



VESTAVIA HILLS

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CITY SCHOOLS

**Parent-Student Handbook  
2022-23**

Vestavia Hills City Schools  
1204 Montgomery Highway  
Vestavia Hills, AL 35216

# Vestavia Hills City Schools Mission Statement

The mission of Vestavia Hills City Schools is to ensure each student learns without limits by pursuing knowledge and igniting curiosity about the world through a system distinguished by:

## A safe and nurturing environment



## Unparalleled community support



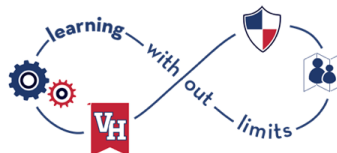
## The courage to be creative



## Appreciation of diversity



## Multiple paths to a bold future



## Beliefs

- Each person deserves to be safe.
- Diversity strengthens community.
- All people have the right to learn without limits.
- Succeeding is an intentional pursuit.
- Trusting relationships are the essence of a strong community.
- All people deserve respect.
- Every person has the responsibility to be a good steward of resources.
- Community service is a civic duty.
- Every voice deserves to be heard.
- Society is strengthened by educated people.
- A person's uniqueness is a gift.
- Work ethic builds character.
- Every person has value.
- Leading positive change is the mark of a thriving community.
- Faith is vital to one's life.
- Transparency inspires trust.
- Every person is responsible for his/her actions.
- Health and wellness are vital to quality of life.

# Introduction

The purpose of this handbook is to inform students and parents of some basic rights, as well as the responsibilities that go along with these rights. The rights and responsibilities in no way diminish the legal authority of school officials and the Board of Education. The intent of providing this handbook is to foster a safe, friendly, and orderly atmosphere in which parents, students, and school personnel work cooperatively to the benefit of the children in Vestavia Hills City Schools.

This handbook is not intended to, nor does it, contain all rules, policies, procedures, and/or regulations that relate to students. Every effort has been made to provide parents and students with complete and accurate information. However, Vestavia Hills City Schools reserves the right to change program requirements and to modify, amend, or revoke any rules, regulations, and schedules, both academic and financial.

No student has the right to interfere with the education of a fellow student. Students have the responsibility to respect the rights of all persons involved in the educational process and to exercise the highest degree of self-discipline in observing and adhering to legitimate rules and regulations. Responsibility is inherent in the exercise of every right.

# Jurisdiction of the Board of Education

The Code of Conduct presented in this handbook is deemed an extension of Vestavia Hills City Schools' policy and will have the force and effect thereof. The Vestavia Hills City Schools Board of Education requires all administrators, faculty members, students, and parents/guardians to adhere to and comply with all Board-approved policy.

The comprehensive Board policy can be accessed on the VHCS website at <https://www.vestavia.k12.al.us>.

## Parental Responsibilities

Under Alabama law, local school systems are required to inform parents/guardians of their education-related responsibilities.

- Parents/legal custodians and guardians are responsible for their children's attendance and conduct in school. Under Alabama law, parents/guardians who fail to compel their child to regularly attend school or fail to compel their child to properly conduct himself or herself as a student in accordance with the written policy on school behavior, adopted by the Board of Education, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor. Upon conviction, shall be fined no more than \$100.00, and may be sentenced to hard labor for the county for no more than 90 days (*Code of Alabama, § 16-28-12*).
- Parents/legal custodians and guardians are required to read and share with their children the Parent/Student Handbook provided by each school.

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# VESTAVIA HILLS

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## CITY SCHOOLS

### **BOARD OF EDUCATION**

Mrs. Jennifer Weaver, President  
Mrs. Jaclyn Hudson, Vice President  
Mr. Scott Brown  
Mr. Jay Stewart  
Mr. Jonathan Handey

Michael Todd Freeman, Ed.D., Superintendent

### **ACCREDITATION**

The Vestavia Hills City Schools are fully accredited by Cognia.

### **Equal Education/Employment Opportunity**

Vestavia Hills City Schools (VHCS) does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age in its programs and activities and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups. The following person has been designated to handle inquiries regarding the non-discrimination policies: Meredith Hanson, Section 504/Title IX Coordinator, at 1204 Montgomery Highway, 205-402-5100.

# District Administrators and Employees

**Bailey, Jennifer**

Director of Student Services

**Barber, Amy**

Administrative Assistant

**Balogh, Mary Laslie**

Program Specialist for Exceptional Children

**Barber, Jed**

Maintenance

**Bellew, Tony**

Director of Maintenance

**Brown, Courtney**

Chief School Finance Officer

**Caffey, Marty**

School Resource Officer Supervisor

**Callahan, Tom**

Director of Administrative Services

**Carlson, Amanda**

Director of Child Nutrition Program

**Cooper, Antonio**

Director of Curriculum and Instruction

**Cunningham, Lisa**

Program Specialist for Exceptional Children

**Dansby, Lee**

Technology

**Farms, Aidan**

Technology

**Fore, Dena**

Data Management Specialist

**Freeman, Todd**

Superintendent

**Gaston, Anna**

Social Worker

**Hanson, Meredith**

Director of Personnel Services

**Hill, Scott**

Maintenance

**Holiday, Ed**

Technology

**Hoskin, Megan**

Program Specialist for Exceptional Children

**Johnson, Willie**

Payroll/Benefits

**Justice, Cricket**

Accounts Payable

**King, Countess**

Bookkeeping / Accounting / Payroll

**Lafiore, Chris**

Maintenance

**Lemak, Tracy**

Administrative Assistant

**Lenhart, Faith**

Arts Education Coordinator

**Lovelady, Brendan**

IT Systems Specialist

**Martin, Patrick**

Assistant Superintendent of Operations and Services

**McGhee, Whit**  
Director of Public Relations

**Nichols, Laura**  
Receptionist

**O'Berry, Katy**  
Psychometrist

**Pennington, Chris**  
Director of Assessment and Accountability

**Peterson, Keta**  
Administrative Assistant

**Price, Keith**  
Director of Technology

**Rainey, Aimee**  
Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning

**Ray, Patrick**  
Technology

**Riddle, Carlson**  
Maintenance

**Ritchey, Sandy**  
Director of Exceptional Education

**Seale, Brenda**  
Lead Nurse

**Varner, Michael**  
Director of Transportation

**Vice, Tricia**  
Executive Secretary to the Superintendent

**Wedgworth, Brooke**  
Director of Curriculum and Instruction

**Young, Michael**  
Network Administrator



# Schools

## **Vestavia Hills Elementary Cahaba Heights**

(Grades K-5)  
Lauren Dressback, Principal  
4401 Dolly Ridge Road  
Vestavia Hills, AL 35243  
(205) 402-5480

## **Vestavia Hills Elementary Dolly Ridge**

(Grades K-5)  
Dr. Ty Arendall, Principal  
2650 Gresham Drive  
Vestavia Hills, AL 35243  
(205) 402-5325

## **Vestavia Hills Elementary East**

(Grades K-5)  
Dr. Mark Richardson, Principal  
2109 Tyson Drive  
Vestavia Hills, AL 35216  
(205) 402-5200

## **Vestavia Hills Elementary Liberty Park**

(Grades K-5)  
Dr. Blair Inabinet, Principal  
17051 Liberty Parkway  
Vestavia Hills, AL 35242  
(205) 402-5400

## **Vestavia Hills Elementary West**

(Grades K-5)  
Kim Hauser, Principal  
2521 Waldrige Road  
Vestavia Hills, AL 35216  
(205) 402-5151

## **Liberty Park Middle School**

(Grades 6-8)  
Roger Dobnikar, Principal  
17035 Liberty Parkway  
Vestavia Hills, AL 35242  
(205) 402-5450

## **Louis Pizitz Middle School**

(Grades 6-8)  
Dr. Alicia Hunsberger, Principal  
2826 Columbiana Road  
Vestavia Hills, AL 35216  
(205) 402-5350

## **Vestavia Hills High School Freshman Campus**

(Grade 9)  
Bill Mann, Principal  
2020 Pizitz Drive  
Vestavia Hills, AL 35216  
(205) 402-5300

## **Vestavia Hills High School**

(Grades 10-12)  
Tonya Rozell, Principal  
2235 Lime Rock Road  
Vestavia Hills, AL 35216  
(205) 402-5250

## **Middle School Feeder Patterns**

Students who attend Vestavia Hills Elementary East, West, and Dolly Ridge will attend Louis Pizitz Middle School.

Students who attend Vestavia Hills Elementary Cahaba Heights and Liberty Park will attend Liberty Park Middle School.

### School Start / Dismissal Times (Central Time)

| School Name  | Start Time | Dismissal Time |
|--|------------|----------------|
| All Elementary Schools (Grades K-5)                  | 7:45 a.m.  | 2:35 p.m.      |
| All Middle Schools (Grades 6-8)                      | 8:00 a.m.  | 3:00 p.m.      |
| Vestavia Hills High School Freshman Campus (Grade 9) | 8:10 a.m.  | 3:20 p.m.      |
| Vestavia Hills High School (Grades 10-12)            | 8:20 a.m.  | 3:30 p.m.      |

### School Closings

The Superintendent will close schools when weather conditions are too hazardous for safe operations, and parents/guardians will be notified using our mass notification system.

# Admission to Schools

The Vestavia Hills City Schools Board of Education shall be solely responsible for the education of students in all grades residing in its city limits. The Vestavia Hills Board of Education will not permit any student to enroll and/or attend any school within the system unless the student actually resides full time with his or her parents or legal guardian in the school attendance areas. Exceptions to this policy shall only include the following:

1. Children of employees of the Vestavia Hills Board of Education whose residence is located outside the corporate limits of the City of Vestavia Hills may choose to attend the Vestavia Hills City Schools and may do so without payment of out-of-district tuition.
2. Senior students who legally attended Vestavia Hills High School during the prior school year may attend Vestavia Hills High School for their senior year even though they live outside of the attendance area; however, the student pays out-of-district tuition, the amount of which shall be established by the Board of Education.
3. VHCS offers a tuition option, at the rate of \$408.50 per month, for the following situations (see page 12 for additional information):
  - Moving out of zone
  - Buying
  - Building/construction
  - Senior

# Enrollment Documentation

Students entering the school system for the first time, regardless of grade level, are not required to submit a birth certificate, but may be requested to submit a birth certificate or another form of acceptable documentation to verify the student's age. A social security number may also be requested, but such request is voluntary and is not a requirement of enrollment.

