



2025-2026

**FAMILY
HANDBOOK**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Welcome Message	01
Board of Trustees	02
The Academy Hill Parents' Association	02
Welcome to the Hill	03
Our Mission	03
Core Values	03
About this Handbook	03
A Brief History of Academy Hill	04
Giving at Academy Hill	05
Annual Fund	06
Endowment	06
Capital Giving	06
General Daily Guidelines	07
Arrival	07
Tardiness	07
Absence	07
Planned Absences/Trips	08
School Closings/Delays	08
Outdoor Recess and Physical Education	08
Lunch and Healthy Snacks	08
Visitor Policy	09
Early Dismissal	09
Pick-up by Someone Other than a Parent	09
Regular Dismissal	09
Curriculum	10
Core Programs	11
Good Morning Show	11
Forum	11
Field Trips and Enrichment Programs	12
Private Lessons and Tutoring	12
Homework	12
After School Care	13
A-SPARK	13
Home-School Communication	14
Friday Folders	14
Conferences	14
Handling Concerns	14
Email	15
Progress Reports	15
Academic Integrity	15
Consequences for Academic Dishonesty	15
School Culture	16
Self-Management	16
Prohibition of Bullying, Harassment, Hitting & Biting	17
Non-Discrimination Statement and Procedures	18
Dress Code	18
Birthday Observances	19
Acceptable Use of Technology	19
The Network	20
Chromebooks or Other Devices	20
Social Media	21
All Students Use of Personal Electronics	22
Health & Safety	23
Illness	23
Administration of Medication at School	23
Physical Exams	24
Safety	24

WELCOME MESSAGE



Zach Verriden
Head of School

Welcome to The Academy Hill School!

When you are at Academy Hill, you are family and we are glad you are here.

At the Academy Hill School (AHS), we harness children's natural curiosity and help build a lifelong passion for learning in an environment rich in encouragement and opportunities. Academy Hill has been a proud leader in the education of enthusiastic, motivated students for nearly 40 years. Our mission is to grow the innovators, visionaries, and leaders of tomorrow.

At Academy Hill, "Nurturing and Challenging Bright Minds" is not simply a tagline. We believe in our mission to enhance the educational experience for our students through rigorous, engaging, personalized curricular and co-curricular programs. Our teachers harness the talents and gifts each child exhibits, and help to guide every child to find new and creative ways to access knowledge, interpret content, and develop and present ideas. Academy Hill offers our students opportunities to interact with the world as they develop skills that will continue to benefit them, the local community and our society. This Family Handbook serves as an excellent foundation from which to build this experience.

Our close-knit community, emphasis on individual learning, and small class sizes have combined to create a strong, successful educational program for all our students. We embrace our unique talents and look forward to the road ahead together.

Best wishes,
Zach Verriden
Head of School



Phone
413-788-0300



Website
www.academyhill.org



Email Address
academy@academyhill.org



Address
1190 Liberty Street,
Springfield, MA 01104

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The Academy Hill Board of Trustees is an organization of volunteers from our school community and beyond who assume responsibility for the long-range stability of Academy Hill, delegate responsibility for enacting Academy Hill's mission to a Head of School, and play a leadership role in the raising of gifts to the school.

Academy Hill School Board of Trustees, 2025-2026

David Kayiatos, Chair
Tom Cerasulo, Vice-Chair
Laura Cardillo, Treasurer
Robert Boyd

Brooke Depelteau
Yasameen Salehi
Incoming Trustee-To Be Confirmed
Incoming Trustee-To Be Confirmed
Incoming Trustee-To Be Confirmed

Zachary Verriden, ex officio

THE ACADEMY HILL PARENTS' ASSOCIATION

The mission of the Academy Hill Parent Association is to:

- Create a forum that will encourage busy parents to participate in the Parent Association and school activities.
- Review and consider new trends and ideas for both fundraising and enrichment.
- Define and implement quality, enriched activities and fundraisers for the current school year.
- Work cooperatively with school administration to support and enhance the school program.

Please send an email to ashpa@academyhill.org if you are interested in volunteering.

Welcome to the Hill!

At Academy Hill, "Developing Visionaries, Innovators & Leaders of Tomorrow" is not simply a tagline. We believe in our mission to enhance the educational experience for our students through rigorous, engaging, personalized curricular and co-curricular programs. Our teachers harness the talents and gifts each child exhibits and help to guide every child to find new and creative ways to access knowledge, interpret content, and develop and present ideas.

School culture is often described as "the way we do things around here" and that is no different at The Academy Hill School. We believe school culture can be defined by the guiding beliefs and values evident in the way a school operates. 'School culture' can be used to encompass all the attitudes, expected behaviors and values that impact how the school operates. This Family Handbook will help explain some of "the way we do things" around Academy Hill School (AHS).

