absences.

Illness or injury during the school day: If a student becomes ill or is injured during the day, teachers will notify the office so that parents may be contacted for transportation home. To maintain a healthy environment in our classrooms, students who are ill may not remain at school, and in the event a student becomes ill during class, teachers are asked to send the child to the office.

Medical appointments: To the extent possible, parents are encouraged to schedule medical and dental appointments after school hours or during school vacations.

Religious holidays: Students shall bring a note from home prior to the holiday absence stating how many days they will be absent. Typically, teachers will not require make-up homework, test taking, or projects on the day students return, unless a non-holiday weekend precedes or immediately follows the holiday.

Honesty regarding the nature of student absences is expected from students and parents. Teachers are asked to address questions or concerns regarding possible (parental) dishonesty with the Head of School.

Academic responsibilities following an absence: Students who have been absent are responsible for obtaining assignments and completing missed work. Such work should be completed to meet the teacher's deadlines.

Tardiness

Students not in their classrooms when the 8:00 a.m. bell sounds are considered tardy and must first report to the office for a late pass. Teachers need to record student tardiness in the student's attendance record, and should notify the office of any student's excessive tardiness. Students with excessive tardiness may receive detentions, and parents of students with excessive tardiness will be asked to confer with the Head of School to discuss possible remedies.

Tardiness is excused for illness, visits to a physician (note required with date and time of visit), or hazardous conditions. Other circumstances are subject to approval by the Head of School. Teachers are not required or expected to re-teach missed lessons to students with unexcused tardiness.

Early Dismissal

Parents should complete a Student Activity form should their daughter need to leave school early and must sign their daughter out before the student will be allowed to leave campus.

If the student is returning during the day, she is expected to sign in upon returning. The student is responsible for informing her teachers and making up the work on a schedule agreeable to the teacher.

Dismissal

A safe, orderly, and organized student dismissal at the end of each school day will require the cooperation of each last-hour teacher and parents. Teachers are asked to require students to remain in line in their designated area near the blue door, and teachers will accompany students from their classrooms as the students make their way to the pick-up point.

Kindergarten and first grade pick-up begins at 2:55 p.m. Second, third and fourth grade dismissal begins at 3:05 p.m. and middle school pick up begins at 3:30 p.m.

ALL students are supervised until pick up; and if a student has not been picked up by 3:15 p.m. (lower school) or 3:45 p.m. (middle school), they will be sent to after care. Students may leave the school only if:

- Parents pick them up.
- Parents have presented written permission for another person to pick them up and follows up with a verbal confirmation
- The person picking up the student presents sufficient photo identification.

Participation in After School Activities or Special Events (Field Trips)

A student who is too ill to participate in classes may not attend a field trip or participate in after school activities on campus on the day she was absent from regular classes.

Drop off/Pick up Procedures

During drop off and pick up times in the morning and afternoon:

1. Do not park on the other side of McCall during drop off and pick up, from 7:45-8:15 a.m. and again from 2:45 -3:15 p.m. If you are on campus for an appointment before either of those windows and will be here during those times, please plan ahead and park further down the street.
2. Do not turn onto McCall from Windsor during drop off or pick up. If you are approaching the school from Windsor, turn onto Bremen and then turn onto Horn. This will place you safely in the queue.
3. Pull all the way forward in the loop—in fact, pull all the way to the junction of the loop and McCall (this way we can get more cars in the loop). DO NOT get out of your car.
4. A teacher will guide your daughter to (or from) your vehicle. Please do not pull around the car in front of you unless instructed to do so.
5. Turn right when exiting the loop onto McCall; this will minimize congestion in the intersection of McCall and Horn.

UNIFORM POLICY

Student Dress Code

Uniforms are required at The Girls' School of Austin and each student is expected to adhere to the uniform code. The uniform regulations are intended to help parents/guardians and students avoid any misunderstanding of the school administration's expectations. All students are expected to be clean, neat and well groomed, and to dress in conformity with GSA's uniform policy.

Any staff member may ask a student to remove or replace any articles of clothing or accessories that do not comply with our uniform code. The school administration reserves the right to authorize or prohibit any individual item of clothing, even if it is not specifically stated in the uniform code.

Non-Compliance with Uniform Code

A Uniform Reminder notice will be sent home with your daughter each time she is not in compliance with GSA's uniform code. This notice must be signed by the student and a parent and returned the next day. Students are charged the equivalent of a tardy for the first day, and a tardy for every day the notice is unsigned and not returned to the office. The School may ask that a parent bring the appropriate clothing or have the student change into clothing that is on hand.

GSA Uniform Requirements

All shirts, sweaters and hooded jackets must have the approved GSA logo. Polo shirts and sweaters from previous years may have the school logo embroidered on them and continue to be worn.