In addition, students may also be required to submit other registration materials as school officials may reasonably require including, but not limited to, a certificate of immunization or an exemption as prescribed by the Department of Public Health and signed by a private physician or appropriate health department official.

Placement of Students: The Board will determine the placement of newly enrolled students in accordance with state law.

To enroll your child in Vestavia Hills City Schools, **the following items must be presented by a parent or legal guardian at the school your child will attend** (with the exception of migrant, immigrant, homeless, or EL students):

1. Alabama Certificate of Immunization
2. Proof of age, including, but not limited to: birth certificate; religious, hospital, or physician's documents showing date of birth; an adoption record; an affidavit from a parent; previously verified school records, etc.

3. Current and valid lease, warranty deed, settlement statement, mortgage statement, or current property tax notice
4. A power bill in your name for the current month showing residence property address
5. One other item that ties you to the residence:
  - a. Proof of residency from the County Registrar of Voters
  - b. Current vehicle registration showing residence address
  - c. One other bill mailed to you at residence address
  - d. A canceled check in your name for the current month showing residence property address
6. If legal custody of a child is split between two parents, you must attach a certified copy of the court order identifying each parent's respective award of physical custody.

If you do not know which Vestavia Hills school your child should attend, please contact the Central Office at (205) 402-5100 with your address and the age of your child.

## **Enrollment Transfers from Other Educational Settings**

### **Non-Accredited Educational Settings**

Students requesting enrollment to VHCS from any school setting not accredited by an accrediting agency recognized by the Alabama State Board of Education, such as "homeschool," church umbrella, or online schools, etc. will be enrolled and placed according to procedures outlined in the *ALSDE Administrative Code of Alabama 290-3-1*.

### **Students with Discipline Issues from Transferring School**

A student transferring from any educational setting, public or private, will not be permitted to enroll until they have satisfied the terms of suspension or expulsion set by the suspending or expelling board of authority, which would allow the student to be readmitted to the original authority. Additional admission prerequisite requirements may be established by the Board or administrative designee that may include temporary attendance in an alternative placement, counseling and psychological evaluation and services.

## **Residency Requirements**

The primary residence of the parent, the parent with sole legal physical custody, the joint legal and physical custodian or the court-appointed legal guardian is the legal residence for purposes of enrollment in school. The legal residence, as used herein, shall mean the true, fixed, and permanent home and principal establishment to which whenever absent, the parent, parent with sole legal physical custody, the joint legal and physical custodian, or the court appointed legal guardian of the student intends to return to each evening. The legal residence, as used herein, is distinguished from a temporary or secondary place of residence established for some specific purpose but is not the fixed and permanent residence of the parent, parent with sole legal physical custody, the joint legal and physical custodian, or the

court-appointed legal guardian. Parents who live in separate residences will be asked to provide custodial documentation for the enrolling parent.

It is the responsibility of the parent/legal custodian or guardian to notify each respective school in which their child attends when there is a change in address of the child, a change in residency status, or a change of contact phone numbers and/or email addresses previously provided as their child's contact information.

## Home Visit Residency Check

We utilize multiple methods to verify student residency in Vestavia Hills City Schools. If we are aware of a change in residency, an unannounced home visit to verify student residence may be conducted by VHCS administration. If it is determined that the student no longer resides in the Vestavia Hills City Schools district, a tuition option approved by the Board will be offered. If the tuition option is declined, the student will be required to withdraw and enroll in the district in which they reside.

## Tuition Option

### Non-resident Students

The Board does not permit students who do not reside within the Vestavia Hills City School District to attend schools within the school system. Current students who subsequently move out of the school district may be allowed to continue to attend Vestavia Hills City Schools for the remainder of the current semester upon payment of tuition. The Board will not provide transportation to and from school or homebound instruction outside of the city limits of Vestavia Hills.

### **VHCS offers a tuition option, at the rate of \$408.50 per month, for the following situations:**

**Moving out of Zone:** If during the school year, a student moves out-of-zone they have the option to pay tuition for the remainder of the current semester only. They would be required to withdraw for the second semester or next school year.

**Building/Construction:** The student may be allowed to attend VHCS with a signed and valid building contract, plus broken ground on the home. Tuition must be paid until the student is living in the new home on a full-time basis if the student is living out-of-zone during the building process.

**Buying:** The student may be allowed to attend VHCS with a signed and valid sales purchase contract. Tuition will be required until the student is living in the home on a full-time basis if the student is living out-of-zone during the purchasing process.

**Senior:** If a student resides and attends school in VHCS during their junior year of high school and moves out-of-zone after the school year ends, they may pay tuition for the entire length of their senior year.

# Attendance Zone and Class Assignment

**Attendance Zone Assignment:** Students will be assigned to the school serving the attendance zone in which the parent(s) or legal guardian reside(s). A student whose parent or legal guardian moves from one attendance zone to another during the school year will be transferred to the school attendance zone in which the new residence is located. The student may be permitted to remain in the school attendance zone that serves the former residence until the end of the year with the approval of the Superintendent. A parent or legal guardian who has documented plans to move to a new attendance area during the first or second grading period of the school year may have the child enrolled in the school serving the new residence upon approval by the Superintendent.

**Class Assignment:** Principals will assign students to classes in keeping with school accreditation standards and any procedures or criteria that may be established at the system or school level.

## Attendance Zones

For your convenience, we have a *School Locator Tool*. It is powered by the City of Vestavia Hills to quickly search for and find school zone information for any residential address in the city. It is found on the Vestavia Hills City School's website at <https://www.vestavia.k12.al.us/Page/3724>.

## Custody and Guardianship

Only a parent/person who is the sole legal and physical custodian, the joint legal and physical custodian, or the legal guardian of a child as established by Alabama statute, case law, or a judge's order may enroll a child in Vestavia Hills City Schools.

**Delegation of Authority:** A Delegation of Parental Authority, *Ala. Code 26-2A-7*, **does not establish residence for the purpose of school enrollment**. The mere filing of a Dependent complaint, Custody Affidavit and Petition, *Ala. Code 26-2A-75*, in Jefferson County Family Court **does not** create the necessary parental or custodial relationship required to establish residence for the purpose of school enrollment.

A Dependent Complaint, Custody Affidavit and Petition properly filed in Jefferson County Family Court and granted by the judge is sufficient to confer the requisite parental or custodial relationship to establish residence for the purpose of school enrollment.

**Guardianship:** Conservatorship of the estate and/or guardianship shall not be used to determine school assignment. Guardianship of the person shall only be accepted upon the following conditions:

- The guardianship must be ordered and issued by a Court of competent jurisdiction; and
- The actual and full-time residence of the guardian must be within the Vestavia Hills City Schools' attendance area; and
- The student must reside with the guardian on a full-time basis.

# Online Registration Process

VHCS utilizes an online registration process for all students wishing to enroll or to continue enrollment with VHCS. See the VHCS website [www.vestavia.k12.al.us](http://www.vestavia.k12.al.us) for details. Students will be enrolled only after a successful review and approval of all registration documents and information submitted for the student.

## McKinney-Vento (Homeless), Migrant, Immigrant, English Language Learners and Students in Foster Care

It is the policy of the Vestavia Hills Board of Education to provide all students, including English Language Learners, Migrant, Immigrant, Homeless, and students in Foster Care, with meaningful and appropriate educational programs allowing all students the same benefits and rights of participation regardless of race, color, disability, sex, religion, national origin, or age. The enrollment of English Language Learners, Migrant, Immigrant, Homeless, and students in Foster Care shall not be denied or delayed due to any of the following barriers:

- Lack of birth certificate
- Lack of school records or transcripts
- Lack of immunization or health records
- Lack of proof of residency
- Lack of transportation
- Guardianship or custody requirements
- Language barriers
- Disabilities

**School Placement of Homeless Students:** It is the policy of the Vestavia Hills Board of Education to make school placement decisions in the "best interest" of a homeless or unaccompanied youth. Any homeless student will continue in the school of origin for the duration of homelessness when a family becomes homeless between academic years or during an academic year; or for the remainder of the academic year if the child or youth becomes permanently housed during an academic year. The student may enroll in any school that non-homeless students who live in the attendance area in which the student is actually living are eligible to attend.

If a school enrollment decision is contrary to the wishes of the child or youth's parent/guardian, the school district will provide the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth with a written explanation of the decision, a statement of the right to appeal, and procedure for appealing the placement decision. The complainant must file a School Enrollment Dispute form with the school district in which the student is presently enrolled. The Homeless Liaison will take steps to resolve the dispute.

When a dispute arises regarding school placement or enrollment, the system will immediately enroll the homeless student in the school in which enrollment is sought by the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth, pending resolution of the dispute. The parent or guardian of the child or youth shall be provided

with a written explanation of the school's decision regarding school selection or enrollment, including the rights of the parent, guardian, or youth to appeal the decision. The Homeless Liaison will expeditiously take steps to resolve the dispute. If the dispute cannot be settled by the Homeless Liaison, the liaison will assist the complainant in seeking technical assistance from the State Coordinator for Homeless Education at the Alabama State Department of Education.

## Child Nutrition

The goal of the Child Nutrition Program at Vestavia Hills City Schools is to provide nutritious, healthy, meals in a safe and pleasant environment. Our staff is dedicated to the health and well-being of your children. Other CNP information, as well as meal prices and menus, can be found on the VHCS website under Resources/Child Nutrition Program. The link to more detailed information is available at [www.vestavia.k12.al.us/cnp](http://www.vestavia.k12.al.us/cnp).

