

# LEARNING GATE COMMUNITY SCHOOL

## PARENT & STUDENT HANDBOOK

### Kindergarten – 8th Grade



Embracing the pioneering fieldwork of Jane Goodall, the profound ecological insights of Aldo Leopold, and the adventurous spirit of Jacques Cousteau, Learning Gate Community School has crafted an innovative educational model. Nestled in a pastoral landscape and utilizing neuroscience-informed teaching methods, Learning Gate is evolving as an institution dedicated to ecological stewardship and environmental awareness, all while preserving the nostalgic charm of a traditional one-room schoolhouse. This approach honors the legacy of Frances Hamerstrom in wildlife conservation and reflects the interconnectedness of forests championed by Suzanne Simard, fostering a generation of students who are as knowledgeable about the natural world as they are committed to its preservation.

*This handbook is a work in progress and should be considered a living document. Frequent revisions may be made as we strive to define a superior learning environment for our students and families. Its present form and content should provide the most up to date information on the policies of Learning Gate Community School.*

**Adopted at the July 23, 2025 Board Meeting**

School District of Hillsborough County

LEARNING GATE COMMUNITY SCHOOL

HANNA ROAD K-6 CAMPUS

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## LEARNING GATE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Learning Gate Community School operates as a charter school sponsored by Hillsborough County but governed by the state of Florida. It has its own board that sets policy and is responsible for the financial security of the school. Information about Charter Law in the state of Florida can be found on the Department of Education website.

Monthly board meetings notices are posted at both campuses, on the website and in the newsletter.

### **Board Chairman**

Stanley Kroh  
Tampa Electric  
skroh@learninggate.org

### **Vice Chairman**

Chrissie Price  
Jones Sign Company  
cprice@learninggate.org

### **Secretary**

Ezra Johnson  
University of South Florida  
ejohnson@learninggate.org

### **Treasurer**

Denelle Miller  
FiCare Federal Credit Union  
dmiller@learninggate.org

### **Board Member**

Steven McCarty  
Apex Service Partners  
smccarty@learninggate.org

### **Board Member**

John Zdanowicz  
Cleargage  
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### **Board Member**

Dr Trina Halfhide  
Hazen & Sawyer  
thalfhide@learninggate.org

To reach the entire board of directors, you can email [board@learninggate.org](mailto:board@learninggate.org)

Parent Liaison Hanna Campus: [Brigette Oates – hannaparentrep@learninggate.org](mailto:hannaparentrep@learninggate.org)

Parent Liaison LLF Campus: OPEN – [LLFparentrep@learninggate.org](mailto:LLFparentrep@learninggate.org)

## **School Administration**

Michelle Mason	Principal	<a href="mailto:mmason@learninggate.org">mmason@learninggate.org</a>
Carlos Jordan	Lutz Lake AP	<a href="mailto:cjordan@learninggate.org">cjordan@learninggate.org</a>
Kelly Fox	Hanna Road AP	<a href="mailto:kelly@learninggate.org">kelly@learninggate.org</a>
George Radka	ESE/504 Supervisor	<a href="mailto:gradka@learninggate.org">gradka@learninggate.org</a>
Kris Smith	Business Manager	<a href="mailto:kris@learninggate.org">kris@learninggate.org</a>
Amber Rodriguez	Data Processing/Attendance	<a href="mailto:arodriguez@learninggate.org">arodriguez@learninggate.org</a>
Sara Bassoumi	School Counselor	<a href="mailto:sbassoumi@learninggate.org">sbassoumi@learninggate.org</a>
Rachel DeMarco	School Counselor	<a href="mailto:rdemarco@learninggate.org">rdemarco@learninggate.org</a>
Jocelyn Hemke	School Nurse	<a href="mailto:jhemke@learninggate.org">jhemke@learninggate.org</a>

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **MISSION**

To cultivate students through academic excellence, critical thinking and environmental responsibility, focusing on student success, outdoor education and serving the community.

### **VISION**

To be a leader in education and environmental stewardship in Tampa Bay, contributing to a sustainable world.

### **PHILOSOPHY**

Our teaching program will allow students to grow and develop as active rather than passive learners. A range of activities will be provided that are designed to meet the needs of grade school students at their level of development along the growth continuum.

The staff is committed to helping students discover their natural gifts through multiple intelligence training, brain-based instruction and exploratory learning. We believe that all children should be given opportunities to learn about the community and how to live in it. Therefore, active teaching through an environmentally integrated curriculum establishes foundations for understanding self, others and the natural world. Activities will be designed to help each student develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

### **HISTORY**

The recent “Green” and “No Child Left Inside” movements are not new to Learning Gate. Established in 1983 as a “preschool where kids get dirty”, teaching students to appreciate and care for our earth for over 25 years.

The original location of the pre-school was on a 5-acre property in North Tampa, full of beautiful oaks and native vegetation. Also on the property, was a small working farm with a barn, chicken coop, a garden and farm animals. The children spent the majority of their day outside, learning about how the world works by being in it.

The successful pre-school grew to include a private elementary school. The vision was to develop an all-encompassing curriculum that would integrate the environment into every subject area. Inspired by Rachel Carson’s work, *The Sense of Wonder*, became the inspiration and guiding force behind the school that is today Learning Gate Community School. Learning Gate developed a literature-based curriculum with an environmental theme.

In 2000 an application was submitted and approved by the Hillsborough County School District for Learning Gate Community School, the first environmentally focused charter school. The school opened with 108 students. In October of 2003 the school moved 300 students to the 27-acre property on Hanna Road.

In 2009, its sponsor, Hillsborough County School District, rewarded the school for its high academic performance and sound financial practices with a 15-year contract. Learning Gate Community School is the first school to receive this lengthy contract in the history of the charter movement in Hillsborough County. Learning Gate received its second 15-year charter contract in 2025.

That same year, Learning Gate Community School became the first public school in the nation to receive the LEED Platinum Award for schools. This is a prestigious honor and shows the commitment the school made to the sustainability of the environment.

In 2014, Learning Gate Community School was awarded accreditation by the AdvancED Accreditation Commission, now Cognia. Cognia is a non-profit, non-governmental organization that accredits primary and secondary schools throughout the United States and internationally. AdvancED was formed in 2006 by the consolidation of the pre-college divisions of two of the U.S. regional accreditation organizations: the Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCA CASI), and the Council on Accreditation and School Improvement of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS CASI). In 2012 the Northwest Accreditation Commission (NWAC) joined Cognia. In 2024, Learning Gate was renewed accreditation by Cognia.

This school year, Learning Gate will enroll 800 students located on two campuses. A waiting list of prospective students is a testimony to the dedicated and hardworking staff.

**LEARNING GATE COMMUNITY SCHOOL**  
**2025-2026**  
**SCHOOL CALENDAR**

<b>Students First Day of School</b>	<b>August 121, 2025</b>
<b>Labor Day – No School</b>	<b>September 1, 2025</b>
<b>Conference Day - No Students</b>	<b>September 26, 2025</b>
<b>End of 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter</b>	<b>October 10, 2025</b>
<b>Early Release for Students</b>	<b>October 17, 2025</b>
<b>Early Release</b>	<b>November 25, 2025</b>
<b>Thanksgiving Break</b>	<b>November 26-28, 2025</b>
<b>End of 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter</b>	<b>December 19, 2025</b>
<b>Early Release Day</b>	<b>December 19, 2025</b>
<b>Winter Break</b>	<b>December 23,2004 - January 10, 2026</b>
<b>No School MLK Day</b>	<b>January 19, 2026</b>
<b>No School - Fair Day</b>	<b>February 13, 2026</b>
<b>Early Release for Students</b>	<b>March 13, 2026</b>
<b>End of 3<sup>rd</sup> Grading Period</b>	<b>March 13, 2026</b>
<b>Spring Break</b>	<b>March 16 – March 20, 2026</b>
<b>No School</b>	<b>April 3, 2026</b>
<b>No Students - Teacher Work Day</b>	<b>April 6, 2026</b>
<b>Memorial Day</b>	<b>May 25, 2026</b>
<b>Last Day of School/End of 4<sup>th</sup> Grading Period/Early Release Day</b>	<b>May 39, 2026</b>

## SCHOOL HOURS

Grade Level	Start Time (students must be in their classroom)	Pick Up Time
Kindergarten	7:45 am	2:00 pm
1 <sup>st</sup> Grade	7:45 am	2:15 pm
2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade	7:45 am	2:30 pm
3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade	8:00 am	2:45 pm
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade	8:00 am	3:00 pm
5 <sup>th</sup> Grade	8:00 am	3:15 pm
6 <sup>th</sup> Grade	8:05 am	3:30 pm
7 <sup>th</sup> Grade	8:05 am	3:15 pm
8 <sup>th</sup> Grade	8:05 am	3:30 pm

Students must be in their classroom seat at the assigned start time to be counted as on time for school. Students arriving to class after the assigned times above will be counted as tardy.

**\*\*NOTE:** It can take up to 3 minutes for a student to walk to class on the Hanna Campus. Please make sure to account for that time when dropping your students off\*\*

**\*\*** The drop off gate at LLF will close promptly at 8:00 am. Students arriving after that time are required to be dropped off at the front office and will receive a tardy for the day. Students arriving to their homeroom after 8:05am will also receive a tardy for the day.

Please review the tardy policy found on page 20.

Before care opens at 7:00 am at both locations and is free to all LG students. Personal electronics and phones will not be allowed in before or aftercare.

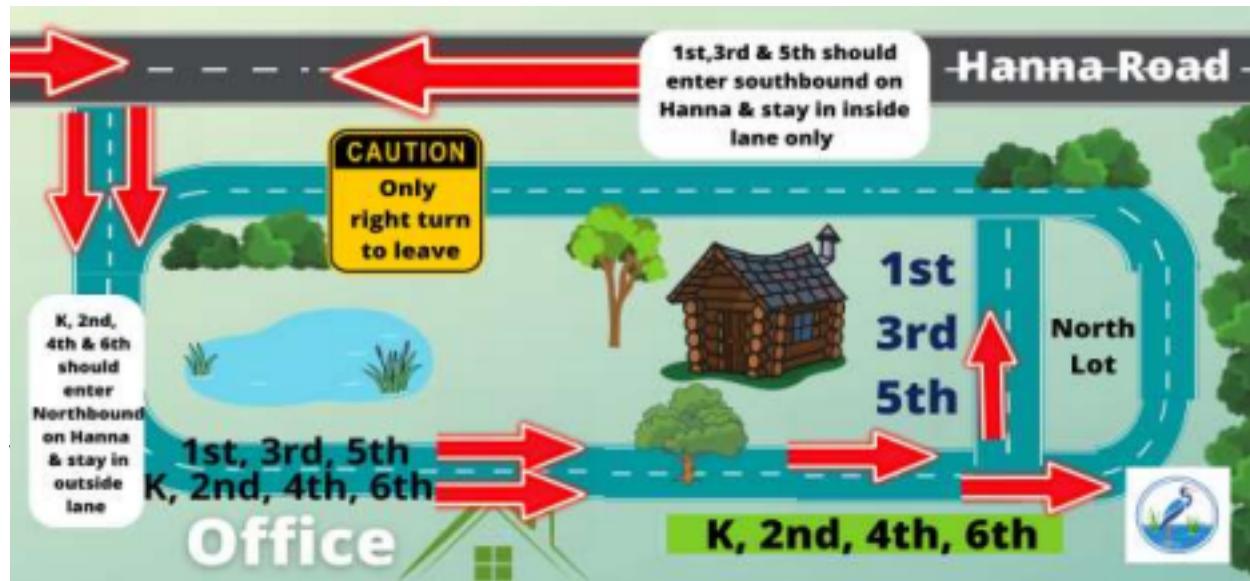
## DISMISSAL

**You MUST arrive at the time listed above. Do not come earlier. We are required to leave one lane open at all times for emergency vehicles. You will be required to leave the car line and return at the proper time if you arrive early.**