Parents are requested to label all articles of clothing with permanent marker or name labels.

Dress Uniform (Every Monday):

Shirt: White Polo (Long or Short Sleeve w/GSA logo)

Skort/Skirt: Navy

Shoes: Black or Navy Mary Jane style with closed toe and back, heels 1 ½ maximum height. Middle School girls may wear ballet style shoes.

Socks: White dress (must cover ankle bone) or white tights.

On chilly winter days students may wear navy pants instead of a skort/skirt. Sweat pants are not allowed on dress uniform days except for PE.

Tuesday – Friday

Shirt: Red, Navy, Blue, White, or Yellow Polo (w/GSA logo)

Pants/Shorts/Skirt/Skort: Navy (No Cargo Pants/Shorts or Bike Shorts)
(No skirts shorter than two inches above knee)

Shoes: Any athletic tennis shoes, Mary Jane or ballet slipper styles

Socks – personal preference

Cardigan: Navy

GSA Spirit Wear Hooded Jacket: Navy

Friday Option: Any GSA Spirit Wear shirt w/logo (must have been purchased from school).

Please note that outer coats/jackets worn during cold weather may be any color but may not be worn in the classroom. Hats may be worn outside only.

P.E. Uniform – All Grades
Navy shorts or sweatpants
Any GSA Spirit Wear Shirt
Navy GSA Hooded Jacket
Athletic/tennis shoes

Students may change for P.E., but must change back into their uniforms prior to returning to their next class.

Jewelry & Hair

Only simple earrings and/or a simple necklace will be permitted.
Hair should be kept neat at all times.

Fingernail Polish/Cosmetics

Is discouraged but polish in light colors may be worn. Any GSA faculty or administrator reserves the right to ask a student to remove the polish if the color is inappropriate. Students are not permitted to wear make-up.

For safety purposes, sandals, flip-flops, or other open toed shoes may not be worn by our students.

COMPUTERS

Each classroom (grades 2 and up) is equipped with computers for student use (middle school students share a laptop cart). Student computer use is limited to those computers designated “student computers,” **and students may not use teacher or office computers at any time.**

Students and GSA staff are expected to abide by acceptable use guidelines. Any use described below is deemed “acceptable” and consistent with this policy. The final decision regarding whether any given use of the network or Internet is acceptable lies with the technology coordinator or the Head of School.

Acceptable Use

1. Supports and furthers GSA’s education purposes, goals and objectives.
2. Furthers online research related to education and instruction.
3. Is consistent with the ethical and network rules established by the school.
4. Does not violate any GSA policy.
5. Would not reflect negatively on GSA if known by the parents of GSA’s students or the general public.

Unacceptable Use

Any of the following uses is deemed “unacceptable” and a violation of the User Agreement and this policy. The final decision regarding whether any given use of the network or Internet is unacceptable lies with the Head of School.

1. Using, viewing, or participating in any third-party social networking site (e.g. Facebook, Myspace, Twitter)
2. Participating in any chat room that is not sponsored and overseen by GSA.
3. Unauthorized use of copyrighted material, including violating GSA’s software licensing agreements.
4. Posting or distribution of threatening, discriminatory, harassing, violent, sexual or otherwise inappropriate material.
5. Personal, political use to advocate for or against a candidate, office-holder, political party, or political position. Research or electronic communications regarding political issues or candidates shall not be a violation, provided the activity was conducted to fulfill an assignment for a class credit and otherwise complied with all GSA requirements and policies.
6. Tampering, i.e., accessing, reading, deleting, copying, or modifying with the electronic mail or stored documents of other users, regardless of where the message is being displayed or stored.
7. “Hacking,” i.e., attempting unauthorized access to any computer whether within the school’s network or outside it. Using another student’s login information is considered hacking.
8. Any use that would be unlawful under state or federal law.
9. Unauthorized disclosure, use, or distribution of personal identification information regarding students or employees.
10. Forgery of electronic mail message or transmission of unsolicited junk e-mail chain messages.

11. Use that violates the student code of conduct.
12. Use related to commercial activities or for commercial gain for a student or teacher.

The network resources are owned by The Girls' School of Austin and these systems (including e-mail and Internet access) are monitored. Any student violating these provisions is subject to loss of network access and/or disciplinary measures consistent with those outlined in the student conduct code, and/or criminal prosecution.

The Girls' School of Austin makes no guarantee of any kind, whether expressed or implied, for the services it is providing. GSA will not be responsible for any damages a user may suffer, including loss of data or interruptions in service. GSA will not be responsible for the accuracy or quality of information obtained through GSA technology resources or the Internet.

STUDENT LAPTOP USE (middle school)

In addition to the above rules, the following rules apply to laptop use on campus. Use of a school laptop is a privilege, and students who violate this policy will lose their privilege for a period of time to be determined by the Head of School.

