



Discovery Middle School  
@  
Nehemiah Center  
Student Handbook  
2021 - 2022

## **Our Mission**

Our mission is to prepare college and career-ready students for postsecondary success.

## **Our Vision**

We are a premier district of choice that meets the diverse needs of all students by creating an inclusive community that fosters a strong sense of self-worth.

## **Core Beliefs**

### **We believe that:**

- All students can learn if we meet their needs.
- Innate learning depends on a safe, nurturing, inclusive, and flexible environment.
- All decisions should be based on what is best for the student.
- A learning organization focused on excellence will continually transform through meaningful and relevant work that engages students in profound learning.
- Education is the shared responsibility of the community.
- Genuine transformation requires disruptive innovation.

## **Values**

- Safety
- Learning
- Quality
- Community
- Common Decency
- Human Capital

## **Our Commitment**

Southwest Schools is committed to creating an outstanding learning environment resulting in skillful, knowledgeable, well-equipped citizens who will become successful members of society, enabling them to adapt to the cultural, intellectual, and social challenges in a changing world. We aspire to be the leader and integral part of a consortium within our community that meets that goal. To achieve that ambition, we apply our collective energies, resources, and talents to provide high quality education to children and youth in Texas. Along with others, we will advocate for all our children. We will reach out with a universal embrace to all parts of our community. We will work continuously to learn more about the evolving issues in education and we will not hesitate to attempt innovative solutions.

August 2021

Dear DMS at Nehemiah Community:

It's a privilege to be with you for another year of learning. We all begin eager at the start of a new school year to do our best and succeed. Let us take an important first step towards that goal by reading and absorbing the information in these pages. Parents/caregivers and students should carefully go over each topic together. Parents share the responsibility for their student's understanding of the contents of this *Handbook*. By signing, you are *acknowledging that* you are fully aware of the commitments you are making to partner with your child's school to ensure a successful year. Please return the *Acknowledgement Page* to a DMS @ Nehemiah teacher or to Ms. Sandy Green, Clerk in the School Office.

Respectfully,

*Marian Kennedy-Busby*

Marian Kennedy-Busby, M.Ed.  
Principal

### *Non-Discrimination Policy*

We are committed to the communities that we serve in providing a safe and nurturing environment for all regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or gender expression. We do not condone any discrimination based on any of these factors or any other prohibited by law. All students, faculty, staff, and community deserve the right to have an educational environment that is free from discrimination, threats, fear, harassment, and retaliation.

## **Faculty and Staff Assignments: 2021 - 2022**

### **District Leadership**

Don Hooper – Interim Superintendent – [dhooper@swschools.org](mailto:dhooper@swschools.org)

Uyen Nguyen – Chief Academic Officer – [unguyen@swschools.org](mailto:unguyen@swschools.org)

Rose Norman – Chief Operations Officer – [rnorman@swschools.org](mailto:rnorman@swschools.org)

Lisa Schott – Associate Human Resources Officer – [lschott@swschools.org](mailto:lschott@swschools.org)

### **DMS@Nehemiah Leadership**

*Office Phone Number/Address 346-571-6060 - 6400 West Park Suite 480, Houston, Texas 77057*

Marian Kennedy-Busby –Principal - [mken尼迪@swschools.org](mailto:mken尼迪@swschools.org)

Maria Benzon, PhD. – Assistant Principal – [mbenzon@swschools.org](mailto:mbenzon@swschools.org)

Ebonee Guilliam – Administrative Assistant - [eguilliam@swschools.org](mailto:eguilliam@swschools.org)

Tosha Felder Washington – Academic Counselor – [tfelder@swschools.org](mailto:tfelder@swschools.org)

– Enrollment and Records Coordinator -

– Special Education and LEP Coordinator –

### **The Nehemiah Center Leadership**

*Phone Number/Address - 713-526-5015 – 5015 Fannin, Houston, Texas 77004*

Tonia Labbe –Executive Director – [tlabbe@nehemiahcenterhouston.org](mailto:tlabbe@nehemiahcenterhouston.org)

### **Phoenix Team**

Broderick Jones – Accountability Specialist and Site Lead – [bjones@swschools.org](mailto:bjones@swschools.org)

Nakishee McGee – English Lead, English Instructor - [nmcgee@swschools.org](mailto:nmcgee@swschools.org)

Sandy Green - Clerk, Lab Instructor - [sggreen@swschools.org](mailto:sggreen@swschools.org)

Roland Parsons - Physical Education Instructor - [rparsons@swschools.org](mailto:rparsons@swschools.org)

Erick Ceppi - Social Studies Instructor – [eceppi@swschools.org](mailto:eceppi@swschools.org)

Tyneshia Thomas - Denmon - Science Instructor - [tthomas@swschools.org](mailto:tthomas@swschools.org)

Lulu Li – Math Instructor - [lli@swschools.org](mailto:lli@swschools.org)

Barbara Combs – Special Education Teacher - [bcombs@swschools.org](mailto:bcombs@swschools.org)

Krystal Gokey – Counselor – [kgokey@swschools.org](mailto:kgokey@swschools.org)