## Health and Wellness

The Vestavia Hills Board of Education employs one district nurse to coordinate health services for all schools. Each school has a nurse on-site during school hours. School nurses administer medications, assist students with chronic health problems, assist with school screenings, monitor for communicable diseases, and provide health education information.

There are many minor illnesses or injuries that often occur that do not require your child to be absent from school. There are also many illnesses that do require your child to be absent from school, for your child's protection as well as the protection of the other students and staff members. Such conditions would include, but are not limited to:

- Fever of 100 degrees or higher
- Injury or illness requiring intensive medical services
- Vomiting
- Adverse side effects from medication that need monitoring
- Unexplained diarrhea
- Pink eye (untreated)
- Untreated head lice or nits
- Ringworm or impetigo that cannot be covered

There are also some contagious conditions that carry special requirements about returning to school, such as strep throat, pink eye, chicken pox, flu, etc. If your student has a condition or illness that you are unsure about with regard to school attendance, please contact the nurse at your school to get information before sending your child back to school. We want to be a partner in promoting the very highest level of wellness for each student in our school environment.

Should a student develop one of these conditions during the school day, the nurse will call a parent to pick the child up from school.



# Medications at School

There are times when students need medication at school. We will gladly assist your student with all medication needs, but the following state regulations must be adhered to:

1. All medications, whether prescription or over-the-counter (OTC), must be turned into the school nurse by a parent/guardian or other responsible adult. Students are not to deliver their medications to the nurse. Please do not send medication to the school by your student in a book bag, lunch box, purse, etc.
2. No student will be permitted to carry or possess any type of medication, whether prescription or over-the-counter, on his/her person at any time (except emergency/OTC prescribed for self administration.)
3. All medication, whether prescription or over-the-counter, must have a signed permission form entitled "School Medication Prescriber/Parent Authorization."
4. For prescription medications, a physician signature and a parent signature is required.
5. For over-the-counter medications, including cough drops and ointments, an "OTC School Medication Parent Authorization" form is also required. However, only the parent's signature is necessary as long as the medication is age-appropriate by the container instructions. Schools are not allowed to keep stock medicines like Tylenol or Advil. **No exceptions can be made.**
6. Prescription medication must be brought in the labeled pharmacy bottle. We must have a current dated school bottle each time new medication is brought to the school nurse. All OTC medication must be brought in the original, **unopened**, age-appropriate container.
7. Controlled prescription medications must be counted each time they are brought to the school nurse. Please do not bring more than a one month supply at the time.
8. If your student requires emergency medication such as an inhaler or Epipen, to be kept on-person, please see your school nurse for guidance. Both the physician and the parent must indicate permission on the authorization form.
9. All unused medications not picked up by parents/guardians by the last day of each school year will be discarded according to the safe medication procedure guidelines.

These medication procedures were considered with your student's safety in mind. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your school nurse.

# Screenings at School

Students in 5th-9th grades will be screened yearly for scoliosis upon the written request from parents, who will be notified in writing of any abnormal results. Vision screening will be offered annually for students in kindergarten and 2nd and 4th grades.

# Flu Vaccines

Parents will have the opportunity to have a flu vaccine administered to their student at school during the fall semester. Information will be distributed to parents in advance of the scheduled day, and parents may submit the required authorization for vaccine administration during the school day.

## Mental Health Services at School

Parents will receive the following information regarding Mental Health Services during the registration process and will provide a signature to Opt-In or Opt-Out in the registration portal. Parents may rescind permission at any time. In order to rescind permission, parents must contact the school counseling office and complete the Mental Health Opt-Out Form.

### Mental Health Services

Vestavia Hills City Schools provides or sponsors mental health services ranging from awareness and prevention to intervention and support.

1. **Large-group guidance** - includes a school counselor or professional visiting the classroom to discuss standards-based topics such as bullying, class scheduling, stress management, test anxiety, or guest speakers to discuss good choices, substance abuse prevention, etc.
2. **Small-group guidance** - includes small groups of students with a school counselor or professional to discuss topics such as test anxiety, grief, healthy coping skills, positive decision making, etc.
3. **Assessments or Surveys** - includes counselor-developed needs assessments and questionnaires provided to students related to social behaviors, feelings, etc.
4. **Crisis intervention** - short-term, immediate assistance by school counselor, district social worker, or other professional including, but not limited to, IMPACT Family Counseling, Bradford Health Services, etc., for a specific situation.
5. **School-Based Mental Health** - ongoing counseling services through IMPACT Family Counseling or other practitioners contracted by Vestavia Hills City Schools in the school setting. Parent or legal guardian permission will be obtained prior to services.

### Review of Materials

You may request to review any materials used in the guidance and counseling programs available to students by contacting the student's principal or school counselor.

### Information Regarding How to Allow, Limit, or Prevent Your Child's Participation in Mental Health Services

Under Alabama law, no student under the age of fourteen may participate in ongoing school counseling services including, but not limited to, mental health services, unless (1) the student's parent or legal guardian has submitted a written opt-in granting permission for the student to participate or (2) there is an imminent threat to the health of the student or others.

Therefore, if your child is under fourteen, they will only be allowed to participate in mental health services if you opt-in. **If you would like Vestavia Hills City Schools to be able to offer and/or provide mental health services to your child, you must opt-in for each service listed for them to participate in that service.**

Even if you do not opt-in to mental health services, your child may be provided mental health services if there is an imminent threat to their health or others. Vestavia Hills City Schools employees may determine in their discretion whether such an imminent threat exists and provide any mental health services they deem necessary under the circumstances.

**Parent/guardian of students with disabilities:** Please note that the opt-in process is not applicable to any school counseling services or “mental health services” contained in a student’s IEP or §504 plan. Consent for those services will be obtained, and information regarding your child’s mental health services will be provided through the special education process.

## Extended Day Program

The Vestavia Hills City Schools Extended Day Program exists to meet the needs of students and families after school in Vestavia Hills City Schools. Any child who is currently attending kindergarten through eighth grade in a Vestavia Hills City School may attend EDP at the student’s base school with registration and tuition. The hours for EDP are from school dismissal until 6:00 p.m. unless otherwise determined for inclement weather, early dismissal, or holidays, which will be communicated in advance to parents. Drop-offs are not allowed.

### Tuition

- Full-time (5 days): \$200 per month for first child, \$160 for second, \$120 for third
- Part-time (1-3 days): \$128 per child per month (no sibling discounts)

*Tuition is due in full by the 5th school day of each month.*

# Grading

Teachers will assign grades and confer academic credit for work and activities performed by students in accordance with objective and generally accepted instructional and grading standards, applicable laws and regulations, and criteria hereinafter specified.

## General Grade Scale

Grades for academic coursework will be awarded according to the following scale for 4th-12th grades:

| Letter Grade | Numerical Grade<br>(100-point scale) | Grade Point Average<br>(4-point scale) |
|--------------|--------------------------------------|--|
| A            | 90 – 100                             | 4.00                                   |
| B            | 80 – 89                              | 3.00                                   |
| C            | 70 – 79                              | 2.00                                   |
| D            | 60 – 69                              | 1.00                                   |
| F            | Below 60                             | 0.00                                   |

**Advanced Placement and Honors Grade Scale:** Numerical grades in approved Advanced Placement, Dual Enrollment, and Honors courses will be weighted in accordance with the guidelines contained in the applicable handbook.

**Special Education Grading Standards:** Students who are receiving special education services may be graded according to an individualized educational plan, and nothing in Board policy or procedure prohibits the extension of appropriate academic modifications or accommodations to students who may be eligible for such modifications or accommodations under provisions of state and federal law.

**Reporting:** Student progress will be regularly reported to the parents or legal guardians of all VHCS students. \*K-3rd Grades use Standards-Based Report Cards.

**Promotion:** Students are promoted from grade to grade on the basis of academic credit earned during the school year, in summer school programs, or in such other academic programs as may be approved or recognized by the Board. Students who are eligible for promotion from grade to grade may nevertheless be retained by agreement of the parents and appropriate school officials.

**Retention:** Elementary students may be recommended for retention if they do not demonstrate proficiency of grade-level standards. Middle school students who fail two or more core content classes will be recommended for retention, which may impact extracurricular eligibility. Students may attend a summer school program to demonstrate proficiency. High school students must fulfill credit requirements for an Alabama High School diploma, and credit recovery is offered for students who fail courses.

**Credit Recovery:** The Superintendent is authorized to develop procedures for a program through which a student may recover credits in one or more failed courses, in compliance with regulations promulgated by the State Department of Education. The curriculum will align with the State Board of Education course of study and study content standards in which the student seeking credit recovery is deficient. Students who have failed a course will conference with their guidance counselor to determine the credit recovery option that is best to meet their individual needs.

**Class Rankings:** Beginning with the ninth grade of high school, all students will be ranked based on the four-point, grade point average scale (GPA), which is calculated and weighted. The GPA calculation will be carried out four decimal places. Vestavia Hills High School reports decile rank to colleges and universities.

**Summer School Program:** Summer school programs are offered for elementary, middle, and high school students.

# Graduation Requirements

To view an accessible version of this document, [click here](#).



