

**Secondary Student/Family Handbook
2023-2024 School Year**



Midlands STEM Charter School

**112 Crane Street
Winnsboro, SC 29180
803-815-1524**

I. Code of Conduct

Pledge

I Will Set My Goals
 I Will Work Hard
 I Will Be Unstoppable
 I Will Trust My Teaching
 I Will Celebrate My Wins
 And I Will Win
 Because When One Wins
 We All Win!

Mission Statement

The Mission of Midlands STEM is to produce academically and physically fit STEM-proficient students.

School Honor Code

The Midlands STEM community embodies a spirit of mutual trust and intellectual honesty that is central to the very nature of the school and represents the highest possible expression of shared values among the members of the school community. The fundamental beliefs underlying and reflected in the Honor Code are:

- I will abide by the rules and standards of the school as written in my school handbook.
- I will behave with integrity, respect, and dignity in all relationships with teachers and peers.
- I will acknowledge the rights and property of the school and my peers.
- I will do unto others as *they* would want done to *them*.

This Honor Code summarizes the Honor Policy, which defines the expected standards of conduct in academic affairs. The Honor Policy is published on our school website www.midlandsstem.org. The Honor Council is the school body charged with enforcement of the Honor Code. The Honor council is to be made up of the grade level assistant principal, the general education teacher, and the president of the student council. The student body and faculty at Midlands STEM will not tolerate any violation of the Honor Code.

II. Grading Policies

This is the weighting of each assignment.

Assessment Type	Percentage Weight	Assessment Type	Percentage Weight
Tests	30%	Classwork	25%
Quizzes	20%	Homework	10%
Projects	15%		

Your final grade for a course will be calculated as follows:

Quarter 1	20%	Quarter 2	20%
Quarter 3	20%	Quarter 4	20%
Final Exam or EOC	20%		

***All middle and high school classes will include a midterm assessment which will count as a double test grade.

Grades will be updated regularly by the following Tuesday afternoon. Please note that essays and projects may take longer to grade and return than tests and quizzes, so feedback on these assignments may be delayed. Students will earn true grades on assignments, but there will be no grade below 50 on their report card.

The grading scale is as follows:

A: 90-100 C: 70-79 F: 0-50
 B: 80-89 D: 60-69

III. School Policies, Rules, and Procedures

Attendance and Truancy

Attendance is an essential component of a student's academic success. Often, the number of days that students are absent accumulates without parents realizing how many days have been missed.

Children who are eligible to enter five-year kindergarten through age seventeen are subject to compulsory attendance regulations as defined by the South Carolina Code of Laws. **Unexcused absences that total ten or more days in any one school year will result in automatic grade retention.** In accordance with the South Carolina Code of Laws, **truancy cases must be reported to the court system.**

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Ten (10) consecutive absences will result in your child being dropped from the school enrollment. A child who accumulates three (3) consecutive unlawful absences or a total of five unlawful absences will be deemed truant and will be signed up for an **Attendance Intervention Plan**. Midlands STEM's policy regarding attendance violations is consistent with South Carolina state laws and regulations pertaining to student Attendance and Truancy Procedures.

Midlands STEM considers students lawfully absent when:

- The student is ill and attendance in school would endanger their health or the health of others and a medical excuse is provided;
- The student has a medical or dental appointment or other recognized licensed/certified medical practitioner and a medical excuse is provided;
- The student is participating in school-related activities that have received prior approval by the executive director or his/her designee;
- The student has been suspended from class or school;
- The parent or guardian has prearranged absences due to extreme hardship;
- There is a death or serious illness in their immediate family;
- There is a recognized religious holiday of their faith; or
- There is a required appearance in court or an appointment with a legal officer.

Midlands STEM considers students unlawfully absent when:

- The student is absent from school without the knowledge of the parent/legal guardian;
- The student is absent without acceptable cause with the knowledge of the parent/legal guardian;
- **Three (3) tardies constitute one (1) absence.**

South Carolina State Board of Education Regulations are as follows:

SBOE Regulation 43-172: Accounting and Reporting

A pupil shall be dropped from membership on the day when the number of unlawful days absent exceeds ten consecutive days or when the pupil leaves school because of transfer, death, expulsion, graduation, legal withdrawal, or for any other reason.