Our Mission

Academy Hill emphasizes progression without limits through an enriched curriculum that celebrates differences, nourishes creative thought and critical inquiry, and cultivates authentic learning, leading to the success of our students. *Our goal is to develop tomorrow's visionaries, innovators, and leaders.*

Core Values

We refer to our Core Values as our "Habits of the Hill" and we rely on them to determine if our decisions and actions align with who we are and who we strive to be. At their core, an Academy Hill Student is: *Inclusive, Attentive, Prepared, Diligent, Respectful, and Kind.*

About this Handbook

This handbook outlines our policies and procedures to help you understand how we operate. It is presented as a matter of information only and its contents should not be interpreted, and are not intended, as a written contract as these policies are subject to updates and modifications based on the needs of the school and the evolving world around us. The School reserves the right to suspend, modify, or amend any policy or procedure at any time.

After reviewing the handbook, if you have any questions, please feel free to discuss them with your child's teacher or the Head of School. We appreciate open communication and welcome your input to help us achieve our goals together.

A Brief History of Academy Hill

Academy Hill's mission is to create the visionaries, innovators and leaders of tomorrow. That statement has changed in wording over time, but the central ideas have remained constant.



Academy Hill got its start in the 1970s when a group of parents became tired of driving their children to Worcester for gifted-oriented enrichment activities. They created their own local program, Ames Hill Center for Gifted Children, on the campus of the MacDuffie School in Springfield.



In 1986, Academy Hill became a formal day School with 51 students on the campus of Wilbraham and Monson Academy in Wilbraham. It returned to MacDuffie in 1993, then moved to its own building at 1190 Liberty Street in Springfield in 2000.



Grades 7 and 8 were added in 2004 and 2005, respectively. The Early Learner program opened its doors in 2013. In 2019, Academy Hill welcomed its first alumni student, and today our classrooms include several more second generation Snowy Owls.

GIVING AT ACADEMY HILL

Getting involved with our school is a great way to enhance our community and make a positive impact on your child's overall educational experience. There are three key ways you can contribute: Time, Treasure, and Talent.

- **Time:** One of the most valuable resources you can offer is your time. Volunteering at our school allows you to directly engage with students and staff, creating meaningful connections and making a difference in their lives. You can serve pizza to students on Fridays, help organize events or fundraisers, or join the AHSPA. By giving your time, you become an integral part of our school community and help create an enriching environment for everyone involved.
- **Treasure:** Financial contributions are another essential way to support our school's growth and development. Your donations can be used to fund various initiatives such as upgrading facilities, purchasing educational resources or technology equipment, and supporting extracurricular activities. Every contribution counts and helps us provide the best possible education for our students.
- **Talent:** Each individual possesses unique skills and talents that can greatly benefit our school community. Whether you have expertise in art, music, sports coaching, technology, or any other field of interest - sharing your talents during a Brown Bag Lunch with us can create exciting opportunities for our students.

By getting involved through Time (volunteering), Treasure (donations), or Talent (sharing skills), you play an active role in shaping the future of our school community. Together we can create an environment where every student thrives academically and personally while fostering a sense of pride within ourselves for contributing to something greater than ourselves - the success of future generations at our beloved institution.

Annual Fund

Parents who send their children to Academy Hill have made education a priority and are committed to our school community. Not only do they pay their tuition but they also share their time and talents as tireless volunteers. We hope that all of our constituents will be able to recognize the difference that AHS makes for its students through a contribution to the Annual Fund Giving Campaign. Not only do contributions directly support the operating budget, they also signal a vote of confidence in our program.

As at many independent schools, Academy Hill's tuition and fees cover only a portion of the total cost of educating a student for one year. We rely on donations and gifts from parents, grandparents, relatives, and community benefactors to make up the difference in our operating budget. The Annual Giving Campaign is an opportunity to support AHS immediately through a tax-deductible donation. These gifts go towards mission critical expenses including financial aid, teacher salaries, utilities, maintenance, school supplies, and academic opportunities.

Endowment

By giving a gift to our endowment, you are making a lasting impact on the future of our school. Your contribution not only supports our current needs but also strengthens our long-term strategic planning goals.

An endowment is a vital financial resource that provides stability and sustainability to educational institutions. It serves as a permanent fund that generates income year after year, ensuring that our school can continue to thrive and grow.

Capital Giving

Give a gift to support a specific capital project to improve our campus and facilities. These projects are clearly identified each year.

Gifts of all sizes are critical to our school. Your support has a profound impact on the students and faculty at Academy Hill.



GENERAL DAILY GUIDELINES

Arrival

Regular arrival time is between 8:03 a.m. and 8:20 a.m., at which time a staff member will be present to greet students and guide them from car to building. Parents may not leave their children unattended outside the school prior to the opening of the front door at 8:03 a.m.