## Academic Calendar Year 2021 - 2022

<b>21</b> <b>July 2021</b> S M T W T F S 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31	<b>August 2021 - (E-15 S-10)</b> S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31	<b>September 2021 - (E-21 S-21)</b> S M T W T F S 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30
<b>October 2021 - (E-20 S-19)</b> S M T W T F S 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31	<b>November 2021 - (E-17 S-17)</b> S M T W T F S 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30	<b>December 2021 - (E-13 S-12)</b> S M T W T F S 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31
<b>22</b> <b>January 2022 - (E-20 S-19)</b> S M T W T F S 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31	<b>February 2022 - (E-20 S-20)</b> S M T W T F S 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28	<b>March 2022 - (E-18 S-18)</b> S M T W T F S 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31
<b>April 2022 - (E-19 S-19)</b> S M T W T F S 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30	<b>May 2022 - (E-21 S-21)</b> S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31	<b>June 2022 - (E-3 S-2)</b> S M T W T F S 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30
<b>KEY</b> E-# = Employee Days S-# = Student Days New Teacher In-Service Days Teacher In-Service Days District Welcome Back First and Last day of School Holidays Early Dismissal for Students Professional Dev. Days (No Students) End of Six Weeks Teacher Prep. Days (No Students) First day of Second Semester Make-up Days		
<b>SIGNIFICANT DATES</b> First Day for New Teachers/New to SWS August 6, 2021 First Day for Returning Teachers August 11, 2021 First Day of School August 18, 2021 Last Day of First Semester December 16, 2021 First Day of Second Semester January 4, 2022 Last Day of School June 2, 2022 Last Day for Teachers June 3, 2022		
<b>MAKE-UP DAYS</b> <b>June 3, 2022</b> First make up day if needed, moves Teacher Prep Day to June 6 <sup>th</sup> . <b>June 6, 2022</b> Second make up day if needed, moves Teacher Prep Day to June 7 <sup>th</sup> .		
<b>SEMESTER DATES</b> <b>First Semester</b> August 18, 2021-December 16, 2021 <b>Second Semester</b> January 4, 2022-June 2, 2022		
<b>Six Weeks Grading Periods</b> Cycle I 8/18/21-9/27/21 28 Days Cycle II 9/28/21-11/8/21 28 Days Cycle III 11/9/21-12/16/21 23 Days Cycle IV 1/4/2022-2/14/2022 29 Days Cycle V 2/15/2022-4/8/2022 33 Days Cycle VI 4/11/2022-6/2/2022 37 Days		

Instructional Days: 178

Employee Work Days: 187

## **Communication Procedures and Policies**

### **Communication with Families**

Discovery Middle School @ Nehemiah believes that it is of vital importance for the home and the school to work together. In order to promote effective communication and understanding, the school has established the following avenues for information regarding school and student life:

1. Nehemiah Center Mailbox – each family is assigned a mailbox on the first floor of the Nehemiah Center for the purpose of communicating information. This mailbox should be checked daily.
2. Front Door – important information, including emergency information and off-campus activities, will be posted on the front door of the Nehemiah Center, including the name and number of the person to contact for information.
3. REMIND – a text messaging service that will communicate information, events, important notices, updates, meetings, emergency information, and other important announcements.
4. Southwest Schools District's Website – the website includes information regarding occurrences at DMS@Nehemiah. Also you can find updated information on the website for the Nehemiah Center. [www.swschools.org](http://www.swschools.org) & [www.nehemiahcenterhouston.org](http://www.nehemiahcenterhouston.org)
5. Report Cards – the school will issue printed progress reports every three weeks and report cards every six weeks. These are designed to monitor and assess student progress in their academic achievement, conduct, and work habits.
6. *Monthly Calendar* – the school will send out a monthly calendar that will communicate items of information, events, and other items to keep parents informed.
7. Parent/Teacher Conference – is a face-to-face meeting with the teacher(s) to assess the present state of a student's welfare, determine a course of action, and set up monitoring procedures to ensure success. Individual conferences are arranged through the main office and Ms. Green will schedule the meetings at the teacher's conference period. Parents may also request a teacher group conference, and this is encouraged especially for a student that may be struggling in more than one academic area.

## **Telephone and Address Changes**

Because of the importance of always having the most up-to-date contact information, parents will be asked periodically to complete a *Family Contact Information* form and return it to the DMS@Nehemiah Office. Likewise, we ask that **families immediately report any changes** so that records will reflect accurate information and we may better serve you and your children.

## **Closing of School and REMIND**

Discovery Middle School @ Nehemiah will follow HISD policy in the event of the closing of school due to inclement weather or other emergencies. If the occasion arrives for a deviation from our Southwest Schools designated schedule, school families will be notified through email, call outs, and the REMIND communication tool. **It is the responsibility of families to provide up to date phone numbers and emails in the system to receive alerts that will affect you and your children.**

## **Contacting Teachers**

Discovery Middle School @ Nehemiah has established a strict policy limiting employee use of cell phones and other communication devices during the workday. Teachers are not at liberty to respond to parent texts or emails during the day. We ask that parents who wish to communicate with a member of the DMS faculty/staff call **346-571-6062** and leave a message with the Clerk, Ms. Sandy Green. Members of the faculty/staff will respond within 24-48 hours, if not sooner. Please do not show up unannounced to try to talk with teachers. This behavior can distract faculty from their primary responsibility during the day: the supervision and teaching of all students.

## **Student – Teacher Communication: Restrictions**

Discovery Middle School @ Nehemiah policy prohibits electronic communication and social media relationships between faculty/staff and students. Faculty will not respond to student texts, even those seeking assistance with homework or making similar requests. Parents, please ensure that your students understand that teachers will make every effort to assist students during the school day and that Center policy prevents them from engaging in academic or social conversations with students by phone or online.

## **Parent Visits to Class**

Parents are welcome to visit school and observe classes, with a prior appointment. Call 346-571-6062 and speak with Ms. Green to arrange a visit. As stated above, please do not show up unannounced as this behavior can interfere with the flow of supervision, teaching, and learning for all students during the school day.

## Parent Request for Student Documents

To obtain a copy of a student records, please contact Sandy Green at 346-571-6060 ext. 561 or send an email request to [sggreen@swschools.org](mailto:sggreen@swschools.org). Ms. Green will prepare documents for parents. Note: The School requires a minimum of 48 hours' notice to prepare the necessary documents.