- Only GSA laptops may be used on campus by GSA students.
- Students are assigned specific laptops and may use only their assigned computers and only under supervision.
- Each middle school grade has a unique gmail account and all activity on that gmail account is monitored by a teacher. No other email accounts may be used while on campus.
- Students may be asked to sign out/sign in their laptops each time they use them.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

Homework Assignments

Homework assignments at GSA serve either as reinforcement for classroom learning or as pre-learning for class work. Daily homework assignments may be posted in class and/or on Blackboard. Teachers may choose the method for posting homework assignments and parents and students should know how they are expected to record or access assignments. In addition, developing a system for recording, and then following through on assignments is a valuable skill.

Care must be taken in the planning and assigning of homework, as it is our shared belief that excessive amounts are unnecessary. A *reasonable* amount of homework may be assigned, and each teacher must take into consideration the possibility/probability of assignments by other teachers. One teacher should not dominate a student's after-school time.

- Homework assignments should be assigned in accordance with the following guidelines:

K-1 st	Approximately 30 minutes a night
2 nd -3 rd	Approximately 45 minutes a night
4 th -5 th	Approximately 1 hour a night
6 th	Approximately 1 ½ hours a night
7 th -8 th	Approximately 2 hours a night
K-4	No weekend homework

- Students who are accelerated in math should expect a slightly higher homework load.
- No homework for students over holidays.
- Teachers are asked to report any holiday assignments to the Head of School before giving them. In addition, the teacher is asked to contact the student's parents to notify them of the assignment their daughter will be expected to compete.

Completion of homework is required. Parents will be notified of a trend in incomplete homework. Teachers may assess a penalty (points deducted from assignment, for example), but the teacher's policy must be announced in advance to students and parents.

Make-Up Tests

It is a student's responsibility to meet with the teacher to reschedule missed tests. K-4 teachers will designate a time during the school day or may use study hall time (teachers must be sure to let parents know). Afternoon study hall is available for 5-8th graders. If a student does not reschedule and make-up the test within a week of the absence (7 calendar days or 5 class days), she will receive a zero for the test grade.

Academic Difficulties

In the event a student's performance is of concern, parents will be contacted as early as possible. Occasionally, there may be a student whose difficulties are greater than a teacher can address in the amount of time the student has available at school. It is also possible that the nature of the problem is such that the student needs additional support or a change in her program. If a need for support has been identified, the teacher will address his or her concern to the Head of School before the students may be referred for diagnostic evaluation. If tutoring is recommended, it must be scheduled after the school day with a qualified tutor unless on-campus tutoring is authorized by the Head of School. Parents are expected to follow through with remediation requests made by the school. If a student has an academic problem or behavioral issue associated with an academic issue, or other behavioral issues, these issues will be discussed with the Head of School.

Grading and Reporting

The GSA Trimester Review is designed to give students, parents and teachers as much information as possible about a student's academic experience and performance. Reviews are intended, as well, to provide an opportunity for the student to reflect on her own learning and identify goals for continued improvement.

Conferences

Parent-advisor conferences are scheduled for all parents in the fall before distribution of the first trimester review and conferences may be scheduled by request of the parent or the advisor/teacher at any time. Teachers should document conferences in writing.

Trimester Reviews

In November, February and May, written performance reviews on each student's academic and social progress are sent home to parents.

Grading Procedures in Grades K-3

Academic achievement is evaluated at the lower elementary grade level by written teacher comments, and classroom behavior and performance is assessed using the following language:

Exceeds Standard
At Standard
Approaching Standard
Not At Standard

Trimester Reviews for lower school students in grades K-3, include improvement goals written by teachers. In addition to trimester reviews, lower school students assemble portfolios of their work—one portfolio per trimester.

Grading Procedures in Grades 4-8

In lower school grade 4 and in middle-school grades (5-8), academic achievement is evaluated by the letters A, B, C, D and F with + or – representing performance at the upper or lower end of the range. Teachers are required to indicate a numeric and letter grade. The grading scale at The Girls' School of Austin is as follows:

A+	97-100
A	93-96
A-	90-92
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D+	67-69
D	63-66
D-	60-62
F	59 and below

Students whose class work is incomplete at review time will receive a letter grade of "I", which may be changed when required work is turned in, no later than two weeks following the last day of the trimester. Performance grades are given in math, science, social studies, language arts and Spanish. Grades are based on projects, test scores, quizzes, assigned work, and participation in class discussions and activities.

Effort Grades

At all grade levels and where applicable, an effort grade is given in music, art, PE, SET and health and is based on the following criteria:

1. The students come to class promptly, with assigned work completed/prepared and correct class materials, ready to begin work.
2. The student pays attention in class, listens to the teacher or student who is speaking.
3. The student contributes positively to class discussion, answers questions raised by the teacher or by a student and shares ideas and insights with the class
4. The student makes an independent effort to learn.

