

The policies handbook here is a provisional version, pending final revisions by the Board of Trustees.

The plain text version that you see in the Website is supplemented by a PDF version, which you can download [here](#). It allows you to navigate between topics, just as this Webpage does.

Welcome to the Las Cruces Academy. We are pleased that your family has joined us in the LCA community of students, parents, teachers, board members, advisors, and friends.

This handbook is intended to be a guide for our families. It cannot possibly cover every situation that may occur during the year. This handbook is a work in progress, a work of love on the part of all of our community, as is the Academy itself. We ask our families to follow the spirit as well as the letter of our policies.

If you have a question regarding any of these policies or guidelines, please contact us. We are always interested in hearing your ideas, thoughts, or concerns. We are looking forward to another great year at the Las Cruces Academy.

Sincerely,

Lou Ellen Kay, Ph. D., Biology

Head of School

*Vincent P. Gutschick, Ph. D.,
Chemistry*

Chair, Board of Trustees

We are distributing this policies handbook to all of our parents, and making it available publicly on our Website (lascrucesacademy.org), for parents of prospective students and for all the friends of the school. We expect that parents of our students will read the handbook in full and agree with the policies. Parents will be asked to sign a short note acknowledging receipt of this handbook and assent to the policies in it. The additional section for teachers will also be viewable here, shortly.

This version has gone through an initial review by the Board of Trustees. We will notify everyone of any revisions, which are expected to be modest, when they occur. The latest revision was done on: Thursday, July 24, 2014.

We gratefully acknowledge advice from the Manzano Day School, Albuquerque, NM, and guidance for the content of this policy handbook drawn from their handbook.

The Las Cruces Academy does not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, color, national or ethnic origin, sex, physical disability, or sexual orientation. We value freedom of expression and equal opportunity for learning by all our students.

How to find out more about us

Please visit our Website lascrucesacademy.org.

You may call our Head of School, Lou Ellen Kay, at 575-521-9384, or the chair of our board of trustees, Vince Gutschick, at 575-571-2269

You may visit us at the school, which is located at 1755 Avenida de Mercado in Mesilla, NM. To be sure that we are free to meet you at the time you wish to visit, please phone in advance.

Contents of This Handbook

This handbook, as implemented on the Academy Website as a PDF document, uses **hyperlinks (blue text)**. From the table of contents here, you may click on any topic, in order to get to that section of the handbook.

To return to the table of contents here from any other part of the document, please hit “Alt” and “left arrow” (on a PC; we will test the functions on a Mac).

The handbook may be printed but not modified.

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Fundamentals of the school

Our core values

Our mission is to empower gifted and advanced children by providing them with academic challenges, individual attention, and a nurturing social environment. Our goal is to serve gifted and advanced children of all backgrounds and socioeconomic levels.

Las Cruces Academy is a school designed to foster positive change by nurturing the talents of the most promising students from the Las Cruces area. To achieve this goal, we have small classes, an extended school day, and teachers with enthusiasm about and exceptional knowledge of their subjects.

We provide:

- small classes & a small school
- teachers who know their subject & love teaching
- a strong, academic education
- student placement in each subject at a level that is rewarding and challenging, rather than by age

- student-interest-driven choice of topics when possible
- support & rewards for positive behavior
- a challenging but supportive environment, while avoiding negative feedback and false praise
- a sense of community & belonging, including engagement of the Las Cruces community
- environmental stewardship; we recycle extensively and use energy wisely

Our mission statement

We are a non-profit (501(c)(3)), private, non-sectarian school, with an emphasis on math, science, and languages. Academic rigor at LCA derives from our recruitment of highly qualified teachers in science, math, and languages, along with small class sizes. Students learn English, Spanish, and Mandarin Chinese language classes every day, in order to prepare them for communication in an increasingly connected world. Our commitment to maintaining small class sizes allows teachers to provide extra help to students who need it and to group high-performing students according to their ability; not their age. Furthermore, our student-influenced curriculum encourages children to pursue self-directed learning, indulge their intellectual curiosity, and remain engaged in class. LCA students are encouraged to socialize, work and play with one another in order to develop the crucial social skills necessary for community involvement and future leadership roles.

We serve students who are gifted or advanced and who are typically underserved in other schools. These children have talents or academic achievements in one or more subjects are significantly beyond grade level, and have academic needs that exceed those of most other students. LCA guides them in the realization of their full potential with our holistic approach towards education.

