



ACADEMY  
AT THE  
LAKES

LOWER DIVISION  
FAMILY HANDBOOK 2025-2026

# **ALMA MATER**

**OUR STRONG BANDS SHALL NE’ER BE BROKEN, FORMED AT  
ACADEMY.  
FAR SURPASSING WEALTH UNSPOKEN, FRIENDS FOREVER WE.  
ESSE QUAM VIDERI, THAT’S OUR CREED, DEEP GRAVEN ON  
EACH HEART.  
SHALL BE FOUND UNWAY’RING TRUE WHEN WE FROM LIFE  
SHALL PART.  
DAYS IN SCHOOL WILL SOON BE PASSING, SWIFTLY TO THE  
SEA.  
LET US PLEDGE LOVE EVERLASTING, FOR ACADEMY.  
ESSE QUAM VIDERI, THAT’S OUR CREED, DEEP GRAVEN ON  
EACH HEART.  
SHALL BE FOUND UNWAY’RING TRUE WHEN WE FROM LIFE  
SHALL PART.**

## **THE COLORS OF ACADEMY**

**FIGHT, FIGHT, BLUE AND WHITE**

**OH YES, THE COLORS OF ACADEMY  
WE’RE FIGHTING FOR THE WHITE AND BLUE  
OH YES, THE COLORS OF ACADEMY  
WILL SPUR US EVER ON TO VICTORY!**

**OH YES, THE COLORS OF ACADEMY  
WILL KEEP US EVER STRONG AND TRUE  
BLUE AND WHITE, TRUTH AND LIGHT,  
THEY’RE THE COLORS OF ACADEMY**

**(REPEAT, THEN END WITH "FIGHT")**



Dear Academy Families:

Welcome to the exciting educational journey that is the Academy at the Lakes experience. Our school offers each child and each family so many meaningful opportunities to learn and grow in an atmosphere characterized by our Core Values: Balance, Courage, Distinction, Inclusion, Integrity, and Stewardship.

Included in this handbook you will find much important information about our school's policies and procedures. Please read it carefully and feel free to consult it frequently as the year progresses.

We are so pleased to be your partners as we move into a very exciting period of our school's history while helping all of our students learn, grow, and thrive. Thank you very much for your participation and support – they are absolutely essential to our success.

Have a great year!

Sincerely,

Mark Heller  
Head of School

This **Handbook** establishes Academy at the Lakes' codes and guidelines. This Handbook cannot cover every possible circumstance that a student, faculty member or the school may encounter in the course of a school year. Many decisions, policies and situations are left to the good judgment of the faculty and/or the school administration.

# **Academy at the Lakes**

## **Family Handbook**

### **Wendlek Campus**

PK3-4th Grade  
(813) 948-2133

### **McCormick Campus**

5th-12th Grades  
(813) 948-7600  
(813) 949-0563 fax

[www.academyatthelakes.org](http://www.academyatthelakes.org)

Academy at the Lakes admits students of any race, color, sex, religion, national or ethnic origin to all rights, privileges, programs and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. The school does not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, color, religion, sexual orientation, national or ethnic origin, gender, age, disability, or any other characteristic protected by law in the administration of its educational policies, admissions, policies, scholarship or loan programs, and athletic and other school-administered programs. It is the policy of Academy at the Lakes to ensure that all services, facilities, privileges, advantages, and accommodations are offered to and are accessible in a meaningful manner for qualified persons with disabilities, in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and state law.



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Officers, Trustees & Executive Staff  
2025-26**

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Chief Financial Officer	Pat Pesch
Director of Development	Jessica Fugate
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## **I. Introduction:**

### **The School-Family Relationship**



#### **Mission**

Academy at the Lakes is a learning community of shared values dedicated to the success of each individual at school, in the community, and in the world. We celebrate the love of learning and the joy in the journey.

#### **Core Values**

- Courage** We foster personal responsibility, empathy, and resilience.
- Inclusion** We are a caring and compassionate community composed of many different beliefs and traditions seeking points of unity in common experiences.
- Integrity** We believe in the power *of heads to know the good, hearts to love the good, and hands to do the good.*
- Balance** We embrace the joy in the journey, which consists of experiences that balance academics, fine arts, athletics, and co-curricular activities.
- Distinction** We apply high standards of quality, relevance, and accountability to all we do.
- Stewardship** We care for each other and our school, serve our communities, and responsibly engage with the world – today and tomorrow.

### **Philosophy and History**

Academy at the Lakes is a non-denominational, coeducational, PK3—12th grade, independent day school. The school was founded in 1992. The school's programs are designed to build a sense of responsibility and cooperation in students. Our overall goal is to provide a stimulating, nurturing school experience in which students are exposed to relevant information and experiences; are motivated to become seekers and users of information; are inspired to meet the challenges of the future; and are encouraged to become effective problem solvers.

Academy at the Lakes is committed to academic excellence. To be successful, every independent school needs and expects the cooperation of its parents, who must understand and enhance the School's mission, share its core values, and fully support its curriculum, faculty, and staff. When joined by a common set of beliefs and purposes, the independent school and its parents form a powerful team with far-reaching positive effects on children and the entire community.

Working together, parents and school professionals exert a strong influence on children to become better educated; they also help them to mature by modeling adult working relationships based upon civility, honesty and respect. In practice, the greatest impediment to effective teamwork between independent schools and parents grows out of misunderstandings about school decision-making processes. Independent schools communicate their procedures to parents, who in turn, share the important responsibility to become informed members of the school community.

### **Board of Trustees**

The Board of Trustees and officers of the Board serve as the corporate representatives of Academy at the Lakes, a not-for-profit corporation formed under the authority of the laws of Florida and the United States. The Board of Trustees is a group of volunteers acting under the authority of the corporation to govern the school's mission and provide the resources necessary for the mission to thrive. The Board employs a single employee – the Head of School – who is charged with the implementation of all facets of the school's operations. The Board operates in trust, and thereby governs the business operations of the school. The Board approves all budgets and fundraising activities. The trustees are stewards of the school's mission and work to provide the resources necessary for the mission to be actualized. Committees of the Board further serve to regulate and establish policies and to manage the school's finances and governance. All actions relating to the Board's governance of the school must be approved by a vote of the Board as specified in the corporate by-laws.

### **Parents and the Board of Trustees**

In most independent schools, decision-making authority at the highest level resides with a volunteer Board of Trustees whose membership often includes parents. The Board of



Trustees does not intervene in the daily affairs of the school, such as curriculum development, discipline, and the hiring, evaluating, and firing of faculty and staff. Instead, the Board focuses on three areas critical to the success of any independent school: it selects, evaluates, and supports the Head of School; it develops broad institutional policies that guide the Head in running the school; and it is accountable for the financial well-being of the school. In the conduct of its official business, the Board acts only as a whole; individual trustees, including the board chair, have no authority to act unless specifically authorized to do so by the board acting as a whole.

The Academy encourages parents who are interested in high-level decision-making to stay informed about the work of the Board of Trustees by reading school publications, talking to the Head of School, and attending appropriate meetings. Parents with concerns about the school or with decisions made by the administration or faculty are encouraged to inquire about and follow the school's review process, but they should not expect the Board of Trustees to act as an appeals board.

### **Parents and the Faculty and Administration**

Parents play an essential and positive role in the life of an independent school. Not only are parents advocates for their children, they also support faculty and administration through extensive volunteer activities and events. The school formally governs the relationship between parents and the faculty and administration through the written enrollment contract and handbooks, in which procedures are spelled out. When parents choose to enroll their children in an independent school, they agree to subscribe to its mission, follow its rules and abide by its decisions. However, most teachers and administrators would agree that trust and mutual respect are the most essential underpinnings of effective working relationships with parents. The Academy encourages parents to work productively with teachers and administrators by staying informed about their child and important events in the life of the school. The school welcomes thoughtful questions and suggestions. It is incumbent upon the school to provide parents with timely and pertinent information.