Tardiness

The school day begins promptly at 8:20 a.m. in homeroom. During homeroom, teachers set the stage for a successful day. When students enter the classroom later than 8:20 a.m., it compromises the effectiveness of homeroom and your student will begin the day in an unnecessary rush. Please try to drop your child off no later than 8:15 a.m.

Children arriving to homeroom after 8:20 a.m. are listed as tardy and must stop at the office to sign in. It is the school's policy that if a student is tardy (unexcused) four times, he or she will earn one "absence."

Absence

Regular school attendance is a crucial factor in determining the success of students at Academy Hill School. It is essential for parents to understand the significance of ensuring their child's consistent presence in school. By attending school regularly, students have the opportunity to engage in meaningful learning experiences, and build strong relationships with teachers and peers. We encourage parents to prioritize their child's instructional time by planning vacations and medical appointments outside of school hours whenever possible. By doing so, parents can minimize disruptions to their child's learning journey and ensure that they do not miss out on valuable classroom instruction. We understand that unforeseen circumstances may sometimes prevent students from attending classes and while we strive to provide support and ensure academic success, it is important to note that teachers may not always be able to provide extensive make-up homework assignments.

In case of absence, please call the school at 413-788-0300 and leave a message on the absentee line or email the school by 8:30 a.m. You may email the teachers for work to be picked up if take-home work is available. If school absences extend beyond three consecutive days OR more than 8% of possible school days in attendance, a doctor's note will be required.

Planned Absences/Trips

Planning trips and vacations is an exciting and enriching experience for families. It is important to consider and balance the impact of these absences on academic performance. We highly encourage families to schedule their trips when school is not in session whenever possible to supplement, not supplant, learning and enrichment. This ensures that students do not miss out on valuable in-class participation and discussion, which cannot be fully replaced by take-home work. If absences must occur during school time, we kindly request parents/guardians to notify the teacher and Director of Administration at least one week in advance. Take-home work cannot replace the value of in-class participation and as a result limited take-home work may be offered during extended school absences.

School Closings/Delays

When it comes to deciding whether to remain open, close, or potentially delay school due to inclement weather conditions, we closely align our decision with that of Springfield Public Schools. This ensures consistency and keeps everyone informed. School closing or delay information will be displayed on local television network affiliates, posted on the school's social media sites, and sent on the community-wide e-mail. The school will attempt to make postings by 6:30 am but parents should check their email before bringing children to school. In rare cases where it becomes necessary to close the school during regular operating hours, we will promptly send out a community-wide email notice. This ensures that parents can make appropriate arrangements for their children's safe return home.

Outdoor Recess and Physical Education

We go outside for recess unless the weather is dangerous or unhealthy. Please help us ensure the good health of your child by requiring that they come to school with appropriate outerwear for outdoor recess. The same applies for Physical Education and any outdoor classroom instruction, which we try to hold outdoors whenever possible.

Lunch and Healthy Snacks

Students are expected to come to school with a lunch, a drink, a snack, and utensils each day. We strongly discourage bringing or dropping off food from quick service restaurants. However, if you wish to provide your child with food from such establishments for lunch, we ask that you kindly place it in a nondescript lunch container. Deliveries of food ordered through online delivery services such as DoorDash or Grubhub cannot be accepted at the front desk. This measure has been put in place to prioritize school safety and security.

Visitor Policy

All doors to our school are locked to ensure the security of the building. Anyone wishing to enter the building must do so through the front entrance.

The following guidelines apply to all visitors while school is in session:

- During school hours, all visitors (parents, alumni, secondary school reps, prospective students/parents, etc.) must enter through the main entrance;
- Visitors may not visit classrooms, teachers, or students without prior approval;
- Food delivery services are not permitted and will be turned away. We have food alternatives available to students that forget their lunch at home;
- Parents that come early to wait for the regular dismissal, please wait for your child in your vehicle. Please share this information with anyone you have designated to pick up your child before the end of the school day.

Early Dismissal

Classes are dismissed at 3:10 p.m. Early dismissals, though on occasion necessary, constitute a significant disruption for your child and their teacher. If an early dismissal is necessary, parents should notify the school that morning by emailing academy@academyhill.org. When picking up a child early, please proceed to the main office to sign them out. We will notify the teacher and arrange for your child to meet you at the office. Kindly refrain from calling the front desk to request that your student be prepared for your arrival.

Pick-up by Someone Other than a Parent

The front desk must have prior notice of any persons other than parents who are authorized to pick up a student. Please call the office or email academy@academyhill.org.