We realize that students are not gifted or advanced in all subjects. Our policy of placing students in each subject at an appropriate level helps the students use their gifts and motivation well and to progress in all subjects.

Identifying giftedness or academic advancement is challenging, particularly with young children. Prior to admission, then, we use detailed information about a child's prior experience, interests, and idiosyncrasies, often revelatory of giftedness.

Our legal organization and Articles of Incorporation

The Academy incorporated in the state of New Mexico on 2 March 2007, with State Corporation Commission number 2845790. Our status as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dates from the same day. Our legal Articles of Incorporation are posted on our Website. We operate under a business license from the Town of Mesilla, with a Federal Employer Identification Number, a state CRS ID, and a state DWS UI number. We hold accounts at the FirstLight Federal Credit Union. We hold insurance policies for liability, property, and Workers' Compensation. The fire chief of the Town of Mesilla has issued a certificate of occupancy for our building, which we lease from Preston Wisconsin, LP. We are listed with Dun and Bradstreet.

The Academy operates under the authority of an all-volunteer Board of Trustees, who bear the legal and financial responsibility for the operation of the school, as outlined in our Articles of Incorporation. Assets of the Academy are held in its own name; there is no private ownership at any level. The Board of Trustees is self-perpetuating. The Head of School is the sole employee of the board, which reviews the Head of School's performance. Our Website gives the current membership of the board.

We also have a board of advisors to help us make decisions about student admission and teacher hiring.

Our financial records are open and posted on our Website. Updates, including updates to business plans, are made available as time allows.

How we implement our mission

Faculty are chosen carefully under the authority of the Head of School, for their passion for education and expertise in the specific subjects that they teach. Most are part-time, teaching a specific subject. All are paid equally on a basis pro-rated to full-time. Our teachers are supported by the administration and have academic freedom in teaching, subject to overview by the Head of School to assure the progress and well-being of all students. The Academy offers teachers annual contracts, renewable upon the authority of the Head of School; there is no seniority system.

We are supported by tuition and by donations of funds, goods, and services by parents, students, teachers, community friends, foundations, and corporations. Our policy is to meet only operational costs with tuition, making up deficits in operations from donations. Funds for capital projects, primarily the future purchase and development of an LCA-owned campus, are solicited only as donations. At present, and for the foreseeable future, the Head of School and the Chair of the Board of Trustees work full-time without pay. Head of School Kay also has invested a major amount of funding from her personal finances.

We value and expect full participation by parents or guardians in the education of their children. – and in LCA-wide activities. We also welcome the participation of visitors who can share their expertise. We describe a wealth of ways of participating in this handbook.

How we relate to the community: The Academy has become integrated into the Las Cruces community, with ties to businesses, media, the Hispano and Green Chambers of Commerce, local government officials, educators, civic clubs, and others in diverse walks of life. We enjoy a high profile and high approval, which we value greatly and work to maintain.

Our curriculum: We use world-leading Singapore math. Chinese is taught very effectively with the system developed in China for Chinese as a Second Language. English, social studies, and science are taught with lectures, projects, and writing, with students frequently suggesting themes to follow; teachers who are experts in these subjects fill out the year's course content to a coherent whole, using their deep knowledge of the subjects and guidance from the NM State Core Curriculum. Spanish is taught by a native speaker. Music is taught for two periods weekly by a professional singer and musician. Students do self-directed reading daily. Younger students have phonics training from teachers trained in the *Take Flight Program* of the Scottish Rite hospital in Dallas. The students suggest themes for general study that the teachers then implement. Older students write plays for performances that they present.

Governance: Our board of trustees has the ultimate legal responsibility for operation of the Academy. Our Head of School is responsible for all operations, with review by the board. We engage our teachers and parents in providing important information and ideas about all aspect of teaching and operations, while not encumbering them with those legal responsibilities that are specific to the board of trustees. Thus, the final decisions on operations must fall to the Head of School and the board of trustees.

Faculty development: We value our teachers highly. We support their academic freedom to implement the curriculum in ways that they find effective, while subject to review by the Head of School. We also support their professional development to the extent that our finances allow. Over the past 3 years, we have paid for training of several of our fine teachers in the multi-year *Take Flight* program of the Scottish Rite Hospital in Dallas, TX. This is a highly-regarded program for teachers to teach phonics and to impart the ability to read well to dyslexic students. Our teachers also offer dyslexia

remediation to some members of the Las Cruces community, as time allows. Our business plan projects additional teacher training in various subjects in the coming years.