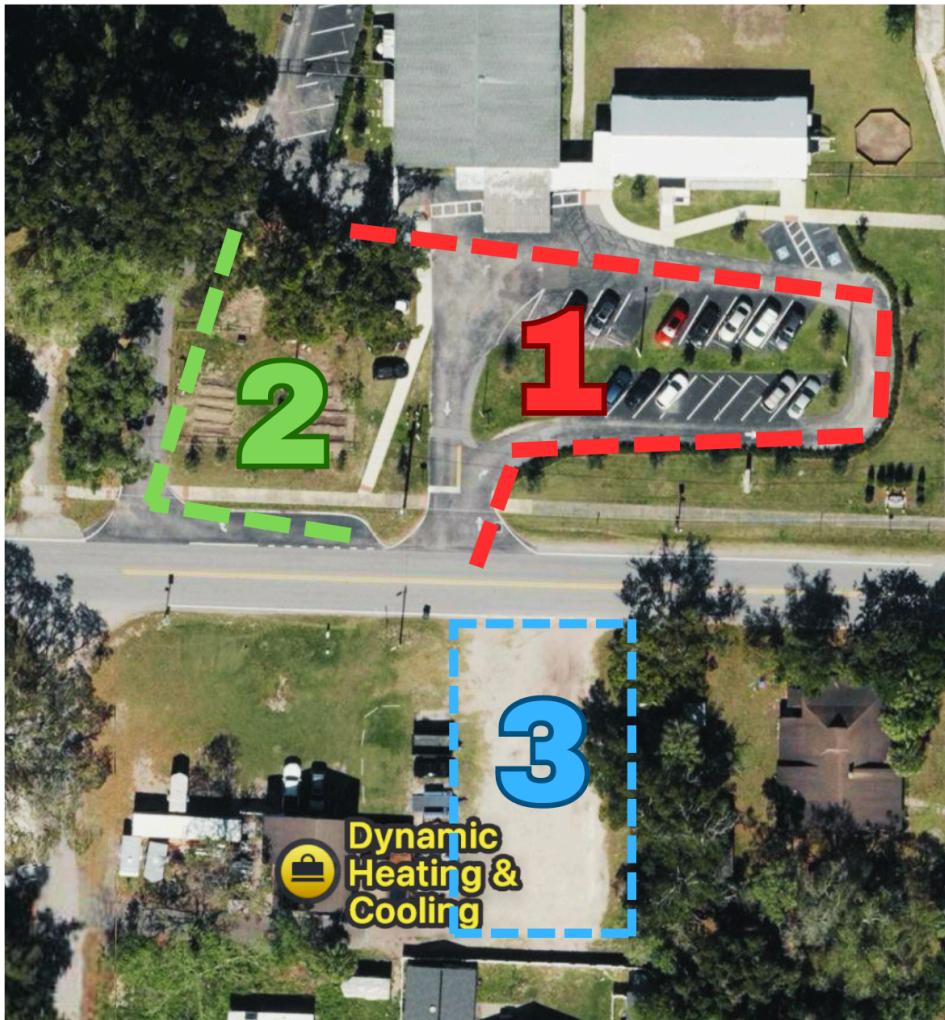
Students cannot be signed out after 1:45PM on regular school days at the Hanna Campus.

Students will be escorted by their teacher or called from the classroom at the LLF Campus to their designated dismissal station as listed above. Parents/guardians will arrive on campus and line up in the lane that is designated for the grade level of the student. Please have your student's name displayed in the front window of the car using the appropriate grade-level LG car tag. If you have more than one child on the Hanna Campus, you will arrive at school at the dismissal time of the oldest child. Sibling care will be provided to younger children in Heron Hall as they wait for the older sibling to be dismissed.

Grade Level	Dismissal Time	Pick Up Location
Kindergarten	2:00 pm	Interior Lane - Green Benches
1 <sup>st</sup> Grade	2:15 pm	Exterior Lane – On the side of the Log Cabin
2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade	2:30 pm	Interior Lane - Green Benches
3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade	2:45 pm	Exterior Lane – On the side of the Log Cabin
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade	3:00 pm	Interior Lane - Green Benches
5 <sup>th</sup> Grade	3:15 pm	Exterior Lane – On the side of the Log Cabin
6 <sup>th</sup> Grade	3:30 pm	Interior Lane - Green Benches
7 <sup>th</sup> Grade	3:20 pm	Rear entrance to cafeteria at LLF
8 <sup>th</sup> Grade	3:30 pm	Rear entrance to cafeteria at LLF



# LLF - Dismissal Map



1. Main carline, 7th grade at 3:15
2. 8th grade early arrival before 3:30
3. 8th grade overflow before 3:30

\*Please do not arrive before your grade's pickup time.

\*\*We CANNOT block the fire station's access to the road.



## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

### **SCHOOL OFFICE AT BOTH CAMPUSES**

- Hours: 7:30am to 4:00pm.
- The office staff will only accept forgotten lunches, water bottles, glasses, and proper school uniforms once the school day has started.
- The office staff will not accept or deliver, under any circumstances, backpacks, homework, forgotten projects, Free Dress Day clothes or other items.

### **ACCOUNTING OFFICE AND SCHOOL FEES**

- You may contact Kris at [kris@learninggate.org](mailto:kris@learninggate.org)
- All monies will be collected through our new Easy Suite Payment Apps. Easy Suite Payment information can be found in the LG Families tab on the website.
- The school does not accept cash payments.
- Monies owed to the school are expected to be paid in full by the due date. Overdue balances may affect the ability to make other purchases like field trips and extracurricular activities. Balances overdue more than 180 days will be referred out to collections. If a family wishes to enter into a repayment plan in lieu of collections they must send a written request via email to [kris@learninggate.org](mailto:kris@learninggate.org) stating the intent to repay.

### **CONSERVATION AND CAMPUS CARE**

Learning Gate Community School prides itself on being environmentally conscious and sensitive to the natural world. Staff, students, and visitors should always be mindful of waste and should make every effort to conserve natural and school resources. Everyone is expected to use campus recycling bins and is responsible for cleaning up after themselves and/or their students/children when using any common areas, indoor or outdoor, on school property.

### **PARENTS**

Learning Gate Community School believes that well-informed parents promote a positive school environment. Consistent with this philosophy, both parents and students are required to familiarize themselves with this handbook, so that you may become acquainted with the school's policies and procedures and school life. In this Handbook, the school has included various regulations, the Code of Student Conduct, activities, and general information, all of which aid students in becoming productive members of the school community. The final page of this handbook must be signed and returned to the front office for one parent education hour. Studies show that students perform better in school if their parents are involved in their education. Parents' knowledge of the standards in each grade will help them interpret their children's report cards and work with teachers to improve students' learning. For this reason, parents are urged to read the standards for all grades rather than just the particular grades their children are in. Standards can be found at CPALMS.org

Canvas is our primary grading platform. Parents are required to register for Canvas and link it to their primary email account to promote communication between parents, students and the

Learning Gate Staff. Parents are expected to **check Canvas daily**, so they are aware of current grades, assignments, and upcoming events. Parents can also participate in parent conferences, work on school events, and be involved in physical activities with their children. They should support classroom activities and participate in special events held within the school and in inter school activities and promote healthy active living through their own habits and practices.

A fundamental principle of our school is inspiring and educating children on how to learn and live in a community. Therefore, please maintain a positive attitude and exhibit respectful behavior to others while on school grounds or participating in school events. Parents are expected to respect the classroom and classroom hours and address faculty and staff in a polite and courteous manner. Conversations regarding students must be by appointment. Employees shall adhere to a 24-hour response policy. Although the response to the parent could vary according to the nature, the employees should at least acknowledge receipt of the query within 24 business hours.

Students, K-8, are not permitted to access their cell phone or smart watch while on campus. Please do not call or text your student's cell phone or smart watch during the school day. When using social media please remember we are all one community working towards the best interest of the students. Keep it positive!

## **PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES**

- Read and understand the Learning Gate Parent and Student Handbook
- Drop off and pick up student(s) during designated school hours
- Register for Canvas and link to your personal email account
- Check student assignments daily on Canvas.
- Read and reinforce the LG23
- Attend Parent Teacher Conferences
- Complete 10 Parent Education Hour Requirements and submit to school
- Complete 30 Annual Volunteer Hour Requirements and submit to school
- Abide by the Policies and Procedures of the School
- Complete the Annual Parent/Guardian Acknowledgement in Enrollease.
- Contact the attendance hotline to report absences before 9am. 813-592-8100 or [attend@learninggate.org](mailto:attend@learninggate.org)

## **STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES**

Students have responsibilities with regard to their own learning, which increases as they advance through elementary and secondary school. Students are required to follow the Student Code of Conduct / Overview (@hillsboroughschools.org/conduct), to be respectful to the teachers and staff at the school and follow the LG23. Students are responsible for bringing all needed materials to school each day. If items are forgotten, parents may only drop off lunches, water bottles, and glasses. Homework, projects and all other materials will not be accepted by the front office. Students may not access cell phones.

## **CIVILITY POLICY**

At Learning Gate Community School (LG), we are committed to fostering a respectful and professional environment among all members of our community, including parents and the public. This policy serves as a guide to ensure orderly educational and administrative processes, prevent disruptions, and uphold the well-being of our students, staff, and visitors.

### *Expected Behavior*

We expect all individuals associated with LG to conduct themselves in a manner that reflects professionalism and respect. This includes:

- Treating all individuals with courtesy and respect.
- Communicating in a respectful and non-confrontational manner.
- Resolving conflicts through dialogue and appropriate channels.
- Adhering to school rules and policies.
- Using appropriate school language

### *Unacceptable Behaviors*

Certain behaviors are entirely unacceptable and will not be tolerated. These include, but are not limited to:

- Bullying, harassing, or intimidating teachers, staff, or other members of the school community via email or any other means.
- Any form of physical or verbal aggression.
- Disruptive conduct that interferes with the learning environment.

### *Consequences*

Engaging in unacceptable behaviors may result in consequences, which may include:

- Written warnings.
- Restricted access to school premises.
- Grounds for student removal from the school.

### *Reporting and Resolution*

Incidents should be reported promptly to the school administration, who will conduct a thorough investigation and take appropriate action. We are committed to addressing incidents in a timely and fair manner.

### *Parent Notification*

We will communicate this policy to parents and ensure they understand its expectations and consequences.

### *Appeals Process*

Individuals who believe they were wrongly accused or unfairly penalized may utilize an appeals process, as outlined in our school's grievance procedures.

This policy will be periodically reviewed and updated as needed to reflect changes in our school's needs and evolving standards of behavior.

By adhering to this policy, we uphold a standard of professionalism and respect within the LG community and ensure a positive learning environment for all.

## **SCHOOL PARTICIPATION**

Parents/Guardians recognize that Learning Gate Community School is a school of choice and by choosing to enroll their child as a student at Learning Gate you agree to support, uphold and conform to the policies, requirements and principles of the school. Parents recognize that they are responsible for completing 30 hours of volunteer time and 10 hours of education classes. Hours must be completed and submitted using the link:

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScIPGvSfvhA6DB39d2ut9Exnx\\_B03R\\_Jri-wcBLXEB8fg7AVA/viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScIPGvSfvhA6DB39d2ut9Exnx_B03R_Jri-wcBLXEB8fg7AVA/viewform) by Friday, May 15, 2026.

For questions, please contact Cathy Allard at [callard@learninggate.org](mailto:callard@learninggate.org).

Parents are responsible for transporting their students to and from school each day on time. Parents/Guardians who do not comply will put their child's position at Learning Gate Community School in jeopardy.

## **STAFF INTERACTION POLICY**

In order to ensure a consistent and effective educational environment, the school administration assigned staff members based on their qualifications and the needs of the students. Parents and guardians **are not permitted** to request or prohibit specific staff members from working with their child. All concerns regarding staff assignments should be addressed to the school administration for appropriate review and resolution.

This policy is in place to support the professional judgment of our educators and to ensure that staffing decisions are made in the best interest of all students. The school administration retains the final authority on all staff assignments and interactions.