Regular Dismissal

Regular dismissal runs from 3:10 p.m. to 3:25 p.m.; families have until 3:25 p.m. to pick up their children. At 3:30 p.m., all remaining students will be signed into the After School program and fees will be assessed accordingly. If a child is not picked up by 3:45 p.m. and has not registered and prepaid for after school care, a late fee of \$25.00 per child will be charged for each additional 15-minute block of time beyond 3:45 p.m. (Exceptions may be made with proper notification to the office.)

We ask that you call or email the front office before 2:30 p.m. for any changes in your child's dismissal. For the safety of our students, we will not dismiss students from the office between 2:30 and 3:10 p.m. If the office is not notified of a dismissal change by 2:30 p.m., your child will follow their regular dismissal routine.

Because the safety of our students is our foremost concern, please observe the following conventions:

- If you are traveling westbound Liberty Street going towards Chicopee and there is a line of cars waiting to turn right from Liberty Street into our driveway, do not attempt to turn left into the driveway. Instead, make a U-turn at the traffic light by Stop and Shop and get in the line headed in one direction.
- Stay to the right so that exiting traffic may pass to your left. Do not try to skip around the line by driving in the oncoming lane.
- We generally load three or four cars at a time. There are marked loading spaces.
- Children should enter and exit cars only from the passenger (right) side.
- Please encourage your child to exit or enter your vehicle as quickly as possible, so that we may move the line along at a reasonable pace. Please begin to say goodbye or give last minute instructions or encouragement to your child as you wait in line.
- If you need extra time to buckle your student into a car seat or booster, please seat the child and then pull over to one of the empty parking spots in the front of the lot to settle your child in securely.

CURRICULUM

Challenging, personalized education and an integrated curriculum are hallmarks of Academy Hill School. Our curriculum content is based on objectives and outcomes defined in national and state standards. It is designed to meet the unique needs of accelerated and curious students. Because our instruction is differentiated, our students attain maximum achievement in basic skills and explore content that goes beyond the curriculum. They are exposed to a variety of fields of study and frequently select topics based on their specific interests and needs. Our curriculum reflects high content complexity. Students work with concepts and ideas that require reflective, evaluative, critical and creative thinking. They apply what they have learned and demonstrate their knowledge in both creative and conventional ways. The very nature of the gifted learner requires us to look at curriculum in very non-traditional ways.

To view our full curriculum guide, please refer to www.academyhill.org.

CORE PROGRAMS

Good Morning Show

Students in grades K through 4 participate in this program by making three to six oral presentations a year and observing and discussing their peers' presentations.

The three-five minute presentations on self-selected topics are diverse, entertaining, and informative. The program begins at 8:30 a.m. on select mornings each week. Presenters receive constructive feedback about five aspects of their presentation: evidence of preparation, audience learning, creativity, audio-visual aids, and personal affect.

The program builds children's self-confidence, creates a forum to share interests, builds respect for other people's individuality, and develops public speaking skills.

Detailed guidelines are given to families by the Lower School teachers.

Forum

Forum is the Middle School extension of the Good Morning Show. It takes place at 2:30 p.m. on select afternoons.

At Forum, students deliver research or performance-based presentations and lead their peers in discussions afterwards. The presentations are longer than Good Morning Show presentations and take the students' public speaking skills to a higher level. Detailed guidelines are given to families by Middle School teachers.

The presentations are built around group themes. This allows individual presenters to build on each other's work and nurture an extended dialogue on a group of ideas.

Field Trips and Enrichment Programs

Field trips and various enrichment programs are an integral part of our curriculum, offering students valuable opportunities for hands-on learning and real-world experiences. We encourage 100% participation in these trips and activities.

The majority of our field trips and activities are provided at no additional cost. However, there may be certain special instances where additional payment may be required.

In many cases, we look for parent volunteers to drive for field trips. To ensure the safety of our students, we have implemented certain requirements for parent volunteers. All parents who wish to volunteer with our students must have a CORI (Criminal Offender Record Information) check on file. It is important to note that our insurance provides secondary coverage to volunteer drivers.

Private Lessons and Tutoring

We work to make our facility available for individual private lessons and tutoring with our own staff or with staff hired from outside the school. Parents must coordinate private tutoring that will occur during the academic day with the Head of School.

HOMework

Regular homework begins in first grade at Academy Hill and consists of both short and long-term assignments. Teachers will supply students with specific class and homework expectations.

From time to time a child may experience difficulty with an assignment. Please bring this to the teacher's attention immediately. Because homework is not intended to stress students, but rather to strengthen them, parents are encouraged to stop homework activity if it becomes too lengthy or too stressful. Simply notify the teacher on the following day.

The following are guidelines for how much homework your child should expect:

- Grade 3: up to 30 minutes per night
- Grades 4-5: up to 45 minutes per night
- Grades 6-7-8: up to 1.5 to 2 hours per night

Parents should provide students with an appropriate place to do their homework each night and help them to budget time for both short and long-term assignments. Please remember that homework is to be completed by the student.