Admission process and conditions

Application for admission of a student begins with submitting a completed application form, which is available on our Website, and payment of an application fee. The Head of School and advisors review applications on a rolling basis. In other words, the admissions committee periodically reviews all the applications we have received, and votes on all of the applications. We will continue to accept applications at least until either all available spots are reserved (by a tuition installment) or until the start of classes in August. We would prefer not to enroll students during the school year, although we understand family circumstances may require it.

What we look for in the admission process: While we expect that some of our students will be profoundly gifted, we know that many will be motivated children of average intelligence or moderately bright children who are ahead of their peers in one or two subjects (such as reading, writing, or math). We realize that a student can be gifted in just one subject, and that “advancement” depends upon previous educational training.

Looking for so many kinds of talent and advancement means that we ask *a lot* of questions on the student application. This should not be intimidating; we haven't met the child yet who was outstanding in every area we ask about. We ask a wide range of questions because not only do we hope to identify children gifted in commonly recognized ways, but also the less-obviously gifted children who are still quite talented. And, of course, we're also looking to identify children who may not be gifted at all, but who have advanced beyond their peers nonetheless.

Currently we accept students as young as age 5 for full-time kindergarten, though we have no strict cutoff. As of August, 2013, we are offering pre-kindergarten for students as young as age 4. In individual subjects, we place students in a group based on their ability and prior knowledge. However, students are assigned an overall grade level based upon their age, not their academic level. Even exceptionally gifted students who are old enough to attend LCA based on their birthday will almost never be placed in a grade higher than their birthday would indicate, for social development reasons. Most very gifted children are academically advanced but still have the emotional development of their age-mates. Thus, in the Academy, a child may spend some time with older or younger students, depending on the subject being taught, but will also spend time with same-aged children whenever possible.

Parents need to apprise the Academy of the child's academic needs and disabilities. We will keep all records of disabilities ***confidential*** unless the parents and student agree to disclose them. We have excellent but limited capability to deal with dyslexia, e.g. We can offer some remediation if it does not detract from the time we must devote to other students with our budgetary constraints; additional remediation must be arranged at the expense of the parent(s) or guardian(s).

The Academy needs records of schools that the child attended previously. Our admission form requires these records, as the name of the school(s), school address(es), and dates of enrollment. Parents may offer transcripts, and the Academy has the right to inquire about the academic and behavioral record of a student at schools that he or she has attended. We request equivalent information for students who have been home-schooled.

Admission is further contingent upon having the child visit the school for one day during normal classes, unless this is impractical, and admission is probationary for the first two weeks. Payment of the first month of tuition in advance then holds the student's place in the Academy.

We expect that the student will continue to be enrolled in the Academy until reaching the highest grade offered by the Academy. This gives the child the full benefit of our curriculum. Neither we nor the child can function well on a drop-in basis.

Disenrollment and reenrollment: Again, we note that children thrive with continuity of our education. Disenrolling your child for reasons other than unforeseen substantive problems, such as financial distress, is an implicit permanent disenrollment. If you wish to reenroll your child after a voluntary disenrollment, the child will be reevaluated for admission suitability. If there is a waiting list for enrollment, the child will be added at the end of the list. We have the option to require deposit of a full year's tuition, refundable only for a subsequent disenrollment for good cause, at the discretion of the Academy.

Continuation of enrollment is contingent. Continued attendance at the Academy is contingent upon the student being invited back each year. The Head of School has the final authority to decide if a student should continue with the Academy. A student who is progressing, is responsive to the way that the Academy educates students, and who exhibits no behavior problems that adversely affect other students in significant ways, may be invited back for the next academic year. Invitations are delivered in writing.

Payment of tuition is required monthly in advance. Tuition is not based on attendance but on registration; we have to pay salaries regardless of attendance. We offer several plans for payment schedules, typically 9- or 12-month. Payment can be done by check or the Intuit Payment Network; we cannot accept credit cards at this time. Timely payment helps our operations. Payments that are late by 7 days or more are subject to a charge of \$10 per week. Invoices are sent by email on or near the first of a month, with payment due on the 15th of the month for instruction covering from the 15th of the month through the 14th of the following month. If a student withdraws for any reason, tuition is refundable only for whole months unless there are exceptional circumstances.