## **CHAIN OF COMMUNICATION**

It is the responsibility of the parent to know the chain of communication and use it when contacting faculty and staff members. Any concerns about student performance, task completion, teacher practices, classroom policies and behavior issues should be directed to the classroom teacher. **Parents should only contact administration concerning classroom performance if they have contacted the teacher and have not received a response within 24 hours.** Failure to follow the proper chain of communication will result in the administration referring you to the teacher so that the proper chain of communication can be followed. If a parent wishes to talk about the teacher or classroom with an administrator, the teacher or staff member will be invited to attend the meeting as well. The Administration also requests that you email or make an appointment as needed to discuss challenges, issues, any concerns, offer

recommendations and/or praise. If there is a complaint about administration, the person should contact the administrator directly to talk through the situation. If common ground cannot be obtained, the parent/student may contact the parent liaison (contact information is on page 3) for guidance or the Board of Directors – [board@learninggate.org](mailto:board@learninggate.org)

## **COMMUNICATIONS HOME**

The school disseminates information throughout the year in a variety of ways. Families are highly encouraged to follow the school on both the LG Facebook and Instagram to get an inside look at the amazing things happening throughout the day. The school will also send out important information through Canvas and Parentlink as a phone call or Email. Another important source of information is the school's website [www.learninggate.org](http://www.learninggate.org). The Parent Student Handbook, school calendar, sports information, lunch information, uniform guidelines and a variety of important information can be found on the website at [www.learninggate.org](http://www.learninggate.org). Learning Gate Community School also sends by email a monthly school newsletter. This contains upcoming events, celebratory information and important school updates. Canvas will be the main mode of communication between school staff and students. Parents may contact teachers through their school email.

## **STUDENT PROGRESS**

Canvas is our primary grading and communication platform. Parents are required to register for Canvas and link their primary email account to this program to promote communication between parents, students and the Learning Gate Staff. Parents are able to see student grades, homework assignments and messages from teachers. Please note, teachers are responsible for responding to parents within a 24-hour period or the next school day during the work week, they are not always able to answer immediately. All students will receive report cards quarterly as well as progress reports. Elementary Report Cards are emailed home and Middle School Report cards are available approximately 10 days after the official end of the 9 weeks. Report cards can be accessed by visiting [www.reportcards.SDHC.k12.FL.us](http://www.reportcards.SDHC.k12.FL.us) For assistance, please reach out to our data processor, Amber Rodriguez, at [arodriguez@learninggate.org](mailto:arodriguez@learninggate.org)

## **ACADEMIC ASSISTANCE**

Conferences with a teacher, administrators or any other staff members must be scheduled ahead of time with a reason provided. Learning Gate will be conducting conferences and can be done through Zoom or in person. This ensures that your concerns can be addressed effectively while maintaining proper confidentiality. Parents/guardians are expected to participate in two parent/teacher conferences per year. Families will receive 1 parent education hour for the first conference for each parent in attendance.

All issues concerning students with disabilities should be directed to the student's case manager. For assistance, please contact our ESE Specialist, George Radka, [gradka@learninggate.org](mailto:gradka@learninggate.org).

## **TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS**

Twice a year, teacher qualifications are reviewed. A letter is sent to families of teachers who are teaching out-of-field. The letters are also posted on the school's website. All LG teachers hold a Florida Teaching Certification.

## **GOVERNING BOARD CONTACT & BOARD MEETING SCHEDULE**

Information about the Learning Gate Board of Directors can be found in the Parent Student Handbook as well as on the school's website at [www.learninggate.org](http://www.learninggate.org) .

The Board of Directors meet on a monthly basis. Meeting information can always be found on the school's website as well as on the marquee found in the pick-up line at the Hanna Campus and on the outdoor bulletin board at the Hanna Campus and the office door on the Lutz Lake Fern Campus. Committee meetings are posted on the website. Parents are welcome and encouraged to attend.

## **GRIEVANCES**

A grievance is another name for a complaint. A student/parent grievance exists when a student/parent believes that he or she has been treated unfairly or has not been afforded due process. Anyone wishing to register a school level grievance must do so within ten (10) days from the time they became aware of the alleged infraction. Anyone involved in a grievance has the right to present evidence or witnesses concerning the charges. All conversations and situations concerning grievances will be confidential and all parties should refrain from discussing grievances and related meetings with anyone not involved in the proceedings.

The steps to follow to resolve a school level grievance for a parent or student are:

1. Ask to schedule a conference with the person(s) who allegedly treated you unfairly for the purpose of discussing your complaint. All involved parties should make every effort to solve any disputes calmly and expediently.
2. If the person charged with the alleged infraction does not resolve your complaint, arrange a conference with the school principal. A minimum of two conferences between the teacher and all parties must be conducted prior to the grievance being escalated to the school principal.
3. The school principal will make recommendations regarding resolution of the grievance and all parties are encouraged to accept these recommendations and do their part to affect a resolution.
4. Students should involve their parents or guardians in resolving school level grievances. Most grievances can and should be resolved at the school level through informal conferences with teachers and other school personnel. If all efforts to resolve the grievance with school level administrators fail, the student or parents may submit a written request for further consideration with the Principal. The Principal will provide a written explanation either accepting or rejecting the grievance and detail the reasons for his/her action and, if applicable, any further recommendations regarding resolution. The school principal may choose to involve the school's Board of Directors in certain situations.

A student/parent wishing to appeal the principal's written decision must file a grievance with the Learning Gate Community School's Board of Directors at [board@learninggate.org](mailto:board@learninggate.org).

## **DUE PROCESS**

Due process is simply another name for fairness of procedure. A basic ingredient to due process of law is that one who is not satisfied with a decision may appeal it to a higher authority. Due process is not a mechanical instrument; it is a process. Due process is a right guaranteed to all by the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments of the Constitution. Individuals must give or have proper notice; an opportunity to be heard and meetings to affect resolution must be conducted fairly.

The basic ingredient or steps to be followed in guaranteeing due process procedures are:

1. Individuals must have proper notice of the charge or complaint being made against them and that their actions were in violation of established rules or regulations.
2. Individuals must have the opportunity to know the specific charges or complaints.
3. Meetings and conferences conducted regarding a grievance must allow individuals to present evidence and/or witnesses on their own behalf.
4. Individuals must be advised that they have the right to appeal to the next higher authority if not satisfied with the action or decision rendered.

## **VOLUNTEER AND PARENT EDUCATION HOURS**

Each family is required to provide 30 hours of volunteer time to the school. Volunteer hours are defined as time a parent/guardian gives to the school by volunteering in a classroom, lunchroom, serving on committees or helping with events. Parents and guardians recognize that Learning Gate Community School is a school of choice and by choosing to enroll their child as a student, agree to support, uphold and conform to the policies, 30 Volunteer Hours and 10 Parent Education hours each year. Parents who do not complete these hours put their child's position at Learning Gate in jeopardy. Contact the school offices for volunteer opportunities. Hours must be completed by Friday, May 15, 2026.

Each family is required to attend 10 hours of parent education classes. Parent Education classes are defined as classes, meetings or educational workshops offered by LG or classes offered off campus with administrative approval. Classes are posted and updated on the school's website at [www.learninggate.org](http://www.learninggate.org).

Children cannot attend education classes unless otherwise stated on the website. Credit for hours may only be granted to parents or guardians of the students.

All education and volunteer hours must be documented on the proper online form, which is found on the school's website. All parts of the form must be completed. Contact Cathy Allard ([callard@learninggate.org](mailto:callard@learninggate.org)) for the tracking of both volunteer and parent education hours or if you have any questions regarding a parent education class.

## **VISITORS TO CAMPUS**

When visitors arrive on the school campus, Learning Gate Community School will be using Raptor to sign in all visitors to the school. All visitors MUST sign in at the office with a Driver's License or state-issued ID card in order to obtain a visitors' badge. This badge does not give a visitor permission to roam the school; it gives access only to the area/person they are signed in for.

Parents, guardians and volunteers that fail to complete or clear the screening process may not volunteer on campus or chaperone an event or field trip.

This policy will also apply to anyone who enters the school in order to deliver goods.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

Parents are responsible for transporting students to and from school each day. Field trips transportation is provided by Busing Companies identified by the Hillsborough County Public School district as an Approved Vendor.

## **SIGNING IN LATE AND OUT EARLY PROCEDURES**

If a student comes to school past their grade level start time, (found on page 9) they will need to sign in as tardy. The student's parent/guardian MUST be present with them to sign in, regardless of grade level.

Parents should make every attempt to schedule doctor and dental appointments during non-school hours or on days when school is not in session. Students miss valuable instructional time that cannot always be replicated. Students leaving due to arranged appointments should send a message to their homeroom teacher via Canvas. The teacher will have the student in the front office for the stated departure time.

***Learning Gate tracks the number of sign-ins and sign-outs. Students with excessive loss of instructional time may be retained.***

On the Hanna Campus, students cannot be signed out after 1:45PM on the Hanna Campus and 2:30 on the LLF Campus. Parents/guardians must park in the North Lot when picking up a student early. There will be no parking in either of the lanes at the Hanna Campus. On the LLF Campus, parents must go to the Front Office to sign a student out.

**Middle school students must be signed out in between classes.** Please make arrangements to pick them up before or after a class period. Please do not text or call your student's cell phone or smart watch during the school day.

Parents in a carpool may sign out their child early. However, the entire carpool should not be taken out early without the expressed written consent of each student's parent/guardian. Students are required to return to school after every field trip, without exceptions. If a parent

wants to sign out a child after a field trip, the child must first return to the classroom with the teacher. Parents may then return to the front office to follow the regular sign out procedures.

## **ATTENDANCE**

Florida School Law, Chapter 232 states that children up to age 16 are required to attend school regularly during the entire school term. A parent who fails to have children attend school regularly may be guilty of a misdemeanor, punishable by law.

Before coming to school each day, parents/guardians must do a health check of the student. If the student has any signs or symptoms of COVID or other communicable illness, the student must stay home. Please do not send students to school after taking symptom reducing medications.

## **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

School attendance is critical for academic and personal success. Student attendance is a partnership between the school and the home; communication is essential. Students are expected to arrive at school on time and attend class for the full instructional day.

The only absences that may be excused include the following:

- Student illness
- Student medical or dental appointments
- Student court appearance
- Death of an immediate member of the family
- Observance of a religious holiday
- Extenuating circumstance determined by the school administration

Parents/guardians must inform the school each time their child(ren) is absent from school. This can be done by calling 813-592-8100 or [attend@learninggate.org](mailto:attend@learninggate.org). Parents/guardians must communicate the absence within 2 days for it to be excused.

Students will be permitted to make up work for excused absences. Parents/guardians/students are responsible for requesting make-up work/information from the teacher. Make up work must be completed and turned in by the date requested by the teacher for it to be graded. Makeup work will not be given before a planned absence.

The following applies to students who have an absence:

- An automated phone call will be placed each time your child is absent
- 5 absences – Letter sent to the parent/guardian with notification of the number of absences
- 10 absences – Letter sent to the parent/guardian with notification of the number of absences and a phone call from the School Counselor to collaborate on strategies to improve attendance.
- 15 absences – Meeting with the Attendance Committee is required. A Home/School Contract will be created. A doctor's note may be required for every absence for the

remainder of the year for it to be documented as excused. The student may be ineligible for after school sports or other school sponsored events.

- 20 absences – Referral to the Promotion/Retention Committee made. Students will not be able to participate in afterschool sports/events. A certified letter will be sent home informing of retention if the student reaches 25 missing days.
- 25 absences – Student will not be promoted
- 30 absences – Case will be sent to DCF

Students have the right to:

- Receive information concerning attendance policies at the school
- Make up any work missed because of excused absences and/or an excused tardy within the appropriate amount of time
- Students have two days to make up work during an absence. If the absence is more than one day, they will receive the initial 2-day period and then one extra day for each day missed. For example: 3 days missed = 4 days to submit all assignments.

Students have the responsibility to:

- Attend classes daily and on time
- Check Canvas for missing work and announcements.
- Request make-up work from their teachers within the appropriate amount of time.
- Submit makeup work during the appropriate time
- Complete any work that was requested in advance upon return to school.

Students who are not in attendance at school may not participate in the sports program, dances or other after school programs that day. Students must be present for at least  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the school day or by 11:30 am to participate.

To REPORT an absence parents/guardians must report an absence to LGCS by 9 AM. This can be done by phone, email or in person on the day of the absence.

Phone# - (813) 592-8100 Email – [attend@learninggate.org](mailto:attend@learninggate.org)

If a student does not attend school on the first day, per HCPS guidelines the student will be withdrawn from enrollment. If an opening is available when the student returns, they may be re-enrolled. If no opening is available, the student will be temporarily placed on the waitlist until a spot becomes available.