SBOE Regulation 43-274: Student Attendance

II. Truancy

A. Truant

A child ages 6 to 17 years meets the definition of a **truant when the child has three consecutive unlawful absences or a total of five unlawful absences.**

B. Habitual Truant

A **"habitual truant"** is a child aged 12 to 17 years who fails to comply with the intervention plan developed by the school, the child, and the parents) or guardians(s) and who accumulates two or more additional unlawful absences. This child may need court intervention and an initial truancy petition may be filed. The written intervention plan, and documentation of non-compliance must be attached to the truancy petition asking for court intervention.

Please note that Midlands STEM makes every effort to comply with compulsory attendance regulations in order to provide students with a high-quality education. **In the event that a student has been lawfully absent and the absence has not been excused by the school, please submit any documentation meeting the lawfully allowed absentee criteria listed above within 3 business days to the office.** Should you have questions regarding attendance, please contact Mrs. Robertson, Attendance and PowerSchool coordinator at 803-815-1524

Dress Code

As we prepare all students for success by providing meaningful, challenging, and engaging learning experiences, including preparing them for college and/or career success, it is important students' clothing, articles, and displays of items promote safety, consideration for others and the orderly operation of the school. The universal dress code is as follows:

Students must wear:

- Tops (shirt, blouse, sweater, sweatshirt, tank, etc.); with fabric in the front, back and on the sides and under the arms; and
- Bottoms to one ID length above the knee when standing straight (pants, shorts, skirt, dress, etc.); and
- Appropriate, solid-soled shoes are necessary to ensure safety during school activities. For this reason, crocs, slides, or flip-flops are not permitted.

Students must **not** wear attire that:

- Is pornographic, contains threats or promotes illegal or violent conduct, alcohol, smoking, drugs, or other age-restricted material;
- Demonstrates hate group association/affiliation and/or uses hate speech targeting groups based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, religious affiliation or other protected groups;
- Shows private parts (swimsuit areas). Private parts must be covered by clothing that is opaque (not able to be seen through);
- Shows skin on the student's abdomen or any area between the top and bottom of garments;
- Has rips, tears or holes one ID length above the knee, unless permanent patches or leggings are worn underneath (temporary patches such as napkins or bandanas are not acceptable);
- Shows any part of undergarments;
- Leggings or tights unless covered by appropriate tunic/upper-thigh length dress/shirt/skirt/shorts;
- Covers the student's face to the extent that the student is not identifiable (except that worn for religious purposes) or covers the student to the point that they cannot be identified from the front or the back (ski masks, etc.);
- Demonstrates gang association or affiliation;
- May be used as a weapon.

Hats, sunglasses, head coverings, and/or hoods may not be worn **inside** any classroom or building, including hallways. This is a privilege and the policy can be modified if abused by students attempting to wear these items once they are in the buildings..

Attire worn in observance of a student's religion is not subject to this policy. Additional provisions may be required by the Principal or their designee when necessary to ensure safety or if required for participation in activities such as fine arts, extra-curricular activities/events, or sports/athletics.

Enforcement:

Students shall not be disciplined or removed from class as a consequence of wearing attire in violation of this policy unless the attire creates a substantial disruption to the educational environment or poses a hazard to the health and safety of the wearer or others. Students, at the discretion of the principal or their designee, may be asked to briefly leave the classroom to change clothes or to cover or remove attire that does not comply with the dress code policy. Students shall not be referred to as "a distraction" based on their appearance or attire. All staff will use reasonable efforts to avoid speaking to students about their attire in the presence of other students, staff or other adults unrelated to the student. Discussions with students about violations of the Student Attire policy or this Administrative Rule should be done in a manner that does not cause embarrassment to the student. Principals are required to ensure that all staff are aware of and understand the guidelines of this policy.