The Academy seeks to make scholarships available to families that have financial needs. The amount available depends upon the current reserve of donated funds. All scholarships are partial, typically with a maximum of half tuition.

Hours and attendance

The standard school day for instruction is from 8:30 AM through 4:15 PM, or 3:30 PM for students in kindergarten and first grade. Policies on tardiness are noted in the section on academic performance. The current class schedule is posted on our Website, shortly after the start of the term, as is our schedule for holidays and events. Please note that it is somewhat complex, with each individual student assigned to a group separately in each subject. For the convenience of working parents, the school is open for dropping off students as early as 7:30 AM and for picking up students as late as 5:30 PM. If a student is not picked up by 5:30 the parents will be assessed a \$10 fee, and if the student is not picked up by 6:00, there will be a further \$20 fee. Our staff members should not be expected to provide free day care beyond their work day.

Health and safety

Custody: We value the safety of our students in every respect. Students must be escorted into the school to begin classes or out of the school at the end of instruction by a parent, guardian, or authorized representative. A parent or guardian (from here on, "parent") must give the school written information about any representatives whom he or she wishes to pick up a child, with sufficient detail that we can affirm the identity of the person.

In cases of children of divorced parents, we must have clear and specific directions, including legal documentation, regarding custody arrangements. Please note that the Academy cannot intervene in any custody disputes, whether on school grounds or in court, unless subpoenaed in court.

On-duty law enforcement officers may remove students from campus for any reason after signing a statement indicating that they are taking the student. We will record the officer's name and badge number, as well as where the student is being taken. If we disagree with the officer's reason for removing the student, we will note this and ask the officer to sign the statement indicating their awareness of our disagreement. If the officer refuses to sign the statement, we will note this on the statement. Except in cases of suspected child abuse or neglect, we will notify the parents as soon as possible and give them the reason for the student's removal, the officer's name and badge number, and where the student is being taken to.

Students eat lunch and two snacks at the Academy. We strongly encourage that the food, which is provided by the parents except on special occasion, be healthful and that it also not present packaging waste that is not recyclable. If parents are concerned about the healthfulness of snacks that other parents or teachers provide for occasions such as birthdays (e.g., cakes, cookies, ice cream, ice pops), we ask these parents bring snacks for their child that they consider acceptable, so that the student is not left out on such occasions. Students are responsible for bringing their own food, which should not require refrigeration or heating. The food the students bring should include lunch and the number of snacks needed based on the hours of attendance. If your child has a variable appetite we suggest you provide the student with nutritious, prepackaged snacks which may be stored in their cubbie. The Academy will support the efforts of the parents if they wish to join together and take turns providing snacks, or form a pool of money from which a faculty member/staff member/parent will buy suggested snacks. The food needs to be ready to eat without cooking; by fire code and health codes, the Academy cannot cook food without major expensive modifications to our facility that are also not allowed by the building owner. We appreciate the cooperation of all parents.

Food allergies can be life-threatening. Parents need to inform the Head of School any food allergies that their child may have. We teach the children to be aware of the food allergies of other children, and we expect the parents of all children to make their children aware of the contents of their school food, both lunch and snacks if the food contains potential allergens.

By state law, we must keep health records for every student. These records include any allergies (food, insect stings, etc.) and chronic illnesses, disabilities. The public schools keep more extensive records, such as a student's health history and vision screenings; at present we do not require these records. We will keep all student health records confidential among the relevant staff members, unless the parents and student wish to disclose them. Certain records should be disclosed to the teachers and, in some cases, students for the safety of a student, such as life-threatening food allergies. In these cases, the parents will be asked to give consent to the disclosure, or, if they choose not to make such disclosure, to sign legal documents that they assume the responsibility for consequences. The Academy needs all information for handling emergencies, including emergency telephone numbers of parents, alternative responders, and the child's doctor. We must be notified of any updates in status. The Academy staff can only administer a limited number of medications, and only with signed parental permission. These include non-prescription painkillers, as well as some emergency medications, such as inhalers for asthma or similar conditions. We will maintain an epinephrine (epi) pen for emergencies when it is provided by the parents. An epi pen is the only injection that any Academy staff can administer, and only under the most stringently controlled conditions. For both inhalers and the epi pen, we need a signed authorization from a parent to use in such an emergency. For students who need inhalers, parents must provide an inhaler for the school staff to retain. Student self-medication is prohibited at all times. Academy staff must retain custody of all medications.