## **TARDY**

Students are expected to be on time for class and will be considered tardy if not present when daily attendance is taken. Any student arriving at school past their grade level start time (found on page 9), will need to sign in as tardy. The student's parent/guardian MUST be present with them to sign in, regardless of the grade level.

Students must be in their homeroom classroom at the time of the tardy bell to be marked present. Please plan to drop your student off at least 3 minutes before this time to ensure that they have time to make it to class and can be marked present.

Excused tardies include doctor and dentist appointments, illness, accident, family death or religious holiday, but do not include situations like waking up late or running behind schedule. If the parent does not accompany the students and/or the reason is invalid the tardy will be considered unexcused. Administration may request a doctor's note to excuse a tardy. This applies to all students:

The following applies to students who have an tardy:

- 5 Days Tardy – Letter sent by School Counselor
- 10 Days Tardy – Phone call from the School Counselor to discuss possible solutions
- 15 Days Tardy – Meeting with the Attendance Committee. Home/School Contract created and signed
- 20 Days Tardy – Referral to the Promotion Retention Committee. May be ineligible for after school sports/events. Certified letter with potential retention/dismissal sent home
- 25 Days Tardy – Determination made by the Promotion Retention Committee as to retention or dismissal from LG. Case brought to the Board of Directors with a recommendation from the Committee.
- 30 Days Tardy – Case brought to BOD for dismissal from LG

## **Early Dismissal Policy**

### **Definition:**

A student is considered to have an early dismissal if they are signed out prior to the school's official dismissal time.

### **Guidelines:**

- All early dismissals must go through the front office.  
Students must be signed out by a parent/guardian or a person listed on their emergency contact form.
- Early dismissals will be documented in the student's attendance record.

### **Excused Early Dismissals Include:**

- Medical appointments
- Family emergencies

- Religious observances

**Unexcused Early Dismissals Include:**

- Avoiding traffic
- Convenience of schedule
- Routine personal errands

**Excessive Early Dismissals:**

Patterns of frequent early sign-outs will be monitored. After **5 early dismissals in a quarter**, families will be contacted to review attendance expectations. Continued excessive early dismissals may lead to:

- Conference with administration
- Development of an attendance improvement plan
- Referral to the Promotion/Retention Committee
- Impact on eligibility for extracurricular activities
- Potential recommendation for retention or dismissal

Attendance is a shared responsibility. Families are encouraged to partner with the school to ensure students benefit from every moment of their instructional day. The school reserves the right to make determinations based on individual circumstances and in the best interest of student achievement.

**LEARNING GATE BEFORE SCHOOL CARE & AFTER SCHOOL CARE PROGRAM**

Learning Gate offers free before school care to all students at both campuses beginning at 7:00 am. Parents may not leave children unattended before 7:00 am. Students must wait in the car until the gate at Hanna is opened or the door at LLF is opened.

Parents will not be allowed to walk children to Heron Hall at the Hanna Campus or The Swamp at LLF Campus or any classroom. We ask that parents remain in the car, unless signing a student in tardy.

Students who get breakfast will stop into Heron Hall (Hanna) or The Swamp (LLF) between 7:00 am – 7:30 am.

The Learning Gate aftercare program is open until 6:00 p.m. To use the aftercare program, you must be registered, and your account must be paid in full before the start of the school year. Aftercare services will be held on both campuses.

After school care is available to all students at both campuses from dismissal until 6:00 pm. The cost is \$65.00 per week. An additional \$1.00 per minute will be charged for parents arriving after 6:00 pm. If a student is not picked up on time and must go to aftercare there is a \$16.00 per day fee. If you have 3 or more students using the aftercare service, there is a fee reduction for the third child. Please contact the program director. Families must complete the aftercare application for their students to attend. For more information contact Leah Meltzer at [aftercare@learninggate.org](mailto:aftercare@learninggate.org).

Billing for aftercare is through [Supervisease](#). All payments must be made online. Families with an overdue balance will be removed from the aftercare roster until a payment is made.

Learning Gate Community School discourages the release of Lutz Lake Fern students to the unsupervised Library area. Major incidents that occur off campus resulting in on campus issues are subject to disciplinary action.

## **HOLIDAYS**

Significant holidays may be acknowledged in the classroom as daily and weekly course material incorporates the theme of the holiday. Teachers may have a celebration for the winter holiday and the end of the year during the last hour of the day. Other holidays may have small activities. Food items that are brought in for an activity/celebration should be healthy in nature, store bought, individually wrapped and approved by the teacher before bringing them to the school.

## **STUDENT BIRTHDAYS**

The school recognizes student birthdays at the monthly meetings.

Teachers may also recognize individual student birthdays on class calendars, at the morning flag salute and during other appropriate school activities; however, no formal parties or celebrations will be conducted for birthdays. PLEASE DO NOT send balloons, cupcakes, donuts, cake or other food with your child to acknowledge their birthday! The only time invitations may be given out at school for birthday parties is if ALL students in the class will receive an invitation.

Learning Gate has a Birthday Board that will be updated each month at each campus. Families can contribute \$25.00 to have their student's name on the Birthday Board for the month.

## **FIELD TRIPS**

LG believes participation in class field trips is important. All field trips are educational and offer our students the opportunity to experience what they have learned in the classroom and apply that knowledge in an alternative-learning environment. Any child who does not participate in a field trip should attend school on the day of the trip (unless not attending due to illness).

Arrangements will be made for the student and assignments will be provided for completion. Assignments will be reflective of the trip and provide information on the concepts and standards being missed. For Middle School End-of-Year Trips (Ex. Seabase, Pathfinder, and EPCOT) students are not eligible to participate if the family has any overdue balances owed to the school for After School Care or the Lunch Program. In the event that a student has been disciplined for serious behavioral issues or broken a behavior contract, they will not be eligible for overnight field trips or any other field trip identified by the Administration (See Discipline on page 26).

LG will be using buses for field trips for students and staff. Chaperones will be responsible for their own transportation. Students will not be transported by parents.

Chaperones must complete and pass the online volunteer screening (SEE VISITORS TO CAMPUS SECTION) Parents will be unable to attend field trips if screenings are not on record with the front office. [Raptor Visitor Registration Link](#)

Parents must read and sign the Chaperone Guidelines that outline the chaperone responsibilities. If a parent does not follow the rules and procedures for a field trip as stated on the Chaperone Guidelines and Responsibilities Agreement, they will be unable to chaperone future trips. These rules include purchasing items or food for students, taking a student or students to an area outside of the field trip specifications, inappropriate behavior, or not following the instructions of the teacher(s).

Only students in the assigned classes with proper permission and payment if applicable may attend a field trip. Siblings, regardless of age or student status, are NOT allowed to attend field trips.

Permission slips and payments are due by the date indicated in the [Journease](#). If a completed permission slip or payment is NOT received by the indicated date on Journease, the student will NOT be eligible to attend the field trip. Parents will receive a receipt of payment upon successful completion of payment in Journease. The field trip description will specify the dress code for that trip.

## **DRESS CODE**

School uniforms are mandatory at Learning Gate Community School. Risse Brothers is the only provider of new school uniforms. Heron Outfitters is available for the purchase of used uniforms and is located in Heron Hall on the Hanna Campus. Dates and times of operation can be found at [www.heronoutfitters.org](http://www.heronoutfitters.org).

Students out of compliance with the mandatory dress code will face disciplinary actions that will include: notes home, parent bringing a change of clothes, parent phone calls, and lunch detention. Non-compliance may result in suspension or withdrawal of the student from Learning Gate Community School.

Middle School Students that are out of dress code will remain in the office until appropriate dress can be provided. If parents are unable to bring appropriate dress, the student will remain in the office with work until dismissal.

- Elementary Students wear Standard Uniforms two (2) days and PE Uniform three (3) Days. In K-5, the students may wear the PE uniform for the two (2) PE and Garden days.
- Middle School Students will wear the Standard Uniform two (2) days, PE Uniforms (2) Days and the House Shirt and standard uniform bottoms on Fridays

All uniforms must be clean, free of holes and worn appropriately. The uniform policy is in place to promote a safe environment for students and applies to all students in K-8<sup>th</sup> grade.

#### *Uniform Shirts*

Uniform shirts must be worn at all times on campus:

- K – 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Green or Maroon shirts with the school logo
- 4<sup>th</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Green, Maroon or White with the school logo
- 6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Green, Maroon, White, Black shirt with school logo

Any shirt worn under a uniform shirt must be black, blue, green, or white, with no designs. Elementary students may not wear non-official LG outerwear in the classroom. Students not following this guideline will receive disciplinary action.

K-5 students may wear a PE shirt along with school bottoms and the required footwear on their specified garden day.

Non-LG outerwear is not permitted on the Lutz Lake Fern campus. Non-LG outerwear will be confiscated and returned to the parent at dismissal. Continuous violation of this policy will result in disciplinary action. Students wearing an LG hoodie are not permitted to have the hood covering their head while inside a school building.

#### *Uniform Bottoms*

All school bottoms must be purchased from either Risse Brothers or Heron Outfitters. Bottoms brought from any other stores do not fulfill the Dress Code Policy.

Shorts, skirts, and dresses MUST be longer than fingertip length or parents will be called to bring a change of clothes that meet the dress code policy. If the length of the clothing becomes a persistent problem, disciplinary action may be taken.

Learning Gate sweatpants are allowable on cold weather days only for PE/Garden days. Pants with belt loops must be worn with a brown or black belt. Leggings worn under shorts or skirts must be a solid black, white or gray with no colors or designs.

#### *Shoes*

Shoes must be appropriate for the outdoors environment. Sneakers or sturdy closed toe/heel shoes are allowable. Boots, sandals, crocs, beach shoes and flip-flops are NOT allowed...even on a free dress day.

#### *PE Uniforms*

Must be purchased at Risse Brothers or Heron Outfitters and must be worn to school on PE Days. PE uniforms are only permitted to be worn on PE days identified by the grade level PE coach.

6-8 grade students are permitted to wear their house shirts on regular PE days.

#### *Other*

Students may not wear hats indoors. Students may not have facial piercings or any object that covers portions of the face other than prescription glasses with the exception of religious headdresses. Students may not wear accessories that may be dangerous or disruptive to student learning and include collars with spikes and/or chains on them. Umbrellas and rolling backpacks are not permitted. Ponchos are a necessity.

#### *Free Dress/non-Uniform Day*

Free dress days are a privilege earned by students. Failure to follow the free dress requirements may result in the student's loss of privilege in future free dress days. If a student forgets free dress, they will not be given the opportunity to call parents for a change of clothes. No clothing may have rips, holes, inappropriate pictures, innuendos, words, logos, and advertisements, anything discriminatory, violent and may not be suggestive of drugs, alcohol. Anything questionable will be reviewed by the Administration.

#### *Shirts*

Must have sleeves that fully cover the shoulders. Shirts must fully cover the chest and abdomen, may not be seen through or tied or cinched at the waist.

#### *Bottoms*

Must be longer than fingertip length, may not have writing across the backside of the pants/shorts/skirt, may not be worn below the hips.

Middle school students may wear their house shirts with standard uniform bottoms and school appropriate shoes on Fridays.

### *Field Trips*

The Journease App descriptions will specify the dress code for that particular trip.

### *Hair and Grooming*

Hair must be neatly groomed. Hair must not fall over the eyes. No shaved numbers, phrases or other designs shaved into hair are permitted.

### **Cell Phones/Smart Watches**

Cell phones and smart watches are so commonplace that many students perceive them as part of their uniform. Students may have their cell phone and smart watches within their bookbag, but students **are not permitted to use or handle them during the school day**. Students in any grade that choose to use their device or make it visible while on campus will have their device confiscated. Parents/guardians will be required to pick up the device from an administrator. Students are not permitted to wear headphones or earbuds while on campus unless provided permission by a staff member.

