



# Panther House Friday School

## Family Handbook

### 2025–2026 School Year

Dear Students and Families,

We are delighted to welcome you to the Panther House Friday School family, where each child's natural curiosity, independence, and unique potential are deeply valued and nurtured. At Panther House, we view education as a collaborative journey—one shared by the child, the family, and the school. Our carefully prepared environments and dedicated educators are committed to supporting children as they grow into confident, self-directed learners who show respect for themselves, others, and the world around them. This family handbook outlines our shared values, expectations, and daily rhythms, serving as a guide for the year ahead. We're honored to partner with your family as we cultivate a lifelong love of learning and a strong sense of purpose in every child.

Sincerely,

*Rachael Dunn*

Owner/Director, Panther House Friday School, LLC

## Panther House Friday School

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# Table of Contents

Mission & Vision

Core Values

Student Welcome Interview

Learning Design Model

Family Communication

Attendance Policy

School Calendar, Schedule, and Closures

Behavior Support & Expectations

Health & Safety Procedures

Technology Use Policy

Food & Nutrition

Tuition & Fees

Handbook Acknowledgment Form

## Mission & Vision

### **Mission:**

At Panther House Friday School, our mission is to nurture the whole child through a student-centered approach that values individuality, fosters curiosity, and cultivates a love of learning. We provide a supportive and academically challenging environment where we maximize each Friday to enrich our students' learning potential.

### **Vision:**

We envision a school community rooted in curiosity and guided by collaboration from both our students and teachers. Our program honors each child's unique path by offering individualized support, hands-on experiences, and project-based learning. Through meaningful, student-driven projects and real-world connections, we cultivate confident, compassionate learners who think critically, work collaboratively, and joyfully engage with the world around them.

## Core Values

- **Curiosity** – We value inquiry and celebrate the joy of discovery.
- **Student-Centered** – We honor each child's voice, choice, and learning path.

- **Collaborative** – We learn together through teamwork and community partnerships.
- **Academic Growth** – We pursue deep understanding and meaningful challenge.
- **Project-Based** – We learn by doing, exploring real-world questions and ideas.

## Student Welcome Interview

### Student Welcome Interview Summary

The Student Welcome Interview is a foundational step in building meaningful relationships and designing personalized learning experiences. During this one-on-one conversation, we take time to learn more about each child's hobbies, interests, learning preferences, personal goals, and areas of strength. This dialogue helps us understand what excites and motivates the student, how they best take in and process information, and where they feel most confident in their learning.

Questions are open-ended, student-friendly, age-appropriate; and invite learners to share about favorite activities, preferred ways of working (e.g., hands-on, visual, collaborative), and what they hope to achieve during their time with us on Fridays. We also explore areas they might want more support in and celebrate what they already do well.

The information gathered from the interview is used to:

- *Tailor academic lessons and enrichment activities to student interests*
- *Guide project-based learning choices and student grouping*
- *Support social-emotional growth and goal setting*
- *Foster a strong sense of belonging and student voice in the classroom and school*

This interview is not an assessment, but rather a tool to honor the whole child and ensure that learning is engaging, relevant, and responsive from the very beginning.

## Student Welcome Interview – Sample Questions

### Getting to Know You

- *What are some things you love to do outside of school?*
- *Do you have any favorite books, games, or activities?*

### Learning Style & Preferences

- *When you're learning something new, what helps you most—listening, seeing pictures, moving around, working with others?*
- *Do you like working by yourself, in a group, or with a partner?*

### Strengths & Growth Areas

- *What's something you're really good at—in or out of school?*
- *Is there a subject or kind of work that feels difficult for you?*

### Goals & Motivation

- *What do you hope to learn or do this year or is there something new you'd like to try?*
- *How do you feel when you're really proud of your work?*

## Social & Emotional Insights

- *What makes you feel welcome and comfortable in a new place?*
- *How do you like to make new friends or connect with others?*
- *How can a teacher or friend help you when you're having a hard day?*

## Learning Design Model

At Panther House Friday School, we prioritize and value individualized student learning pathways. Our learning design model includes the following areas:

- *Pre-taught Lessons Aligned to LHISD Math/Reading)*
- *Skill-based Small Group Tutoring (Math/Reading)*
- *Science/Social Studies (Project-based, hands-on, real-world, exploratory)*
- *Social Emotional Learning (Responsive skills through student welcome interview and teacher observation)*
- *Health/Nutrition/Wellness (Physical activity through Catalysts, Mindful eating, etc.)*
- *Panther Passion Project (Multi-aged student group research project/presentation for area of interest)*
- *Student-Led Enrichment (Based on student interest/hobbies)*

### **Pre-taught Lessons:**

Our pre-taught lessons follow Liberty Hill ISD's Year *At A Glance* for both math and reading, and will be tailored to the content students will see in their grade level the following week.