Parents support a school climate of trust and respect by communicating concerns openly and constructively to the teacher or administrator closest to the problem. Efforts by parents to lobby other parents will be viewed by the school as counterproductive and non-supportive. While parents may not agree with every decision made by the school, in most cases, the parent and school will find enough common ground to continue a mutually respectful relationship. In the extreme case, however, an impasse may be so severe that the parent cannot remain a constructive member of the community. In such cases, both the parents and school should consider whether another school would be a better match for the family.

### **Parent Association**

The Parent Association in an independent school provides a vital and much-appreciated service to school leadership and the entire school community. The activities sponsored by the Parent Association are designed to build community spirit and advance the mission of the school. The Parent Association supports the policies and decisions of the administration. The parents neither participate in policy-making by the school nor function as a lobbying group. The finances of the Parent Association are a part of the school's audited financial statements. The Parent Association supports the decisions and policies of the school.

Academy at the Lakes welcomes volunteers! Volunteering is a wonderful way for parents to become involved with the educational process.

All visitors to the school, including parents and alumni, are required to check in at the front desk. Classroom volunteers must be approved through the office and the teachers involved.

### **Accreditation and Affiliation**

Academy at the Lakes is accredited by the Florida Council of Independent Schools (FCIS) and Cognia (formerly SACS, or the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools). The school is a full member of the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) and the Bay Area Association of Independent School (BAAIS).

### **Development Office**

The Development Office exists to further the mission of the school by securing the necessary resources. The Office is responsible for approving and monitoring a variety of activities, fundraisers, and special events. The Office coordinates all such activities and trains volunteers in order to better meet school goals.

### **Statement on Diversity**

At Academy at the Lakes, diversity is seen as a positive impact on our lives and an essential aspect of education. The children, staff, board members, and friends of the School recognize and respect the fact that diversity exists in the languages we speak, the colors of our skin, the traditions we observe, the structure of our families, the financial and educational resources our families possess, and the special needs we may have. We believe that our separate heritages, beliefs, and choices of expression help to define us as individuals and that our commitment to learning about one another and the larger world unites us as a community. Differences of all kinds are acknowledged and explored with enthusiasm, respect, and acceptance.

Academy at the Lakes assumes an ongoing responsibility to act as part of a larger community. In our recruitment practices for both families and staff, we strive to create a community whose members reflect the diversity inherent in the Tampa Bay area, as well as in the world. In our curriculum such topics as race, ethnicity, family structure, gender, religion, physical attributes, sexual orientation, and economic differences are introduced and studied in ways that are developmentally appropriate. In our assemblies, special events, guest lectures, and other extra-curricular activities, we work to further our commitment to diversity.

We view the family as the primary source of traditions, celebrations, and values for children. The role of the school is to affirm that each individual has a distinct identity and to help children and others appreciate their own identity as well as those of others. We believe that the experience of an education will enable children to value themselves while preparing them to participate with pride and confidence in a rich, complex society. We recognize that working to provide such an experience requires dedication and an ongoing commitment of time, energy, and resources.

Founded on the principle of respect, Academy at the Lakes is a place where children can listen, question, challenge, probe, and thereby make sense of their world. When children graduate from Academy, it is our hope and vision that they will carry with them a strong sense of their identity, a willingness to see the common threads which run through our lives, and a high regard for the breadth and value of differences.

## **II. General Policies and Related Information**

### **The School Day**

#### **Wendle Campus School Hours**

PK3 - SK	8:15 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Grades 1 - 4	8:15 a.m. - 3:15 p.m.
Extended Care PK3 - 4th	7:00 - 8:00 a.m. & 3:15 - 6:00 p.m.

#### **McCormick Campus School Hours**

Grades 5 - 12	7:00 a.m. - 3:15 p.m.
Extended Care Grades 5 - 8	3:15 - 6:00 p.m.

### **Drop Off and Dismissal**

Supervised drop-off begins at 7:55 a.m. in front of the school. Students who arrive prior need to go to Before Care and parents will be charged accordingly. Students in Grades PK3 – SK will dismiss at 3:00 p.m. Grades 1 - 4 will dismiss at 3:15 p.m. in front of the school. If you have a child in Early Childhood as well as an older Lower Division student, please pick up your children at the later time (3:15 p.m.).

Please let the school office know of any regular carpools. In addition, please notify the school if there are any changes to your carpool or pickup person at any time. Students who remain at school for extended care will be teacher-escorted to the appropriate classroom or playground. Charges will be imposed for pick-ups made after 3:30 p.m.

**Please note the following:**

**During the first two days of school**, PK3, JK, and SK parents may drop off their child at their classroom. After this time, parents will need to use the regular drop-off (car line or walking down to the sidewalk) in front of the school. Students in grades 1 – 4 should come through the car line or be dropped off by an adult on the sidewalk in front of the school each day, starting on the first day of school.

All children must be accompanied through the parking lot at both drop-off and pick-up times. If you are walking your child to school or picking your child up after school, please park your car in the spaces by the reservoir fence and **use the cross walk**.

When using the car line, please pull your car up as far as you can in the line. Do not stop and wait by the door from which your child enters or leaves as this holds up cars behind you. Teachers will escort your child to and from your car.

If your child needs to be buckled in, please pull to the right lane at the bottom of the hill (adjacent to the parked faculty cars) and buckle your child there. Do not buckle or unbuckle children in the main car line as that, too, holds up the cars behind you. We will ask you to move your car if you need to get out of your car to help your child.

If you arrive to school after 8:15 a.m., you must park your car and walk your child down to the front office to sign your child in.

To help keep the car line moving and to promote safety for our young students, please have the name card provided by the school in the windshield. If someone new is picking up your child, whether they have your tag or not, they will need to pull into the right lane at the bottom of the hill so we have time to check their ID.

Please stay in your car if you are in car line. The teachers will bring your child to you. Please do not leave your car in the car line.

**Parents must refrain from using cell phones while in the car line because it creates an unsafe environment for students and teachers during such a busy time.**

**Please ensure that anyone who will be dropping off or picking up your child has a copy of these procedures, including the map and the car tag with your child's name on it, and is thoroughly acquainted with the procedures before they arrive on campus.**

**Thank you for your patience and for your attention to these procedures. They will help ensure a safe and efficient drop-off and dismissal each day for our students, faculty, and staff.**

## **Arrival-Specific Procedures**

**We ask that all drivers stay off their cell phones while in our carline; cellphones create a distraction and unsafe conditions for everyone.**

- Our first period begins at 8:15 a.m., so students should be in school no later than 8:10 each morning. Students will be marked tardy at 8:15 a.m.
- Parents may park and walk their child down the hill to the sidewalk in front of the school to avoid the long car line. We will begin accepting students into the school building at 7:55 a.m.
- If you come through the carline, please make two lines at the top of the hill and you will be instructed how to move down the hill by a faculty member. The carline starts moving at 7:55 a.m.
- For all cars coming through the carline, please pull up as far as possible at the bottom of the hill (toward the gate at the end of our sidewalk). Please do not try to stop in front of your child's classroom door.
- Please pay very close attention to faculty members' directions while you are in the carline. We may ask you to move or to stop at any moment in order to provide the safest environment for everyone.

## **Dismissal-Specific Procedures**

**Special note:** If you need to pick your child up from school early, you must pick up by 2:30pm. There will be no pickups between 2:30 and 3:00pm, as this time of day is simply too busy to accommodate early pickups.