## ALABAMA HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

Alabama Administrative Code 290-3-1-02(8) and (8)(a)

|  |   |                 |
|--|---|-----------------|
| <b>English Language Arts</b>   | <b>Four credits to include:</b>                                     | <b>Required</b> |
|  | English 9   | 1               |
|  | English 10  | 1               |
|  | English 11  | 1               |
|  | English 12  | 1               |
| <b>English Language Arts Total Credits*</b>  |   | <b>4</b>        |
| <b>Mathematics</b>   | <b>Four credits to include:</b>                                     |                 |
|  | Algebra I or its equivalent/substitute                              | 1               |
|  | Geometry or its equivalent/substitute                               | 1               |
|  | Algebra II, Algebra II w/Trigonometry, or its equivalent/substitute | 1               |
|  | Additional mathematics credit-eligible course*                      | 1               |
| <b>Mathematics Total Credits*</b>  |   | <b>4</b>        |
| <b>Science</b>   | <b>Four credits to include:</b>                                     |                 |
|  | Biology   | 1               |
|  | A physical science (Chemistry, Physics, or Physical Science)        | 1               |
|  | Additional science credit-eligible course *                         | 1               |
|  | Additional science credit-eligible course*                          | 1               |
| <b>Science Total Credits*</b>  |   | <b>4</b>        |
| <b>Social Studies</b>  | <b>Four credits to include:</b>                                     |                 |
|  | World History   | 1               |
|  | United States History I   | 1               |
|  | United States History II  | 1               |
|  | United States Government**  | 0.5             |
| Economics  | 0.5   |                 |
| <b>Social Studies Total Credits*</b>   |   | <b>4</b>        |
| <b>Arts Education and/or Career and Technical Education (CTE) and/or World Languages</b>   |   | <b>3</b>        |
| <b>Career Preparedness***</b>  |   | <b>1.0</b>      |
| <b>Physical Education (Beginning Kinesiology or JROTC)</b>   |   | <b>1</b>        |
| <b>Health Education</b>  |   | <b>0.5</b>      |
| <b>Electives</b>   |   | <b>2.5</b>      |
| <p>* English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies credit-eligible courses from Alabama Courses of Study, including Advanced Placement, Career and Technical Education, International Baccalaureate, postsecondary courses, and/or ALSDE-approved courses.</p> <p>** Students are required to pass the Civics Test in the United States Government class effective the 2018-2019 school year.</p> <p>***Satisfies the distance learning requirement for students entering Grade 9 in the 2009 – 2010 school year, Alabama students will be required to complete one online/technology enhanced course or experience prior to graduation.</p> |   |                 |
| <b>Total Credits</b>   |   | <b>24</b>       |

Updated 8/2020

# Attendance

## Mandatory Attendance Legislation

*Code of Alabama (1975) §16-28-3* requires all persons between the age of six (6) and seventeen (17) years of age to attend school for the minimum number of scholastic days prescribed by the State Board of Education. All laws regarding school attendance shall be strictly enforced by the Vestavia Hills Board of Education.

**Kindergarten Age Requirement:** A student must be five years old on or before September 2, the date set by state guidelines, to be admitted for kindergarten for the current school year.

**First Grade Age Requirement:** Students entering first grade for the first time must be six (6) years old on or before December 31st. Students turning six (6) years old after December 31st shall not be eligible for admission to first grade during that school year, except that an underage child who transfers from the first grade of a school in another state may be admitted to school upon the approval of the local school system. An underage child who has moved into this state having completed or graduated from a mandated kindergarten program in another state shall be entitled to admission to the first grade, regardless of age.

## Arrivals/Dismissals

Students are to arrive on time for the beginning of the school day and leave the school campus immediately upon dismissal for the day and/or from other school-related activities. No loitering on school campuses will be allowed.

## Tardies

Tardies are considered excused for the same reason(s) as excused student absences. The principal or his/her designee may impose disciplinary measures for excessive tardies. Excessive tardies may result in a home visit by the VHCS Attendance Officer.

## Check-ins/Check-outs

Necessary check-ins or check-outs must be processed by the parent through the school's office. It is encouraged that parents/guardians schedule appointments that are not of a critical nature for times and days when school is not in session. Check-ins/outs are considered excused for the same reasons as excused absences. Excessive check-ins/outs may result in a home visit by the VHCS Attendance Officer.

## Absences

Students are not permitted to be absent from school without a valid excuse.

## Absence Monitoring by Parents

Parents are expected to monitor and are held responsible for student attendance. If a parent has a question or concern about an absence, the parent should contact the school as soon as possible.

## Excused Absences

The parent/legal guardian must provide a **written explanation** (excuse) to the school principal or his/her designee for each student absence within three (3) days of the student's return to school, or the absence will be coded unexcused.

Absences will be permitted for the following reasons:

- Illness that endangers the student's health or the health of others.
- Students who are deemed ill by the school nurse on a given day.
- Death of an immediate family member.
- Legal quarantine.
- Students who are receiving healthcare, hospitalized, etc.
- Inclement weather that would be dangerous to the life and health of the child as determined by the LEA (Vestavia Hills City Schools).
- Legal requirements for students.
- Observance of any sacred day set aside by a recognized religious denomination of which the student is a member.
- Military deployment date of a student's parent.
- Emergency conditions as determined by the LEA (Vestavia Hills City Schools).

## Unexcused Absences

Any absences not excused shall be considered unexcused.

## Written Excuses

The parent/legal guardian must provide a written explanation (excuse) to the school principal or his/her designee for each student absence within three (3) days of the student's return to school, or the absence will be coded unexcused. An email from the parent will be accepted as a written excuse.

For a student's consecutive days of absence, a parent/legal guardian may submit one written excuse for the length of the absence. **A student may have no more than 10 days excused by parent note per year. After the 10th parent excuse, a doctor or legal excuse will be required.**

The written excuse must include the following:

1. Written statement from the parent or doctor stating the reason for the absence
2. The date of the absence(s)
3. The parent's signature (email will serve as an electronic signature)

## Pre-Approved Absences

The principal has the authority to approve and excuse absences for students. **A principal may approve no more than 10 days requested to be excused by parent note per year. Note: a student may have no more than 10 total days excused by a parent note per year.** A parent may request a pre-approved absence by going to the district or school website and using the pre-approved absence form.



## College-University Visits by Students

A student in grades 10-12 at Vestavia Hills High School may visit campuses of colleges/universities as a means of making his/her choice of a post-secondary institution to attend after graduation. All college visits must be pre-approved. The visits shall be considered as field trips and, therefore, not counted as a student absence if the following stipulations are met. If they are not met, the absence/s will count toward the 10 pre-approved excuses per year.

- Such college/university visits are limited to three (3) school days during a given academic year.
- Upon returning from a college/university visit, the student shall submit to the principal signed documentation from an official at the college/university as evidence that the visit occurred.

## Missed Work

Students with excused absences may have five (5) school days upon returning to make up any missed work. At the teacher's discretion, they may or may not be given the same work done by the students who were in class. Students with unexcused absences, may be allowed to make up some or all missed work at the discretion of the school administration. The student may or may not be given the same work done by the students who were in class.

## Student Withdrawal Due to Absences

The *Code of Alabama § 16-28-40* defines withdrawals as "more than ten (10) consecutive days or fifteen (15) days of total unexcused absences during a single semester." A student meeting these criteria (without acceptable parent, doctor, or legal excuses) is subject to withdrawal from school.

For students seventeen (17) years of age or older who are withdrawn from school due to attendance issues, the Attendance Officer notifies the Department of Public Safety of the withdrawal. The Department of Public Safety shall deny or revoke a driver's license or learner's permit for the operation of a motor vehicle to any person under the age of nineteen (19) who has obtained withdrawn status.

## Truancy

Truancy is defined as "unexcused absences or skipping school/class for a day or portion thereof." Parents or guardians are required to ensure that students under their care, custody, or control attend school regularly. Habitual or excessive absence from school may require Board officials to refer the matter to juvenile authorities or to initiate truancy proceedings. A student identified as truant may also be subject to the loss of extracurricular activity and school event participation.

1. On the **first unexcused truancy**, the parent/guardian will be notified by the school principal or his/her designee by automated call that the student was truant and the date of the truancy. The parent/guardian will also be provided with a copy of Alabama's compulsory school attendance law and advised of the penalties that can be applied and the procedures that will be followed in the event that other unexcused absences occur.
2. On the **second unexcused truancy**, the parent/guardian will be notified by the school principal or his/her designee that the student has accumulated their second truancy and the date of the

truancy. The parent/guardian will be encouraged to submit written documentation supporting the absence if it is to be considered excused. School officials will meet with the student to identify reasons the student has missed school.

3. Should a student accumulate **four (4) unexcused absences** during a school year, he/she will be referred to a school administrator. A conference will be scheduled between the parent/guardian and administrator to review the student's current attendance record, discuss VHCS attendance and tardy policies, and develop a plan of intervention.
4. Should a student accumulate **six (6) unexcused absences** during a school year, the parent/guardian will be referred to the VHCS Attendance Officer. The parent will be required to participate in the Early Warning Program provided by the Juvenile Court System and/or attend a Student Attendance meeting at the Vestavia Hills Board of Education. Attendance at these conferences is mandatory except where prior arrangements have been made or an emergency exists.
5. When the Attendance Officer has been notified by the principal or his/her designee that the student has reached **7 unexcused absences**, 10 excused absences, or 10 unexcused tardies, the principal or his/her designee in conference with the Attendance Officer will decide whether or not to refer the student to Early Warning.
6. The Attendance Officer will go out to the home address of the child prior to the filing with Family Court to verify the address and residency of the child.
7. The Attendance Officer will complete and provide all documentation required by the court.
8. The Attendance Officer will send the referral to Family Court, listing the date set for review.
9. The Attendance Officer will mail a letter to the parents specifying the date and time for Early Warning.
10. The Attendance Officer will be present at the review.
11. The Attendance Officer will report to the school the action taken by Early Warning.

# Behavior and Discipline

Vestavia Hills City Schools administrators developed and commit to the following Purpose Statement and Collective Commitments regarding student behavior and discipline.

## Purpose

The purpose of discipline is to teach—positive behaviors, respect for self and others, and self-regulation skills—and ensure a safe and nurturing learning environment for all students.

## Collective Commitments

We commit to pursuing disciplinary action as an opportunity to teach positive behavior.

We commit to consistency in the disciplinary process of investigating, communicating, and assigning appropriate consequences.

We commit to student safety to promote a positive learning environment.

## Dress Code

Vestavia Hills City Schools is a working and learning environment. All VHCS students are encouraged to observe a standard of grooming and dress consistent with the importance of the school's mission of education. The purpose of the dress code is to give students a safe, orderly, and distraction-free learning environment. The Board and administration recognize and appreciate the role of parents in assisting their children in making appropriate choices regarding their clothing while attending school within the boundaries provided by this dress code. The school principal or his/her designee will have the final decision in determining whether apparel meets the system's dress code. Students in violation of the dress code will be required to change immediately. If this requires a student to checkout, the absence will be marked as unexcused. The Code of Conduct will be followed for dress code violations.