In addition to health records, parents must inform us about major behavioral problems of their child that may affect the safety or academic progress of the student or other students.

On or before the first day of school, then, we need the following records:

- A list of any allergies the child has, and any medications he or she is taking
- Contact information, as well as two backup contacts in case a parent can't be reached in an emergency.
- A form allowing us to authorize emergency health care if the parent cannot be reached in an emergency
- A form identifying any persons who are allowed to pick the child up from school.
- A record of immunization status, showing that the child has (1) an immunization record showing that the child has received all immunizations mandated by the New Mexico Department of Health, or (2) an exemption from New Mexico's Public Health Division, or (3) a signed statement from a licensed physician or certified nurse vouching that the child's life or health would be seriously endangered by vaccination. We are required by law to report parents who do not vaccinate their children without an exemption or a statement from a physician/nurse.
- A record of any chronic communicable diseases your child has. We will maintain the confidentiality and privacy for the child and his or her parents, but we need to know about these diseases so that we can make sure that both the family and we are taking any necessary safety precautions.

Injuries at school : Academy staff can treat minor injuries such as small cuts and bruises. The staff is trained in CPR and first aid. Any more significant injury will be treated as a health emergency, in which case the staff will contact parents, a parent representative, the child's doctor, or emergency services.

When emergency services such as an ambulance or paramedics must be contacted for illness or injury of a student, a significant cost may be incurred, for which the parents are responsible. We will use our most careful judgment before incurring this liability for parents.

Do not send an ill child to school; we realize it is an inconvenience to have to provide day care for your ill child, but spreading an illness incurs this penalty on others. We do realize that childhood illnesses are inevitable, but we work to minimize the problems associated with them. Near the end of this handbook we provide guidance for assessing if a child must be kept home.

Pets: Due to the risk of bites, scratches and allergies pets should not be brought to school. We can make exceptions if we judge that the risk is low and that parents are properly informed.

Visitors: The Academy has a relatively open campus visit policy. In fact, parents of enrolled or potential students, as well as interested community members, are encouraged to visit at virtually any time, although we ask that you try to call in advance. This is to make sure that we're not on a field trip, so we can minimize any disruption your visit will call if you are visiting a class, and to make sure that if you wish to visit a particular person, he or she will be available when you arrive. Visitors are held to the same standards of behavior as everybody else, and may be asked to leave if they have problems meeting those standards. Our experience is that visitors can enrich the educational experience, particularly those who participate as guest teachers, discussants, or helpers.

For the safety of the students and our property, we may ask you or your designated relative or caregiver to sign out when picking up a student. If our staff does not recognize you by sight, we may ask for a photo ID.

Noninterference: New Mexico statute 30-20-13(D) states: No person shall willfully interfere with the educational process of any public or private school by committing, threatening to commit or inciting others to commit any act which would disrupt, impair, interfere with or obstruct the lawful mission, processes, procedures or functions of a public or private school. We apply this statute to everyone who is on campus or with students on an official Academy activity off-campus.

Weapons are strictly prohibited on school property or in the course of any school activities off-campus. Only an on-duty law officer or a student, staff member, or visitor who has received explicit written permission from the Head of School in advance may have a weapon on campus. Anyone bringing a weapon on campus without such permission will have the weapon confiscated at a minimum, and will likely be required to leave. Depending on the nature of the weapon and whether or not it is brandished, the person may even be indefinitely banned from campus.

The serious warnings above aside, we are careful in what we identify as a weapon. Items which were designed with another use in mind (such as forks, letter openers, and even tire irons) are not weapons until they are carried or brandished in such a manner indicating a threat to someone's safety (including the bearer's). On the other hand, swords, guns (or realistic copies), night sticks, etc. are always weapons, whether or not they are brandished. If in doubt, ask first or don't bring it.

Drugs: Drugs or controlled substances, as well as drug paraphernalia, are prohibited on campus unless they're legal for the person to use, or are being delivered to someone who can legally use them. Currently, we judge that we do not require an explicit policy. We will develop a comprehensive policy in the near term. In any event, our first response to a suspected incident by a student, short of egregious, will not be to involve law enforcement agencies; our goal is to protect and inform students. Actions by an adult will be treated more aggressively. In no case will we allow the Academy or its staff to be liable to prosecution for drug violations. We will not take possession of any illegal substances by confiscating them.