### *Middle School Dances*

Middle School Dances are semi-formal events, unless otherwise announced. To ensure that students are dressed appropriately for a school event, the following semi-formal dress code must be followed:

- Pants must fit comfortably around the waist. Nice pants/slacks should be worn. No jeans or pants with any tears and rips in them should be worn. No shorts.
- Ties and jackets aren't mandatory for semi-formal dances
- Slits in clothing should not exceed four inches above the knee.
- Clothing where legs are bare must be at least fingertip length
- Ensure all two piece outfits avoid excessive exposure of the back and stomach even when dancing
- Ensure undergarments are not visible
- Clothing that exposes bare shoulders is permitted, attendees need to avoid styles that excessively expose the back or stomach area
- Nice tennis shoes, boots, and dress shoes are permitted. Please choose shoes that prioritize your safety and comfort, aiming for a business-casual look. Shoes must be worn for the entire duration of the dance.
- No inappropriate wording/graphics may be on clothing (ie: drug, violence, alcohol related materials)

### **STATEMENT OF NON-DISCRIMINATION**

Pursuant to Title VI, Title IX, Section 504/TITLE II and other civil rights regulations, Learning Gate Community School does not discriminate nor tolerate harassment on the basis of race, color, ethnicity, national origin, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, disability, marital status, genetic information or pregnancy in its educational programs, services or activities, or in its hiring or employment practices; and it will take immediate action to eliminate such harassment, prevent its recurrence, and address its effects. Learning Gate Community

School also provides equal access to its facilities to the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and other patriotic youth groups, as required by the Boy Scouts of America Equal Access Act.

## **STUDENT PLACEMENT**

A students' placement for the following year is a process that involves many of the school personnel. The school does not take parent requests. Student placement will remain consistent throughout the year. Students will not be moved to a new classroom during the school year, with the exception of a diagnosed medical reason or as the result of documented bullying or sexual harassment. Documentation of bullying or sexual harassment includes the completion of investigations and a finding of substantiated bullying or sexual harassment, followed by formal referrals and the implementation of an Action Plan.

## **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

Cheating is defined as fraud, deceit, or dishonesty in an academic assignment. It includes using or attempting to use materials or assisting others in using materials that are prohibited or inappropriate in the context of the academic assignment in question. For example:

- Copying or attempting to copy from others during an exam or on an assignment
- Communicating answers with another person during an exam
- Preprogramming a calculator to contain answers or other unauthorized information for exams
- Using unauthorized materials, prepared answers, written notes, or concealed information during an exam
- Allowing others to do an assignment or portion of an assignment, including the use of a commercial term paper service
- Submitting the same assignment for more than one course without the prior approval of all the instructors involved.
- Collaborating on an exam or assignment with any other person without prior approval from the course instructor
- Taking an exam for another person or having someone take an exam for you.
- Providing unauthorized assistance to others by either providing verbal answers or completed written work
- Using artificial intelligence or generative text platforms to produce work and claim it as one's own work

### *Consequences for Cheating:*

Zero tolerance for all parties involved. A student may be required to complete an alternative test/assignment with administration.

## **ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTION INFORMATION**

Students and parents are required to view their teacher's Canvas site for classroom information daily. Canvas will be the mode of communication between families and teachers. Elementary Curriculum can be found on the Learning Gate website [www.learninggate.org](http://www.learninggate.org). Grade level and subject area standards can be found at [CPALMS.org](http://CPALMS.org).

Elementary students at Learning Gate will be assessed quarterly and parents/guardians will receive an electronic report card. Progress reports also be available electronically

**Extra credit and test/quiz retakes are not given to improve grades.**

Elementary homework will consist of reading nightly and independent studying for assessments. If a student requires any additional support, assignments may be assigned by the teacher in the core subject areas.

### **MIDDLE SCHOOL CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTION INFORMATION**

Students and parents are required to view their teachers' syllabi on Canvas. The syllabus will outline course expectations and grading, homework and late work policies.

Learning Gate's curriculum can be found on the school's website [www.learninggate.org](http://www.learninggate.org)

Email is the primary means of communication for parents with Middle School teachers. Emails can be found on the website and in each syllabus

**Extra credit and test/quiz retakes are not given to improve grades.**

#### Middle School Course Requirements

- In all middle school courses, the weighted average of the two nine-week grades and the district scaled semester exam must equal a passing grade for the student to gain credit for the semester.
- To be promoted to 7<sup>th</sup> grade, 6<sup>th</sup> grade students must earn credit for both semesters of Social Studies, Math, LA, and Science by the final day in July of the school year.
- To be promoted to 8<sup>th</sup> grade, 7<sup>th</sup> grade students must earn credit for both semesters of Civics, Math, LA, and Science by the final day of July of the school year
- To be promoted to 9th grade, 8th grade students must:
  - Successfully complete three middle school or higher-level courses (both semesters) in language arts, mathematics, science and social studies
- Failure to earn semester credit in a core subject (Social Studies, LA, Math, Science) requires a student to retake that segment through Florida Virtual School to recover the credit.
- Parents are expected to sign their student up for credit recovery immediately after report cards are posted.
- A student must earn at least a "D" average on their recovery course to earn credit.
- Failure to complete any or all credit recovery courses by the last day of school will result in a report card reading "retained." Parents must contact Learning Gate upon completion of all FLVS recovery courses for the report card to be updated to "promoted."
- Learning Gate cannot approve any course through Florida Virtual School that we provide as part of our curriculum unless it is needed for credit recovery.

- There will be no exam exemptions in Middle School.

Placement in 6th grade Advanced Math, 7th grade Advanced Math, and 8th grade Algebra 1 Honors and IPS is based on the cumulative score of a student's McGraw Hill placement test. A parent may request an Algebra Screener if the student is not eligible for the high school level courses based on their FAST scores alone.

Learning Gate follows the Hillsborough County Progression Plan, which can be accessed at [https://www.hillsboroughschools.org/cms/lib/FL50000635/Centricity/Domain/3133/Middle\\_School\\_Grade\\_Calculation\\_Chart.pdf](https://www.hillsboroughschools.org/cms/lib/FL50000635/Centricity/Domain/3133/Middle_School_Grade_Calculation_Chart.pdf) and is seen below:

Middle School Semester Course Grades				High School Credit Semester Course Grades			
Quarter Grade Combinations	Middle School Courses	Civics	Final Semester Grade	Quarter Grade Combinations	High School Credit	High School Credit	Final Semester Grade
	District Exam	EOC Exam			District Exam	EOC Exam	
	25%	30%			25%	30%	
A,A	A,B,C	A,B	A	A,A	A,B,C	A,B	A
A,A	D*,F	C,D,F	B	A,A	D,F	C,D,F	B
A,B	A	A	A	A,B	A	A	A
A,B	B,C,D,F	B,C,D	B	A,B	B,C,D,F	B,C,D	B
A,B		F	C	A,B		F	C
A,C	A,B,C,D	A,B,C	B	A,C	A,B,C,D	A,B,C	B
A,C	F*	D,F	C	A,C	F	D,F	C
A,D	A,B	A,B	B	A,D	A,B	A,B	B
A,D	C,D,F	C,D,F	C	A,D	C,D,F	C,D,F	C
A,F	A*	A	B	A,F	A	A	B
A,F	B,C,D,F	B,C,D	C	A,F	B,C,D	B,C,D	C
A,F		F	D	A,F	F	F	F
B,B	A,B,C,D	A,B,C	B	B,B	A,B,C,D	A,B,C	B
B,B	F*	D,F	C	B,B	F	D,F	C
B,C	A,B	A,B	B	B,C	A,B	A,B	B
B,C	C,D,F	C,D,F	C	B,C	C,D,F	C,D,F	C
B,D	A*	A	B	B,D	A	A	B
B,D	B,C,D,F	B,C,D	C	B,D	B,C,D,F	B,C,D	C
B,D		F	D	B,D		F	D
B,F	A,B,C	A,B,C	C	B,F	A,B,C	A,B,C	C
B,F	D,F	D,F	D	B,F	D	D	D
C,C	A*	A	B	B,F	F	F	F
C,C	B,C,D,F	B,C,D	C	C,C	A	A	B
C,C		F	D	C,C	B,C,D,F	B,C,D	C
C,D	A,B,C	A,B,C	C	C,C		F	D
C,D	D,F	D,F	D	C,D	A,B,C	A,B,C	C
C,F	A*,B*	A,B	C	C,D	D,F	D,F	D
C,F	C,D,F	C,D,F	D	C,F	A,B	A,B	C
D,D	A*,B*	A,B	C	C,F	C,D	C,D	D
D,D	C,D,F	C,D,F	D	C,F	F	F	F
D,F		A	C	D,D	A,B	A,B	C
D,F	A,B,C,D	B,C,D	D	D,D	C,D,F	C,D,F	D
D,F	F	F	F	D,F		A	C
F,F	A,B	A,B	D	D,F	A,B,C,D	B,C,D	D
F,F	C,D,F	C,D,F	F	D,F	F	F	F
				F,F	A,B,C,D,F	A,B,C,D,F	F

A student who does not take a required exam will receive an "I" grade for a district exam or a "NG" for an EOC exam. Refer to *Middle School, Make-up Exams* section for additional information.

\* Indicates changes effective for the 2019-2020

## **DISCIPLINE**

Learning Gate Community School adheres to the Hillsborough County Public School's Code of Conduct that students must follow and LGCS enforces uniformly regarding discipline. LGCS does not tolerate behavior that disrupts or interferes with the education of other students or the school learning environment. Students are responsible for understanding and adhering to this Code of Conduct. Parents are responsible for helping students understand and abide by these policies, for recognizing that unacceptable behavior is subject to disciplinary action, and for supporting the enforcement of these policies. The Student Code of Conduct can be found at [hillsboroughschools.org/conduct](http://hillsboroughschools.org/conduct)

The HCPS Student Code of Conduct for discipline contains information on students' and parent/guardians' rights and responsibilities, the Multi-Tiered System of Supports for prevention and intervention and disciplinary actions. The discipline matrix found in the handbook are the recommended options that are proportionate to behavioral offenses and allow for increasing alignment with the number of times incidents occur or are repeated.

Please note\* Learning Gate follows its own policies regarding attendance, sign-in and sign-out procedures, cell phones, dress code, and several other topics found in the HCPS Code of Conduct. Specific information presented in this handbook overrides the HCPS Code of Conduct

Disciplinary actions shall follow the escalating consequence plan below:

1. Verbal Warning
2. Detention (lunch/after-school)
3. Parent/Teacher Meeting and Behavior Contract
4. In-School Suspension (ISS)
5. Out-of-School Suspension (OSS)
6. Recommendation for Change of Environment

Note: The administration reserves the right to escalate consequences at any point based on the severity and persistence of the behavior.

Consequences may also include, but are not limited to revoking field trip privileges, removal/inability to participate in after school sports, activities and dances, removal of student from NJHS and Student Government, use of restorative practices, referral to law enforcement agency as appropriate, referral to LGCS Administration with recommendation for dismissal as appropriate.

Students committing serious violations or demonstrating a pattern of offenses may have their field trip privileges revoked (as long as it does not affect their grade) and may be excluded from participation in other non-academic activities such as sports, pep rallies, dances, etc. for a period of 9-weeks or for the remainder of the school year as determined by Administration. Administration will communicate revoked privileges or suspensions to parents.

A student displaying a pattern of continuous disruptive behavior may be referred for a change of environment due to a history of behavior problems. Students earning eight days of in-school suspension and failure to respond to a behavior plan to correct disruptions meet the guidelines for continual disruptive behavior.

*Teacher's authority to remove a student from class.*

The Florida Legislature and the Department of Education give school and classroom safety the highest priority and empower teachers with the authority and responsibility to ensure their individual classroom is safe. The Hillsborough County School District, in conjunction with State Law, gives teachers the authority to remove students from their classrooms who repeatedly interfere with or seriously disrupt their ability to teach or the student's ability to learn.

**SECURITY THREATS/TERRORISM/POSSESSION OF WEAPONS**

Threats of any type on the safety of student(s), teachers, employees, agents, of the school facility will be handled by the appropriate party including, but not limited to, the Principal or Grade Level Administrators and law enforcement agency if deemed necessary by Administration. Consequences will be in compliance with Florida Department of Education, School District of Hillsborough County, local and federal law enforcement agency policies and procedures on such matters.