#### **Reading Pre-Teach May Include:**

- *Vocabulary introduction and word decoding strategies*
- *Preview of key texts or genres*
- *Phonics or fluency skills aligned with upcoming reading content area*
- *Comprehension scaffolds (e.g., identifying main idea, visualization, metacognition)*

#### **Math Pre-Teach May Include:**

- *Number sense or operations practice tied to upcoming concepts*
- *Visual models and manipulatives to build conceptual understanding*
- *Math vocabulary and strategies*
- *Previews of problem types used in upcoming project work*

### **Small Group Tutoring**

Tutoring groups are designed to support specific skills in reading and math, based on regular data check-ins and progress tracking. We focus on high-yield learning goals from the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). These groups are flexible and change as needed, so each child gets support that matches their current learning level and helps them grow.

### **Science/Social Studies**

Science and social studies come to life through hands-on exploration, critical thinking, and collaborative problem-solving. Students take the lead in their learning, designing thematic, project-based investigations based on their interests and curiosity. With teachers as guides and facilitators,

cooperative learning groups work together to ask questions, explore solutions, and make real-world connections. This approach fosters curiosity, independence, and a deep understanding of the world around them.

## **Social Emotional Learning**

At Panther House Friday School, social-emotional learning is woven into daily life to help students grow into confident, capable individuals. In addition to building emotional awareness and empathy, we intentionally teach and practice real-life skills such as time management, communication, teamwork, and reflection. Through collaborative projects, group discussions, and daily routines, students learn to navigate challenges, express themselves clearly, work well with others, and take ownership of their learning and growth.

## **Health/Nutrition/Wellness**

We believe that a healthy body supports a strong mind. Each day begins with Catalysts—intentional lessons and activities focused on physical health, nutrition, and overall wellness. These sessions help students build healthy habits, develop body awareness, and learn the importance of movement, mindfulness, and balanced nutrition. Starting the day this way sets a positive tone for learning and encourages lifelong well-being.

## **Panther Passion Project**

Our school offers exciting opportunities for students to work together across age groups on research projects centered around their personal interests. These multi-age teams, led by our 4th and 5th graders, encourage collaboration, leadership, and responsibility. Teachers provide guidance as students lead their teams, delegate tasks, and work together to bring their projects to life. These projects often involve real-world connections, such as collaborating with local businesses, interviewing community members, or reaching out to experts in the field. At the end of each project, students present their findings to families, showcasing their hard work and creativity. These projects evolve throughout the year, allowing students to explore diverse topics, engage with their community, and deepen their understanding of the world around them.

## **Student-Led Enrichment**

At Panther House, we believe that learning should reflect the passions and interests of each student. Based on the information gathered during our Student Welcome Interviews, we offer student-led enrichment activities designed around students' hobbies, goals, and areas of curiosity. These enriching experiences include a variety of activities such as fine arts, sports, technology, and more. To ensure that students have the opportunity to explore new areas and learn something different, enrichment groups will change roughly every six weeks. This rotating structure allows students to expand their skills, collaborate with new peers, and pursue topics that spark their interest; while fostering a sense of ownership and excitement in their learning journey.

## **Family Communication**

### **Weekly Progress Reports**

Each week, families will receive individualized updates about their child’s progress across all learning areas. These communications will include specific topics and skills covered, as well as insights into the child’s growth, strengths, and areas for continued support. Our goal is to keep families informed and involved by providing meaningful, detailed feedback that reflects each student’s unique learning journey.

Monthly Newsletters

Each month, families will receive a Panther House Friday School newsletter highlighting important updates, upcoming events, and key topics being explored across all learning areas. The newsletter will also feature exciting news, student highlights, and a peek into the unique learning experiences happening at Panther House. It’s a great way to stay connected and celebrate our school community together.

Attendance Policy

Please message us through the Brightwheel app or through email to let us know if your child is going to be absent or arriving after 9:00 am as this information will help us best prepare for our day.