Consequences:

- 1st & 2nd Violation - Warning
- 3rd Violation - Lunch Detention, PBIS Pre-Referral, & \$30 fine in *Maverick Money*
- 4th Violation - Lunch Detention, PBIS Pre-Referral, Parent Conference Scheduled & \$30 fine in *Maverick Money*
- 5th - 9th Violation - Discipline Referral, Parent Conference Scheduled, & 1 Day ISS \$100 fine in *Maverick Money*
- 10th + Violation - 1 Day of OSS

Bathroom Usage

Students will not use the restroom during the first or last 15 minutes of class, and may only use it in between classes if it will not make them tardy. During class, after the first 15 minutes, but before the last 15 minutes, students may ask to use the restroom, unless direct instruction is being given by the teacher. They will present their filled-out agenda to be signed to use the restroom. No more than one student can leave their class at any one time. Everyone has a right to privacy in the stall of the restroom. Only one person per stall. Anything that is contraband in the classroom, is contraband in the bathroom. The bathroom is not to be used for social media content creation, vaping or any other prohibited activity.

Location Specific Information

- Quad - The exterior door will remain open for a clear view of the sinks and non-private areas.
- Sanctuary - The door will remain locked and the key will be checked out after signing the bathroom log.
- Portables 1-3 - Since these classrooms have bathrooms in the classrooms, the procedures are up to the classroom teacher.
- MS & HS students will not use the restrooms in the main building.
- During MS recess, students will use the restroom in P1 with permission from the recess monitor. Students will enter and exit P1 quietly without disruption..

- During HS recess, students will use the restroom in the Quad with permission and adequate supervision.

Agenda

Students will be issued a weekly agenda. This agenda is required in order to leave the classroom, during class, for any reason. Students will not be permitted to leave without the agenda. If a student loses their agenda and wishes to leave the classroom, they will need to purchase a new agenda with Maverick Money at the current replacement value. This agenda is also a place to record homework assignments and other important information throughout the week. Keeping up with and using an agenda fosters good organizational skills.

Tardiness

Students have three minutes in their schedule to transition from one class to another. Any student arriving to class after this time without a pass will be marked tardy. Any student arriving 10 or more minutes late, will receive an immediate Discipline Referral for Cutting Class and be sent to an administrator.

Consequences:

- 1st & 2nd Violation - Warning
- 3rd Violation - Lunch Detention, PBIS Pre-Referral, & \$30 fine in Maverick Money
- 4th Violation - Lunch Detention, PBIS Pre-Referral, Parent Conference Scheduled & \$30 fine in Maverick Money
- 5th - 9th Violation - Discipline Referral, Parent Conference Scheduled, 1 Day ISS, & \$100 fine in Maverick Money
- 10th + Violation - 1 Day of OSS

Identification Badges

Student IDs are required for all middle and high school students, school employees, and visitors. ID badges are to be visible at all times on campus. To assist with this safety issue, students and staff will be issued wearable ID cards. A student must:

- wear their ID card properly while on school grounds on a school-issued lanyard around the neck (including recess and PE);
- wear only their own ID card and never one that belongs to someone else;
- not alter their ID card in any way (including chewing on them); and
- not place unapproved decals or stickers on their ID card.

Upon entering the school for the first time, a student will be issued an ID card and a lanyard at no charge to the student. The card will identify the student by name and grade level. The card should be kept in good condition. Each student will be issued a new ID card annually. Students may not check out textbooks or technology, or obtain lunch without their ID card. Lost or destroyed ID cards must be replaced by the student. Temporary IDs cost \$1 in real money (not Maverick Money) at the front desk. A temporary ID is only valid for ONE day. Temporary IDs will be worn around the neck like a normal ID. *The temporary ID must be returned to the front desk at dismissal or a \$5 fine will be assessed for a lost temporary ID.* Replacement ID cards and replacement lanyards are \$5 cash at the front desk.

In the event a student forgets their ID at home or needs a new ID, they must go directly to the office and purchase a temporary or replacement ID **before** going to their first class in order to avoid a violation. A violation occurs when a student's ID is not properly displayed around their neck. All in-class violations after homeroom will

follow the school-wide progressive discipline model and a violation will advance the student a step on the progressive discipline tracker.

Phone and Headphone Policy

Middle School: Students are not permitted to use a cell phone or headphones/earbuds during school hours. Cell phones and headphones/earbuds should remain off and put away in backpacks at all times. They may not be kept in pockets or handbags. In some cases, a teacher may require the entire class to use headphones for an assignment. This is the ONLY exception to this rule. Smartwatches may also be confiscated if being used for purposes other than medical monitoring and telling time during the class period.