The possession of a firearm or weapon as defined by chapter 790 by any student while the student is on school property or in attendance at a school function is grounds for disciplinary action and may also result in criminal prosecution. Simulating a firearm or weapon while playing or wearing clothing or accessories that depict a firearm or weapon or express an opinion regarding a right guaranteed by the Second Amendment to the United States Constitution is not grounds for disciplinary action or referral to the criminal justice or juvenile justice system under this section or s.1006.13.

**SEARCH AND SEIZURE**

The Principal, Assistant Principal, a teacher or any other school staff member may temporarily detain and question a student when circumstances indicate that such student has committed, is committing or is about to commit a violation of Florida law or school rules and regulations. In accordance with Florida Statutes, school authorities may search any area without notice if he or she has a reasonable suspicion that a prohibited or illegally possessed substance or object is contained in the other area.

Students have the responsibility to not carry, possess or conceal any material that is prohibited by law and to accept the consequences for their actions in cases where unlawful materials are found in their possession.

## **DETENTION**

Detention authorized by the assigning teacher or staff member will be held during lunch or after school for students who misbehave or otherwise violate the Code of Conduct. Parents will be given 24-hour prior written notice for any student serving after school detention, detailing the behavior and the day of after school detention assigned.

Middle school detentions will be held after school from 3:30-4:00 at both campuses and detention may include work detail. At 4 pm, students who have not been picked up will be sent to after care. Students may not leave campus in between school and detention. Depending upon the offense, single or multiple detentions may be assigned. If a student is absent on the assigned day, the student will serve the detention the next day they are back at school. If a student skips a scheduled detention, they will serve in school suspension the next day of school and will be referred to administration for further disciplinary action.

During detention, students will be given a reflective assignment or work detail to complete. If the assignment is not completed during the scheduled time an additional day of detention will be given.

## **SUSPENSION**

In-School Suspension (ISS) is the removal of a student from the classroom to a room in the office where they can do their work independently. The student does not participate in any class activities such as lunch, garden, P.E., etc. If a student is absent on the assigned day, the student will serve the suspension the day they come back to school.

Out-of-School Suspension (OSS) is the removal of the student from the school for up to ten (10) days. The student receives a "0" for all work missed.

Students shall be given notice of the conduct required of them while on school grounds and will be instructed regarding prohibited activities.

The school principal or designee will immediately report any suspensions by phone to the student's parents or guardians and followed up by letter through the US Mail. Administration is prohibited from discussing disciplinary action against other students per the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act.

### *Statement Prohibiting Bullying and Harassment*

(HCPS Policy 5517.01) It is the policy of Hillsborough County Public Schools and Learning Gate Community School that all of its students and school employees have an educational setting that is safe, secure, and free from harassment and bullying of any kind. The district/school will not tolerate bullying or harassment of any type. Conduct that constitutes bullying or harassment, as defined herein, is prohibited.

### *Definition of Bullying and Harassment*

Bullying includes cyberbullying and means systematically and chronically inflicting physical hurt or psychological distress on one or more students or employees.

It is further defined as unwanted and repeated written, verbal, or physical behavior, including any threatening, insulting, or dehumanizing gesture, by an adult or 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:

- a. teasing
- b. threat
- c. intimidation
- d. stalking
- e. cyberstalking
- f. physical violence
- g. theft
- h. sexual, religious, or racial harassment
- i. public or private humiliation
- j. destruction of property; and
- k. social-exclusion

Cyberbullying means bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, which includes, but is not limited to, any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data, or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by a wire, radio, electromagnetic system, photoelectric system, or photo optical system, including, but not limited to, electronic mail, Internet communication, instant messages, 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 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, use of data or computer software, or written, verbal or physical conduct directed against a student or school employee that:

1. Places a student or school employee 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 education performance, opportunities, or benefits.
3. Has the effect of substantially disrupting the orderly operation of a school

*Bullying and Harassment also encompasses:*

1. Retaliation against a student or school employee by another student or school employee for asserting or alleging an act of bullying or harassment. Reporting an act of bullying or harassment that is not made in good faith is considered retaliation.
2. Perpetuation of conduct listed in the definition of bullying or harassment by an individual or group with intent to demean, dehumanize, embarrass, or cause emotional or physical harm to a student or school employee by:
  - a. incitement or coercion.
  - b. accessing or knowingly and willingly causing or providing access to data or computer software through a computer, computer system, or computer network within the scope of the district school system; or
  - c. acting in a manner that has an effect substantially similar to the effect of bullying or harassment.

*Cyberstalking*

Defined in Section 784.048(1)(d), F.S., means to engage in a course of conduct to communicate, or to cause to be communicated, words, images, or language by or through the use of electronic communication, directed at a specific person, causing substantial emotional distress to that person and serving no legitimate purpose.

**EXPECTED BEHAVIOR FROM STUDENTS AND EMPLOYEES OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

The school expects students to conduct themselves in keeping with their levels of development, maturity, and demonstrated capabilities with a proper regard for the rights and welfare of other students and school staff, the educational purpose underlying all school activities, and the care of school facilities and equipment. Such behavior is essential in maintaining an environment that provides each student the opportunity to obtain a high-quality education in a uniform, safe, secure, efficient, and high-quality system of education.

The standards for student behavior shall be set cooperatively through interaction among students, parents/guardians, staff and community members, producing an atmosphere that encourages students to grow in self-discipline. The development of such an atmosphere requires respect for self and others, as well as for district and community property on the part of students, staff and community members. Since students learn by example, school administrators, faculty, staff, and volunteers serve as role models for students and are expected to demonstrate appropriate behavior, treating others with civility and respect, and refusing to tolerate harassment or bullying.

The school upholds that school-related bullying or harassment of any student or school employee is prohibited:

1. During any education program or activity conducted by a school site's education institution. During any school-related or school-sponsored program or activity.
2. Through the use of data or computer software that is accessed through a computer, computer system, or computer network of a school site's education institution, meaning regardless of ownership, any computer, computer system, or computer network that is

physically located on a school property or at a school related or school-sponsored program or activity.

3. Through the use of data or computer software that is accessed at a non-school related location, activity, function, or program or through the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased, or used by the school, if the bullying substantially interferes with or limits the victim's ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or opportunities offered by a school or substantially disrupts the education process or orderly operation of a school.

## **CONSEQUENCES FOR STUDENTS AND EMPLOYEES WHO COMMIT ACTS OF BULLYING AND HARASSMENT**

Concluding whether a particular action or incident constitutes a violation of this policy requires a determination based on all of the facts and surrounding circumstances. The physical location or time of access of a computer related incident cannot be raised as a defense in any disciplinary action. Consequences and appropriate remedial action for students who commits acts of bullying or harassment may range from positive behavioral interventions up to and including suspension or expulsion, as outlined in the Code of Student Conduct. Consequences and appropriate remedial action for a school employee found to have committed an act of bullying or harassment may be disciplined in accordance with school policies, procedures and agreements. Additional, egregious acts of harassment by certified educators may result in sanctions against an educator's state issued certificate, pursuant to Rule 6B-1.006, F.A.C. Consequences and appropriate remedial action for a visitor or volunteer, found to have committed an act of bullying or harassment, shall be determined by the school administration after consideration of the nature and circumstances of the act, including reports to appropriate law enforcement officials

## **CONSEQUENCES FOR STUDENTS AND EMPLOYEES WHO WRONGFULLY AND INTENTIONALLY ACCUSE OTHERS OF BULLYING OR HARASSMENT**

Consequences and appropriate remedial action for a student found to have wrongfully and intentionally accused another as a means of bullying or harassment range from positive behavioral interventions up to and including suspension or expulsion, as outlined in the Code of Student Conduct. Consequences and appropriate remedial action for a school employee found to have wrongfully and intentionally accused another as a means of bullying or harassment may be disciplined in accordance with district policies, procedures, and agreements. Consequences and appropriate remedial action for a visitor or volunteer, found to have wrongfully and intentionally accused another as a means of bullying or harassment, shall be determined by the school's administration after conversation of the nature and circumstances of the act, including reports to appropriate law enforcement officials

## **PROCEDURE FOR RECEIVING REPORTS OF ALLEGED BULLYING OR HARASSMENT INCLUDING PROCEDURES FOR ANONYMOUS REPORTING**

At the school, the principal, or the principal's designee is responsible for receiving complaints alleging violations to this policy. All school employees are required to report alleged violations of this policy to the principal or the principal's designee. All other members of the school

community, including students, parents/legal guardians, volunteers, and visitors are encouraged to report any act that may be a violation of this policy anonymously or in-person to the principal or the principal's designee.

The principal of the school shall establish and prominently publicize to students, staff, volunteers, and parent/legal guardians, how a report of bullying or harassment may be filed either in person or anonymously and how this report will be acted upon. The victim of bullying or harassment, anyone who witnessed the bullying or harassment, and anyone who has credible information that an act of bullying or harassment has taken place may file a report of bullying or harassment. A school employee, school volunteer, student, parent/legal guardian, or other person who promptly reports in good faith an act of bullying or harassment to the appropriate school official and who makes this report in compliance with the procedures set forth in the school's policy is immune from a cause of action for damages arising out of the reporting itself or any failure to remedy the reported incident. Submissions of a good faith complaint or report of bullying or harassment will not affect the complainant or reporter's future employment, grades, learning or working environment, or work assignments.

Any written or oral reporting of an act of bullying or harassment shall be considered an official means of reporting such act(s). Reports may be made anonymously, but formal disciplinary action may not be based solely on the basis of anonymous reports.

## **PROCEDURE FOR PROMPT INVESTIGATION OF REPORTS OF BULLYING OR HARASSMENT AND THE PERSONS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE INVESTIGATION**

### **Procedure:**

1. The principal or principal's designee selects a designee(s), employed by the school, trained in investigative procedures to initiate the investigation. The designee(s) may not be the accused perpetrator (harasser or bully) or victim.
2. Documented interviews of the victim, alleged perpetrator, and witnesses are conducted privately, separately, and are confidential. Each individual (victim, alleged perpetrator, and witnesses) will be interviewed separately and at no time will the alleged perpetrator and victim be interviewed together.
3. The investigator shall collect and evaluate the facts including, but not limited to:
  - a. Description of incident(s) including the nature of the behavior, context in which the alleged incident(s) occurred, etc.
  - b. How often the conduct occurred.
  - c. Whether there were past incidents or past continuing patterns of behavior.
  - d. The relationship between the parties involved
  - e. The characteristics of parties involved (age, grade, etc).
  - f. The identity and number of individuals who participated in the incident.
  - g. Where the alleged incident(s) occurred.
  - h. Whether the conduct adversely affected the student's education or educational environment.

- i. Whether the alleged victim felt or perceived an imbalance of power as a result of the reported incident; and
- j. The date, time, and method in which the parents/legal guardians of all parties involved were contacted

4. Whether a particular action or incident constitutes a violation of this policy requires a determination based on all the facts and surrounding circumstances and includes
  - a. Recommended remedial steps necessary to stop the bullying or harassing behavior; and b. A written final report to the principal
5. The maximum of 10 school days shall be the limit for the initial filing of incidents and completion of the investigative procedural steps. The highest level of confidentiality possible will be upheld regarding the submission of a complaint or a report of bullying or harassment, and the investigative procedures that follow.

**PROCESS TO INVESTIGATE WHETHER A REPORT OF BULLYING OR HARASSMENT IS WITHIN THE SCOPE OF THE DISTRICT AND FOR REFERRAL TO APPROPRIATE JURISDICTION**

The principal or designee will assign a designee(s) that is trained in investigative procedures to initiate an investigation of whether an act of bullying or harassment is within the scope of the school.

The trained designee(s) will provide a report on the results of the investigation with recommendations for the principal to make a determination if an act of bullying or harassment falls within the scope of the school.

1. If it is within the scope of the school, move procedures to procedures for Investigating Bullying and Harassment.
2. If it is outside the scope of the school, and determined a criminal act, refer to appropriate law enforcement
3. If it is outside the scope of the school, and determined not to be a criminal act, inform parents/legal guardians of all students involved.

**PROCEDURE FOR NOTIFYING PARENTS/LEGAL GUARDIANS OF VICTIMS AND PERPETRATORS OF REPORTED BULLYING AND HARASSMENT**

The principal, or designee, shall promptly report via telephone, conference, or in writing, the occurrence of any incident of bullying or harassment as defined by this policy to the parent or legal guardian of all students involved on the same day an investigation of the incident has been initiated. Notification must be consistent with the student privacy rights under the applicable provisions of the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) and state privacy laws.