- We ask that all drivers stay off of their cell phones while in our carline. Cell Phones create a distraction and unsafe conditions for everyone.
- In the afternoon, we dismiss at two different times: PK3, JK, and SK at 3pm. (yellow car tag\*) and grades 1 - 4 at 3:15pm. (blue car tag\*). This year, you may park your car and walk down to the sidewalk for pickup. Please wait at the sidewalk, and we will call for your child to come out.
- If you want to come through the carline, the directions are as follows:
  - For the 3pm pick-up (PK3, JK, and SK), cars should line up on the right, (leaving a lane free closest to the white picket fence), and we will move you down the hill, one car at a time. If you need to help your child buckle in, when you get to the bottom of the hill, please pull to the right of the cones. If your child does not need help, please pull to the left, closest to the building, and pull as far forward as you can. We will bring your child to your car.

- Grades 1 – 4 pickups should line up to the left (closest to the white picket fence) for a 3:15pm. dismissal. However, if you arrive after 3:07 p.m. or so, and the 3:15pm line is long and backing up toward Collier Parkway, please pull up and join the back of the line on the right. We will have moved most of the 3pm line along by then, so it's not a problem for you to pull up.
- For all cars coming through the carline, please pull up as far as possible at the bottom of the hill (toward the gate at the end of our sidewalk), and we will bring your child to you.
- Please do not try to stop in front of your child's classroom door, or where you see them standing on the sidewalk. Our goal is to get as many cars as possible into the pickup area at once so that we can load multiple children at the same time. Please pay very close attention to faculty members' instructions while you are in the carline. We may ask you to move or to stop at any moment to provide the safest environment for everyone.

\*Identifying name tags will be given during Orientation for you to hang on your rearview mirror. Anyone who picks up your child must have this card in their car or on their person when walking down to pick up.

#### **IMPORTANT: INCLEMENT WEATHER PROCEDURES – READ CAREFULLY**

- If, during arrival or dismissal, you see bright orange flags posted along the fence of our carline, we are operating under inclement weather procedures.
- During inclement weather (usually meaning lightning), we will not have a faculty member at the top of the hill. The first car in line will need to move down to the school at 7:55 a.m. (for arrival) or 3:00 p.m. (for dismissal).
- We will get kids out of their car (or put them in during dismissal) one at a time, and only directly in front of the main door to the school. On these days, please stop directly in front of the main office door and do not go all the way down to the gate at the far end of our sidewalk.
- The goal is to have as few people as possible moving around outside during dangerous weather conditions. The car line will move more slowly on these days and we ask that you remain patient so that everyone stays safe.
- At your discretion, you may park and walk down to drop off or pick up your child during inclement weather, although we do not suggest it. If you do walk down, please stand on the sidewalk, under cover of the awning.

#### **Animals and Pets**

Academy at the Lakes recognizes that pets can be an important part of our lives and are often included in daily family activities, such as bringing children to and from school. We

also understand, however, that bringing pets to school may pose a health and safety risk to our students, as some children are allergic or fearful; even the most well-behaved animals may behave unpredictably when confronted by many people, especially children (who may also behave unpredictably). As a result, family pets are not allowed on school campus during the school day or at school-related events without the express permission of the Head of School. Domesticated animals will only be allowed on campus under the following conditions:

- If they are a certified service or guide dog, under the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) guidelines
- To support a school program or curriculum

### **Attendance /Punctuality**

**Absence:** Regular attendance is, of course, expected and vital to a student's academic success. We understand that doctor's appointments, religious holidays, and significant family events will result in some absences, but we strongly encourage families to schedule these events during non-school days as much as possible. Because missed classroom instruction greatly impacts learning and social development, AATL strongly discourages absences undertaken merely for convenience, for outside social activities, or for extended vacation time.

**Notifying the School:** Whenever a student is unable to attend school, will arrive late, or will leave early, please notify the school in writing or call by 8:30 a.m.

**Participation in After-School Activities:** A student must be present for a minimum of more than half the school day in order to participate in After School or Enrichment classes.

### **Leaving School Early**

If you need to pick your child up from school early, you must pick up by 2:30 p.m. There will be no pickups between 2:30 p.m. and 3:00 p.m., as this time of day is simply too busy to accommodate early pickups.

All students who need to leave school early must be released through and signed out in the front office by a parent/guardian. Requests for a student to leave early must be communicated by a parent/guardian to the office as far in advance as possible. Teachers will not release students directly from the classrooms. Kindly reserve your requests for early dismissal to extraordinary situations.

### **Excessive Absences**

When a student is excessively absent (more than five), an email will be sent home. After 10 absences, a note will be recorded on the student's report card and a phone call or meeting with teachers and the Division Director may result. Excessive absences may ultimately result in a student not being ready for promotion to the next grade level.

### **Punctuality/Tardy Policies**

In order for students to achieve to their highest potential and to develop the valuable life-long habit of punctuality, students are expected to be on time for school. Students who are habitually tardy miss much, placing themselves in a position of having to catch up, disrupting the learning environment of their classmates, and placing an undue burden on their teachers.

All students who arrive after 8:15 a.m. are considered tardy. A parent or other authorized adult must sign the student in.

The Lower Division Assistant, working with the teachers, will keep track of all tardies. Excessive tardies (more than 5) in a quarter may result in a family conference with the Division Director. If a student has difficulty completing academic requirements due to habitual tardiness, retention may have to be considered.

### **Celebrations**

Celebrations occur to enhance classroom learning, to acknowledge achievement of curricular goals, or to highlight a special day or season.

Parents should consult with teachers concerning in-school birthday celebrations. Invitations to parties outside of school may only be distributed in school if the entire class is invited.

### **Class Placement**

Near the end of the school year, current classroom teachers and the Lower Division Director meet to discuss the class placement of students. Placement is based upon academic and social considerations that relate to a child as an individual and as a member of a community. Many factors are carefully analyzed to come up with balanced classes.

It is not the policy of Academy at the Lakes to accept parental requests concerning class placements. Oftentimes, a parent is unaware of dynamics and relationships that teachers observe as we strive to form the best mix of students. Parents need to have confidence that the teachers and administration will have the best insights regarding a student's needs in the school. Parents contract with the school for an Academy at the Lakes experience, not for particular teachers.

### **Communications and Conferences**

Please make certain the information in the FACTS Family Portal includes current and accurate email addresses, home, cell, and business phone numbers, as well as information on whom to contact in an emergency, should you be unavailable.



Parent teacher communication is an important part of effective education. Teachers will usually be available for scheduled appointments before and after school hours. Please email and make an appointment with the teacher to be sure she/he will be able to meet with you. Teachers are not always available for conferences or telephone calls during the school day.

Two Parent/Teacher Conference Days are scheduled each year at the Lower Division.

Emails are an excellent form of communication and are always welcome but should not be used for relaying specific concerns, which are better communicated in person or over the phone.

Each Friday, a home/school envelope is sent home with important information, field trip information, assignments, and graded work. Please return the envelope to school each Monday. Our e-Calendar (Wildcat Weekly) is sent weekly to community members.

**Please note:** Important information about upcoming events is sent via email and the Seesaw app. Be sure to check your email and Seesaw frequently for Academy updates.

### **Using the FACTS Family Portal**

FACTS Family Portal is a private and secure portal that allows you to view academic information specific to your student, as well as access your family's school financial account. To connect to the Family Portal, go to [www.factsmgt.com](http://www.factsmgt.com).

Click **Log In Here** in the top right-hand corner of the screen.