High School: Students will not have cell phones on their persons or headphones/earbuds in their ears while classes are taking place. Cell phones and headphones/earbuds should remain off and put away in backpacks while classes are taking place. Smartwatches may also be confiscated if being used for purposes other than medical monitoring and telling time during the class period. High school students are permitted to use their phones and headphones/earbuds during their lunch and free time.

Consequences:

- 1st Violation - Warning
- 2nd Violation - Phone surrendered to the teacher until the end of the class period.
- 3rd Violation - Phone turned into an Administrator and returned at the end of the school day, Lunch Detention, PBIS Pre-Referral, & *\$30 fine in Maverick Money*
- 4th Violation - Phone turned into an Administrator and returned at the end of the school day, Lunch Detention, PBIS Pre-Referral, Parent Conference Scheduled & *\$30 fine in Maverick Money*
- 5th - 9th Violation - Phone turned into an Administrator and returned at the end of the school day, Discipline Referral, Parent Conference Scheduled, 1 Day ISS, & *\$100 fine in Maverick Money*
- 10th + Violation - 1 Day of OSS

Public Displays of Affection (PDA)

Being overly affectionate in school creates an environment that is not conducive to concentration and learning, therefore students should refrain from inappropriate, intimate behaviors on campus or at school-related events & activities. Students are expected to show good taste and conduct themselves respectfully at all times. Examples of PDA include but are not limited to: hugging, kissing, holding hands, touching faces, sitting on another student's lap, and putting legs across another student's lap.

Consequences:

- 1st & 2nd Violation - Warning
- 3rd Violation - Lunch Detention, PBIS Pre-Referral, & *\$30 fine in Maverick Money*
- 4th Violation - Lunch Detention, PBIS Pre-Referral, Parent Conference Scheduled & *\$30 fine in Maverick Money*
- 5th - 9th Violation - Discipline Referral, Parent Conference Scheduled, 1 Day ISS, & *\$100 fine in Maverick Money*
- 10th + Violation - 1 Day of OSS

Acceptable Use of Technology Policy

All parents and students must sign an acceptable use agreement (a separate document) and submit it to the IT Coordinator before being issued school equipment. Personal computers and other technology are prohibited during school hours. Students who disable, remove or otherwise attempt to circumvent the monitoring software will receive a discipline referral. Students will be held accountable for the contents of the acceptable use policy anytime using a school device or school network. School technology checked out to students becomes the responsibility of that student. The cost of any equipment that is lost, damaged, or is no longer identifiable will be the responsibility of the student and their guardians. Failure to comply may result in loss of privileges.

Consequences:

- 1st & 2nd Violation - Warning
- 3rd Violation - Lunch Detention, PBIS Pre-Referral, & *\$30 fine in Maverick Money*
- 4th Violation - Lunch Detention, PBIS Pre-Referral, Parent Conference Scheduled & *\$30 fine in Maverick Money*
- 5th - 9th Violation - Discipline Referral, Parent Conference Scheduled, 1 Day ISS, & *\$100 fine in Maverick Money*
- 10th + Violation - 1 Day of OSS & possible loss of school-issued device

Food and Beverage Policy

- These rules are at the classroom teacher's discretion, and subject to the allergies of your teachers and classmates.
- There should be no eating in the classroom unless an individual teacher has given direct permission, and if eating is allowed, students must be responsible to clean up after themselves.
- All beverages should have a top that helps to prevent spills. Water is the preferred beverage for students to drink in the classroom, but ultimately students must be responsible to clean up after themselves.
- Chewing Gum is allowed if used and disposed of appropriately. Students will lose this privilege, on an individual basis, if it interferes with instruction or they are found disposing of it incorrectly.

Student Parking Procedures

Students must register to park on campus. Students will be assigned a parking area and must only park in the assigned location. Students must also place their parking pass in a visible location on the dash of the car. There will be a \$5 fee if the parking tag is lost. Students will not be permitted to go to their cars during the school day without a signed agenda. Students that violate these parking procedures will lose the privilege of parking/driving to school.