## Attendance Policies

### Attendance

State law requires that a student be regular in school attendance. We also believe that regular attendance is the only way for a student to progress academically and to benefit substantially from the total school program. The instructional program designed by each teacher is a progressive and sequential experience. For that reason, a continuous failure of a student to attend school will be seen as a serious problem. Failure of a student to attend school is considered an absence. Any student who accumulates excessive absences is in jeopardy of not meeting requirements to pass to the next grade level.

**A note from a parent or guardian, including the reason for any absence, must be submitted to the School Office the next school day to document any absence.** Those students who, for medical reasons, experience a long-term absence (a minimum of 5 consecutive days) which would place them over the policy limit (state and DMS@Nehemiah) for attendance **must submit a letter to the school, along with a written explanation from a physician, indicating the nature of the illness and that it was just cause for the extended absence.**

Students are expected to be at school on time (before 7:30 am each day). Students will be dismissed at 3:40 pm each day (**12:45 p.m. on Early Dismissal Wednesdays**). **To remain on campus after those times, students must be enrolled participants in the Nehemiah Center College Prep Program (CPP).**

### Tardiness

All students are considered tardy who are not in their assigned classroom at 7:40 a.m. with the necessary materials to begin work. **When a student arrives late to school, the student must go to the School Office Clerk, Ms. Green, to sign in and receive a pass to class.** If a student has a medical/dental appointment that makes him/her late to school, it will be considered an "excused tardy." A note from the doctor's office should be given to the school office upon arrival. **Habitual late arrival to class will be documented by the school and an explanation meeting will be scheduled.**



## **Late Arrival to Class**

Students are required to be on time to class. Habitual late arrival to class or other school activities during the day will negatively affect the General Conduct grade.

## **Dismissal Before 3:40 pm.**

Students are expected to attend school for the entire day (7:30 a.m. to 3:40 p.m.) No students are permitted to leave early, unless for a reason authorized by the Site Lead. Departures without proper authorization will be converted to unexcused "Days Absent." Parents are required to complete an *Early Release Form* with the Clerk, Ms. Green, for each such absence. If a student returns to school later that day, he/she should report to the School Office with a parent and sign in before returning to class.

## **Truancy**

Truancy, "skipping school/class," is an absence without the knowledge and consent of parents and school personnel. This includes leaving the school campus without prior permission or staying out of scheduled classes or activities without prior approval. Such action will result in disciplinary consequences.

## **Medical Policies**

### **Immunization Policy**

The law requires a current record of immunizations for each student. These documents, along with all other required paperwork, must be on file with the school before your child can be enrolled.

### **Infectious Disease**

The decision to exclude a child from the classroom or any school activity, due to illness, is based upon the individual needs of the child and the risk of exposure to communicable disease for the school population. Do not send your child to school if the child has had a fever or has vomited within 24 hours of the start of school. Discovery Middle School @ Nehemiah does not have a school nurse. If a student displays symptoms of illness (headaches, stomach aches, fever, excessive sneezing/coughing, etc.) we will call a parent and/or emergency contact to request immediate pickup of the child. An ill child will have to sit in the first-floor lobby near the Front Desk until a parent arrives.

The following conditions are considered infectious and require a minimum of 24 hours of treatment prior to returning to school: Vomiting, Fever, Strep Throat, Scarlet Fever, Pink Eye and Ringworm. Lice and scabies require treatment prior to returning to school.

### **Medication at School**

Southwest Schools Charter District prohibits schools from furnishing medication. Prescription medication can only be administered by an administrator or his/her designee. The 'Medication Administration Form' must be completed and signed by the parent/guardian **AND** the physician.

State law forbids school personnel from administering medication to a student unless the medication is in its original container. A form filled out by the physician is required for any medication change.

Over the counter medications should be administered by the parent/guardian before and/or after school. School personnel will be allowed to administer over the counter (OTC) medications only if a medical physician has completed and signed the required form and the parent provides the medication in its original container with the student's name attached. Please see the school's Clerk for the appropriate forms and additional medication guidelines and procedures.

## **Academic Policies**

### **Grading Standard**

Discovery Middle School @ Nehemiah has established a grading policy for evaluating and reporting student achievement:

A	90-100
B	80-89
C	75-79
D	70-74
F	69 and below

### **Student Records**

The school keeps records of the registration and attendance of the students and maintains an up-to-date permanent cumulative record of individual students showing personal data and progress through school. This Cumulative Folder will include academic achievement, health information, disciplinary records, and standardized test results. Parents and legal guardians who wish to review their child's Cumulative Folder must contact the School Office to schedule an appointment with **48 hours advance notice**.

### **Tutoring**

Faculty/Staff will carefully monitor the progress of each student and recommend additional support by volunteer tutors, as needed. Additional tutoring may be available to participants in the Nehemiah Center Afterschool College Prep Program.

### **Honor Roll**

Each 6-weeks the faculty will recognize students who have achieved Honor Roll status by meeting the following criteria: A or B grades in all core classes; a C grade or higher in all other areas; S or E grades in General Conduct (no conduct lower than an S).

**State Testing:**

All students will participate in STAAR testing: 6<sup>th</sup> will take the Reading & Math, 7<sup>th</sup> will take the Reading, Math, & Writing, and 8<sup>th</sup> will take the Reading, Math, Social Studies, and Science exams.