Select **Family Portal Login** under **For K-12 Families**

**For First-Time Users:**

- Click **Create New Account**.
- Our School's District Code: **AL-FL**.
- Type in the e-mail address you have listed with the school.
- Click **CREATE ACCOUNT**.
- An email will be sent which includes a link to create your Family Portal Login. The link is active for 6 hours.
- Click the **Create your Family Portal Login** link in the email
- Enter your e-mail address and your password.
- Click **Create Account**
- Click **Back to log In** and use your new credentials to log in.

## **Continuous Enrollment**

We understand and are thankful that the vast majority of Academy families choose to remain at AATL through graduation. Each year in January, the school will send out a communication that informs the community of the tuition for the coming year and notifies the community of the date your reenrollment deposit for the following school year (one deposit per student) will be deducted through your FACTS billing account. This deposit is nonrefundable. This communication will also notify the community of the coming opt-out date (the date by which a family can terminate the Continuous Enrollment Agreement for future years).

This communication will include information about how to request an official notification of opt-out form. To opt-out of the next school year (and future years) the family must return the official notification of opt-out form to the school by the end of business on the opt-out date. Otherwise, the student will be enrolled for the following year.

## **Cumulative Records**

Cumulative educational records are maintained by the school for each enrolled student. The records include all data that is collected concerning a student's educational progress. The record is updated at the conclusion of a school year. The school requests student educational records from former schools. Likewise, educational records are sent to other schools with parental authorization.

## **Dress Code**

We are delighted that Educational Outfitters is our official school uniform provider, starting in the 2025–2026 school year.

Educational Outfitters stocks all required school, concert, and PE uniforms, as well as approved spirit wear and accessories, year round. For your convenience, they also offer services such as alterations and personalization.

Families have two ways to shop - in-store and online. For your initial order, we highly recommend visiting the store so that Educational Outfitters associates can measure your child(ren) and save their sizing information. They will also assist you in selecting the appropriate uniforms to ensure that you have all the required apparel. Families may begin getting sized at any time. For questions, call 813-350-0222.

To shop online, visit <https://tampa.educationaloutfitters.com/>

**In-store:**

3904 W. Hillsborough Avenue

Tampa, FL 33614

*Store is located in the Horizon Park Shopping Center, near the southwest corner of Hillsborough Ave. and Dale Mabry Hwy.*

**Store Hours:**

Monday–Friday: 10am–6pm

Saturday: 10am–3pm

*Closed May 24–26 and July 4-6*

**Returns and Exchanges Policy:**

- Returns (within 14 days): Full or partial refund with receipt and tags intact. Items cannot be returned if altered, personalized, dirty, washed, worn, or if tags are removed.
- Exchanges (15–60 days): Items in original condition may be exchanged or returned for store credit with a receipt.
- Hair accessories are final sale.

**Seasonal Sales:**

Shop in June and December to receive 10% off all uniform purchases, both in-store and online!

**Stay Connected:** Follow [Educational Outfitters of Tampa](#) on Facebook and [educationaloutfitterstampa](#) on Instagram for updates on sales, holiday hours, and services.

To help you prepare, we've included an infographic illustrating the new uniforms.  
<https://academyatthelakes.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/25-26-AL-Uniforms.pdf>

Please note that ties will be available for purchase at Academy at the Lakes on Orientation Day. As a reminder, Lower and Middle Division students may continue wearing Lands' End uniforms through December 2025.

It is recommended that students also bring a change of clothes – uniform shorts and shirt – in case the weather warms up. Please order your cool weather uniforms early in the year to avoid problems with supply. There is no uniform requirement for heavy coats.

Students who arrive in violation of the dress code will receive a written warning on the first and second infractions. The third incident will result in a phone call home.

## **Electronic Devices**

The Academy strives to have students interact meaningfully with each other and with faculty during the school day. Accordingly, Students may not bring electronic devices such as iPads, other personal listening devices, cameras, or portable game systems to school unless specifically invited to do so by a member of the faculty for a specific time and purpose. Faculty members will make such invitations rarely and only for reasons that support their curriculum or classroom goals. Cell phones and Smart Watches (Apple Watch, etc.) are not needed during the day, and we discourage our young children from bringing them to school. Cell phones and Smart Watches brought to school will be kept in the children's backpacks. Academy at the Lakes is not responsible for lost or damaged items.

The use of any electronic devices while on school property, while in attendance at school-sponsored events, and in any case where doing so disturbs the educational process and/or constitutes harassing, disrespectful, or unacceptable behavior is bound by the Academy's procedures, rules, Technology Acceptable Use Agreement, and Code of Honor. They may not be used during the school day for calling, personal e-mail, social networking, taking pictures, recording, surfing the web, or playing games without the clear and expressed permission of a supervising member of the faculty.

The Academy reserves the right to inspect any personal electronic device brought onto school property or to a school-sponsored event. Any student who uses an electronic device for an unapproved or inappropriate purpose – *including but not limited to* making, posting, or sharing audio, photo, or video recordings of others without their prior knowledge and expressed prior permission to do so – will be subject to immediate confiscation of the device and additional, more serious disciplinary measures. Use of imaging devices – such as still cameras, video cameras, or camera phones and watches – is strictly prohibited in school restrooms.

## **Emergency Procedures**

### **Injuries and Health Conditions**

In the event of a minor injury or illness on campus, the School Nurse will notify the parents or guardian through FACTS. In the event of a more serious injury or illness, a school employee will dial 911, explain the nature of the emergency, then promptly contact a parent or guardian. A school employee will remain with the student until a parent or guardian is able to get to the medical facility where the student is being treated. If the school is not able to reach a parent or guardian, the School Nurse will take the action necessary in the best interest of the student.

## **Emergency Drills**

Drills and evacuations are conducted routinely as a measure of preparedness in the event of fire, severe weather, and other potential threats to community safety.

## **Communications with Parents**

In the event of an emergency, the school will communicate important information through our automated emergency alert system.

## **First Aid/CPR/AED Trained Personnel**

The school requires designated employees to be trained and certified in First Aid/CPR/AED by the American Red Cross.

## **Chain of Command**

In an emergency situation the chain of command is as follows: Head of School, Division Directors and other members of the Administrative Team, Administrative Assistants, Chairs and Team Leaders.

## **Release of Students**

Students are released only to those individuals identified by parents/guardians. Each occasion of such a release requires parents to notify the school in writing, and requires the individual making such a pick up to identify themselves with a valid driver's license. Such individuals will sign students out of school.

## **Severe Weather/School Closing**

During a severe weather alert the following activities will occur:

1. Administrative Assistants and the Controller will monitor the emergency broadcast system and news/weather web sites.
2. During periods of a severe weather "warning," all outside activities will cease and all teachers will follow the procedures laid out in the school's Emergency Procedures Guidelines document.
3. Parents will be notified of school closings due to weather or other emergencies through our Parent Alert system. The Parent Alert system will send a text message to the cell phone(s) listed in FACTS. Messages will also be posted on our website. There are times when Hillsborough or Pasco County will close due to weather related problems in the aftermath of severe weather. Academy at the Lakes will not close at these times unless the school is unable to accommodate student attendance. The Head of School will determine whether or not school will be in session and will activate the Parent Alert system accordingly.

4. The campus must be secured during severe weather to avoid damage from strong winds. All objects capable of being carried by the force of strong wind will be secured. To prevent danger of electrical fires, all lighting and computers and other electronic devices will be disconnected. All sources of electricity will be turned off. In the event that the phone systems are incapable of use, school cell phones will be utilized to communicate with parents and community authorities.
5. In the event of a utility service interruption (electric service, water service) the Head of School will decide whether school will remain in session.

### **Child Abuse Reporting**

This policy complies with Florida Statute 827.07, Abuse of Children:

**Reports of Abuse Required:** Any person, including but not limited to any physician, nurse, teacher, social worker or employee of a public or private facility serving children, who has reason to believe that a child has been subject to abuse shall report or cause reports to be made to the Department of Child and Family Services.