Upon receiving a report of bullying, harassment, or other qualifying incident under section 1002.40, F.S., the school shall timely notify the parents of the Hope Scholarship program, which allows students who have been bullied, harassed, or subjected to other violent acts to transfer

to another public school or to enroll in an approved private school. Reported act of bullying, harassment, or other violent incidents do not have to be substantiated in order to qualify for the Hope Scholarship. The school shall follow all Hope Scholarship procedures in accordance with section 1002.40, F.S., and Rule 6A-6.0951, F.A.C.

Once the investigation has been completed and it has been determined that criminal charges may be pursued against the perpetrator, all appropriate local law enforcement agencies will be notified by telephone or in writing.

### **PROCEDURE TO REFER VICTIMS AND PERPETRATORS OF BULLYING AND HARASSMENT FOR COUNSELING**

A school referral procedure will establish a protocol for intervening when bullying or harassment is suspected or when a bullying or harassment incident is reported. The procedure shall include:

1. A process by which the teacher or parent/legal guardian may request informal consultation with school staff to determine the severity of concern and appropriate steps to address the concern (the involved students' parents or legal guardians may be included)
2. A referral process to provide professional assistance or services that includes:
  - a. A process by which school personnel or parent/legal guardian may refer a student to the school intervention team for consideration of appropriate services (parent/legal guardian involvement is required).
  - b. If a formal discipline report or formal complaint is made, the principal or designee must refer the student(s) to the school intervention team for determination of counseling support and interventions
3. A school-based component to address intervention and assistance as determined appropriate by the intervention team that includes:
  - a. Counseling and support to address the needs of the victims of bullying or harassment.
  - b. Research-based counseling/interventions to address the behavior of the students who bully and harass others (e.g. empathy training, anger management); and
  - c. Research-based counseling/interventions, which include assistance and support provided to parents or legal guardians, if deemed necessary or appropriate

### **PROCEDURE FOR INCLUDING INCIDENTS OF BULLYING OR HARASSMENT IN REQUIRED SESIR REPORTING UNDER SECTION 1006.09(6),F.S.**

In accordance with Rules 6A-1.0014 and 6A-1.0017, F.A.C., the school must utilize Florida's School Environmental Safety Incident Reporting (SESIR) system to report all incidents of bullying, harassment, as well as any other incident that is bullying related. Reporting must be completed in the format and by the deadlines specified in Rule 6A-1.0014, F.A.C. Required SESIR reporting also includes allegations of bullying and harassment that are not able to be substantiated following an investigation.

## **LIST OF PROGRAMS THAT PROVIDE INSTRUCTION TO STUDENTS, PARENTS, AND SCHOOL STAFF ON IDENTIFYING, PREVENTING, AND RESPONDING TO BULLYING OR HARASSMENT**

The district and the school will sustain a healthy, positive, and safe learning environment for all students. It is important to change the social climate of the school and the social norms with regards to bullying or harassment. This requires the efforts of everyone in the school environment. The school district provides the following list of authorized programs including, but not limited to:

- Olweus Bullying Prevention Program
- PBS/PBIS /Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports
- Monique Burr Foundation for Children, Inc.'s Child Safety Matters
- Second Step
- Aggressors, Victims and Bystanders (AVB)
- Project Wisdom
- i-Safe
- Common Sense K-12 Digital Citizenship
- Creating a Safe and Respectful Environment on our Nations' Classrooms (for teachers)
- Character Counts
- Values Matter

Decisions to include additional instructional programs or activities, not previously listed within this policy, will be made on a case-by-case basis and authorized by the school principal.

## **PROCEDURE FOR REPORTING ACTIONS TAKEN TO PROTECT THE VICTIM**

The principal, or designee, shall by telephone and/or in writing report the occurrence of any incident of bullying or harassment as defined by this policy to the parent or legal guardian of all students involved on the same day an investigation of the incident has been initiated. According to the level of infraction, parents/legal guardians will be notified by telephone or in writing of actions being taken to protect the child; the frequency of notification will depend on the seriousness of the bullying or harassment of the incident. Notification must be consistent with the student privacy rights under the applicable provisions of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA).

## **PROCEDURE FOR PUBLICIZING THE SCHOOL'S POLICY**

At the beginning of each school year, the principal or the principal's designee shall, in writing, inform school staff, parents/legal guardians, or other persons responsible for the welfare of a student of the school's student safety and violence prevention policy.

The school shall provide notice to students and staff of this policy by publishing it in the Code of Student Conduct required by section 1006.07(2), F.S., and all employee handbooks. The principal shall also make all contractors aware of this policy.

The principal shall develop an annual process for discussing the policy on bullying and harassment with students in a student assembly or other reasonable format. Reminders of the policy and bullying or harassment prevention messages such as posters and signs will be displayed around the school.

**WAYS TO REPORT A BULLY:**

- Verbally to an adult at school
- On a Bullying Reporting Form located in the front office
- Via email to school administrator or telephone call to school administrator
- Via Learning Gate Community School website [www.learninggate.org](http://www.learninggate.org)
- Crime Stoppers (1-800-873-8477)

**IF YOU ARE THE VICTIM OF BULLYING:**

- Clearly tell the bully(ies) to stop.
- Don't ignore the incident. Immediately report the incident to someone at school or seek peer mediation at school. Tell your parent(s)/guardian(s). If the bullying continues after you have clearly told the bully(ies) to stop, make a written record of the incident including date, time, witness or witnesses, and parties involved in the incident.
- Report the incident immediately to an adult who has authority over the bully(ies); for example: teacher, school counselor, assistant principal, or principal.
- Avoid being alone with the person(s) who has attempted to bully you in the past.

**TO MINIMIZE THE RISK OF BEING ACCUSED OF BULLYING DO:**

- Keep your hands to yourself.
- Remember that NO one has a right to harm another person in any way.
- Think before you speak.
- Immediately apologize if you accidentally say or do something that has made another person feel oppressed.
- Report all incidents of bullying behavior you have witnessed to appropriate school personnel

**DON'T:**

- Touch anyone without his or her permission and especially in an inappropriate way. o Keep interacting with a person after he or she has perceived your behavior toward him or her as being inappropriate and has clearly told you to stop.
- Make remarks that may cause another person to feel oppressed (stressed, scared, intimidated)

Students committing serious violations or demonstrating a pattern of offenses may have their field trip privileges revoked (as long as it does not affect their grade) and may be excluded from participation in other non-academic activities such as sports, pep rallies, dances, etc. for a period of 9-weeks or for the remainder of the school year as determined by Administration. Administration will communicate revoked privileges or suspensions to parents.

A student displaying a pattern of continuous disruptive behavior may be referred for expulsion due to a history of behavior problems. Students earning eight days of suspension and failure to respond to a behavior plan to correct disruptions meet the guidelines for continual disruptive behavior.

## **PERSONAL ELECTRONIC DEVICES**

The school will provide students with all the necessary devices to complete all work that is expected of them during the school day. Students are not required to bring their personal devices to school and are expected to use school devices while at school. The school is not responsible for personal electronics brought into school.

### *School Devices*

Access to electronic devices and the Internet must support your educational goals; these devices are for school use only. Violation of the ethical and legal use of computers and the Internet will terminate the student's access to all electronic devices for a time period decided upon by teachers and administration.

Prohibited activities include, but not limited to the following:

- Illegal activities such as transmission of any material in violation of US or FL regulations. (illegally downloading music, games, or movies)
- Commercial activities (online shopping via eBay, Amazon, etc.)
- Social networking, including Facebook, Snapchat, X(formerly Twitter), Instant Messaging, TikTok, etc., for personal use
- Playing games, downloading, printing, scanning, or non-teacher approved material.
- Any antisocial behaviors, including sexually explicit material, hate mail, excessive violence, harassment, obscenity, etc.
- Seeking information on, obtaining copies of, or modifying files, data, or passwords belonging to other users, or gaining unauthorized access to systems.
- Vandalism in any form including stickers and sharpie (intentional or not)
- Food, drink, gum, candy, make up, etc. in proximity of computers
- Removing the laptop or charger from the LGCS campus
- Playing games, downloading, printing, scanning, of non-teacher approved material.
- Vandalism in any form including stickers and sharpie (intentional or not)
- Sharing student issued laptops/online accounts

All damages or losses due to vandalism or neglect will be charged to the parents/guardians and payment will be required.

### *WiFi*

Non-wireless access to the district's network, such as through Ethernet cable, by personal devices is prohibited. Use of broadband networks, provided by cellular carriers via device or

hotspot is also prohibited while on LG property. Know that users have a limited right to, nor should they have an expectation of, privacy in the content of their personal files and records of their online activity while on the school's network. Access to the school's networks is a privilege and administrators and faculty may monitor electronic devices at any time to maintain system integrity and ensure that the users are acting responsibly.

## **STUDENT INFORMATION/PRIVACY POLICY**

The policy on Protection of Student Information in Connection with Online Educational Services of Learning Gate Community School (the "School"), is implemented to comply with the requirements of Rule 6A-1.0955(9), Florida Administrative Code, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act ("FERPA"), the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act ("COPPA") and other relevant laws.

This policy is intended to protect the personally identifiable information ("PII") of students when students are required to use online educational services, including to provide protections against potential misuse of PII, data mining, or targeting for marketing and other commercial purposes.

All online educational services that students or their parents are required to use as part of school activities must be reviewed and approved as described herein, regardless of whether the online educational service is free, whether use of the online educational service is unique to specific classes and courses, or whether there is a written agreement governing student use. The Principal or their designee must review each online educational service's terms of service and privacy policy to ensure compliance with state and federal privacy laws, including FERPA, COPPA, 15 U.S.C. §§ 6501-6506, Section 1002.22, Florida Statutes, and all applicable implementing regulations (the "Applicable Laws"). The Principal or designee must determine whether the online educational service provider will collect PII, how it will be used, when and how it will be destroyed, and the terms of re-disclosure, if any.

If a teacher or other employee at the School intends to utilize an online educational service as part of a school activity, they must first submit a request to the Principal or their designee for review and approval. No online educational service may be utilized for any school activity unless it has been reviewed and approved. Following the review described above, the Principal or their designee must approve or deny the use of the online educational service. The Principal or designee reserves the right to deny the use of any online educational service for any reason, including if the online educational service is determined to have policies or practices that could lead to the misuse of student PII or violate the Applicable Laws. The Principal or designee may also approve the use of an online educational service subject to parental consent, as described in more detail below. The Principal or designee will maintain documentation related to the approval or denial of all online educational services. Nothing herein is intended to supersede the

authority of the Governing Board to approve the use of an online educational service to the extent such approval is required by any other policy of the School.

Parents must be notified in writing if student PII will be collected by an online educational service, including what PII will be collected, how it will be used, when and how it will be destroyed, and the terms of re-disclosure, if any. This notification should be sent to parents at the beginning of the school year, or prior to students utilizing the online educational service if it is implemented after the start of the school year. If during the review process or at any time thereafter it is determined that an online educational service will share or sell student PII for commercial purposes, school personnel shall be strictly prohibited from allowing students to utilize the online educational service in any school activity without having first obtained written parental consent.

For any online educational service that a student is required to use, the School will provide notice on its website of the PII information that may be collected, how it will be used, when it will be destroyed, and the terms of re-disclosure, if any. This notice will also include a link to the online educational service's terms of service and privacy policy, if publicly available.

## **STUDENT NAMES**

Per state statute students must be addressed by their legal name unless permission to use an alternate name is on file with the school. Once parents complete the permission form the alternate name defined by the parent can be used at school. Please reach out to the front office to complete the permission documentation.

## **USE OF SCHOOL BATHROOMS POLICY**

This is the Policy on the Use of School Bathrooms of Learning Gate Community School, Inc. (the "School"). This policy is implemented to comply with the requirements of Rule 6A-10.086, Florida Administrative Code, Chapter 1014, Florida Statutes, and other relevant laws. This policy shall at all times be construed in accordance with state and federal law and shall supersede and replace any prior adopted policies related to the subject matter addressed herein.