## Kindergarten – 12th Grade

Appearance, dress, or grooming style should not cause disruption or interference with the learning environment.

Students may wear shorts, dresses, skirts, etc. to school as long as they are at least mid-thigh length.

Clothing must cover under-garments at all times.

Students must wear appropriate shoes for a school setting at all times. **\*Elementary students should wear shoes that allow them to participate safely in P.E. and recess during school. They should also wear shorts under skirts for P.E. and recess play.**

Students may not wear hats or sunglasses inside of the building. (Exceptions will be announced in advance.)

Students may not wear clothing that is inappropriate, offensive, or revealing. This includes the following:

- Clothing that is too baggy
- Clothing that is sheer, see-through, or has holes above mid-thigh
- Undergarments worn as outerwear
- Leggings or tights without a top that covers appropriately
- Bare-midriff, backless, or strapless garments, or tank tops without another shirt that complies with the dress code
- Anything that could be viewed as obscene, vulgar, suggestive, or offensive. This includes clothes that promote violence or drug use; endorse alcohol or tobacco products; or contain messages with any sexual content.

# Student Code of Conduct

## Classification Violations and Actions

The mission of Vestavia Hills City Schools is to provide a safe and nurturing environment. The Code of Conduct is in place to help us achieve this mission. The school's primary goal is to educate, not to discipline. However, when the behavior of an individual student comes in conflict with the rights of others, corrective actions are necessary for the benefit of the individual and the school.

Instruction should occur in an environment that is conducive to learning. Effective instruction requires good order and discipline which may be described as the absence of distraction, friction, and disturbances that interfere with the effective functioning of the student, class, and school. We believe that every student is entitled to an education, which shall be offered in an orderly, healthy atmosphere, and to firm, fair treatment in all matters pertaining to school life.

We further believe that every student shall comply with all rules and regulations having to do with behavior established by the state and the Vestavia Hills Board of Education. In a democracy there exists many privileges and freedoms, all of which are dependent upon adherence to certain rules and regulations. It should be made very clear that any student by his/her own failure to comply with school regulations may lose his/her right to a public education.

As students progress in our public schools, it is reasonable to assume that an increase in age and maturity will result in students assuming greater responsibility for their actions. It is recognized that the differences in age and maturity require different types of disciplinary implementation; however, these general rules and regulations shall apply to all students in grades K-12.

## General Conduct at School

All students within the Vestavia Hills City Schools district are charged with the responsibility of conducting themselves in a manner consistent with good citizenship. Students are expected to respect themselves, to respect others, and to respect property.

According to legal rulings, students may be disciplined for offenses not only when they occur during the school day on school premises but also when they occur off campus during school-sponsored activities or school-related functions. Students who threaten school employees or damage an employee's property away from the school are also subject to disciplinary action.

## Code of Conduct

Violations of the Code of Student Conduct are grouped into three (3) classes — **minor, intermediate, and major** — and are applicable to all elementary (K-5) and secondary (6-12) students of the Vestavia Hills City School system.

Before determining the classification of violation, the principal or his/her designee will consult with the student(s) and school personnel involved. Once the classification of the violation is determined, the principal or his/her designee will implement the disciplinary procedure. Each classroom teacher will deal with general classroom disruption by taking in-class disciplinary action, telephoning the parent(s) or guardian(s) when feasible, and/or scheduling conferences with parent(s) or guardian(s) and/or other school staff. Only when the action taken by the teacher is ineffective, or the disruption is severe, should the student be referred to the principal or his/her designee. Failure to bring notebook, pencil, or homework, or failure to do work in class are not cause for disciplinary referrals; however, defiance of a teacher in regard to these areas is cause for disciplinary referral. Parents or guardians should be notified by the teacher of students who consistently exhibit poor work habits, and/or these students should be referred to a guidance counselor. The following provides a description of disciplinary problems that may occur and administrative options that may be taken by school officials.

## **Minor Offenses – Class I**

- 1.01** Excessive distraction of other students. Any conduct and/or behavior which is disruptive to the orderly education process in the classroom or any other students. Examples: talking excessively, interrupting class functions, or provoking other students.
- 1.02** Minor intimidation/harassment of a student.
- 1.03** Participation in games of chance for minor sums of money and/or things of little value.
- 1.04** Excessive tardiness. Repeatedly reporting late to school or class.
- 1.05** Unintentional and/or non-directed use of profane or obscene language.
- 1.06** Non-conformity to dress code.
- 1.07** Minor disruption on a school bus.
- 1.08** Inappropriate public display of affection, including, but not limited to, embracing and kissing.
- 1.09** Unauthorized absence from class or classes.
- 1.10** Continued refusal to complete class assignments.
- 1.11** Failure to follow instructions. Examples: failure to carry correspondence home; failure to obey directions in the hallways, during assemblies, etc.
- 1.12** Unauthorized use of school or personal property.
- 1.13** Littering or minor defacement of school property.
- 1.14** Violation of local school rules and regulations regarding the use of electronic communication devices.
- 1.15** Any other violation which the principal may deem reasonable to fall within this category after consideration of extenuating circumstances.

**\*Multiple Class I infractions can be upgraded to a Class II.**

## **Disciplinary Actions – Class I Elementary Students (Grades K-5)**

Administrative Options:

1. Conference and parental/guardian contact
2. Parental contact and disciplinary action

3. Disciplinary action such as probation, detention, loss of privilege

## **Disciplinary Actions – Class I Secondary Students (Grades 6-12)**

Administrative Options:

1. Conference and parental/guardian contact
2. Disciplinary action such as loss of privilege, probation, detention, Saturday school, in-school suspension, or suspension at the discretion of the principal

*\*Class I Violations may warrant police contact.*

## **Intermediate Offenses – Class II**

- 2.01** Use of obscene language, verbal or written, towards another person.
- 2.02** Leaving class or campus without permission.
- 2.03** Unsolicited written or verbal proposition to engage in sexual acts.
- 2.04** Gambling. The intentional, unlawful participation in gambling activities involving amount of more than \$100.00.
- 2.05** Open defiance of a teacher or school board employee. Any verbal or non-verbal refusal to comply with a lawful direction or order of a school board employee.
- 2.06** Unauthorized access to a computer system or knowledge of restricted computer passwords.
- 2.07** Indirect Threats. The indirect, intentional threat by word or act to do violence to another student, coupled with an apparent ability to do so, or the doing of some act which creates a well-founded fear in the person that such harm is likely. *(May be upgraded to 3.10)*
- 2.08** Verbal Abuse. Speech or other expression intended to insult or stigmatize others on the basis of their sex, race, color, handicap, religion, sexual orientation, or national or ethnic origin.
- 2.09** Possession of a pocket knife, small or key chain variety, or similar instruments that would not normally be considered a weapon.
- 2.10** Possession of firearm facsimiles. Discharge, possession, transfer, or sale of any facsimile or toy-type replica of a firearm or any other item resembling a firearm.
- 2.11** Disrespect to a school board employee. Any verbal or nonverbal conduct and/or behavior directed toward a school board employee that is rude or discourteous.
- 2.12** Possession of fireworks, firecrackers, or stink bombs. *(May be upgraded to 3.19)*
- 2.13** Possession of obscene pornographic or sexually explicit material.
- 2.14** Illegal Organization. Any on-campus fraternities, sororities, secret sororities, or non-school affiliated school clubs.
- 2.15** Intentionally providing false information to a school board employee. This includes giving false student information, data, and concealment of information directly relating to school business. This includes, but is not limited to, forgery of any school document, parent or guardian notes, or other related material.
- 2.16** Possession and/or use of nicotine products/alternatives including lighters, matches, vapes, or paraphernalia.
- 2.17** Unjustified activation of a fire alarm system or fire extinguisher. *(May be upgraded to 3.18)*

- 2.18 Fighting. Any physical action involving violence or conflict between two or more individuals.
- 2.19 Assault and Battery of Student(s). Intentionally touching or striking another student against the will of the other student.
- 2.20 Trespassing. Willfully entering or roaming in any structure, conveyance, or property without permission.
- 2.21 Vandalism. Intentionally doing some act that results in injury or damaging by means of real, personal, or public property belonging to another.
- 2.22 Stealing/Larceny. The intentional, unlawful taking and carrying away of personal property, valued at less than \$100.00, or possession of stolen property with the knowledge it is stolen.
- 2.23 Extortion. Verbally or by a written or printed communication, maliciously threatening to accuse another of any crime or offense.
- 2.24 Inciting student disorder and/or malicious mischief.
- 2.25 Cheating. The use or attempted use of any deceptive or dishonest method of improving a grade.
- 2.26 Possession of a cell phone or other electronic device that interrupts the classroom environment, which includes use of or sound emitting from it.
- 2.27 Bullying/intimidation/harassment of another individual in any form including, but not limited to, verbal, written, or action.
- 2.28 Unauthorized and inappropriate taking of pictures or video on school board property.
- 2.29 Offensive touching. *(May be upgraded to 3.16)*
- 2.30 Use of hate speech. *(May be upgraded to 3.20)*
- 2.31 Multiple Class I infractions.
- 2.32 Any other offense which the principal may reasonably deem to fall in this category.