Classroom behavior and performance of middle school students is assessed using a 4-point scale:

Exceeds Standard
At Standard
Approaching Standard
Not At Standard

Promotion and Retention

Advancement to the next grade level is subject to the student's readiness for advancement and the opinion of her GSA teachers that she can comfortably do satisfactory work at the higher level. School policy is to notify parents in writing when a student's academic performance is such that she is at risk of retention. At the discretion of the Head of School, such students may be placed on academic probation or, in cases where the school finds itself unable to meet the needs of the student, may be dismissed from the Girls' School of Austin.

If a teacher feels that a student might not be able to proceed to the next grade, that information should be shared with the Head of School immediately. The Head of School, teachers, and parents will meet to seek possible remedies. GSA policy holds that a student is at risk for retention or dismissal if she has not demonstrated sufficient academic and social growth to capably meet the demands of the next grade OR has required an extraordinary and excessive amount of individual time and attention from the teachers. In all cases where promotion is in question, the Head of School will initiate contact with the parents.

In order to pass a subject, a student must have a yearly average of at least 60 (or D-). To be promoted from one grade level to the next, a student shall attain an overall average of 70 (or C-) or above for the year in all courses taken. In addition, a student shall maintain an average of 70 (or C-) or above in the following core subjects: language arts, mathematics, social studies, science and Spanish. Students who are in advanced math must maintain a grade average of 80% or above in each trimester in order to continue participation in that program. A student who fails two or more subjects shall not be admitted to the Girls' School of Austin the following year.

A student who fails one subject for the year must attend an accredited summer school and pass with a grade of at least 70 (or C-). The student then will be promoted and placed on academic probation for a

period determined by the school. If the student does not go to summer school or attends and does not pass with a grade of at least 70 (or C-), the student will not be permitted to return to the Girls' School.

On occasion, the school may request professional diagnostic evaluation of a student whose performance is of concern to the teacher or the school. Because requests for testing are always initiated to enable teachers to better respond to the needs of GSA students, it is the expectation of the school that recommendations/requests for testing or counseling be honored by the student's parents. If, during the school year, a school-request for testing or counseling for a student is ignored by the student's parents, the school reserves the right to dismiss a student from the GSA program.

Testing – Individual/Diagnostic

After consultation among teachers, parents, and administrators, individual testing can be requested for students. Testing may be requested if questions arise about a child's intellectual and/or emotional development. Once the testing is completed, parents need to sign a release for the school to receive the recommendations and strategies to use with the individual student. Parents/guardians are responsible for covering the cost of testing.

Testing – Standardized Achievement

As part of the ongoing evaluation of the GSA academic program, students in grades 1 through 8 will take the CTP-4 achievement tests each spring. Standardized test results are one indicator of a student's abilities and progress, and are used as tools to help teachers to identify skill areas requiring attention. At no time are such scores used in determining student grades.

BEHAVIOR GUIDELINES

GSA is committed to maintaining an environment in which all members of the community interact with mutual respect and cooperation. The school is committed to being an institution free of bullying and harassment based on factors including, but not limited to, race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, or medical condition. The school will not tolerate harassment of students, administrators, faculty, staff, parents, or other students. The school will take appropriate action against any person whose behavior is found to be in violation of this policy.

Self-Discipline

A minimum of rules with maximum observance is GSA's policy. Each student is expected to treat her classmates and her teachers with kindness, consideration, and respect. Teachers, staff, and administrators serve as role models and counselors for this behavior. In addition, they provide direct guidelines when needed.

Students should leave and enter buildings in a quiet, well-organized fashion. Classroom routines such as how students move between classes, perform classroom jobs, excuse themselves to use bathroom and water facilities, and participate in class discussions will be clearly established at the beginning of each school year by the student's teachers.

Appropriate behavior is the norm at GSA, and the rare incidence of academic or behavioral misconduct is dealt with quietly and respectfully but firmly. Repeated acts of minor misconduct such as interfering with the instructional process, disobeying the dress code,

not following proper procedures, being in an unauthorized area, or being disrespectful to another member of the community, or any act of major misconduct such as use or possession of drugs or alcohol, possession of weapons, vandalism, and threats of violence can be grounds for dismissal.

Parents are notified if a child has a persistent behavioral problem. When this happens, parents are encouraged to join the school in a cooperative effort to understand and change disturbing behavior patterns. The Head of School will recommend outside professional help when she deems such action necessary. The school reserves the right to request, for good reason, the withdrawal of any student.