School Calendar and Schedule

School Calendar

Panther House Friday School follows a unique schedule designed to complement the Liberty Hill ISD hybrid calendar. We will be open on most Fridays throughout the school year—specifically when Liberty Hill ISD is closed to students for staff development or when Friday is the only day off in a four-day shortened school week. The exception to this schedule is during extended breaks such as Thanksgiving, Winter Break, and Spring Break, as well as any Fridays when students are expected to attend their home campus. For the 2025–2026 school year, Panther House will operate with a total of 25 Fridays - including the Friday after the last day of school. Panther House will follow LHISD school closures for emergency weather days.

Liberty Hill ISD Calendar											
2025-2026 Academic Calendar											
July 2025				August 2025				September 2025			
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa		Su	M	Tu	W
		1	2	3	4	5				1	2
6	7	8	9	10	11	12		3	4	5	6
13	14	15	16	17	18	19		7	8	9	10
20	21	22	23	24	25	26		11	12	13	14
27	28	29	30	31				15	16	17	18
								19	20	21	22
								23	24	25	26
								27	28	29	30
October 2025				November 2025				December 2025			
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa		Su	M	Tu	W
			1	2	3	4				1	2
5	6	7	8	9	10	11		3	4	5	6
12	13	14	15	16	17	18		7	8	9	10
19	20	21	22	23	24	25		11	12	13	14
26	27	28	29	30	31			15	16	17	18
								19	20	21	22
								23	24	25	26
								27	28	29	30
January 2026				February 2026				March 2026			
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa		Su	M	Tu	W
				1	2	3				1	2
4	5	6	7	8	9	10		3	4	5	6
11	12	13	14	15	16	17		7	8	9	10
18	19	20	21	22	23	24		11	12	13	14
25	26	27	28	29	30	31		15	16	17	18
								19	20	21	22
								23	24	25	26
								27	28	29	30
April 2026				May 2026				June 2026			
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa		Su	M	Tu	W
			1	2	3	4				1	2
5	6	7	8	9	10	11		3	4	5	6
12	13	14	15	16	17	18		7	8	9	10
19	20	21	22	23	24	25		11	12	13	14
26	27	28	29	30				15	16	17	18
								19	20	21	22
								23	24	25	26
								27	28	29	30

School Schedule

Our daily schedule reflects the core components of our learning program. While these elements remain consistent, we may make adjustments as needed to best support our students' growth and well-being. For families requiring additional hours, before and after school care is available for an additional fee. Students may be dropped off as early as 7:00 AM and picked up as late as 4:00 PM. A five-minute grace period is provided for both regular (3:00 PM) and extended (4:00 PM) pick-up times. Any student not picked up by 3:05 PM or 4:05 PM will incur a late pick-up fee.

Should any changes to the schedule arise, they will be thoughtfully planned and communicated to families in advance.

Time	Event	
8:00 - 8:30	Drop Off	
8:30 - 9:00	Catalyst	
9:00 - 11:30	Core Instruction Rotations RLA/Math/Enrichment	
11:30 - 12:05	Lunch: K-2	Recess: 3-5
12:05 - 12:40	Recess: K-2	Lunch: 3-5
12:40-1:40	SEL & Panther Passion Projects	Individual/Small Group Instruction
1:40 -2:40	Student Led Enrichment	
2:40 -3:00	Pick Up	

## Behavior Support and Expectations

At Panther House Friday School, we believe that all students thrive in a respectful, safe, and supportive environment. Our behavior expectations are rooted in kindness, responsibility, and mutual respect. We guide students in developing self-awareness, making thoughtful choices, and resolving conflicts peacefully. Because we are a small program with a limited staff-to-student ratio, we are not currently equipped to support students with high behavioral and/or functional needs. While we remain fully committed to inclusion, our current structure does not yet allow us to provide the level of support some students may require. It is our hope and intention to build a more comprehensive support system in the future that can better serve a wider range of student needs as we believe all students benefit from learning from and with each other.

Due to our commitment to safety for Panther House students and staff, students who exhibit the following behaviors may be dismissed from Panther House Friday School:

- *Elopement*
- *Physical and/or emotional harm to others (including staff and/or students)*
- *Developmental, physical, emotional, and/or medical needs that cannot be supported by our staff*

## Health & Safety Procedures

The health and safety of our students is a top priority at Panther House Friday School. We maintain clean, well-supervised environments and follow basic health practices to prevent the spread of illness. Students who are sick should remain at home until they are symptom-free for at least 24 hours without medication. In the case of illness or injury during the day, families will be contacted promptly.