**\*Multiple Class II infractions can be upgraded to a Class III.**

## **Disciplinary Actions – Class II**

### **Elementary Students (Grades K-5)**

### **Secondary Students (Grades 6-12)**

Administrative Options:

1. Parent or guardian contact and disciplinary action
2. In-school suspension
3. Out-of-school suspension for one to five days
4. Out-of-school suspension from six to ten days with the approval of the Superintendent
5. Recommendation for referral to alternative school
6. Recommendation for expulsion

*\*Class II violations may warrant police contact.*



## Major Offenses – Class III

- 3.01** Stealing/Larceny/Grand Theft. The intentional, unlawful taking and/or carrying away of property valued at \$100.00 or more belonging to or in the lawful possession or custody of another.
- 3.02** Drugs/Alcohol. Unauthorized possession, use, transfer, or sale; being under the influence of drugs, alcohol, or any other mood-altering substance; or possession of paraphernalia.
- 3.03** Illegal school entry or burglary of school property. Entering or remaining in a structure or conveyance with the intent to commit an offense therein during the hours the premises are closed to the public.
- 3.04** Criminal Mischief. Willful and malicious injury or damages at or in excess of \$200.00 to public property or to real or personal property belonging to another.
- 3.05** Sexual Acts. Acts of a sexual nature including, but not limited to, battery, intercourse, indecent exposure, attempted rape, or rape.
- 3.06** Aggravated Battery. Intentionally causing bodily harm, disability, or permanent disfigurement; use of a deadly weapon.
- 3.07** Inciting, promoting, publicizing, or participating in major student disorder. Leading, encouraging, or assisting in (major) disruptions which result in destruction or damage of private or public property or personal injury to participants or others.
- 3.08** Offensive touching of another person.
- 3.09** Possession by student of deadly weapon or firearm in a school building, on school grounds, on school buses, or at other school-sponsored functions. Disciplinary action for any student who is determined by the Board of Education (a) to have brought a deadly weapon or firearm to school or (b) to have had a deadly weapon or firearm in his/her possession in a school building, on school grounds, on a school bus, or on a school-sponsored function shall be expelled from school for a period of at least one year, as outlined in VHCS board policy 4.2.1.
- 3.10** Direct Threats. The direct, intentional threat by word or act to do violence to another student, coupled with an apparent ability to do so, or the doing of some act which creates a well-founded fear in the person that such violence is imminent.
- 3.11** Weapons. Possession of a knife, gun of any kind, or other object as defined by state law to be a deadly weapon or dangerous instrument, or the possession of a knife or other object which is used in a threatening manner and is perceived by the individual being threatened as capable of inflicting physical harm.
- 3.12** Possession of prohibited objects. Possession of any switchblade, metallic knuckles, tear gas gun, chemical weapon or device, martial arts weapon, taser, or any other similar object.
- 3.13** Terrorist Threat. A person commits the crime of making a terrorist threat when he/she threatens by any means to commit any crime of violence or to damage any property.
- 3.14** Bomb Threat. Any such communication(s) which has the effect of interrupting the educational environment.
- 3.15** Explosives. Preparing, possessing, or igniting on school board property, explosives (including live projectiles) which have the potential to cause serious bodily injury or property damage.
- 3.16** Sexual Harassment.
- 3.17** Sabotage of a computer or computer system.
- 3.18** Unjustified activation of a fire alarm system.
- 3.19** Igniting a fire, fireworks, firecrackers, or activating stink bombs.
- 3.20** Hate Speech.

- 3.21 Multiple Class II infractions.
- 3.22 Harassment. Multiple incidents of harassment.
- 3.23 Imitation of controlled substances. Unauthorized possession, transfer, use or sale of a substance other than a drug, which by dosage unit, appearance (including color, size, shape and/or markings), and/or by representations made, would lead a reasonable person to believe that the substance is controlled.
- 3.24 Any other offense which the principal may deem reasonable to fall within this category after consideration of extenuating circumstances.

## **Disciplinary Actions – Class III**

### **Elementary Students (Grades K-5)**

### **Secondary Students (Grades 6-12)**

The disciplinary action for such offenses will be suspension and/or recommendation for expulsion by the principal as authorized in the procedures previously stated.

Administrative Options:

1. Out-of-school suspension for up to ten (10) days with the approval of the Superintendent and/or recommendation for expulsion with parent contact and conference
2. Recommendation for referral to an alternative setting with the approval of the principal and district alternative placement committee
3. Recommendation for expulsion

*\*Class III Violations may warrant police contact.*

## **Conclusion**

It is the finding of the Alabama Legislature that the people of Alabama have two basic expectations of their public schools: (1) that students be allowed to learn in a safe classroom setting where order and discipline are maintained; and (2) that students learn at the level of their capabilities and achieve accordingly. The Legislature finds further that every child in Alabama is entitled to have access to a program of instruction which gives him or her the right to learn in a non-disruptive environment. No student has a right to be unruly in his or her classroom to the extent that such disruption denies fellow students of the right to learn. The teacher in each classroom is expected to maintain order and discipline. Teachers are hereby given the authority and responsibility to use appropriate means of discipline as may be prescribed by the local Board of Education. So long as teachers follow approved procedure in the exercise of their responsibility to maintain discipline in their classroom, such teacher shall be immune from civil or criminal liability. (*Title 16-28A(1), Code of Alabama 1979*)

## **Detention (Grades K-12)**

Students may be detained for disciplinary purposes at the discretion of the local school principal and professional staff of individual schools. Provided a student is detained after regular school hours, the student must be given notice of such detention. The principal or his/her designee must notify parent/guardian and arrange necessary transportation. Students shall not be required to remain after school for more than one (1) hour daily for detention purposes. Transported students shall not be detained after school on an involuntary basis without reasonable prior notification to the parents or guardians.

## **In-School Suspension (Grades K-12)**

In-school suspension is a structured disciplinary action in which a student is isolated or removed from regular classroom and extracurricular activities but is not dismissed from the school setting nor counted absent during the period of in-school suspension. The principal or designee has the authority to assign students to the in-school suspension program for a reasonable and specified period of time not to exceed five (5) days. The principals and their staffs should determine the scope of in-school suspension in their respective schools. In addition, the local school principal shall ensure that the following safeguards are met:

1. The student must be supervised by a member of the professional staff during in-school suspension.
2. The confinement area assigned to the student should be adequate and conducive to completing school assignments.
3. The student shall be responsible for completing all class assignments, homework, examinations, etc. that are applicable to other students in his/her class(s), except that, students on in-school suspension shall not be permitted to participate in assignments that require class attendance (oral reports, recitations, etc.).
4. A student to be suspended with a recommendation for expulsion may not be placed on in-school suspension.

## **Out-of-School Suspension (Grades K-12)**

To maintain order, minimize the risk of potential personal injury, property damage or disruption, or to permit an orderly investigation and evaluation of a suspected violation of school or school system rules, standards, or policies, principals may temporarily suspend a student pending a conference with the parent or guardian of the student and a final disciplinary decision. Suspension may also be imposed as a disciplinary measure as provided in the Code of Student Conduct. Suspension of students with disabilities will be subject to applicable limitations and requirements imposed by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and its implementing regulations.

The Board recognizes its authority to maintain good order and discipline within the district's schools. Therefore, the Board gives the school principal the authority to suspend a student.

The principal shall make an immediate effort (same day) to contact the student's parents or guardians about the suspension. No suspended student shall be allowed to leave the school premises during the school day until the student's parent, guardian, or proper school authorities assume responsibility for him/her. When a student's parent, guardian, or other designated individual(s) cannot be notified, the student must remain on the premises until the end of the school day. At the end of the school day, the student will return home via normal transportation methods.

The school principal/designee has the authority to suspend students from school for up to five (5) days and up to ten (10) days with the permission of the Superintendent when an expulsion recommendation is to be considered.

## **Notification of Suspension**

Prior to suspension, the student will be made aware of the charges and supporting evidence and given an opportunity to respond to them. The local school principal shall complete and provide the student with a notice of suspension prior to the departure from campus with copies to the student's parent or guardian within forty-eight (48) hours stating the reason(s) for such action. Immediate removal of the student from school premises is justified only when his/her presence threatens himself/herself, endangers school property, or seriously disrupts the orderly educational process. If immediate removal is necessary, the parents or guardians must be notified by phone or personally by the attendance supervisor or other school officials. In extreme emergencies, principals are given the authority to call upon law enforcement officials to remove such students. The principal shall advise the superintendent by phone regarding forced removals and shall follow the oral contact with a written confirmation to the Superintendent.

## **Length of Suspension**

The suspension of a student shall not exceed five (5) days except as follows:

1. Any student suspended more than three times during a school year shall be required to appear with parents or guardians before the Superintendent and school principal to explain his/her situation. The Superintendent or designee shall schedule the conference within five (5) school days after being notified by the school principal. If the student or parents or guardians fail to appear as ordered, an alternative placement or expulsion proceedings may be initiated.
2. If an incident or violation, or series of incidents or violations, are serious enough to warrant suspension, said suspension may not exceed ten (10) complete school days pending Board action on an expulsion recommendation. Provided the Board does not render a decision within the ten (10) school-day period, after expulsion recommendation consideration, the school may readmit the student to school within the ten (10) school-day period based on mutual agreement of the principal and Superintendent. In such case, the principal and Superintendent will have decided not to recommend expulsion.

## **Terms of Suspension**

1. While suspended, a student may not attend school functions or enter school property for any reason during or after the school day.
2. When a student is suspended, his/her teachers shall be notified immediately concerning the date and duration of the suspension.

3. A suspended student must comply with the full length of the suspension unless the principal approves an alternative.

## **Readmission After Suspension**

When a student returns to school after the first suspension in an academic year, the readmission must be preceded by a pre- or post-conference with the principal or designee. The conference must include the parents or guardians, unless otherwise approved by the principal. A student returning after the required conference with the Superintendent and school principal is not required to submit to a second conference with the school principal. The student is readmitted on approval of the principal or his/her designee.

## **Alternative Placement**

Alternative placement is designed for students who are not able to function in the structure of a regular school setting. A decision to place a student in the alternative setting will be based on an administrative investigation of the reported incident and a review of student records. The school administrator will make a recommendation to the district Alternative Placement Committee for a final placement decision. The school system will require students in alternative education programs to meet state graduation requirements. The system will maintain evidence of student accomplishments and progress in the programs.

A student may be recommended for a short-term or long-term placement depending on the severity of the infraction. Students in punitive alternative placement may not be allowed to attend functions or events at the base school until the length of placement has been met.