**Immunity:** Anyone participating in the making of a report to the Department of Child and Family Services pursuant to this act or participating in a judicial proceeding resulting from prima facie involvement, shall be presumed to be acting in good faith and in so doing shall be immune from any liability, civil or criminal, that otherwise might be incurred or imposed.

### **Criminal Activity**

It is illegal to carry a gun, gun look-a-like or any other weapon onto a school campus. Administrators will follow the guidelines as established by law in all such cases.

Students found in possession of illicit substances and/or their paraphernalia will be subject to applicable laws and school policies concerning such items. The relevant school policies are detailed in the “Code of Honor and Discipline Policies” section of this handbook.

Bomb threats require the immediate intervention of law enforcement officials. During such a threat, facilities must be evacuated immediately. The Head of School will direct activities.

### **Search**

The School reserves the right to search students’ desks, lockers, backpacks and other personal possessions. Only administrators may conduct such searches.

### **Safety on Campus**

All visitors must report to the office to state their business. Parents, volunteers, guests, alumni, friends from other schools, and others authorized to be on campus will sign in and wear either a visitor or volunteer badge and will be escorted to the location of their service.

Upon leaving campus such individuals will sign out and make their exit known in the office.

Uninvited solicitors are not welcome on campus. Staff spotting of unknown and/or suspicious individuals must be reported to the office immediately. Persons with no business at the school are considered trespassers. Administrators will attempt to track such individuals to determine their reason for being on campus. If necessary, law enforcement officials will become involved.

Only authorized persons may enter classrooms. A member of the faculty or staff must escort such persons to classroom areas. Any unescorted individuals may not enter classrooms or common areas.

Signage at the school clearly directs visitors as to the procedures to be followed for visiting our campus.

### **Supervision**

Lower Division students are required to be under the supervision of a staff/faculty member at all times, including lunch, break, and recess times.

**All Lower Division classroom doors and other entrances are locked during the school day.**

### **Extended Care**

An Extended Care program is contractually provided. Extended Care is provided on the Wendlek Campus on both a before school and after school basis for students in PK3-4th grade. The program opens each school day at 7:00 a.m. and closes at 6:00 p.m. Lower Division students who arrive 10 or more minutes prior to the start of the academic day will be supervised in the Before Care program. Families who plan to use these services regularly may sign up for the entire year.

Students who arrive in the program on a “drop-in” basis will be billed at the drop-in rate. Students who remain 15 or more minutes after dismissal will be escorted to the After Care program for supervision and parents will be billed for this service. Parents who have unforeseen situations arise whereby use of Extended Care is necessary should contact the school on the day the service is required to make such arrangements.

### **Field Trips/School Activities**

Field trips serve as an important extension of the school's programs. A blanket permission form is part of the annual Enrollment Agreement. Parents will be notified of field trips through the Home/School Envelope and the Seesaw app well in advance of the trip. An activities fee is charged in order to curtail the cost of invoicing individual field trips. Field trip charges are not refundable. A limited number of parents may be invited to attend field trips as chaperones.

### **Food Service**

An order out lunch program is available each school day and must be ordered in advance. (Details of the program are shared with families separately.) Credit cannot be given due to absence; parents are responsible for checking the online school calendar for field trips, service days, extended trip dates, or any days that lunch would not be needed for their students. Students may also, of course, choose to bring in their own lunches. Any lunch that needs to be heated in a microwave should take no longer than 30 seconds. (Students should not bring in frozen meals.) Please do not order lunches from other outside vendors separately and individually as our office cannot take responsibility for accepting deliveries and because such deliveries are frequently late, causing student and classroom disruptions.

**Gum:** Students may not chew gum on campus at any time because of the damage it can cause to school property.

**Water:** Because of the proven health and learning benefits of staying well hydrated, students should bring plain water (not sports drinks or other flavored drinks) to school each day in a re-fillable water bottle or thermos. Glass bottles and thermoses are not acceptable at school. There are a number of filtered water bottle refill stations on campus.

### **House System**

The House System was created to further opportunities for the development of relationships via predictable community activities designed to develop cross-age relationships through healthy competitions and planned community gatherings. Events such as intramural sports and academic competitions, an energy-filled House Day, and spirit days are presented annually. In order for the goal of the development of relationships to embed itself in the efforts of the House System, students, faculty members, and families are sorted into one of four houses. Competitions and other events are all based upon House membership.

The students are divided into one of four (4) houses - Peregrine, Nighthawk, Osprey, or Kestrel. Siblings are placed in the same house. The house colors are as follows:

Peregrine	Red
Nighthawk	Yellow
Osprey	Blue
Kestrel	Green

During House events, students and faculty are required to wear their House shirt. House shirts are issued to the students by the school. You may purchase additional House shirts by contacting the Division Assistant.



## **Medical Information/Medications**

Parents should make the school aware of any health problem(s), including medical conditions or allergies, that their child(ren) may have by entering the information in FACTS Family Portal.

Prescription medications must be brought to school by the parent or guardian in the original prescription container and will only be administered as directed by the prescription. If medications need to be used at home and at school, parents can request an extra empty, labeled prescription bottle from the pharmacy to be used at school. Medication will be counted by the School Nurse and recorded on the “Medication Verification Form.”

Over-the-counter medications may be administered to students on campus if parents have consented to the specific over-the-counter medication being administered on the students medical form. If parents prefer a different over-the-counter medication not listed on the medical form, the parent can provide the medication to the School Nurse, labeled with the student’s first and last name. A “Medication Verification Form” must be completed.

Students are NOT to carry medication of any kind, prescribed or over-the-counter, including vitamins, cough drops, Tylenol, Midol, etc. Students will be allowed to carry medication/equipment for life-threatening emergencies, such as inhalers and Epi-Pens, with a completed “Authorization to Carry and Self-Administer Asthma Inhaler and/or Epi-Pen” form on file. Or, the school nurse will hold and administer with a “Medication Verification Form” on file.

Forms can be found in the *Web Forms* section of the FACTS Family Parent Portal (which can be found at [www.academyatthelakes.org](http://www.academyatthelakes.org))

All students must have a completed Florida Certification of Immunization (Florida Department of Health Form 680) with either proof of immunization or exemption.

The Certification of Immunization Form (DH 680) may be obtained from the student’s primary care provider, or from the local county Health Department (the Health Department may have a charge for this). Please ensure the form is complete and includes:

- The child’s complete name, date of birth, and name of parent or guardian.
- All vaccine dates with the month/day/year.
- The state immunization identification number (ID#) will appear on a computer-generated DH 680 and is an identification number issued by the Florida State Health Online System (Florida SHOTS).

- The name of the physician/clinic; physician/clinic address; signature or signature stamp of the physician, public health nurse, physician's authorized designee, or the County Health Department stamp with the date the form was signed and issued.

Students with communicable diseases may not attend school, according to the guidelines set forth by the local health department and the Centers for Disease Control.

The school requires designated employees to be trained and certified in First Aid/CPR/AED by the American Heart Association and/or the American Red Cross.

### **Sickness Policy**

If your child has any one of these symptoms listed below, please keep them home and contact the school nurse, Getta O'Neill, at [nurse@aatl.org](mailto:nurse@aatl.org) and the Wendle Campus Administrative Assistant, Karen Hart, at [khart@aatl.org](mailto:khart@aatl.org) for further guidance.