Homework Policy

- Assignments are due at the beginning of class. If the student cannot produce the assignment at the time it is called for, it will be considered a late assignment. The student will still be responsible for the content of the homework assignment.
- If it is determined that one student is copying another student's homework, both students will receive zeroes. This is a violation of the Honor Code.
- If students are unsure about an assignment, they should check with a reliable classmate, email the teacher, or check Google Classroom for directions.

Testing Procedure

- Students must adhere to test-taking procedures as described by the teacher.
- Students who do not adhere to test-taking procedures will be removed from the classroom to complete the test with an administrator. The parents or guardians of the student will also be notified.

Makeup Work Policy

- It is the student's responsibility to contact the teacher about any missed work during an excused absence. Students will be expected to make up assignments within a period of time equal to the number of days the student was absent. A student who does not make up assigned work within the time allotted will receive a grade of zero for the assignment.

Late Work Policy

- All work is due on the date assigned by the teacher. Any work not turned in on the date assigned will receive late work penalties as follows:
 - Missing assignments will be indicated on weekly worklists.
 - Students will have 5 school days to submit the assignment after it was missed with no penalty.
 - No work will be accepted after the 5th late day without a note from the parent explaining the extenuating circumstances.
 - Work submitted after the 5th day will earn a maximum grade of 70%.
- It is the student's responsibility to email the teacher informing them that the assignment has been submitted.

Extra Credit

- Extra credit assignments will not be given. Extension activities may be available if students have completed all assignments for a given week.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the intentional or unintentional use of someone else's words or ideas as your own, also including words or ideas generated by Artificial Intelligence. You must quote and cite or paraphrase and cite someone else's work used in your paper to avoid plagiarism. Any paper found to contain plagiarized parts will receive a zero, and the student will receive a discipline referral. If a peer shares work or contributes to plagiarism of another student's paper, the same consequences will apply to the other student(s). Sharing of information for tests, quizzes, homework, etc. also results in a zero on the assignment and/or discipline notice for both students.

Academic Responsibilities

At all times, academic integrity must be preserved, and all students are held to the honor code. Students are expected to read all assigned materials (use of Spark Notes, Cliff Notes, and such are secondary to the primary texts). Individuals are expected to complete their own work. Plagiarism and copying another person's work and claiming it as your own will not be tolerated. These acts not only cheat the individual but also damage Midlands STEM's integrity. Consequences for such acts are zeroes on the assignment for all involved, and discipline notices which may result in further punishment to be decided by the Honor Council.

Teacher/Student Conferences

Teachers will be available for conferencing during the homeroom period and after school until 4pm unless otherwise specified. Students must let the teacher know when they will be coming to discuss grades, assignments, or other matters. Because conference times have been made available, these matters should not be discussed during the class period.

Retakes and Reteaching

Makeup of missed assignments and retakes of tests and quizzes are at the teacher's discretion provided that students have made an appropriate effort and attended reteaching sessions during class if offered by the teacher or during after-school tutoring. Students who receive a 59 or below on any test or quiz will be required to attend reteaching.

After-School Tutoring

Each teacher will have a designated day each week for after-school tutoring. Students who need tutoring should notify their teacher of their intent to stay for tutoring no later than 3:00 pm. Students must arrange for their ride to pick them up by 4:30 pm.

Mode of Transportation & Dismissal Procedures

All students are assumed to be car riders by default unless the school is notified by the parent in writing, which will include a map of the path that they will take to get home. Only students who live no more than a mile away, and have a parent notification on file, may walk to and from school. Students may only walk to and from school to a residence; students may not leave campus on foot to be picked up from a gas station, campus boundaries, or other public area. If a student is not a designated walker, parents are expected to enter the car line and pick up their students in the designated locations. Only adults listed in PowerSchool may pick up a student. If you would like your student to leave with anyone else, the school needs to be notified in writing (or by email from the parent) before dismissal that day. All families will be issued two car rider pick up tags. No student will be allowed to leave with anyone that does not have this tag. We take your student's safety very seriously and will not release them to any unauthorized person.