## **Expulsion**

A student may be expelled from school if an offense is serious enough to warrant such action. The authority to expel a student is retained solely by the Board of Education. Students who are recommended for expulsion may be suspended until such time as the Board meets to consider the recommendation for expulsion.

The Superintendent will notify the student or the student's parent/guardian, in writing, of any action taken by the Board. The term of an expulsion may extend to the maximum permitted by law. The Board may impose such reasonable limitations on the student's right to re-enroll in the school system following expiration of expulsion as may be permitted by law. A student who withdraws from school prior to the Board's consideration of a proposed expulsion may not re-enroll in the school system until the Board holds a hearing or other appropriate proceeding regarding the recommended expulsion.

After being expelled from school, a student shall be prohibited from participating in or attending all school-related functions or activities during school hours.

## **Expulsion of Students with Exceptionalities**

Students with exceptionalities may be expelled from school if an offense is serious enough to warrant such an action. It should be noted, however, that such an extreme action will result in a change of placement, and the IEP Committee will have to convene to consider an alternative instructional program.

## **Receipt of Copy of the Code of Conduct Procedure**

The Board shall provide at the commencement of each academic year a copy of this Procedure to all teachers, staff, parents, and students. The electronic signature of the student and parents during the registration process shall document receipt of this procedure.

## **Due Process**

Students shall be treated with fairness in all discipline matters and shall be accorded procedural due process when the discipline measures of short/long-term suspension, alternative placement, and expulsions are applied. The Board does not permit corporal punishment as a consequence for inappropriate behavior in VHCS. Before being punished for violation of a procedure or local school rule and regulation, the local school principal or designee shall ensure that students are accorded the following minimum due process:

### **Informal Process**

1. The student shall be given oral or written notice of the charge(s) against him/her.
2. The evidence supporting the charge(s) shall be explained to the student.
3. The student shall be given an opportunity to present his/her own version of the facts concerning the charge(s).

The disciplining authority (principal or teacher, etc.) may impose appropriate discipline measures immediately following the informal due process hearing stated above.

### **Formal Process**

When a student is facing possible long-term suspension (more than ten school days) or expulsion, the Board shall ensure that the following formal due process procedures are afforded the student:

1. The right to a hearing.
2. The right to be represented by counsel.
3. The right to cross-examine witnesses.
4. The right to a written record of the hearing.
5. The right to a written record of the Board's decision.
6. If the Board does not render a decision within ten days, the student shall be returned to his/her regular school assignment.

The Board may place the student in the school system's alternative placement based upon their discretion.

Prior to the application of the above procedures to a student with exceptionalities (except gifted or speech impaired), said student's IEP committee shall be convened to determine if the student's behavior warranting punishment is related to the disability. In the event it is determined that the student's behavior is not related to the disability, the student shall be treated as any other student, except that an exceptional student may not be more than ten (10) school days without an alternative educational program.

## Searches of Students

**Board Property:** All school system property, facilities, and grounds may be entered, inspected, and searched for any lawful purpose by Board officials or their designees at any time, without prior notice and to the fullest extent permitted by law. The right to enter, inspect, and search includes and extends to (but is not limited to) Board owned or controlled offices, desks, file cabinets, lockers, computers, files, documents, data, and devices however and wherever kept, stored, or maintained.

**Personal Property:** Personal property, including but not limited to, vehicles, purses, wallets, gym bags, book bags, cell phones, and computers may be searched by authorized school officials, including school principals or their designees, when reasonable suspicion exists that the property contains prohibited materials, illegal substances, weapons, or other items that are reasonably deemed to present a risk or threat to the safety or welfare of the school community.

**Personal Searches:** Students may be searched whenever reasonable suspicion exists that the student possesses prohibited materials, illegal substances, weapons, or other items that are reasonably deemed to present a risk or threat to the safety and welfare of the school community. Student searches must be conducted by a school administrator in the presence of another certified school employee and may include a private pat down of the student, a search of personal items and clothing, or a more thorough search upon specific approval of the Superintendent. Personal searches will be conducted with regard for the age and gender of the student. Searches that require physical contact between the school official and the student, removal of clothing, or examination of the student in a way that would implicate privacy concerns must be conducted and witnessed by officials of the same gender as the student and in a way that preserves the dignity of the student to the extent practicable under the circumstances. Refusal to submit to a search or to cooperate in a search as provided in this policy may be grounds for disciplinary action.

**Use of Recovered Items:** Property, material, substances, information, or records that are obtained, discovered, or recovered as a result of a search may be retained and used for any lawful purpose.

## Searches by Law Enforcement Officials

The Board respects the rights of all persons in the schools and will uphold those rights. At the same time, school property cannot be regarded as a sanctuary from enforcement of the law.

School officials should seek to cooperate with law enforcement officials in the effort to enforce the law; however, school officials must not permit warrantless searches by law officials on school property.

## Drug Screening

For the safety, health and wellbeing of students in extracurricular activities the Vestavia Hills City Schools has adopted Board Policy 6.23 (Student Competitive Extracurricular Activity Substance Abuse) for use by all participants in interscholastic extracurricular activities in grades 7-12.

Participation in school-sponsored interscholastic extracurricular activities at the Vestavia Hills City Schools is a privilege. Students who participate in these activities should be respected by the student body and are representing the school district and the community. Illegal and performance-enhancing drug use of any kind is incompatible with the physical, mental, and emotional demands placed upon participants in extra-curricular activities and upon the positive image these students project to other students and to the community on behalf of the Vestavia Hills City Schools.

Accordingly, students in extracurricular activities carry a responsibility to themselves, their fellow students, their parents and their school to set the highest possible examples of conduct, sportsmanship, and training. Therefore, Activity Students are prohibited from violating the Board's tobacco/nicotine, drug, or alcohol policies and are prohibited from using tobacco, nicotine, drugs or alcohol at any time. Activity Students must inform their coach or sponsor when they are legitimately taking medication that may affect their ability to practice or compete, in order to avoid creating safety problems.

To review the entire Activity Student Substance Abuse Testing Procedure and consequences for violations, please [click here to go to the VHCS website](#).



# NOTIFICATION OF LEGAL LIABILITIES

The following laws relate to civil liabilities and criminal penalties for violence or other misbehavior by students on school property, at school-sponsored activities, and/or against school employees.

## **ATTENDANCE AND CONDUCT (Act 94-782), (Act 99-705) (Code of Ala. § 16-28-12)**

Each parent/legal guardian or other person having control or custody of a student required to attend school who fails to require the student to enroll, to regularly attend school, or to compel the student to properly conduct himself/herself as a pupil in accordance with the written policy on school behavior adopted by the local board of education shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and may be fined up to \$100.00 and may be sentenced to hard labor for up to (90) days. Amendment to Act 94-782 (effective July 1, 2000).

(Act.99-705) amends the attendance requirement to read "Each student who is enrolled in a public school shall be subject to the attendance and truancy provisions of the article except that any parent/guardian who voluntarily enrolls their student in public school, who feels that it is in the best interest of that student, shall have the right to withdraw the student at any time prior to the current compulsory attendance age."

## **DROP-OUT/DRIVER'S LICENSE (Act 94-820 which amended Act 93-368 as codified in Code of Ala. § 16-28-40)**

The Department of Public Safety shall deny a driver's license or learner's permit to any person under nineteen (19) who is not enrolled or has not received a diploma or certificate of graduation. Exceptions are students who are 19 and enrolled in a GED program, are enrolled in a secondary school, are participating in an approved job training program, are gainfully employed, are a parent of a minor or unborn child, or are the sole source of transportation for parent.

## **DRIVER'S LICENSE/PISTOL POSSESSION (Act 94-820) (Code of Ala. § 16-28-40)**

Any person over the age of fourteen (14) who is convicted of the crime of possession of a pistol on the premises of a public school, or a public school bus shall be denied issuance of a driver's permit or license to operate a motor vehicle for (180) days from the date the person is eligible and applies for a permit or license. If a person over age fourteen (14) possesses a driver's license on the date of conviction, the driver's license will be suspended for (180) days.

### **Section 1:**

- No person shall shoot or discharge a firearm into an occupied or unoccupied school bus or school building.
- A person who shoots or discharges a firearm into an occupied school bus or school building shall be guilty of a Class B felony.
- A person who shoots or discharges a firearm into an unoccupied school bus or school building shall be guilty of a Class C felony.

## **DRUG DEALING (Act 94-783) (Code of Ala. § 6-5-72)**

A person who unlawfully sells, furnishes, or gives a controlled substance to a minor may be liable for injury or damage or both suffered by a third person caused by or resulting from the use of the controlled substance by the minor if the sale, furnishing, or giving of the controlled substance is the proximate cause of the injury or damage.

## **DRUGS, ALCOHOL, WEAPONS, PHYSICAL HARM, OR THREATENED PHYSICAL HARM (Act 94-784) (Code of Ala. § 16-1-24.1)**

The school principal shall notify appropriate law enforcement officials when a person violates local board of education policies concerning drugs, alcohol, weapons, physical harm to a person, or threatened physical harm to a person. If any criminal charge is warranted, the principal is authorized to sign the appropriate warrant. If that person is a student, the local school system shall immediately suspend that person from attending regular classes, and, if the charge is resulting in an expulsion, schedule an expulsion hearing within five (5) school days.

If a person is found to have violated a local board of education policy concerning drugs, alcohol, weapons, physical harm to a person, or threatened physical harm to a person, the person may not be admitted as a transfer student or readmitted to the public schools until criminal charges, if any, have been disposed of by appropriate authorities and the person has satisfied all other requirements imposed by the local board of education as a condition for readmission.

## **MANDATORY REPORTING OF SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT (Code of Ala. § 26-14-3(f))**

According to Alabama laws, all...nurses, school teachers and officials, peace officers, law enforcement officials, social workers, day care workers or employees, mental health professionals, as defined in Rule 505 of the Alabama Rules of Evidence, or any other person called upon to render aid or medical assistance to any child shall report or cause to report incidents where a child below the age of eighteen (18) is known or suspected to be a victim of child abuse or neglect.