In the event of a critical illness or injury requiring immediate medical attention, we will refer to the child's Medical Consent and Registration Forms, if needed. Our staff will administer First Aid or CPR as appropriate and contact the physician listed on the child's record. Emergency medical services (911) will be called if necessary. If appropriate, the child will be removed from the situation to ensure their safety. At all times, we will ensure that the rest of the group remains under proper supervision.

We also practice regular safety drills and follow emergency procedures to ensure all students and staff are prepared and protected. This includes drills related to fire, lockdown, emergency weather, etc.

## **Technology Use Policy**

Although technology will not be a central part of the school day, students may occasionally use their personal devices for Panther Passion Projects and/or enrichment activities. These projects provide opportunities for students to collaborate, research topics of interest, and create presentations to share with their families. Teachers will closely monitor both device and internet use to ensure a safe and focused learning environment. Any student who is found utilizing technology or the Internet for purposes other than their intended use will be addressed and communicated to families for further discussion.

## **Food & Nutrition**

At Panther House Friday School, we prioritize nutrition, mindful eating, and empowering students to make healthy food choices. Students are encouraged to bring their own snacks and will enjoy two snack breaks—one in the morning and one in the afternoon. Families are responsible for providing lunch, and student food will have access to a refrigerator and microwave as needed. To ensure the safety of all students, classrooms with significant food allergies will be designated as allergy-free zones whenever possible.

## **Tuition, Deposits, Fees, & Discounts**

All billing for Panther House Friday School will be done through our school management app Brightwheel.

### **Tuition**

Panther House Friday School offers a variety of tuition payment plans for families. For our monthly and biweekly options, we will operate within a balanced billing system where families will be invoiced a consistent amount throughout the school year regardless of the number of Fridays in the month. Tuition costs remain in effect regardless of absences and/or tardies for any reason. Prior to the first day of school, families will be sent a tuition option form to communicate which method they prefer:

- **Annual** (10% discount) \$4.455, due September 1st, 2025
- **Monthly** (\$550), due the first day of each month (September-May)
- **Biweekly** (Every two weeks @ \$275), due the first and fifteenth day of each month (September-May)

### **Deposits/Fees - Nonrefundable**



- **Enrollment/Deposit Fee:** \$200 upon enrollment, to be applied towards your first tuition payment; officially reserving your child's spot at Panther House
- **Materials Fee:** \$100, due August 1st, 2025 (materials fee waived for parents who are current teachers)
- **Late Fee:** A late fee in the amount of \$25 will be added for each day the payment is late. If a payment is not received three days after it is due, your child may be dismissed from our program.
- **Insufficient Funds Fee:** If a payment doesn't go through because of insufficient funds, an expired card, or a closed account, a \$20 fee will be added to the tuition payment. To help avoid extra fees, just let us know if you've changed banks, closed an account, want to use a different card, or need to update your payment information.

## **Discounts & Specials**

- **Referral Discount:** \$150 credit for every family who enrolls through your referral. Please encourage families to write your name down on our pre-enrollment form upon enrolling to receive this discount. Families who receive a referral discount will be notified by the Panther House Friday School Director.
- **Sibling Discount:** Siblings of enrolled students will receive a tuition discount of 10% for the first sibling and 15% for each additional child.
- **Specials:** Panther House Friday School loves to provide special pricing such as our early bird discount, tuition raffles, attending special events, etc. If you have already enrolled and received one of these specials, it will be applied towards your tuition payment.

## **Withdraw Policy & Refunds**

If you need to withdraw your child(ren) from Panther House Friday School, a withdrawal form must be submitted through Brightwheel no less than 30 days before the intended withdrawal date. Tuition will be collected for the final 30 days of enrollment based on the tuition option previously selected, regardless of the number of Fridays in that month. For families who paid annually, a 50% refund will be issued after deducting tuition for the final 30 days of enrollment.

## **Non-Discrimination Statement**

Panther House Friday School admits students of any race, color, national or ethnic origin to all rights, privileges, programs, and activities. We do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, or disability.

## **Handbook Acknowledgment Form**

Each family is required to sign and return the Handbook Acknowledgment Form, Registration Form, and Medical Consent form before the first day of school. Panther House Friday School retains the right to revise this document as needed for the continuous improvement of our school.