- Temperature of 100.0° or greater
- Itchy, red eyes with drainage
- Vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain
- Severe cold, cough, sore throat
- Lice

**Returning to school after illness:** Please follow the guidelines below in determining when it is safe to allow a child to attend school:

- **Temperature of 100° or greater:** Children must be fever-free for 24 hours without the use of a fever reducing medication (Tylenol, aspirin, ibuprofen)
- **Contagious condition:** A child with a potentially contagious condition, such as a rash, strep throat, or conjunctivitis, may not return to school until he or she has been on prescribed medication for 24 hours and has been cleared by doctor to return to school.
- **Diarrhea or vomiting:** A child who has had diarrhea or vomiting may not return to school for 24 hours.
- **Contagious illness:** In the case of any more serious contagious illness such as COVID-19, influenza, chicken pox, measles, mumps, MRSA (Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus), etc., please inform the school immediately and keep your child at home until the child has been cleared by a doctor to return to school.
- **Lice:** A child that has had lice, must provide proof of treatment and must check in with the school nurse before being allowed back into the classroom.

**While at School:** Students with temperatures of 100° or greater, who experience diarrhea, vomiting, or appear otherwise ill, will have parents contacted and will possibly be sent home based on clinical judgement and severity of symptoms. First Aid procedures will be utilized in treating illness and injury.

### **Solicitors**

Solicitors are permitted at the school only by the invitation of school officials.

### **Summer Camp**

Summer at the Lakes is the official summer camp of Academy at the Lakes. The camp is conducted on the McCormick and Wendlek Campuses from early June — late July. Enrollment for the camp begins in February of each year. Early enrollment is recommended as spaces do fill up quickly.

### **Textbooks**

Students are responsible for textbooks issued to them. Textbooks are the property of the Academy and are rented by the students. Should a textbook be lost or damaged, the student is responsible for the cost of the book.

### **Transportation To and From School**

Parents and others who drop off or pick up students are required to follow these published safety procedures:

- Parents may park and walk down to the school to drop off or pick up their child. Please remain in the crosswalk at all times.
- Parents who come through the carline are to remain in their vehicles at both pick-up and drop-off times. Students will be brought to your vehicle.
- Please follow the flow of traffic as you are directed.
- Students are supervised by school personnel at both drop-off and dismissal times.
- All traffic will exit using the traffic signal.
- The drive into the Wendlek Campus uses a one-way traffic pattern. Please follow the arrows unless otherwise directed by school personnel.

The school offers morning transportation to school from certain locations in our area. If you are interested in having your child come to school on an Academy bus, you can register on the school website.

### **III. Academic Policies and Information**

#### **Auxiliary Programs**

After-school auxiliary programs (Wildcat Club) are designed to offer students opportunities to pursue their interests and talents. Classes typically meet from 3:30-4:30 p.m. Announcements concerning auxiliary programs will be distributed to the community for each session. Charges for auxiliary programs are in addition to normal tuition charges. As an added benefit, many members of the Academy's faculty serve as auxiliary instructors.

#### **Student Support Services**

##### **Purpose**

The mission of Academy at the Lakes is to be a learning community of shared values dedicated to the success of each individual at school, in the community, and in the world. We celebrate the love of learning and the joy in the journey. The Student Support Team (SST) seeks to meet this mission by creating an environment focused on the "success of each individual" with the lens of understanding that success may look different for each student. We celebrate these differences and provide the necessary support to help each individual develop into a lifelong learner.

Most students adjust to the school's expectations responsibly and successfully. However, the school stands ready in several ways to help any student experiencing difficulty. The Administrative Team and the Student Support Team are available to work with students and families as needed. At AATL we are committed to the success of each individual and seek to provide appropriate support when needed so that all students will attain this goal. The Student Support Team includes the Director of Student Support, the School Psychologist, the School Counselors, the School Nurse, the School Reading Specialist, and the School Learning Specialists. This Team supports students, parents, and faculty in areas of academic, social, and emotional skills and development.

##### **Supporting Learners: Academic Support**

Teachers embed experiences that build developmentally appropriate coping, social interaction, and communication skills into daily classroom life. These skills, combined with our academic curriculum, are the core of the Academy at the Lakes Lower Division program.

The Student Support Team works together with teachers and families to implement a course of action to meet a student's individual needs. Often, this process involves a number

of meetings with parents, teachers, members of the Student Support Team and, sometimes, outside service providers. The Student Support Team generally includes the Lower Division Director, School Psychologist, Reading Specialist, Learning Specialist, and at times the School Nurse.

Procedures for support may include the following:

- Student Observations
- Review existing data (report cards, benchmark testing, teacher documentation)
- In-house screenings (speech and language, phonological awareness, cognitive/achievement, behavior rating scales, etc.) or school-based assessments
- Provide academic support during classroom instruction
- Provide academic support outside of the classroom in small groups or one-on-one
- Develop strategies to address behavior and emotional challenges
- Make referrals for outside support (therapy, evaluation, tutoring, etc.)

### **Accommodations**

Since essential skills such as reading, writing, and critical thinking are part of the curriculum, the school cannot make too many accommodations without seriously altering the program. A student may be asked to complete additional summer work/tutoring, spend an additional year in a grade, or undergo an educational evaluation, including special testing at the family's expense. If, after a period of time, it becomes apparent that Academy at the Lakes is not an appropriate school for a student, the school advises the parents as early as possible and counsels them concerning other school options.

### **Social/Emotional Support**

The mission of the Academy at the Lakes counseling program is to empower all students to reach their full potential in academic, social, and emotional development. Our counseling department is dedicated to helping students develop age-appropriate coping, problem-solving, and social skills. The counselor will consult and collaborate with faculty, staff, and families to support students through their lower division years. This support includes prevention and intervention activities designed to address students' needs through counseling and skill-building. Counseling services are available on a drop-in basis or by referral from a student, parent, teacher, or administrator. When necessary, students may be referred to other school support personnel or outside professionals.

### **Physical Well-Being**

At AATL we are dedicated to the success of each individual and focus on the well-being of the whole child including physical and social/emotional wellness. The School Nurse collaborates with the Division Directors and serves as a member of the Student Support Team to monitor the physical well-being of students.

### **Grading**

Parents receive a narrative report along with the report card at the end of each quarter that indicates how the student has performed according to the standards and benchmarks established in each subject for every grade level. These reports are designed to present an evaluation of the child's academic and personal growth.

### **The Core Curriculum**

The Academy Core Curriculum provides a well-defined focus and energy for all that we embrace at Academy at the Lakes. As a professional learning community, we are dedicated to preparing our students for the 21st century. Academy's curriculum and program are centered around six core strengths – strengths that will help our students find success in the 21st century academic arena, workplace, and global market. They are: critical thinking; communication; collaboration; creativity; citizenship; and character.

- **Critical Thinking:** The process of actively and skillfully analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation and experience, as a guide to belief and action.
- **Communication:** The act or process of using words, sounds, images, signs, or behaviors to express or exchange information or to express your ideas, thoughts or feelings to someone else.
  - Taking time to listen to other points of view
  - Expressing oneself clearly and purposefully
- **Collaboration:** To work with another person or group in order to achieve a goal.
  - demonstrating leadership by being a good role model on the field, on the playground, or in the classroom
  - modeling the importance of playing the game well, as opposed to simply winning
  - taking the time to teach others
  - accepting each other's strengths and weaknesses

- advocating for a strong sense of camaraderie
- ensuring that peers feel valued during class activities
- **Creativity:** The ability to create – to make new things, new combinations of things, or think of new ideas.
- **Citizenship:** The qualities that a person is expected to have as a responsible member of a community.
  - taking an active role in our school community
  - setting an example for others by performing tasks without being asked
  - taking care of school property and the property of others
  - showing respect to all
  - taking pride not only in themselves, but also in the total school community
- **Character:** The way someone thinks, feels, and behaves. A person of strong character is one of integrity and compassion.
  - displays self-determination and pride in his/her work
  - displays a high level of motivation in all endeavors
  - always strives to do his/her personal best
  - consistently behaves in ways that are right and good

### **Homework Policy**

Homework is assigned for many purposes. Children need the time to practice, read, write, and edit on their own. Through homework, they develop the important ability to think independently, to budget their time, and to work without guidance from their teachers and, as time passes, from their parents. They work toward becoming autonomous learners. Furthermore, homework disciplines and prepares them for the future steps in their education - steps that will take them into secondary school and college.