## **OBSTRUCTING GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS (Code of Ala. § 13A-10-2)**

A person commits the crime of obstructing governmental operations if, by means of intimidation, physical force, interference, or by any other independently unlawful act, he:

1. Intentionally obstructs, impairs, or hinders the administration of law or other governmental function; or
2. Intentionally prevents a public servant from performing a governmental function. This section does not apply to the obstruction, impairment, or hindrance of the making of an arrest.
3. Obstructing governmental operations is a Class A misdemeanor.

## **STUDENT HARASSMENT PREVENTION ACT (Code of Ala. § 16-28B)**

"Bullying" means a continuous pattern of intentional behavior on or off of school property, on a school bus, or at a school-sponsored function including, but not limited to: cyberbullying or written, electronic, verbal, or physical actions that are reasonably perceived as being motivated by any characteristic of a student, or by the association of a student with an individual who has a particular characteristic, if the

characteristic falls into one of the categories of personal characteristics contained in this policy. To constitute bullying, a pattern of behavior may do any of the following:

1. Place a student in reasonable fear of harm to his or her person or damage to his or her property.
  2. Have the effect of substantially interfering with the educational performance, opportunities, or benefits of a student.
  3. Have the effect of substantially disrupting or interfering with the orderly operation of the school whether the conduct occurs on or off school property, online, or electronically.
  4. Have the effect of creating a hostile environment in the school, on school property, on a school bus, or at a school-sponsored function.
  5. Have the effect of being sufficiently severe, persistent, or pervasive enough to create an intimidating, threatening, or abusive educational environment for a student.
- No student shall engage in or be subjected to harassment, intimidation, violence, or threats of violence.
  - No person shall engage in reprisal, retaliation, or false accusation against a victim, witness, or other person who has reliable information about an act of harassment, violence, or threat of violence.
  - Any student, or parent/legal guardian of the student, who is the object of harassment may file a complaint outlining the details of the harassment, on a form authorized by the local Board, and submit the form to the official designated by the local Board to receive complaints at the school. The Jamari Terrell Williams Bullying Complaint form is available on the VHCS website under Student Services or from the school principal. VHCS also has an electronic reporting tool, "SafeSchools Alert," to report bullying or harassment.

## **SEXUAL HARASSMENT (Code of Ala. 13A. Criminal Code § 13A-6-67)**

Sexual Harassment in any form that is directed toward students and employees is prohibited. Persons who violate this policy will be subject to the full range of disciplinary consequences up to and including termination (for employees) and expulsion (for students) as dictated by the nature and severity of the violation and other relevant considerations. Any student or employee who feels they have experienced sexual harassment in VHCS may file a written complaint with the Principal, Superintendent, or Director of Human Resources.

## **TEACHER ASSAULT (Act 94-794) (Code of Ala. § 13A-6-21)**

A person commits the crime of assault in the second degree (Class C felony) if the person assaults with intent to cause serious physical injury to a teacher or to an employee of a public educational institution during or as a result of the performance of his/her duty.

## **THEFT OF LOST PROPERTY (Code of Ala. §13A-8-6)**

Definition: A person commits the crime of theft of lost property if he actively obtains or exerts control over the property of another which he knows to have been lost or mislaid, or to have been delivered under a mistake as to the identity of the recipient or as to the nature of the amount of the property, and with intent to deprive the owner permanently of it, he fails to take reasonable measures to discover and notify the owner.

## **CRIMINAL TRESPASS BY MOTOR VEHICLE (Code of Ala. § 13A-7-4.1)**

A person commits the offense of criminal trespass by motor vehicle when the person does so after having been requested not to do so by a uniformed law enforcement officer or by a properly identified owner or an authorized agent of the owner. A person who commits the offense of criminal trespass by motor vehicle shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and upon conviction thereof shall be punished by a fine: 1. Not to exceed \$50.00 for the first such offense; 2. Not to exceed \$100.00 for the second such offense; and 3. Not to exceed \$150.00 for the third or subsequent such offense.

## **VANDALISM (Act 94-819) (Code of Ala. § 16-5-380)**

The parent/legal guardian or other person having control of any minor under the age of eighteen (18), with whom the minor is living and who has custody of the minor, shall be liable for the actual damages sustained to school property, plus the court costs caused by the intentional, willful, or malicious act of the minor.

## **WEAPONS IN SCHOOLS (Act 94-817) (Code of Ala. § 13A-11-72)**

No person shall knowingly with intent to do bodily harm, carry, or possess a deadly weapon on the premises of a public school. Possession of a deadly weapon with the intent to do bodily harm on the premises of a public school or school bus is a Class C felony. Possession by a student of a deadly weapon or firearm in a school building, on school grounds, on school buses, or at other school-sponsored functions shall constitute a Major Offense-Class III violation under Student Code of Conduct.

(Note: The term “deadly weapon” means a firearm or anything manifestly designed, made, or adapted for the purpose of inflicting death or serious physical injury, and such term includes, but is not limited to, a bazooka, hand grenade, missile, or explosive or incendiary device; a pistol, rifle, or shotgun; or a switch-blade knife, gravity knife, stiletto, sword, or dagger; or any club, baton, billy, black-jack, bludgeon, or metal knuckles).

## **FIREARMS IN SCHOOLS (Acts 1995, NO 95-756, 1768 §1-4) (Code of Ala. § 16-1-24.3)**

Students, who are determined to have brought to school or have in their possession a firearm in a school building, on school grounds, on school buses, or at other school-sponsored functions shall receive a required expulsion for a period of one year. The local Board and Superintendent may modify the expulsion requirement for a student on a case-by-case basis. Students who are expelled for violation of this section shall not be allowed to attend regular school classes in any public school in the state during the expulsion period. Students who are expelled from school for firearm possession may be permitted to attend alternative schools designed to provide education services. Discipline of students with disabilities who violate the firearm possession policies of city boards of education shall be determined on a case-by-case basis in accordance with the requirements of the IDEA and Section 504 Rehabilitation Act. For the purposes of this section, the term “firearm” has the same meaning as defined in Title 18 §921 U.S.C. When there are violations of the prohibition on firearms being brought to school by students, the school principal shall notify the appropriate law enforcement officials. Law enforcement authorities shall refer the violators to the appropriate authority in the judicial system when the action is feasible. The school principal shall notify the parents of students who violate the firearm-free school environment.

For purposes of this Procedure, the term “firearm” shall mean:

1. Any weapon (including a starter gun) which will or is designed to or may be readily converted to expel a projectile by the action of an explosive.
2. The frame or receiver of any weapon.
3. Any firearm muffler or firearm silencer.
4. Any destructive device, including explosives.

*The Code of Alabama can be a dynamic document. Based on its ability to be changed during the year, procedures referencing The Code of Alabama may not be current. The most current code will apply regardless of what the procedure manual indicates.*

## **Interrogation by Public Officials**

### **Law Enforcement Officials**

In accordance with Section 290-2-1-01 (1)(b) of the Alabama Administrative Code, it shall be the Procedure of the Vestavia Hills Board of Education to permit law enforcement agencies to make periodic visits to the Vestavia Hills City Schools for the purpose of detecting the presence of illegal drugs. Such visits shall be unannounced except to the Superintendent of schools and principals of the individual schools that are subject to visitation. When law enforcement officers make it known that they wish to talk to a student while under supervision of the school, the student will be called to the office of the principal, and in the presence of the officers, the school principal or his/her designated representative shall attempt to notify by telephone the student’s parent or guardian of the situation. The student will then be informed that he/she may opt for one of the following choices:

1. The student may converse by phone with his/her parent or guardian.
2. The student may decline to talk with the officers until his/her parent(s) or guardian(s) is present.
3. The student may talk with the officers either in or outside the presence of a school official.

In case an arrest warrant is presented by law enforcement officers, the school principal or his/her designated representative shall make every effort to notify the parents or legal guardians of the student in question prior to the student’s removal from the school premises.

### **Notification of Law Enforcement Officials**

The school principal shall notify the appropriate law enforcement authority, which may include city police, the Jefferson County sheriff, and the Jefferson County district attorney of violations of this Procedure. In addition, the school principal shall notify the parents of students who violate this Procedure. Law enforcement authorities are encouraged to refer violators of this Procedure to the appropriate authority in the judicial system when such action is feasible.

## Human Resource Department Officials

When Human Resource Department officials make it known that they wish to talk with a student while under the supervision of the school, the principal or his/her designated representative shall seek to determine if the visit relates to child abuse or neglect. If so, after presenting appropriate identification, the Department of Human Resources' official shall be permitted to talk to the student in accordance with the following procedure:

## Procedure for Handling Child Abuse/Neglect

**All educators are required to report immediately suspected cases of child abuse/neglect to the Department of Human Resources.** The following guidelines are suggested if child abuse/neglect is suspected:

1. The educator should immediately notify the principal.
2. The principal/educator should consult with the counselor.

Once the report is made, DHR will determine if an investigation is warranted. If the investigation is to begin at the school, the DHR caseworker will report to the school office and identify himself/herself to the principal or designated representative. Child abuse/neglect investigations are highly confidential, and the student's right to privacy must be respected. Only those persons necessary to conduct the investigation should be present in any interview. After an evaluation/intervention has been made, the caseworker may provide feedback to the principal and arrange monitoring procedures as needed. Educators will report further incidents of abuse/neglect regarding that child to the assigned caseworker.

## Right to Privacy Considerations

1. A student's school record continues to be protected by the terms of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act and the policies of the Board. The school system needs a parental release form, court order, or other legal document which gives school personnel the permission to release information in school records to DHR caseworkers.
2. In return, DHR personnel should share needed information with school officials. The school principal or counselor could be designated as a confidential person to receive this information and use it in the best interest of the student.

## Severability

If any part, section, or subdivision of this procedure shall be held unconstitutional or invalid for any reason, such holding shall not be construed to invalidate or impair the remainder of this procedure, which shall continue in full force and effect notwithstanding such holding.