**Field Trips: Using “Houston as a Classroom”**

Field trips use the rich learning resources of the Museum District and the greater Houston area. They enhance classroom instruction and integrate subject matter with “real life” experience. At times, a student may remain on campus and not participate in a given field trip due to academic and/or behavioral issues. Misbehavior on field trips is a serious disciplinary offense. When a field trip is scheduled, all students in the designated classes are expected to participate. Exceptions require the permission of the principal and the teacher in charge of the field trip. Parents must sign Field Trip Permission forms as soon as they are sent home. Students must have the **written** permission of a parent/guardian to participate in a field trip. **No phone call authorizations will be accepted.**

**Bus Rules and Regulations (Mangum, Discovery, and Empowerment)**

Students sometimes ride in buses or vans on field trips. Students are expected to assist in ensuring the vehicles remain in good condition and that transportation is provided safely. When riding a bus/van, students are held to the following behavioral standards:

- Always follow the Driver’s directions.
- Enter and leave the bus in an orderly manner at the designated stop.
- Keep feet, books, band instrument cases and other objects out of the aisle.
- Do not deface the bus or its equipment.
- Do not put head, arms, or legs out the window.
- Do not hold any object out the window or throw any object in or out of the bus.
- Do not possess or use any form of tobacco product on the bus.
- Observe all usual classroom rules.
- Be seated while the vehicle is moving.
- Fasten your seat belt when available on the bus.
- Wait for the Driver’s signal upon leaving the bus and before crossing in front of the vehicle.

Misconduct on the bus will be punished in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct and the Consequences chart below. Bus riding privileges may be suspended.

**Discipline Policies****Discipline Code**

Discovery Middle School @ Nehemiah strives to promote high standards of honor, to teach respect of authority, and to develop self-discipline. A school discipline code has been established to accomplish the above goals, to set a foundation for proper conduct in school, and provide teachers and parents with an outline of accepted discipline.

To maintain a proper atmosphere in which the teaching/learning process can develop, students are expected to:

- Be courteous, cooperative, and respectful toward one another, their teachers, and all Discovery Middle School @ Nehemiah employees and guests
- Arrive to class on time; be prepared and attentive
- Exert their best effort to learn and allow others to learn
- Adhere to the school's standard of dress, per the Uniform Policy
- Be honest in their work and in their dealings with others
- Respect the property of the school and that of others in the school
- Not harass, bully, or insult other students
- Not utilize profanity
- Refrain from involvement and situations in the areas of drugs, alcohol, tobacco, and immorality

As with all of life, student behavioral choices have consequences. With the school's discipline code, these consequences will follow a graduated scale.

For offenses that are disrespectful in nature to the student herself/himself, another student, a faculty or staff member, or property, the student will be issued a warning. If the behavior continues or escalates, the student may again be warned or immediately referred to the principal or her designee so parents may be contacted. Parents will be contacted by the teacher or the principal. Continuing difficulties will result in a Parent-School conference (Principal and Teacher) to determine a plan of action that will best serve the student without jeopardizing the learning and well-being of other students.

### **Suspension from School**

More serious violations of the school discipline code will result in the student being suspended from classes or on-campus attendance. In such instances, the principal will determine the number of days that a student will be suspended. The duration can be from 1-3 days.

Students suspended from school are still required to complete all assignments missed while suspended. A suspension from school is counted as an unexcused absence from school.

Students that are suspended from school **may not participate** in extracurricular activities for the period of the suspension.

### **Disciplinary Probation**

A student may be placed on disciplinary probation because of a pattern of disregard of the school's values, procedures, policies, and behavioral norms or after a single severe behavioral offense. In such cases, the principal will determine the terms and length of the probation. The probation period serves as a clear message to the student and parent/caregiver that immediate and observable behavioral improvement is required for the student to continue to enjoy all the rights and privileges of a DMS@Nehemiah student.

### **Cheating/Plagiarism Policy**

Cheating is defined as any act of deceit, trickery, or fraud on an assignment or test. It includes the using or copying of another person's work or lending one's work to another. It could also include but is not limited to using written notes on a test; giving or receiving hand signals; looking at another student's test; or allowing another student to copy one's answers. Collaborative assignments or group assignments made by a teacher will not be considered cheating. Plagiarism is defined as using another person's original ideas or writing as one's own without giving credit to the true author. If a student plagiarizes or cheats on an assignment, he/she will be assigned a mandatory lunch detention to redo the original plagiarized assignment and receive a grade no higher than 80%.

### **Bullying Prevention Policies and Procedures**

"Bullying":

(A) means a single significant act or a pattern of acts by one or more students directed at another student that exploits an imbalance of power and involves engaging in written or verbal expression, expression through electronic means, or physical conduct that satisfies the applicability requirements provided by Subsection (a-1), and that:

(i) has the effect or will have the effect of physically harming a student, damaging a student's property, or placing a student in reasonable fear of harm to the student's person or of damage to the student's property.

(ii) is sufficiently severe, persistent, or pervasive enough that the action or threat creates an intimidating, threatening, or abusive educational environment for a student.

(iii) materially and substantially disrupts the educational process or the orderly operation of a classroom or school; or

(iv) infringes on the rights of the victim at school; and

(B) includes cyberbullying.

(2) "Cyberbullying" means bullying that is done using any electronic communication device, including using a cellular or other type of telephone, a computer, a camera, electronic mail, instant messaging, text messaging, a social media application, an Internet website, or any other Internet-based communication tool.

(a-1) This section applies to:

(1) bullying that occurs on or is delivered to school property or to the site of a school-sponsored or school-related activity on or off school property.

(2) bullying that occurs on a publicly or privately owned school bus or vehicle being used for transportation of students to or from school or a school-sponsored or school-related activity; and

(3) cyberbullying that occurs off school property or outside of a school-sponsored or school-related activity if the cyberbullying:

(A) interferes with a student's educational opportunities; or

(B) substantially disrupts the orderly operation of a classroom, school, or school-sponsored or school-related activity.

(b) Repealed by Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 522 (S.B. [179](#)), Sec. 15, eff. September 1, 2017.