Academic Honesty

Academic honesty is of critical importance at GSA. Any violation of the academic honesty code is considered academic misconduct, and will be addressed accordingly. Academic honesty means:

- A student completes and submits only her own work
- A student does not allow another student to copy her work
- A student does not plagiarize—use another person’s written work or ideas without giving credit to the author or creator
- A student does not forge a parents’ required signature
- A student does not falsify information intended for or by parents
- A student completes tests and quizzes without the use of any unauthorized notes
- A student completes tests and quizzes in silence without showing work to another person during the test
- A student refrains from sharing information about a test with a student who has not yet taken it; and
- A student does not program formulas, equations, or words into the memory of a calculator or handheld computer device

The determination that a student has engaged in academic dishonesty shall be based on the judgment of the classroom teacher or other supervising professional employee, taking into consideration written materials, observation, or information from students. Students found to have engaged in academic dishonesty will be referred to the head of school and an appropriate penalty established, up to and including dismissal.

Bullying Policy

“We cannot live only for ourselves. A thousand fibers connect us with our fellow men; and among those fibers, as sympathetic threads, our actions run as causes, and they come back to us as effects.”

-Herman Melville

Bullying is anti-social behavior and violates the type of community and culture that The Girls’ School honors and cultivates. Bullying may be commonplace in our culture, but we do not believe it is healthy or normal and we feel compelled to work to protect the type of community that is the cornerstone of The Girls’ School. Positive peer relations and the ability to interact with community members peacefully and effectively is a necessary life skill. Bullying is a learned behavior and if it can be learned, it can be examined and

changed. Our goal is a culture of acceptance, empathy, tolerance, and compassion wherein all children and adults feel safe. Bullying behaviors are in direct conflict with that goal and will not be tolerated.

At The Girls' School bullying...

- is aggressive behavior that is intended to hurt, control, intimidate, or humiliate the target
- can be physical, verbal, or emotional
- is carried out repeatedly over time
- occurs in relationships with a power imbalance

Examples include, but are not limited to, name-calling, taunting, belittling, cruel criticism, slurs, personal defamation, malicious rumors, anonymous notes, poking, pinching, scratching, destroying property, ignoring, isolating, excluding, or shunning.

Bullying will not be tolerated and students will be held accountable. Administrators, teachers, staff, parents, and students are asked to “pay attention, get involved, and never look away.”

Educational programs at The Girls' School teach the students how to recognize, refuse, and report bullying. Emphasis is placed on the important role of the “courageous bystander” in breaking the bullying cycle and students are taught both how to help without getting hurt and the difference between tattling and reporting.

Parents and students of The Girls' School are encouraged to report any episodes that may involve bullying to the Head of School. If a bullying episode has occurred, teachers, administrators and parents will work together with the person bullying, the person being bullied, and the students who observed the bullying to seek solutions.

CONFLICT

While bullying is not considered normal behavior, conflict is considered normal, and as a school for girls we recognize the importance of learning how to deal with conflict well.

How we deal with conflict at The Girls' School

Our goal is to build a culture of respect and healthy conflict resolution through student, parent and teacher education and practice.

In order to achieve this goal, members of the GSA community will...

- Understand that conflict naturally arises as part of life and is an opportunity for growth.
- Communicate directly and respectfully with others.
- Take responsibility for their contributions to the situation and for its resolution.

INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

Recess

All lower school students enjoy recess outdoors whenever the weather permits and should have appropriate outdoor wear when necessary. Indoor recess will be allowed for special

circumstances, as well as on rainy days, during extreme cold or other inclement weather conditions.

Lunch and Snack

Students are encouraged to eat a nutritious breakfast prior to school each day. Likewise, students bringing lunch to school should pack a wholesome, balanced meal including protein, a vegetable, a fruit and a grain. Teachers see observable behavior changes after unbalanced meals or too much sugar so we ask that no soda, high-caffeine drinks or candy be brought into the school. Students are encouraged to use refillable bottles. Neither refrigeration, a microwave oven, nor hot water is available for use by students.

Our students eat outdoors, picnic style, in the central courtyard and each grade is assigned weekly clean-up duty to keep our campus beautiful. Parents are welcome to join their daughters at this time. During rain, extreme cold or other inclement weather conditions, students will eat in the classrooms.

Students should pack a healthful mid-morning snack and, for extended school days, a mid-afternoon snack as well. Parents are reminded that during hot lunch days, or ½ days for students, students must still bring a morning snack to school. While the school has snacks available for after care, and when necessary, for our students, in order to assure that your child is eating the appropriate healthy, nutritious snacks of your choice, please be diligent about providing snacks for your daughter.