AFTER SCHOOL CARE

Students must be registered for after school care in advance. Participation in the program will be on a prepaid, monthly basis, which helps us ensure adequate staffing and resources for all students.

Parents must pay for the upcoming month by the 25th of the previous month. If a student is unable to use any prepaid portion of after school care, a credit for that time will be applied to the following month, provided the student was absent from school or went home sick. If a family decides not to use the prepaid time due to personal changes in plans, they are still responsible for the reservation.

The After School Program operates each school day unless otherwise announced. After School Care begins at 3:10 p.m. and runs until 5:30 p.m. and includes both play and homework time.

For safety reasons, the after school care coordinator must visually identify the party picking up a student from after school. Please come to the window by the front door, ring the after-school doorbell, and wait to be identified.

The fee for After School Care is \$15.00 from 3:10-4:00 p.m., \$25.00 until 5:00 p.m., and \$30.00 until 5:30 p.m. Prepayment is required before a student can attend. A late fee of \$25.00 per child will be charged for each additional 15-minute block of time beyond the prepaid period. Failure to pay late pick-up fees may result in your child being suspended or removed from the program. Repeated disregard for pick-up times can also lead to suspension or termination from the program.

Emergency same-day drop-ins are available only if space permits, with a flat fee of \$50 per student. The student must be picked up by 5:30 p.m. If a child is not picked up by 3:45 p.m. and has not registered and prepaid for after-school care, a late fee of \$25.00 per child will be charged for each additional 15-minute block of time beyond 3:45 p.m. Exceptions may be made with proper notification to the office.

Behavioral Policy: If a student engages in physical contact with another student, we may no longer be able to provide aftercare services to that family. We are committed to maintaining a safe and respectful environment for all our students. To uphold these standards, any aggressive or physical contact may result in suspension or removal from the program.

A-SPARK

We offer a variety of after school activities throughout the year. Past examples include National History Day, Yearbook and Study Group. You will receive information throughout the year detailing offerings and fees.

**Please note that all policies outlined in the Family Handbook also apply to our After School and Summer Spark programs.*

HOME-SCHOOL COMMUNICATION

Our primary forms of communication with parents are email/newsletter and our website www.academyhill.org. Calendar items, events, important news and notices can all be found on the website. It is important for parents to check the website and read the newsletter on a regular basis. Specific information about your child's class can be found on your child's teacher page if one has been created.

Friday Folders

Friday Folders are also an important part of the communication process. Please check your child's folder weekly for student work and the occasional general notice. Keep the papers and return the folder on Monday.

Conferences

Our teachers will always make themselves available to talk with you, but they prefer advance notice to be able to prepare. If you would like to speak with a teacher, we ask that you schedule an appointment with the teacher with whom you want to confer.

Formal parent/teacher conferences are held in October or November & March. Parents are given advance notice of when the scheduling begins.

Handling Concerns

By virtue of sending your child to Academy Hill, you are deeply invested in the success and quality of this organization. Accordingly, finding the right approach to handling concerns is important. If you have concerns about the academic program, for example, always start by discussing them with the relevant teachers. In the unlikely instance that you and the teachers can't come to an understanding, you may then contact the Head of School. Working out concerns with faculty and administrators is a healthier way to come to resolution than discussing them out of context in social settings. Just remember, we are one community with a common mission.

Email

Email is an effective way of communicating with the administration and your child's teachers. All teachers have email addresses that consist of the first initial followed by the last name @ academyhill.org. (For example, zverriden@academyhill.org)

Please do not send urgent messages by email, as teachers may not have time to check emails during the school day. Instead, email or call the front office to be sure your message gets to the teacher.

Progress Reports

Formal reports of progress are emailed home at the end of each Trimester.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

All students are expected to complete their own original work and properly cite any ideas, references or work they share from other sources. It is essential to uphold academic integrity by conducting thorough research and properly citing any external sources used (including artificial intelligence or similar technologies). By doing so, we demonstrate our understanding of the subject matter but also respect the intellectual property of others. Students can ask questions and seek clarification on plagiarism from teachers before a specific assignment's deadline.

The use of translation websites for language-related assignments and projects is prohibited. This is to ensure that students develop their language skills authentically and effectively. Please talk with your student and reiterate the importance of academic integrity, including the dangers of relying on artificial intelligence (AI) in producing their own original work.

Consequences for Academic Dishonesty

Students who give or receive information that is not properly attributed and cited, or otherwise copy/cheat on quizzes, tests, or exams will be disciplined and are subject to suspension, separation, or dismissal from the school.