(c) The board of trustees of each school district shall adopt a policy, including any necessary procedures, concerning bullying that:

(1) prohibits the bullying of a student.

(2) prohibits retaliation against any person, including a victim, a witness, or another person, who in good faith provides information concerning an incident of bullying.

- (3) establishes a procedure for providing notice of an incident of bullying to:
  - (A) a parent or guardian of the alleged victim on or before the third business day after the date the incident is reported; and
  - (B) a parent or guardian of the alleged bully within a reasonable amount of time after the incident.
- (4) establishes the actions a student should take to obtain assistance and intervention in response to bullying.
- (5) sets out the available counseling options for a student who is a victim of or a witness to bullying or who engages in bullying.
- (6) establishes procedures for reporting an incident of bullying, including procedures for a student to anonymously report an incident of bullying, investigating a reported incident of bullying, and determining whether the reported incident of bullying occurred.
- (7) prohibits the imposition of a disciplinary measure on a student who, after an investigation, is found to be a victim of bullying, on the basis of that student's use of reasonable self-defense in response to the bullying; and
- (8) requires that discipline for bullying of a student with disabilities comply with applicable requirements under federal law, including the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. Section 1400 et seq.).
- (d) The policy and any necessary procedures adopted under Subsection (c) must be included:
  - (1) annually, in the student and employee school district handbooks; and
  - (2) in the district improvement plan under Section [11.252](#).
- (e) The procedure for reporting bullying established under Subsection (c) must be posted on the district's Internet website to the extent practicable.
- (f) Each school district may establish a district-wide policy to assist in the prevention and mediation of bullying incidents between students that:
  - (1) interfere with a student's educational opportunities; or
  - (2) substantially disrupt the orderly operation of a classroom, school, or school-sponsored or school-related activity.

## **Sexual Harassment**

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 protects people from sex discrimination in educational programs and activities at institutions that receive federal financial assistance. Under Title IX, discrimination based on sex can include sexual harassment or sexual violence such as rape, sexual assault, sexual battery, and sexual coercion.

Southwest Schools Charter District does not discriminate based on sex in education programs and/or District activities, and any member of the SWS community should promptly report any instances of harassment or violence.

## **Sexual Harassment by Students**

Students shall not engage in sexual harassment toward another student or a District employee. A substantiated charge of sexual harassment against a student shall result in disciplinary action. Sexual harassment by a student includes unwanted and unwelcome verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, whether by word, gesture, or any other sexual conduct, including requests for sexual favors.

## **Sexual Harassment by Employees**

District employees are prohibited from sexually harassing or sexually abusing students. Romantic relationships between students and employees are prohibited.

## **Dating/Relationship Violence**

The district prohibits sexual harassment, dating violence, and harassment based on a person's age, race, color, ancestry, national origin, sex, handicap or disability, marital status, religion, political affiliation, sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or gender expression. Dating violence occurs when one partner in a dating relationship, either past or current, intentionally uses physical, sexual, verbal, or emotional abuse to harm, threaten, intimidate, or control the other partner.

## **Corporal Punishment**

Southwest School Charter District policy prohibits corporal punishment as a disciplinary method within the School District. Certain physical acts against a student by school personnel (such as choking, kicking, punching, pinching, hitting with an object, etc.) are not authorized and will be considered a violation of the corporal-punishment policies when used as a disciplinary measure.

## **Search of Property and Students**

- Students are entitled to the guarantees of the Fourth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, and they are subject to reasonable searches and seizures.
- Students have the responsibility not to carry on their person or to have on school property or at school-sponsored events such items as drugs, weapons, alcohol, or other contraband materials in violation of school policy or state law.
- School officials are empowered to conduct reasonable searches of students and school property when there is reasonable cause to believe that students may be in possession of drugs, weapons, alcohol, or other materials ("contraband") in violation of school policy or state law. Students who bring contraband onto school grounds may be searched to secure the school environment so learning can take place and to protect other students from any potentially harmful effects stemming from the contraband. School property such as lockers, desks, computers, and electronic devices shall remain under the control of school officials and shall be subject to search.
- Students do not have a reasonable expectation of privacy in the use of school lockers, school desks, school computers, District provided electronic devices, and SWS email accounts. SWS computers, electronic devices, and email accounts are subject to random inspection to ensure compliance with acceptable use policies and compliance with network security procedures.
- The administration may utilize dogs and metal detectors as provided by SWS policies and applicable laws. Metal detectors and trained dogs may be used at random

locations and times by SWS personnel as determined by SWS administrative and law-enforcement personnel.

## **Weapons**

- Southwest Schools Charter District is a weapon-free school. A student shall not go onto the school premises with a firearm, explosive weapon, or illegal knife.
- Students are also prohibited from bringing to school or to a school-related activity any other weapons. This prohibition will not normally apply to school supplies such as pencils, compasses, and the like, unless they are used in a menacing or threatening manner.
- Weapons include:
  - Firearms
  - Pellet guns, B.B. guns, etc.
  - Knives of any size, including pocketknives
  - Razors
  - Metallic knuckles
  - Chains
  - Stink bombs
  - Jewelry with metal spikes
  - Fireworks of any kind
  - Any other object used in a way that threatens to inflict bodily injury to another person or self
- Students should be aware that possession of any facsimile of any of the above mentioned weapons could incur a disciplinary consequence by the school.
- Possession of a firearm, an illegal knife, a club, or a prohibited weapon under Section 40.06 of the Penal Code will result in immediate expulsion from school for the remainder of the school year or up to one year from the offense. The police will be called, charges will be filed, and the student will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.
- Policy/procedures are designed to provide a safe campus and environment geared toward learning. The Southwest School Southwest District Administration and School Board reserve the right to amend any/all policies or procedures.