After School Care

After School Care is available Monday through Friday from 3:15 to 5:30 p.m. Students are automatically placed in After School Care if they are not picked up by 3:15 p.m. for grades K-4 or by 3:45 p.m. for grades 5-8. Students in grades K-4 can attend After School Care from 3:00 – 3:30 p.m. at no cost if they have an older sibling in middle school. Fees are as follows:

Children being picked up anytime between 3:16 - 4:30 p.m.	\$ 7.00
Children being picked up anytime between 4:31 - 5:30 p.m.	\$14.00
Late pick up fee after 5:30 p.m.	\$ 1.00 per minute

Those students participating in after school programs/activities and who remain after 5:01 p.m. will be charged \$7.00 for after-school care until 5:30 p.m. and a late pick up fee of \$1.00 per minute after 5:30 p.m.

The GSA Office phones will be answered and/or messages checked between 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. If you need to contact our After-School Care Coordinator, please call the GSA cell # at 779-3290 after 3:30 p.m.

Building Access

The main office is open Monday through Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 pm. All visitors to GSA must register at the main office upon arrival at the school building. Students and unauthorized adults are not allowed in any part of the school building before or after hours unless supervised by a GSA staff member.

Gifts to Teachers

During the winter holiday season and at the end of the year, students may wish to express

good wishes to teachers and staff members, and the habit of gift-giving can be a lovely family custom. We request that the expression of good wishes, thanks, or holiday greetings be entirely voluntary. Class gifts—and solicitations to parents for collections for teacher gifts—are not allowed.

Medications for Students

Medications for students, prescription or non-prescription (including herbal remedies), will be administered to students only when it is absolutely necessary and only if it cannot be sufficiently administered at home. As a general rule, only administrative personnel may administer medications to students; however, teachers are permitted to administer medicines in an emergency. All medications must be in their original container and be accompanied by the appropriate form (Authorization for Administration of Medication), completely filled out and signed by a parent. Medications are to be given to an adult by the parent, and may not be sent with the student in a backpack, lunch box, or coat pocket, or be kept by the student at school (Exception: Asthma medication/inhalers may be kept by the student, but the authorization form must be on file and the teacher made aware that this medication is in the student's possession). All medications must be labeled with the student's name, date, instructions, and if prescription, the physician's name. Students with severe allergies should keep an Epi-Pen or Benadryl in the Main office. The school maintains a first-aid kit, which contains general medications (i.e. Jr Tylenol, Tums, etc.); however we do not dispense any medication without prior authorization from a parent.

In all instances, all employees should refrain from discussing a child's medication or medical condition absent a compelling need to do so and then only in private.

Accidents

Any incident involving any injury requiring any form of treatment beyond the most basic of first aid should be recorded using an "Incident Form," which is available in the main office.

Teachers are asked to request assistance whenever it would be useful or necessary, whether in the classroom or on the playground. In the event of an accident or injury, the teacher on duty should notify the main office immediately. The Head of School is the first contact person. The following procedures should be followed:

- On the playground, children are expected to notify the teacher(s) on duty of an accident or injury.
- In the event of minor injuries, the teacher on duty will assign a student to accompany the injured child to the office for first-aid treatment.
- The Head of School or a delegate will contact an injured student's parents if the injury requires any form of treatment beyond the most basic of first aid. The Head of School or the delegate will call 911 for serious injuries of any kind, and parents will be contacted immediately. (Student Emergency Information Sheets are on file in the main office, and contain contact information as well as hospital and physician preferences).

An accident report for serious injuries (including location map and witness reports) is to be completed by the teacher on duty and kept on file in the office.

Parties

GSA welcomes and celebrates the diversity of its community. As a non-sectarian private school, GSA has the unique opportunity to deal creatively and sensitively with varying ethnic, economic, religious, and socio-cultural perspectives. The richness of our diverse culture provides the conditions for learning from one another; for respecting each other's differences; and for building a caring and cooperative educational community.

While GSA does not promote any particular religious or moral outlook, neither does it inhibit religious belief or non-belief. For that reason, our policy supports those seasonal, cultural, or religious activities that may serve an educational purpose for *all* students.

Fundraising

As is the case with most private schools, the Girls' School between income through tuition and fees and expenses with fundraising. Families are asked to contribute to the GSA Annual Fund in the fall and the GSA gala (or other event) in the spring. All other fundraising must be approved by the Director of Development. Fundraising for other organizations is generally not permitted on campus unless it is part of a school-sponsored service event (for example, a grade level fundraiser for the Food Pantry etc) and even these fundraisers must be approved by the Director of Development. In general, we prefer to assist other organizations through direct service (tree planting vs. raising money for trees).

SECURITY, SAFETY AND EMERGENCIES

Safety

For students' safety, parents must never leave children at the school in the absence of a member of staff.

Sun

To protect against skin damage, GSA students are strongly encouraged to apply sunscreen before school. In addition, caps and sunglasses are recommended.