Our view at Academy at the Lakes supports the busy lives of our students and parents. While homework is a natural extension of the school day, we realize our students spend nearly seven hours a day in structured academic activities. Homework builds in frequency and duration throughout a child's years at our school. Our homework policy provides our Lower Division students ample opportunity for after school activities with friends and family.

Homework assignments and projects are assigned as an extension and application of material introduced at school. Homework assignments and projects are due as required.

### **PK3 and JK**

Homework, in the traditional sense, is not as common at this age as it is in the primary grades and beyond. However, as the parents are the “first teachers,” important learning takes place each minute in the home through the daily routine of activities. Parents can assist their young children by encouraging curiosity and support for learning in everything the child does. Measuring while cooking, counting rows and petals while gardening and reading together often are a few of the many possible activities that will encourage academic growth and development. Spontaneity is the key to dealing with young children, and it is never too early to begin good study habits.

### **Grades SK - 4**

The primary aim of homework in the Lower Division is to develop good home study habits. It is extremely important that the place where a child studies meets her/his needs and is conducive to concentration. Homework should be a successful experience. If a student requires excessive time or experiences great frustration on a regular basis, please communicate with us so we can discuss the situation. Often, minor adjustments or arrangements can be effected. In addition to regular homework assignments, reading for enjoyment is strongly encouraged!

## **IV. The Code of Honor and Discipline**

**Important Note: The provisions of the Code of Honor and our discipline policies are school-wide. They apply to every student, PK3 – 12<sup>th</sup> Grade in age-appropriate ways.**

### **Code of Honor**

It is understood that genuine academic and personal achievements presuppose academic and personal integrity. No matter the pressure felt to achieve, the *appearance* of academic and personal achievements without their realities, is a betrayal to the self and others. Major violations of the Code of Honor include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarizing, stealing, bullying, harassment, and being disrespectful to others or their property. The truth must not be misrepresented in order to obtain special privilege or consideration. In that light, students pledge to uphold – and are held accountable to – the following Academy at the Lakes Code of Honor:

On my honor, I pledge that the work I submit is my own and that I have neither given nor received unauthorized help on this assignment. I will show respect and kindness to my classmates, teachers, colleagues, and administration at all times.



Students pledge to uphold the following provisions of the Code of Honor:

- I will neither give help to nor accept help from another student during a test or graded assignment—unless express permission is given by my teacher.
- I will neither accept information in advance of a test or graded assignment from someone who has already taken it, nor will I disseminate information to someone who has not yet taken it.
- I will not use notes or other sources of information during a test or graded assignment unless allowed to do so by the teacher.
- I will not plagiarize. I will cite outside sources properly and not represent them as my own ideas.
- If I receive help from someone else, including parent(s), tutor, another adult, or a peer, in doing any out-of-class, graded assignment, I will make sure the assignment represents my work and my ideas and not those of the person who helped me—*unless the ideas are properly cited in an appropriate format.*
- I will not treat others with contempt or cruelty. I will be civil to other persons and take them seriously.
- I will never misrepresent the truth in order to obtain special consideration or privilege.
- I will use technology in an appropriate and legal manner and will not abuse that privilege.

### **Bullying and Harassment**

Academy at the Lakes will not tolerate bullying or harassment. Conduct that constitutes bullying and harassment, as defined below, is prohibited.

*Bullying*, which includes *cyberbullying*, means **systematically** and **chronically** inflicting physical hurt or psychological distress on a student by one or more students with a power imbalance over that student. It is further defined as unwanted and **repeated** written, verbal, or physical behavior, including any threatening, insulting, or dehumanizing gesture, by a student, that is **severe** or **pervasive** enough to create an intimidating, hostile, or offensive educational environment; cause discomfort or humiliation; or unreasonably interfere with the individual's school performance or participation; and may involve but is not limited to:

- Teasing
- Social Exclusion
- Threat/Intimidation
- Stalking
- Physical violence

- Theft
- Sexual, religious, or racial harassment
- Public or private humiliation
- Destruction of property
- Obscene gestures or remarks

***Cyberbullying*** means bullying by any electronic communication through the use of any electronic device, including but not limited to e-mail, Internet, instant message, or facsimile communications. Cyberbullying includes the creation of a webpage or weblog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person, or the knowing impersonation of another person as the author of posted content or messages, if the creation or impersonation creates any of the conditions enumerated in the definition of bullying. Cyberbullying also includes the distribution by electronic means of a communication to more than one person or the posting of material on an electronic medium that may be accessed by one or more persons, if the distribution or posting creates any of the conditions enumerated in the definition of bullying.

***Harassment*** means any threatening, insulting, or dehumanizing gesture, image, use of data or computer software, or written, verbal or physical conduct directed against a student that:

1. Places a student in reasonable fear of harm to his or her person or damage to his or her property;
2. Has the effect of substantially interfering with a student's educational performance, opportunities, or benefits;
3. Causes a student substantial emotional distress and serves no legitimate purpose; or
4. Has the effect of substantially disrupting the orderly operation of the school.

Any student or parent with a concern about bullying or harassment should immediately bring that concern to the attention of a teacher or administrator. Any student, teacher, or member of the staff who witnesses or otherwise has knowledge of an occurrence of bullying or harassment should immediately report the matter to an administrator. There will be no negative consequences for anyone, student or otherwise, who makes a report of bullying or harassment in good faith. Any form of retaliation against a student for making a good faith report – or for assisting the school in its investigation of the report – will be considered a serious breach of the Code of Honor.

Bullying and harassment are considered to be very serious breaches of the Academy's Honor Code, with potential long-term impactful consequences for the student. Students who engage in such unacceptable behavior will be subject to serious consequences, up to

and including separation or dismissal from the school.

### **Responsible Computer Use and Plagiarism Policy**

The growing use of the computer in all disciplines and its capacity to access the Internet has increased the possibility for computer fraud - using the computer to misrepresent someone else's work as your own. Academy at the Lakes does not tolerate this in any way and offenses will be treated as plagiarism under the Code of Honor. The fact that the computer is involved does not influence the decision-making process. Copying a computer file is the same as copying or having someone else write a science lab report or a research paper.

Furthermore, the use of e-mail, instant messages, chat rooms, social networking sites (such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube), or the cell phone to send inappropriate, offensive, or harassing messages or images – from whatever location they are sent – will be considered a serious violation of the school's Code of Honor and dealt with accordingly.

### **Off-campus Incidents**

We view prank phone calls and other harmful incidents as a poor reflection of our school and may consider these actions to be honor code violation.

### **Respect for others**

The language that people use has power. Words, whether written or spoken, can hurt other members of the community. Students should maintain a high degree of respect for each person associated with the school. Humor should not be an excuse to belittle or disrespect another member of the school community.

### **Sportsmanship**

Each student is a representative of Academy at the Lakes whether in the classroom or on the playing field. Proper conduct during Physical Education, recess, and during participation in athletic contests is essential. Language and attitudes should remain consistently appropriate.

### **Stewardship**

Each student is responsible for taking care of the campus. Littering and the improper use of resources is not acceptable behavior.