## **Trespassing/Loitering On School Property**

- Any person loitering on school property after being warned to leave by a person in charge will have criminal trespass charges filed against him or her.
- School property for the purposes of this act shall include the grounds of any public school and any grounds or buildings used for school-sponsored assemblies or for other activities.



- Students are not to sit in parked vehicles on campus, in vacant classrooms, or in other unsupervised areas.
- Parents and other visitors are welcome to visit Discovery Middle School at Nehemiah. All visitors must first report to the School Office. Visits to individual classrooms during instructional time shall be permitted only with the administrator's approval and such visits shall not be permitted if their duration or frequency interferes with the delivery of instruction or disrupts the normal school environment.
- Students are never to visit other school campuses (in or out of school) during school hours or immediately before or after school.

## **General Student Policies**

### **Uniform Policy**

Philosophy – the purpose of a dress code is meant to create a positive educational atmosphere, school identity, and community for Discovery Middle School @ Nehemiah.

1. As a broad principle, students act the way they dress. Neat, modest, and appropriate clothing encourages and enforces conduct, which is conducive to learning, to healthy interactions, and to a sense of community.
2. It is the intent of the Uniform Policy to create clear and consistent guidelines for students. This policy seeks to reflect a standard that says, "We Are DMS@Nehemiah."
3. Standards of appearance are one means of building character and distinction in the lives of our students. The school's uniform policy serves as a tool in fostering the academic and character development of the students as they participate in the educational process.
4. Uniform policies require the active involvement of parents and DMS@Nehemiah family support in this regard.

### Daily Uniform (Mon-Thurs)

- Southwest Schools collared shirts
- Khaki long pants, skirt/skorts, or long shorts
- Closed-toe shoes
- Over-sized, baggy clothing is not acceptable

Students may choose to wear an undershirt under their school shirts. This undershirt may not be long-sleeved or otherwise visible. No hats may be worn in the building.

### Friday (Spirit Day)

School spirit t-shirt and jeans or their Southwest Schools regular uniform.

### PE Uniform

Students are expected to wear a clean PE uniform for their physical education classes. They will change into their PE clothes immediately before PE class. The approved PE uniform consists of:

- Gray T-shirt
- Black, Khaki, or navy shorts (appropriate length)
- Socks
- Athletic shoes

## **Student Dress Code and Personal Grooming**

- All SWS students are required to be in uniform every day.
- All SWS students have the responsibility to become familiar with the school's standards and the responsibility to adhere to them.
- All SWS students will be required to visibly wear their student ID during the school day either around their neck or pinned high on the chest. The first ID and lanyard will be provided at no cost. After that, replacement ID's will cost \$5.00 and lanyards will cost \$1.00.
- Any non-religious head coverings (including but not limited to hats, caps, headbands over one-inch-wide, bandannas and hoodies) are not allowed on campus during school hours.
- Trench coats or oversized jackets are not allowed on campus during school hours.

### **Special Dress:**

Periodically, a Themed Day or Free Dress Day will be given to the students. Students are to wear jeans that are in good repair, and all clothing must be appropriate for Discovery Middle School @ Nehemiah standards.

## **Homework**

Homework is given for the purpose of review, practice, and to extend information taught during the school day. Students in Grades 6,7, & 8 will receive a weekly **Homework Assignment Sheet** each Friday. Parents should ask their children to show them the Assignment Packet each Friday night and throughout the week so that they can monitor the student's completion of all the assigned tasks. In addition to the tasks written, students are expected to read 20 minutes each day in the Independent Reading (IR) books provided by the English teacher. DMS@Nehemiah students and their families are expected to take the completion of homework very seriously. The habit of daily study is a key to success in middle school and high school, as well as college. Failure to comply with homework expectations will result in learning deficits, as well as poor academic results.

## **Conflict Resolution**

Students and parents are asked to take their concerns to the source of the problem and the place where the problem can best be solved – the School Office and the teacher. If the matter cannot be settled at this level, the parent or student should take their concerns to the next level of authority. The order of authority at DMS@Nehemiah is as follows: teacher, Site Lead, Administrator for SW Schools, and then Executive Director of the Nehemiah Center. The resolution of problems is best accomplished when one is past the initial feelings of anger and hurt. All persons are asked to wait until they are in control of their feelings so as to be able to discuss the problem in a constructive manner. It is equally important that all parties involved avoid the escalation of the situation through gossip by confining their discussions to those who need to know.

## **Student Admissions**

In accordance with Title VI, Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX, Education amendment of 1972, Section 504, Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Title II of the American with Disabilities Act of 1992, the Discovery Middle School @ Nehemiah does not discriminate on the basis of ethnicity, religion, military status, color, national origin, age, sex, disability, academic, artistic, or athletic ability, or the district the child would otherwise attend, or any other basis prohibited by law. To be considered for admission to Discovery Middle School @ Nehemiah, parents must complete and submit the enrollment packet to the Registrar for processing.

Information regarding admission procedures is available on the Southwest Schools Website [www.swschools.org](http://www.swschools.org). Interested parents are invited to contact Ms. Sandy Green at 713-526-5015 for timely information.

### **Enrollment in the Nehemiah Center and the *Nehemiah Center Parent Handbook***

All students enrolled in Discovery@Nehemiah must also have a Nehemiah Center registration form completed and on file to comply with the office of Child Care Licensing of the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS). Discovery parents and students must comply with pertinent rules and regulations set forth in the *Nehemiah Center Parent Handbook 2018-2019*.

## **Technology**

### **Media Release**

All student photos and videos are for official Southwest Schools business. The personal social media of employees is not affiliated with Southwest Schools.