In addition to the guidelines outlined above, the following procedures and policies are in place for emergencies:

Emergency Closings

Except for regularly scheduled holidays, The Girls' School of Austin will be open Monday through Friday from 7:30 AM to 5:00 PM. In the event of inclement weather, national crisis, or other emergency, either prior to the start of school, or in the event the school will close early, parents will be notified through our One Call Now system. If possible, information will be posted on the website.

Evacuation

Fire drills are held randomly at GSA, as required by law. Teachers will be informed of emergency procedures at the beginning of each school year. In addition, evacuation diagrams are exhibited on the walls of each room in the school. No one is to return to the school building until it is designated safe by the Head of School or a delegate.

In the event of a local or national emergency, teachers will be notified immediately. Teachers are asked to refrain from sharing information with students unless or until advised to do so. Computers, televisions and radios should be turned off upon notification of an emergency.

In the event an emergency within the school necessitates total or partial closure, threatens the safety and well being of students, and/or interferes in the normal operation of the school, the following emergency procedure will be followed:

1. The report of an emergency shall be directed to the Head of School's office.
2. The Head of School or a delegate shall contact the City Police Department and the Department of Emergency Services when appropriate.
3. The Head of School or a delegate will contact parents to pick up children, if advisable.

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT POLICY

At The Girls' School we believe that a thorough understanding of how our bodies work is empowering. We also believe that our girls should be well prepared to make healthy decisions, especially as they enter the pressure cooker of adolescence. This is why we employ a comprehensive health education program in every grade that includes developmentally-appropriate information on human growth and development, nutrition and exercise, alcohol, tobacco and drug abuse, body image, personal skills, relationships, sexual health and behavior, and cultural influences. We strive to create an environment in which girls are comfortable asking questions and engaging in candid age-appropriate and context-appropriate discussions on any topic.

COMMUNICATION

Calls To and From Parents

Calls to parents will be made any time a teacher has a concern about a student's emotional, physical, academic, or social well-being. The period before school and before each class is critical preparation time for teachers, and does not allow enough time for teachers to adequately address parental concerns. In general, calls from parents should be made during regular school hours and, if possible, during the teacher's office hours, which the teacher will share at the beginning of the school year. Teachers receive their phone messages regularly, and will return a parent's phone call by the end of the next teaching day. In addition, each faculty member has voice mail and an e-mail address and checks messages periodically. Out of respect for teachers and their families, the school asks that parents refrain from calling teachers at home to discuss school matters.

Cell Phones

Cell phones may not be used on school premises at anytime during the school day for any reason (including lunch and/or recess periods). Students should not make calls from school or receive phone calls at school except in case of an emergency. Social plans should be completed prior to or after the school day. Messages for students should be received well in

advance of dismissal time. Any staff member who sees a student with a cell phone will confiscate the phone for the rest of that school day and the phone will be kept in the office until the end of the following day when it will be returned to the student by the Head of School. Other electronic equipment (i.e. mp3 players, pda's, etc.) can be used by a student before and after school, and during lunch and in class only if authorized by the teacher. All equipment must be put away by the student prior to start of class.

School Newsletter

Once each month expect the GSA newsletter, where you will find important information about scheduled and upcoming events, field trips, and items of interest to students and parents. The newsletter is a collaborative effort of our middle school students, staff and parents.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Parents have access to all areas of the facilities used by their children, but must first check in with the office. All parents, visitors, etc. must sign the Visitor Log each time when they arrive and depart the school. For the benefit of parents and teachers, parents are asked to refrain from visiting classrooms before school or during the school day, unless previously scheduled. While we ask that parents refrain from unexpected visits to the classroom in order to minimize student disruptions, parents are welcome to participate in their daughter's education in a variety of ways. Parent help is very much needed to keep up the quality and quantity of activities offered at the Girls' School of Austin and the variety of talents parents share with the school contributes to the richness of the environment. We ask parents to be involved in at least one school sponsored event each year. When requested by a teacher, assistance in the classroom is also appreciated.

Parents in various occupations are invited to speak to appropriate groups about their vocational fields. We also encourage parent volunteers to help with our art and music program and to accompany students on field trips.

To comply with our insurance policy, and in the interest of students' safety, parents volunteering to provide transportation for field trips must present proof of insurance coverage and a valid driver's license. Also for safety reasons, parent-drivers are asked to refrain from using a cell phone while driving GSA students. Faculty/staff members are not permitted to drive students to any school sponsored event or leave school premises during the regular school day with any student(s) unless specifically authorized by the Head of School, and with written authorization from the parents.

Room Parents

Parents have the opportunity to sign up to be a Room Parent at the Open House in August. At least one parent from each class serves as a room parent (or, for middle school, a class parent). Room parents work directly teachers to help set up chaperones for field trips and service projects.