All violations in the Lower Division will be reviewed by the Lower Division Director and/or Assistant Director, and will take into account the child's age, grade, and level of maturity.

### **Difference**

Every student should be able to express his or her opinions and individuality without fear of being ridiculed or rejected in a manner which displays lack of respect, insensitivity, or intolerance. While differences of opinion are natural and welcomed, these should be conveyed with courtesy and consideration towards others' beliefs, ideas, backgrounds, ethnicity, sexual orientation, privacy, and appearance. Treating each other with respect will create a better environment for all students.

If a student feels that this value system has been ignored or disobeyed by another student or member of the community and has been unable to resolve the issue satisfactorily, that student should see their teacher or the Lower Division Director.

### **Code of Honor Interventions and Consequences**

The Lower Division Director will review decisions involving the most serious infractions. **Please remember that it is not possible to list every behavior that is inappropriate. Academy at the Lakes expects all students to abide by the spirit as well as the letter of our rules as stated in the Code of Honor.**

### **Disciplinary Action**

When a student acts in a manner that is inconsistent with the school's community standards, it is the responsibility of the school and the parents to educate the student about inappropriate behavior. Students and their families should constructively accept discipline and recognize that life-long lessons can be learned from mistakes. The focus is to be constructive with the students.

Consequences for behavior will be handled on an individual basis. A parent conference with the Lower Division Administration and teachers may be required as a result of irresponsible behavior.

A student who bites another person is immediately sent home for the remainder of the day, as that is a serious and dangerous behavior.

Parents may disagree with some decisions. However, if a situation arises where a parent does not support the school, the student may be best served by attending another school.

### **Disciplinary Reports**

A system of assigning Disciplinary Reports for infractions exists. Any faculty or staff member can issue Disciplinary Reports to students. Few students go through the academic year without some minor infractions of the rules, and a few occasional reports create no major concern and carry no penalty other than discussion, review, and

counseling with teachers and administrators. Initial infractions of inappropriate behavior by a student are handled through counseling by teachers, Lower Division Director, Assistant Division Director and/or School Psychologist. However, when counseling does not correct a behavior and a student begins to accumulate significant numbers of Disciplinary Reports because he or she is continually disruptive to the educational process, he or she could become subject to probation, suspension, and eventual dismissal.

Disciplinary Reports are kept on file. The Lower Division Director reviews each student's infraction and decides upon an appropriate penalty.

**Disciplinary Warning:** Disciplinary Warning is a formal written notice to the parents that the student's behavior has violated the Code of Honor of the Academy at the Lakes' community. Further breaches of conduct may result in probation, suspension, or dismissal. The cause and terms of the warning are spelled out in each case.

**Disciplinary Probation:** Disciplinary Probation is a formal written notice to the parents that the student has either repeatedly violated a specific school rule or, through repeated disrespect, has shown willful disregard of the community. Further breaches of conduct may result in suspension or dismissal. The cause and terms of the probation are spelled out in each case. Probation means that a student's behavior is being closely observed and further breaches of conduct could result in the student's contract being withheld, or the student might be asked to withdraw or be expelled.

**Suspension:** After a very serious violation of community rules or repeated incidents resulting in on-campus discipline, it may be beneficial for a student to spend time away from the routine of school, preferably under the guidance of his/her parents, reflecting on the attitudes or actions which led to the suspension. Suspension is not a way to reject the student; rather, it is an opportunity for the student to think and to change. Suspension is usually followed by a probationary period, a time when, by exhibiting exemplary behavior, a student proves his/her ability to be a constructive member of the school community.

The parents and Lower Division Director may meet both before and/or after the suspension period to confer on the reasons for, and terms and expectations of, the suspension.

**Expulsion:** At times a student's action or actions convince the school that he or she must be separated from the community. Moreover, it is sometimes not constructive for the school or for the individual to be retained within the community. Such a decision might come after a single act, after a series of acts, or at the end of the school year.

## **Administrative Authority**

The administration is the final authority regarding interpretations of all aspects of the Code of Honor – as well as of all academic and behavioral rules and policies – and the consequences assessed for violating those provisions. The Academy reserves the right to modify and/or amend the contents of this Family Handbook at any time during the school year. Though the school will endeavor to communicate any such changes to families in a timely manner, students and parents should check the Academy’s website periodically to ensure that they are aware of the most current version of the school’s Code of Honor, policies, and procedures.

## **IV. Whom to Contact**

- For daily attendance, late arrivals, early dismissal, or general calendar questions:
  - contact the Lower Division Administrative Assistant, Mrs. Karen Hart:
    - [khart@aatl.org](mailto:khart@aatl.org)
    - (813) 948-2133
- For general Lower Division information or events:
  - First, check *Seesaw*, website, *FACTS*, the Handbook, and/or specific e-mail messages.
  - Second, contact the Lower Division Assistant Director, Ms. Steph Huff:
    - [shuff@aatl.org](mailto:shuff@aatl.org)
    - (813) 948-2133 x239
- If your question deals with a particular class or teacher:
  - First, contact the teacher:
    - E-mail address as listed in the School Directory
    - (813) 948-2133
  - You may also contact the Lower Division Director, Raini Jewell, for any follow-up:
    - [rjewell@aatl.org](mailto:rjewell@aatl.org)
    - (813) 948-2133
- If your question deals with After School Enrichments:
  - First contact Jay Woodruff
    - [jwoodruff@aatl.org](mailto:jwoodruff@aatl.org)
    - (813) 948-7600 x 411

- Secondly, contact the Lower Division Administrative Assistant, Mrs. Hart:
    - [khart@aatl.org](mailto:khart@aatl.org)
    - (813) 948-2133
- If your question deals with billing or payments:
  - Contact our Business Office Assistant, Mrs. Penny Benson:
    - [pbenson@aatl.org](mailto:pbenson@aatl.org)
    - (813) 948-7600
  - Or contact our Controller, Mr. Kevin McCarthy:
    - [kmccarthy@aatl.org](mailto:kmccarthy@aatl.org)
    - (813) 948-7600
- If your question deals with Admissions:
  - Contact our Director of Admissions, Mrs. Sue Gunther:
    - [sgunther@aatl.org](mailto:sgunther@aatl.org)
    - (813) 909-7919 or (813) 948-7600
- If your question deals with financial support of the school:
  - Contact our Director of Development, Jessica Fugate
    - [jfugate@aatl.org](mailto:jfugate@aatl.org)
- If your question deals with counseling for your student:
  - Contact our School Psychologist, Deeba Arifuddin:
    - [darifuddin@aatl.org](mailto:darifuddin@aatl.org)
    - (813)948-2133
- Middle Division:
  - Middle Division Assistant, Mrs. Liza McQuarrie:
    - [lmcquarrie@aatl.org](mailto:lmcquarrie@aatl.org)
    - (813) 948-7600, x300
  - Middle Division Director, Mrs. Colleen McCormick
    - [mmccormick@aatl.org](mailto:mmccormick@aatl.org)
    - (813) 948-7600, x306
- Upper Division:
  - Upper Division Administrative Assistant, Mrs. Ariana Litt:
    - [alitt@aatl.org](mailto:alitt@aatl.org)
    - (813) 948-7600, x301

- Upper Division Director, Mrs. Jennifer Sciortino:
  - [jsciortino@aatl.org](mailto:jsciortino@aatl.org)
  - (813) 948-7600
- Head of School:
  - Assistant to the Head of School, Mrs. Karen Sooklal:
    - [ksooklal@aatl.org](mailto:ksooklal@aatl.org)
    - (813) 948-7600, x316
  - Head of School, Mr. Mark Heller:
    - [mheller@aatl.org](mailto:mheller@aatl.org)
    - (813) 948-7600