- First offense: The student meets with the Head of School and the teacher. Parents will be notified. A "0" is given as a grade for the assignment, at the discretion of the teacher. The student may be placed on probation from the National Junior Honor Society, as applicable.

- Second offense: The student meets with the Head of School, the teacher, and parents (may be a phone conference). An automatic zero is given for the assignment. The student may be placed on academic probation. The student may be considered for permanent disqualification from the National Junior Honor Society.
- Third offense: Academic dishonesty will be recorded on student's transcript. May have consequences in terms of participation in certain experiential learning opportunities (e.g. DC trip).
- Fourth offense: The student will be subject to suspension or dismissal from the school. Student may fail the course for the trimester.

It is well understood by the administration that students might engage in objectionable academic behavior without intending to mislead the teacher or to subvert the integrity of the academic program. The Head of School is responsible for making these judgments and evaluations, and for administering consequences for academic dishonesty. Students and families should realize that when a student fails to address issues of academic dishonesty in a timely and effective way, their future placement as a student may be jeopardized.

SCHOOL CULTURE

School culture is often described as "the way we do things around here" and that is no different at AHS. School culture can be defined as the guiding beliefs and values evident in the way a school operates. 'School culture' can be used to encompass all the attitudes, expected behaviors and values that impact how the school operates.

At Academy Hill, "Developing Visionaries, Innovators & Leaders of Tomorrow" is not simply a tagline. We believe in our mission to enhance the educational experience for our students through rigorous, engaging, personalized curricular and co-curricular programs. Our teachers harness the talents and gifts each child exhibits and help to guide every child to find new and creative ways to access knowledge, interpret content, and develop and present ideas.

Self-Management

Academy Hill is a nurturing community that aims to foster a sense of safety and security for all its members. On occasion, we expect students to make some mistakes that may require adult intervention. We use these opportunities to promote growth and a sense of self-discipline.

Philosophy of Academy Hill Self-Management:

- All members of the school community respect themselves, respect each other, and respect the environment;
- Problems are best solved through talking, listening, and understanding all facets of the situation;

Philosophy of Academy Hill Self-Management Continued:

- Parental involvement is crucial;
- Solutions and/or consequences should be logical with the goal of the student making better choices;
- It is our aim to turn tough situations or poor choices into learning opportunities where student dignity is preserved and the learning is restorative.

Each child struggling with self-management may face disciplinary action and will be treated according to his/her individual incident.

Prohibition of Bullying, Harassment, Hitting & Biting

Bullying, harassment, hitting and biting run counter to our core values, or Habits of the Hill, and will not be tolerated. These behaviors, whether physical, verbal, or digital, undermine the safety and well-being of our community. If bullying or harassment among students takes place outside of the school building (e.g. at a practice, on social media, over a messaging app, etc.) and holds the possibility to impact the AHS community, we will address it at Academy Hill, as well.

Pursuant to M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, acts of bullying (including cyberbullying) are prohibited:

- On school grounds and property immediately adjacent to school grounds, at a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function, or program whether on or off school grounds, on a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased, or used by the school; or through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased, or used by a school district or school, and
- At a location, activity, function, or program that is not school-related through the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased, or used by the school, if the acts create a hostile environment at school for the target or witnesses, infringe on their rights at school, or materially and substantially disrupt the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

Biting is defined as any intentional act of using the teeth to cause physical harm or discomfort to another person. Biting is considered a form of physical bullying or harassment and is subject to the same disciplinary measures as other prohibited behaviors under this policy.

Retaliation against a person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying is also prohibited.

As stated in M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, nothing in the policy requires the school to staff any non-school related activities, functions, or programs.

Please refer to www.academyhill.org for the Academy Hill Prevention Plan and a copy of the incident reporting form to report suspected bullying behavior.

Non-Discrimination Statement and Procedures

Academy Hill School does not discriminate in admission to, access to, treatment in, or employment in its services, programs and activities, on the basis of race, color or national origin, in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI); on the basis of sex, in accordance with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972; on the basis of disability, in accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504) and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA); or on the basis of age, in accordance with the Age Discrimination Act of 1974 (Age Discrimination Act). Nor does it discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity or religion, in accordance with Chapter 622 of the Acts of 1971 (M.G.L. c.76, §5) and Chapter 151B of the General Laws.

To file a complaint alleging discrimination or harassment by Academy Hill School on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender, or religion or to make inquiry concerning the application of Title VI, Title IX, Section 504, the ADA, the Age Discrimination Act, or applicable state laws and their respective implementing regulations, please contact:

Academy Hill School
1190 Liberty Street
Springfield, MA 01104
413.788.0300

Dress Code

There is a large body of school research that concludes that the way children dress for school impacts the way that they learn at school. At Academy Hill we want our children to be comfortable and yet distinguish what they wear to school from what they might wear in their leisure time.