### **Personal Electronics Use**

Electronics (cell phone, hand-held devices, or similar) are **not** permitted at Discovery Middle School @ Nehemiah. Students are not allowed to bring those devices to school and may not have said devices on their persons at any time. If it is necessary for a student to possess a device for after-school use, the parent should contact the DMS Office beforehand for permission, with the understanding that the device must be turned over to DMS@Nehemiah homeroom teachers or to the School Office upon the student's arrival at school in the morning. Should a student be found to have a device without authorization, it will be confiscated. Parents/guardians must pick up confiscated devices in person; items will not be given directly to the student. DMS@Nehemiah will not be held responsible for the loss or theft of any electronic device.

### **Laptops**

Discovery Middle School @ Nehemiah computers are for educational purposes only. At all times, the computers remain the property of DMS, and students may not load or download any software. Students may not tamper with or anyway adjust default or teacher-created settings on any of the school computers. Students also may not damage the computer or any of the equipment and must report any damage immediately to a teacher or the School Office. Families will be assessed repair or replacement fees for laptops damaged by students who mis-handle equipment.

Access to the Internet will be provided to students who agree to act in an appropriate and responsible manner. Students may not access the Internet without the permission of their teacher and parent. Students are not allowed to play games without faculty authorization or use the computers for non-academic purposes.

## **Daily Student Life**

### **Before School/Drop-Off**

Every school day, students should be dropped off in the parking lot behind the Nehemiah Center. The gate to the parking lot opens at 7:15 a.m. Parents should not leave students prior to 7:15 a.m. because there will not be an adult on duty to supervise children at that time. Keep your students safe by respecting this rule.

On most days, students will enter the cafeteria area and eat breakfast or wait for their first period class. Students will be allowed to go upstairs at 7:40 a.m. when escorted by their teacher. Students will not be allowed in the building prior to 7:15 a.m.

Students who arrive tardy, that is, after 7:40 a.m., will need to report to the School Office (Ms. Green) to sign the Late Arrival form and receive a pass to enter class. Because of the law governing truancy and school attendance, students will not be allowed to proceed to class without a *Tardy Pass*.

### **Dismissal Procedures**

DMS@Nehemiah will dismiss students daily at 3:40 p.m. with the exception of **Early Dismissal Wednesdays (12:45 p.m.)**. Any students who are not enrolled participants in the Nehemiah Center Afterschool College Prep Program must be picked up by a parent/legal guardian. At no time will a student be released to anyone not authorized by a parent/legal guardian on the enrollment form. Changes to this authorization must be in writing. The parent, legal guardian, or authorized individual must report to the Front Desk (first floor) to sign out the student. Proper identification will be required of individuals before the student is released. All authorized individuals must be an adult 18 years of age or older.

### **Daily Schedule**

A copy of the schedule of classes for each grade is posted in the Student Commons.

### **Gum/Candy/Food/Drink**

Students are not allowed to bring any food or drink into DMS at Nehemiah. Any food or drink will be confiscated and thrown out. Gum chewing and/or eating candy is not permitted anywhere in the building. Students are expected to adhere to this policy at all times.

## **Lost & Found**

Articles that are misplaced or forgotten will be stored for one week in a Lost & Found box outside the DMS@Nehemiah Office. Students may claim those items before and after school and during lunch/recess. Unclaimed items will be discarded or donated after two weeks.

## **Hallway Procedures**

Students are not to be outside the classroom at any time during classes without a teacher's permission. Student must not linger in the hallway and must report directly to their assigned classroom. Students are also not allowed in the NMS Office without permission, and should not enter the Administrative Offices of the Nehemiah Center unless accompanied by a member of the staff.

Students must not run in the hallway. When transitioning between the upper and lower levels of the Nehemiah Center, students should use the middle stairway between the restrooms, except in a case requiring emergency exit. In addition, for safety reasons, students must stay on "their" right side of the stairwell when ascending or descending the stairs. For the sake of safety and courtesy, students should always allow an adult or younger child the "right of way" in using the stairs. **Any degree of misbehavior on the stairs is considered a serious offense because of the potential for bodily harm to others. This includes what a student might mistakenly consider as "playful behavior" with classmates.**

## **Fire Drills**

Fire drills will be performed monthly. All emergency exits will be clearly marked in each classroom. Individual teachers will review fire drill procedures with the students. During a fire drill, all students are expected to exit the building quietly and orderly and line up in the designated area outside. Teachers will take attendance and inform the Office Clerk, Ms. Sandy Green, of any missing students.

After all necessary procedures have taken place to ensure safety and efficiency, the signal will be given for all to return to class in an orderly fashion.

## **Backpacks and Personal Belongings**

All backpacks and personal belongings must fit within a student's locker/bin. Keep in mind that students will often share locker space and belongings must be small enough to fold up and fit within existing storage. Backpacks must be transparent (clear plastic or mesh) so that contents are visible.

Students will be limited in the number of items they are allowed to carry from class to class. Backpacks must be left in lockers during the school day. Students are not allowed to take bags/backpacks and other personal belongings on school field trips. In addition, all

bags/backpacks and personal belongings are subject to search by DMS@Nehemiah staff as well as by Nehemiah Center staff.

## **Birthdays**

We acknowledge individual student birthdays when they occur and parents, if they choose, may host a birthday celebration during lunch. This must be scheduled in advance with Ms. Sandy Green and can only include ice cream and/or cake. There will be a time provided the last 10 minutes of the lunch period and the parent must be willing to provide the cake to all students.

## **School Facilities**

Students are expected to respect the buildings, grounds, equipment, and materials of DMS@Nehemiah. Students are not to go into the teachers' desks or any storage areas without teacher permission. **Sitting in faculty chairs and at teachers' desks, even during afterschool time, is strictly prohibited.**

Students should not go downstairs in the Nehemiah Center at unscheduled times unless given permission to do so by DMS@Nehemiah staff.