Eligibility for Extracurricular Activities

For a student to be eligible for extracurricular activities such as Field Trips, certain During-School PBIS Rewards like the Good Citizens Block Party, or After-School Events, a student must not have had In-School Suspension (ISS) within the previous six weeks, or Out-of-School Suspension (OSS) within the previous nine weeks. This includes consequences given for high-level discipline behaviors, as well as excessive low-level behaviors, whose consequences follow the school-wide progressive discipline model. Students must also attend school the entire day before an after-school activity, and/or must not have an unexcused absence the day before a field trip.

IV. Record of Student Progress

The following procedures will be used to monitor and record student progress.

1. Gradebook/PowerSchool: Each student will have a line in which grades are recorded. Grades will also be entered in PowerSchool, which is an electronic grading system. All graded assignments will be recorded. Parents will have access to Powerschool via Parent Portal.

2. Other records: Other means of monitoring and recording student progress will include interims, report cards, student/teacher conferences, parent/teacher conferences, notes and/or phone calls home. Documentation of the above is kept in the classroom. Parents are encouraged to link to their student's Google Classroom account in order to gain extra insight into classroom assignments and grading procedures.

Grades will be updated regularly by the following Tuesday afternoon. Please note that essays and projects may take longer to grade and return than tests and quizzes, so feedback on these assignments may be delayed. Students will earn true grades on assignments, but there will be no grade below 50 on their report card.

All students must keep backup copies of all work submitted. If a grade is missing or incorrect, the student is responsible for bringing it to the teacher's attention, providing the dated backup copy and proof of submission. Save everything until the final grades are posted.

V. Curriculum and Reading

Classes are comprehensive courses designed to encourage student thinking, problem-solving, and reading skills. As such, some material will include coarse language and suggestive themes. These books and materials have all been approved for use by students at the secondary school level and chosen directly from historical and scientific records or the literary canon.

Texts may be modified or adjusted throughout the year at the teacher's discretion.

VI. Materials and Resources

Writing Materials

- Charged, school-issued laptop. (Students who fail to charge their devices may be made to do assignments for that day on paper. All assignments will be due at the end of class and students will be issued lunch detention.)
- Pen/pencil (blue or black ink preferred, assignments written in difficult-to-see inks will not be accepted.)

*All students should purchase supplies as indicated by the school supply list prior to the start of the school year.

VII. Classroom Expectations

- | | |
|--------------------|----------------|
| 1. Trustworthiness | 4. Fairness |
| 2. Respect | 5. Caring |
| 3. Responsibility | 6. Citizenship |

Consequences and Rewards for Behavior

Consequences:

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| ● Warning | ● PBIS Pre-Referral Form |
| ● Lunch Detention/Maverick Money Fines | ● Parent Conference |
| ● Student/Teacher Conference | ● Guidance Referral |

- Discipline Referral to Administrator

Rewards:

- Praise
- Positive Notes/Calls Home
- Receipt of Maverick Money
- Consideration for Student of the Month Award
- Extra Classroom Opportunities
- Random Acts of Goodwill

Infractions severe enough to require immediate consequences, suspension, or expulsion are laid out in the school discipline plan which can be found on the school website.

VIII. Scheduling Parent-Teacher Conferences:

End of Nine-Week conferences will be available on the following dates: Oct 18, Jan 16, & Mar 21. Conferences may be scheduled any other day with teachers via phone or email. Teachers are available for conferences during the planning period, before school, and after school. Parents should schedule meetings with teachers and administrators by phone before coming to the school to ensure that the teacher or administrator is available. **The parent or guardian of any student who is failing will be asked to schedule a face-to-face parent-teacher conference to discuss the student's progress.**

IX. Note on Disciplinary Procedures:

Every effort is made to ensure that all students have a fair chance to learn, therefore the above rules and consequences are necessary. In keeping with this philosophy, teachers treat all students with fairness and respect, as their main concern is that all students be present in class so that they have an opportunity to learn. Only severe infractions, which infringe upon the rights of other students to learn, will necessitate students being taken out of the instructional setting.

Middle & High School Student Handbook Signature Page

Please go over the above information with a parent or guardian. Then, verify with the signatures below that all are aware of the responsibilities and expectations of the school and confirm that you are prepared to complete all assigned material.

Please return this page by Friday, Sep 1.

Student Name (Print)

Student Signature

Parent/Guardian Name (Print)

Parent/Guardian Signature

Today's Date