Our dress code is "School Casual" and permits comfortable, loose fitting clothing such as slacks, jeans, skirts, polo shirts, and T-shirts that are in good repair and are without inappropriate messages or images.

Clothing choices that may be causing a significant disruption to the learning environment might require further discussion. Sneakers must be worn for Physical Education. For safety reasons, flip-flops should not be worn to school. Students who violate the dress code policy will be expected to make the appropriate changes immediately, which may include asking the student's parent to bring a change of clothing to the school. Head coverings and hats are not allowed inside the building unless approved by the Head of School.

Students in PreK-2 need to have a complete change of clothes at school at all times—including socks and underwear. In general, clothing should be suited to the weather, should be washable, and should be designed so that the child is not hampered in his or her attempts to manage independently in the bathroom.

Mark articles such as sweaters, jackets, lunch boxes and boots with your child's name.

No weapons or fake weapons are allowed on campus without express permission of a teacher for presentation purposes.

Birthday Observances

Individual portions of celebratory snacks to share are welcome. Please do not send in anything that needs to be cut into individual portions. If you host birthday or other parties outside of school, please respect the spirit of inclusiveness that characterizes Academy Hill.

Birthday treats provided for the class should always consider any students with dietary restrictions/allergies in the class. Contact the teacher for more information.

ACCEPTABLE USE OF TECHNOLOGY

As students progress through the grade levels at Academy Hill School, students will increase their use of electronic technology both inside and outside of the classroom. In order to support a healthy and productive learning environment for both the students and faculty, the following agreements are required. These guidelines and practices serve as rules and the basis for policy, AHS will continue to ensure a safe and appropriate environment as new technologies and practices evolve. Students in selected grade levels may bring their own device to school (BYOD). An additional document covers the use of school approved and student-owned technology.

The Network

Academy Hill is pleased to offer students supervised access to a computer network and the Internet for expressly educational ends.

- Supervision: Technology and Internet access is only for educational activities and only with adult supervision.
- Privacy: Network storage areas may be treated like school lockers. The Network Administrator may review files to ensure that the system is running properly and that students are using the system responsibly.
- Storage capacity: Users are expected to delete material that takes up excessive storage space.
- Illegal copying: Students should never download or install any commercial software, shareware, or freeware onto network drives or disks, unless they have permission from the network administrator. Students should not copy other people's work or intrude into other people's files.

Inappropriate materials or language: Profane, abusive or impolite language should not be used to communicate nor should materials be accessed which are not in line with the rules of school behavior. **A good rule to follow is never view, send, or access materials that you would not want your teachers and parents to see.** Should students encounter such material by accident, they should quietly report it to the teacher or the Front Desk immediately.

Chromebooks or Other Devices

Students at particular grade levels will be provided with a specific Chromebook or similar device for their use. Students may perform online research, project development, word processing, typing practice, or other applications permitted by the teacher. The following guidelines found in the handbook and pertaining to all technology are required when using the Chromebooks:

Plagiarism Guidelines for Technology

- Do not access any websites or content unless given specific permission or guidelines by a teacher or adult.
- Do not cut and paste from websites without quoting or using as the basis for notes in your own words. This is plagiarism.
- The use of ChatGPT or any similar "AI", artificial intelligence or software-generated work in part or in whole is prohibited. All assignments and submissions should be the sole creation of the student submitting it.
- Do not violate copyright laws.

Confidentiality Guidelines

- Do not view, send, or display offensive messages or pictures.
- If you are given a password, do not share it with another person.
- Do quietly notify an adult immediately, if, by accident, you encounter materials that violate the Rules of Appropriate Use.
- Do not trespass in another's folders, work, or files.

Network and Computer Use Guidelines

- Do not waste limited resources such as disk space or printing capacity.
- Do not use a computer to harm other people or their work.
- Do not damage the computer or the network in any way.
- Do not interfere with the operation of the network by installing any software, shareware, or freeware.

Accountability for Appropriate Use of Technology

- Be prepared to be held accountable for your actions and for the loss of privileges if the Rules of Appropriate Use are violated.
- Chromebooks and other school-issued devices must be stored in the charging units in each homeroom or classroom when not in use. If a Chromebook or device is left on any other occasion overnight, the student may lose Chromebook privileges for up to one week.
- If a device is accidentally damaged, please inform an adult right away.
- If the student does not follow these guidelines, the teacher, school administration or designee may suspend use of the school or personal computer.

Social Media

The school recognizes that many students use social networks such as Instagram, TikTok and Snapchat. We encourage you to check each site's user policy, as many students do not meet the required age or school enrollment specifications. In addition, and perhaps more importantly it is our hope that children will use their childhood and adolescent years to gain confidence in creating and maintaining friendships in real, rather than virtual, settings.