## **Activity Room/Cafeteria**

All students must eat lunch in the cafeteria unless they are attending a supervised lunch meeting. Students are to leave their class materials in their lockers before coming to lunch. When called to attention, every student in the cafeteria should immediately stop talking and listen to announcements.

Each student is to clean up his/her own eating area, throwing out trash. Each week two students are assigned to clean the tables in the cafeteria. Spray bottles and paper towels are provided for this purpose.

Students are expected to behave appropriately while in the Activity Room/Cafeteria so that it remains a pleasant, safe place in which to eat and socialize. Leaving seats without permission, making excessive noise, throwing food, creating messes for others to clean up, and other misbehaviors are not acceptable.

## **Hall White Boards**

The hall white board will be used to post school news and learning enrichment items. Students should check them daily. Students wishing to post an announcement or notice of any kind must have the item approved and initialed by the Site Lead, Ms. Nakishee McGee.

## **Lockers**

Lockers/storage bins will be assigned on the first day of school. Lockers will be re-assigned periodically. Individual lockers are not guaranteed, and students may have to share a locker with another student. All personal items are to be kept in the locker when not in use. Students may not

use unassigned lockers. Lockers may be used before school, at snack, at lunch/recess, and after school, or when given permission from a classroom teacher.

Lockers will be cleaned periodically, such as at the end of each grading period. Pictures, stickers, and schedules may be fastened to the inside of the lockers with sticky tack or magnets as long as fasteners do not leave a mark or residue. Such items must be consistent with school standards. Suggestive or inappropriate pictures are prohibited.

Lockers remain the property of the school and the faculty reserves the right to review the contents of a locker at any time.

## **Elevators**

Students are prohibited from using the elevator. If a student has a medical condition that warrants use of the elevator, permission must be obtained from Ms. McGee or Ms. Green first. Students using the elevator inappropriately will receive a disciplinary consequence.

## **Restrooms**

Students may use the restrooms before school, at lunch/recess, or after school. Outside these times, restroom use will be allowed only in case of great need and with the permission of a teacher. In these instances, students will present their *Restroom Pass* to the teacher. Students may not use the restroom during passing minutes between periods so as to not be tardy for the next class.

Students who have a medical condition requiring more frequent access to a restroom should bring a detailed explanation from a health provider. This document will be maintained in the student's cumulative folder.

## **Grievance Policy for Parent/Student Handbook**

The governing body ("Board") of Southwest Schools adopts the following policy which shall be effective on the date that the policy is adopted by the Board. This policy governs student and parent complaints, employee grievances, and citizen complaints.

For purposes of this policy, "days" means school calendar days.

Except for a complaint against the Superintendent of Schools, each complaint must initially be brought at the lowest level of review, at the Campus Principal Review level. The Board encourages all complaints to be resolved at the lowest level possible.

### **Section 1. Campus Principal Review of Complaint**

Where a(n) Southwest Schools employee, student, guardian of a student, or a member of the public has a complaint or concern regarding Southwest Schools, the individual shall first bring their complaint or concern in writing to the appropriate campus principal. The complaint must be brought within 15 school days of the date that the complainant knew or should have known of the alleged harm. The complaint must be specific, and where possible suggest a resolution. The principal must hear the complaint, attempt to remedy the complaint in the best interest of the affected parties, and document the outcome. The principal must respond to the complainant and issue a final decision in writing within 10 days of the principal's receipt of the complaint.

## **Section 2. Superintendent Review of Complaint**

If the individual bringing the complaint is not satisfied with the campus principal's final decision, then the individual may file a written appeal to the Superintendent of Southwest Schools. This written appeal shall be filed with the Superintendent's office within 10 days of the individual's receipt of the campus principal's final decision. The complaint shall include a copy of the written complaint to the campus principal along with a copy of the campus principal's final decision. A copy of the appeal shall also be delivered to the campus principal. The appeal must be specific, and where possible suggest a resolution. The complaint shall not include any new issues or complaints unrelated in the original complaint expressed to the campus principal. The Superintendent, or designee, shall respond to the complaint and issue a final decision in writing within 15 days of receipt of the written appeal.

## **Section 3. Board of Directors Review of Complaint**

If the individual bringing the complaint is not satisfied with the Superintendent's final decision, then the individual may appeal their complaint in writing to Southwest School's Board of Directors within 10 days of receiving the Superintendent's final decision. The complaint shall be directed to the President of the Board and shall include a copy of the written complaint to the Superintendent of Schools along with a copy of the Superintendent's final decision. A copy of this appeal shall also be delivered to the Superintendent of Schools.

### **Requesting an appeal**

- If you wish to file an appeal to the CEO/Superintendent of Schools, please submit your request in writing within 10 days of receipt of written notification of decision
- Request must be in writing and submitted via email within 10 days.
- Requests must be emailed to Dr. Don Hooper, Interim Superintendent of Schools, [dhooper@swschools.org](mailto:dhooper@swschools.org) and copied to Lisa Schott, [lschott@swschools.org](mailto:lschott@swschools.org) with the subject line "Appeal Request."



# **DMS@NEHEMIAH**

## **THE HONOR CODE**

In order to honor myself as a student,  
my Family, and School, I commit to do  
the right thing in all situations both  
on and off campus and to respect the  
values and behavioral norms  
established by Discovery Middle School  
@ Nehemiah Center. If I do not  
comply with the procedures and  
expectations in the DMS @ Nehemiah  
*Handbook*, I will take full  
responsibility for my actions and  
accept all consequences set forth by  
the school administration.

Student signature \_\_\_\_\_

Parent signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_