- Policy: It is the policy of the School that all multi-occupancy bathrooms on the School's campuses shall be separated based on biological sex at birth. Students, school personnel, and visitors are required to utilize multi-occupancy bathrooms that correspond with the individual's biological sex at birth. All single-occupancy bathrooms will be designated as gender-neutral and may be utilized by any person regardless of their biological sex at birth. In enforcing this policy, school personnel may reasonably rely upon representations made or documentation provided by the parent or guardian at initial enrollment, or such other records available to the administration. In the event of any inconsistency in a student's records, the administration reserves the right to request additional documentation from the parent or guardian to verify the student's biological sex at birth. This policy shall also apply to any locker rooms or dressing rooms on the School's campuses.

- Privacy of Information: In carrying out this policy, school personnel are required to maintain the privacy of all educational records as set forth in Section 1012.22, Florida Statutes, and to respect the privacy interests of all students and parents.
- Parental Notification: A copy of this policy shall be made available on the School's website and incorporated into the School's Parent & Student Handbook to fully inform parents and guardians

## FOOD SERVICE INFORMATION

All breakfast and lunch meals must be pre-ordered online at [www.foodease.com](http://www.foodease.com). Cash will not be accepted. All payments must be made online.

Please note that meals cannot be changed or canceled once payment has been made.

### *Hanna Campus*

Breakfast	7:00 am – 7:30 am
Lunch	10:45 am – 1:00 pm

### *Lutz Lake Fern Campus*

Breakfast	7:00 am – 7:30 am
Lunch	10:58 am – 12:41 pm

**Breakfast- Preorder a [www.foodease.com](http://www.foodease.com)**

- Breakfast is served 7:00am-7:30am (both campuses)
- Breakfast costs \$2.00 for paid, \$.30 for reduced and \$0 for free.
- Breakfast includes a whole grain, fruit, juice and milk.
- Breakfast will be eaten in the cafeteria prior to class starting.
- 

**Lunch-Preorder at food [www.foodease.com](http://www.foodease.com), order a minimum of 2 days in advance.**

- Menus are posted monthly and are subject to change.
- Lunch will be served in the cafeteria.
- Lunch costs \$4.05 for paid, \$.40 for reduced and \$0 for free.
- Emergency lunches cost \$4.05 and include a cheese sandwich, fruit, vegetable and milk. If hot food is available, it will be offered on a first come, first serve basis.

## ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY PROCEDURES:

- Students are strongly encouraged to have reusable containers, utensils, water bottles and napkins to minimize waste.
- All food items brought to school will come home in the lunch box.
- Compost stations will be available for students eating school lunches.
- Learning Gate Community School encourages healthy eating habits and
- discourages fast foods. We ask parents not to bring fast food into the cafeteria or classroom if visiting or volunteering. If brought, the parent and child will be asked to eat at an outside picnic table or another area away from others. Soft drinks (Coca Cola, Pepsi etc.), high caffeine drinks, coffee/tea, candy and chewing gum are not allowed to be brought to school

## LUNCH VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED DAILY!

- 10:40am -1:15pm
- Duties include: sanitizing tables, sweeping floors, assisting students as needed.

## FREE AND REDUCED MEAL APPLICATIONS

Applications can be submitted online through the [Foodease App](#). If you prefer to submit a paper application, applications are available online under the LG Families section of the website or you can pick one up in the front office. Return paper applications to the front office or send directly to [gsilverwood@learninggate.org](mailto:gsilverwood@learninggate.org).

- If your child qualified for free or reduced meals last school year, there will be a carryover period for 30 days.
- Learning Gate Community School participates in The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) but is not connected to the county food service. If you are applying, you will need to use the application for our school.

CONTACT: [gsilverwood@learninggate.org](mailto:gsilverwood@learninggate.org) or (813) 948-4190 x308

Students and teachers will be able to eat in the cafeteria or in an outdoor area. For purchased lunches, parents must make payment. Students will be instructed that they are not to share food or help each other open packages.

Learning Gate Community School encourages healthy eating habits and discourages fast foods. We ask parents not to bring fast food into the cafeteria or classroom if visiting or volunteering. If brought, the parent and child will be asked to eat at an outside picnic table or another area away from others. Soft drinks (Coca Cola, Pepsi etc.), high caffeine drinks, coffee/tea, candy and chewing gum are not allowed to be brought to school. These items will be confiscated, and a parent can pick it up in the front office. In classrooms that have a daily snack, the snack must be healthy. Fruits, vegetables and other healthy items are preferred. High sugar drinks including sports drinks are not permitted. Candy, cake, cookies and high sugar snacks are not permitted. Sharing is not permitted.

No kitchen facilities will be available for heating or storing lunches brought to school by students.

### *What is a Waste Free Lunch?*

- A waste-free lunch program is more than packing a lunch. It is an educational tool for us to teach students about where our trash ends up and how we, as a community, can reduce our impact on the earth.
- Due to our school's commitment to the environment, we have implemented a waste free lunch program, this means No litter, No trash, No throw away containers. Compostable food will be disposed of in our compost buckets.
- Uneaten, non-compostable food will be returned in the student's lunchbox. All foods and drinks must be packed in reusable containers within a reusable lunch box/bag. Utensils, napkins, and drink bottles must be reusable and packed daily.

- We are asking for your support as we develop the lunch program to better establish the environmental beliefs of our community.

*Lunch Accounts:*

All students must have a lunch account on the [Foodease App](#). You will need to create an account to monitor any emergency lunch charges. We will not be accepting any payments on campus.

*Lunch Ordering:*

Menus will be posted monthly and must be pre-ordered online on the [Foodease App](#). Orders must be placed by Wednesday at noon for the following week. Once your order is placed and confirmed, there is no way to cancel.

*Emergency Lunch:*

If a student forgets their lunch, one will be provided, and your account will be charged the cost of the meal (\$4.05). Emergency reduced lunch is \$.40. The emergency lunch will consist of a sandwich, vegetable, fruit and milk.

## **HEALTH SCREENING**

The school principal may allow the School Health Service Program or other licensed individuals or organizations to conduct health screening activities at various times during the school year. Parents or guardians will be notified in advance if any will have a fee associated with them and will be allowed an opportunity to decline such services. School health screenings may include, but are not limited to vision screening, hearing screening, measurement of height and weight, dental screening, scoliosis screening, etc. A parent or guardian must inform the school in writing if they do not wish their child to participate in any free portion of this program.

## **COMMUNICABLE DISEASES AND CONDITIONS**

Students who are ill and appear to have symptoms indicating a communicable disease will be isolated from other students. A parent or guardian will be contacted and should make arrangements to pick up their child immediately. If necessary, the school principal or Nurse may ask for a written statement from a licensed physician stating it is safe for the student to return to school.

Signs of a communicable disease:

- vomiting
- diarrhea
- fever
- rash
- red, itchy eyes
- lice
- COVID related symptoms

Please do not send your child to school with any of the above signs/symptoms. Students must be sign/symptom free for 24 hours, without the use of symptom reducing medications, before returning to school. Students with COVID related symptoms will be removed from the classroom and isolated until parents can pick them up.

If a student is identified as or suspected of having head lice, parents will be notified immediately, and the student will be removed from the classroom and isolated until he or she is picked up. Students will not be allowed to return to school until school personnel verify the student is free from lice and nits (the white eggs which adhere to the strands of hair). Parents should treat the child for the lice and return him or her to school as soon as possible. Absences due to head lice will be recorded as any other illness or absence from school. Please notify the nurse if you have recently treated your child or family for head lice.

### **ADMINISTRATION OF MEDICATION**

Students may self-carry sunscreen and/or bug repellent at school. Students may responsibly reapply products one time per day while at school and at the time directed by the teacher. School employees are not responsible for the application of or providing these items. Parents will be contacted if students use these products inappropriately.

No prescription or over the counter medications such as cough drops, aspirin, etc. are allowed to be in the possession of a student. If a student is found to have any form of medication in their possession it will be given to the nurse and a parent will be required to pick it up after school. Parents or guardians should ask physicians to arrange medication schedules so all medication can be given at home whenever possible. If such arrangements cannot be made, school personnel will assist a student with the administration of prescription medication under the following guidelines:

- Only prescription medications will be administered. In rare cases where over the counter or sample medications are required, they must be accompanied by written orders from the physician on the physician's letterhead.
- All medication must be delivered to school in the container in which it was originally purchased by a parent/guardian.
- A separate supply of medication must be kept at school. Pharmacies will supply additional medication bottles with the label if asked. Medication cannot be transported from home to school on a daily or weekly basis.
- The medication label must indicate the name of the medication; the student's name, physician's name, dosage and frequency or time medication is to be delivered.
- Parents or guardians must provide and label any special equipment (cup, spoon, dropper) needed to dispense the medication.
- Parents or guardians must complete and sign the medication authorization form available from the office.
- Parents or guardians(s) are responsible for monitoring the supply of medications.

- School personnel retain the right to dispose of or destroy any expired medications or any medication left during extended holidays or at the end of the school year.

## **STUDENT INJURY**

If a student is injured at school, the teacher will send the student to the clinic to be assessed by the school nurse and appropriate action will be taken. Minor injuries will be treated, and the student will return to class.

More serious injuries will require a call to the parent or, in extreme cases, 911. If a parent or parent designee cannot be reached, the school principal, at her discretion, will accompany the student to the hospital with the notarized Authorization of Medical Treatment Form that was filled out at the beginning of the school year. In all but life-threatening situations, a doctor or hospital will not treat an injured child without this form.

An Accident/Injury Report will be filled out by the supervising teacher or staff member and will be sent home with the student for a parent signature. All but minor occurrences will be documented.

A student must have a doctor's note to use crutches/wheelchairs on school property.

## **EMERGENCY CARDS**

All students will have an emergency card on file in the front office. ONLY those INDIVIDUALS LISTED ON THE EMERGENCY CARD or the student's parents will be permitted ENTRANCE into the school during normal school hours to volunteer. The only person who can make changes or additions to the emergency card is the parent/guardian who signed the card. All individuals will be asked to show a photo ID to identify themselves as the person listed on the card. If both parents wish to sign, they both must be present to sign the card at the same time.

## **COMPREHENSIVE EMERGENCY PLAN**

Every teacher has been trained for emergency situations. Drills are practiced throughout the year with students and trainings are done with the staff quarterly.

In case of evacuation at the Hanna Road campus, students will be taken to River of Life Church located at 410 Chapman Road Lutz, Florida 33549.

In case of evacuation at the Lutz Lake Campus, students will be taken to the Lutz Public Library at 101 W. Lutz Lake Fern Road Lutz, Florida 33548

You will be notified by phone, email, or a text message if there is an emergency at the school.

### *Lockdown*

This procedure is used when it is the opinion of the Principal or Assistant Principal that students and staff are the safest in the classroom. Instruction stops, doors and windows are locked,

blinds are closed, and teachers will NOT open classroom doors FOR ANY REASON until it is deemed safe by the Administration.

*Modified Lockdown*

This procedure is used when it is the Administration's opinion that the students are safest in the classroom. Doors and windows are locked but instruction continues.

For the safety of students, staff, and parents, when in lockdown, no parents are allowed on school grounds. We will notify you when it is safe to pick up your student.

*Tornado Warnings*

Students should be lined up against an inside wall where there are no windows. Students should assume the crouched position either against the wall or under a desk/table. Classroom teachers will be notified by Administration when the warning has passed.

**PARENT VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATION**

Learning Gate Community School PVO is a volunteer organization working with the school. School volunteer hours are earned for participation in any of the numerous events planned. Events include, but are not limited to: Fall Festival, Heritage Day, Science Olympics, EcoFest, and Math Bowl. For assistance, please reach out to [kathy@learninggate.org](mailto:kathy@learninggate.org)



This Handbook is a living document and has been developed for the purpose of informing you of the policies and procedures of Learning Gate Community School. We hope that it will assist you in making your school days pleasant and successful. It is the responsibility of each student and parent/guardian to read, understand, and abide by this Handbook. A parent/guardian signature is required on this page acknowledging the receipt of this handbook and the requirements set forth for students and parents/guardians.

2 Parent Education hours per family will be awarded for reading, printing, signing and submitting this page to Cathy Allard at the Lutz Lake Fern Campus.

Parent/Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Student(s) Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_