Parent Concerns

We ask that parents direct questions, concerns and praise to their daughter's teacher. If there are problems that cannot be resolved, parents should consult with the Head of School. If, after discussion with the Head of School, a parent feels an area of concern warrants

School Board attention, a written request for review by the Board should be submitted to the office. This request will then be forwarded to the President of the Board of Trustees at least one week prior to the next scheduled Board meeting. Upon receipt of the request, the president will place this matter as the first topic of discussion on the agenda, and the parent(s) will be welcome to present the matter to the Board.

STUDENT RECORDS & SAFETY

Immunizations and Health

New health forms must be completed for all students each year. By order of the Department of Health and Human Services of the State of Texas, those students unable to produce an immunization record by the first day of school will not be allowed to enter school until the appropriate records or the appropriate objection affidavits are received by the GSA office. GSA requires vision and hearing screening exams of students in accordance with Department of Health and Human Services requirements. These exams are offered by the school at a nominal fee, but parents may opt to have these exams conducted by their physician.

Requests for Copies of Transcripts

Requests for copies of transcripts should be in writing, signed by the parent, and sent directly to the Head of School. Records of students will not be released if there are any outstanding fees or past due tuition.

Child Abuse and Neglect

Texas state law requires GSA staff to report immediately any suspected neglect, or sexual, physical, or emotional abuse. Without hesitation, a confidential report will be made directly to the Texas Department of Family Protective Services within 24 hours. Parents are not notified in the event a concern is reported to DHS.

TUITION & SCHOOL SUPPLIES

Payment of Tuition and Fees

All students are required to have a signed Girls' School of Austin Enrollment Contract on file with the school office per contract terms. Careful consideration must be given to this legal document. Tuition payments may be made by electing one of the following payment plans: annual payment, semi-annual payments, or monthly payments. Tuition does not include incidental expenses, uniforms, or athletic events. GSA requires students to enroll in piano or strings and fees for those classes are charged as follows: piano fees are \$100 per month, and parents must pay a rental fee/or purchase price for the instrument and accessories required to participate in the strings program. An annual activity fee will cover any school-sponsored field trips.

Parents/guardians electing to pay tuition monthly will pay through FACTs Management Service. Families electing to pay monthly may obtain an enrollment form from the school office or by contacting FACTs directly at 1-800-539-9055 and www.factsmgt.com.

Enrollment of a student at GSA obligates parents to pay the full tuition for the year, unless parents elect to participate in a tuition refund plan. Participation in a tuition refund plan is

elective in most cases and is not included in the tuition cost outlined above.

Non-payment of tuition on time is grounds for dismissal. Records will not be released until all fees are paid, and students whose accounts are not current will be unable to start school or take examinations.

Re-Enrollment

Contracts for the following school year are sent to families of current students in February with a firm deadline for return. The Board of Trustees votes each year on the rate of increase for the tuition and fee schedule, and each current and applying family is notified of the increase before the contract deadline. The Girls' School of Austin reserves the right to insist on the withdrawal of any student or family whose presence is considered by the school to be detrimental to either the students or the school.

School Supplies and Instructional Materials

A list of school supplies and a suggested summer reading list are provided to students/parents in early summer.

School Activities and Events

Community Service

Community Service is an integral part of the GSA experience. The students have opportunities throughout the year to participate in activities designed to help them understand the many and varied needs in both their immediate community and in the much larger global community.

Speakers

Students will enjoy visits from outstanding members of the community, children's authors, illustrators, artists, etc. Teachers are encouraged to invite speakers to make a presentation at GSA.

Theme Days

Throughout the year, students will participate in theme days, which complement class studies. Students may be assigned to dress and act the part of a particular character, or may be asked to provide background information or a sampling of foods related to the theme. Teachers are encouraged to plan cross-curricular activities for these days.

PARENT AND STUDENT ACKNOWLEDGEMENT 2009-10

Parents and their daughters are asked to read carefully over the 2009-2010 Girls' School of Austin Parent/Student Handbook to ensure that they understand and are fully informed of the school's policies and procedures.

Student Name(s): _____
Grade (s): _____

We have read and understand all of the information in The Girls' School of Austin Parent/Student Handbook and agree to abide by and support both the spirit and the content of the policies, procedures, and regulations described therein. Additionally, we agree to ask for assistance and/or clarification when issues arise that are unclear.

Parent Acknowledgement:

_____	_____
Parent Name (Please Print)	Parent Signature
_____	_____
Parent Name (Please Print)	Parent Signature

Student Acknowledgement:

_____	Student Signature
_____	Student Signature
_____	Student Signature

**Please return this form to the Main Office no later than
Friday, August 28, 2009. Thank you!**