If student use of social media has an impact on the school community or other students at AHS, further discussion with families may be required. Please refer to "Bullying and Harassment" policy above for further detail. Online bullying and harassment run counter to our core values, or Habits of the Hill, and will not be tolerated.

Parents and Academy Hill employees are asked not to communicate with students via social networks. We encourage friendly communication with students, parents, and alumni but feel email is a more suitable venue.

All Students

Use of Personal Electronics

Academy Hill School prohibits the use of personal electronics during the school day, unless expressly required by teachers for an academic reason. This includes cell phones, e-readers, tablet computers, smart watches or any other personal electronic device. The use of supportive or other devices can be arranged with the Head of School. We ask that parents also follow this policy while on campus.

Cell phones may be brought to school but must be kept in backpacks and used for after school emergencies only. There is NO CELLPHONE OR SMART WATCH USE permitted while students are at school.

- Upon arrival, personal electronic devices must be put away in lockers.
- Students may retrieve devices after dismissal, but they are to be used with permission for communication to contact a parent/guardian. Students are not permitted to use devices for games, social networking, etc. while on school premises.
- Taking pictures of other students without consent is prohibited without the approval of the Head of School.
- Posting anything to social media during school hours (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter) is prohibited.
- Students who need to contact their parents at times other than after school should ask a teacher for direction.
- Pictures may be taken on field trips, special occasions, etc., with adult permission.
- No pictures may be posted to any of the social media sites without the consent of those students in the photographs.
- The use of AirPods, headphones, or similar personal audio devices is permitted only with explicit teacher approval. This privilege can be revoked at the teacher's discretion if the devices are misused, distract from learning, or violate classroom rules.

These guidelines are intended to keep students focused on their school day.

HEALTH & SAFETY

Illness

For the protection of your child and their classmates, please keep your child at home when ill. It's important not to medicate a child, especially one with a fever, to send them to school. Please notify the school when your child is ill by calling the absent/tardy line at 413-788-0300 option 3.

The following symptoms may mean that an illness is contagious:

- Fever, diarrhea, vomiting within the last 24 hours. Children need to be symptom-free for 24 hours before returning to school.
- Thick mucus or pus draining from eyes.
- Sore throat, especially if combined with fever or swollen neck glands.
- Rashes with fever or rashes of unknown origin.
- Upper respiratory infection and/or severe cold, especially if accompanied with green or yellow nasal discharge and/or ear pain. Coughing spreads germs, and a cough that keeps a child up at night means they will be too tired to learn the next day.
- Unusual fatigue, paleness, loss of appetite, confusion and irritability.

Administration of Medication at School

At Academy Hill School, we prioritize student safety while adhering to Massachusetts Regulation 105 CMR 210.00, which strictly governs the administration of prescription medication in schools. Due to limited resources, we strongly encourage parents to administer all medications, including prescription and over-the-counter (OTC) drugs, at home before or after school hours whenever possible. However, as required by state law, we permit emergency prescription medications, such as epinephrine auto-injectors (EpiPens) for severe allergies, to be administered during school hours for students with documented medical needs.

A parent/guardian must come to school to personally administer any OTC or prescription medication. School staff will not administer subsequent doses of OTC or prescription medications.

Medications for asthma or allergic emergencies will be stored at the front desk area. Students are not allowed to carry on their person or in their belongings any medications other than rescue inhalers and those may be carried only when we have an Asthma Action Plan signed by a physician on file.

All allergy medications (Benadryl, EpiPen) for severe allergic reactions/anaphylaxis must be accompanied by an Allergy Action Plan and medication administration form/waiver signed by a parent and medical provider. Failure to provide an updated Allergy Action Plan may result in the exclusion of the student from school until received.

Physical Exams

Physical Exam forms are required for:

- New students
- Kindergarten students
- Grade 4 students
- Grade 7 students

Physician completed school Health Forms must be on file in the school office when school commences.

Immunizations must be up-to-date. If there are any special circumstances, including religious exemptions or physician approved alternative immunization schedules, please contact the Head of School.

Emergency Information Forms sent home at the beginning of each year must be filled out and returned immediately. In case of emergency, the school must be able to contact a parent or a designated, responsible adult immediately.

Safety

The staff follows response procedures for a variety of emergency situations. In all cases, parents would be contacted after danger had passed and the students were safe. In the event of an evacuation of the property, we have designated a secure location to ensure everyone's safety.

While we intentionally do not publish our safety procedures, we are more than happy to address any concerns or questions you may have directly, ensuring complete transparency and clarity.

Have a great school year!

The Handbook Acknowledgement Form [LINK]
must be electronically submitted by
Tuesday, September 2, 2025.