Search of possessions: The Academy will only allow uninvited searches of students' belongings or persons if a law enforcement officer has probable cause or can present a search warrant. A teacher or administrator will accompany the officer(s) at all times during any searches of student belongings, and the student will be present as well, if possible. We will note the name and badge number of the officer(s) conducting any searches. If we believe the search is improper, we will make a statement noting our disagreement and ask the officer(s) to sign the statement to indicate their awareness of our disagreement. If the officer(s) refuse to sign the statement, we will note this on the statement. As stated above, except in cases of suspected child abuse or neglect (which we are mandated to report), we will notify parents of any interactions with law enforcement involving their child.

Use of the Internet is monitored by adult staff for the safety of the students and of the school. We do not deploy blocking software, which is notably imperfect. We ask parents to help reinforce the safe use of the Internet by students, both at school and at home.

Personal property of students is kept in the student cubbies in the hallway or the classroom. The school is not responsible for losses. If something happens to a student's personal property while it is at LCA or carried on an LCA-sponsored activity, we may attempt to help recover it or mediate a solution between the student and the party responsible for its damage, loss, or destruction, but we will not replace or repair it. In short, students' belongings are their responsibility, so that they must be careful when bringing items of value to them to the school. We help the students keep track of their property, provided that the student makes us aware of it. Some personal property, particularly cellphones and electronic games, cannot be retained under the student's control; it must be given to the staff, for return when the student leaves school for the day.

School emergency procedures: by local and state law, we must conduct fire drills monthly. We instruct students in proper evacuation procedures. We require students and visitors of any age to obey staff instructions in any emergency. Evacuation guides are posted in all rooms and hallways. Room and hall signage for exit routes is complete. We abide by fire code in keeping all doors and gates unlocked during business hours. The building owner has also required in our lease agreement that we post signs stating that the owner is not responsible for any losses or hazards.

Harassment and bullying: Harassment comes in many forms, the most infamous of which is sexual. We have some notable defenses against both harassment and false allegations of harassment. The first

line of defense is performing background checks on all staff, as well as on volunteers who will be working with students for more than the equivalent of one full school day. Our main defense against both harassment and false allegations, however, is having multiple adults present any time children are at the school or on a school-sponsored activity. Having two or more adults means both that we have two independent accounts of any incidents, and that there are at least two people watching out for the well being of the children (and each other). Harassment of students by other students, or bullying, is not tolerated. We seek to resolve incidents by the method of eye-to-eye resolution of conflicts (see the section on Discipline). We reserve the right to restrain students who do not respond to requests to cease harassment, and the incidents will be appropriately recorded and made known to parents if necessary. If a student's behavior is unacceptable and there has been a history of such behavior, the Academy has the right and obligation to require the family to obtain appropriate counseling for the student.

Suspected abuse must be reported, by state law. Our staff, as are all adults of any age and relation or non-relation to students, are required to report suspected abuse of children to Children, Families, and Youth or to a local law enforcement agency. At the Academy children will not be released to impaired parents. We will call the other parent or an adult who is listed as an emergency contact on the registration form to pick up the child.

We require background checks on staff and any volunteers who are present more than nominally. The expense for staff background checks is borne by the Academy. The expense for checks on others may be passed to the volunteer, at the discretion of the Academy.

Field trips by students in which the students are transported from the Academy via motorized transport require explicit parental permission. Because some teachers must remain at the Academy, we also require sufficient chaperoning by parents or background-checked volunteers. If transportation by vehicle is necessary, we require a driver's record for any driver, and the driver must be at least 25 years old. A parent or volunteer who is not an approved driver may not drive students for any reason. This exclusion ***even applies to a parent driving his or her own child*** (see the note near the end about a [similar policy](#) used by another school. The record can be sent to the Academy at 4904 Calabazilla Dr., zip 88011, by going online at <https://secure.mvd.newmexico.gov/RenewalServices/DHR/Individual/>. The approval process takes at least 48 hours. Please plan accordingly. Parents or volunteers who chaperone a trip are expected to be fully attentive to the students; socializing with other adults needs to be kept to a minimum. Adults who are driving cannot use cell phones at any time during travel in a vehicle. Siblings of Academy students who are not enrolled in the Academy can only participate in a field trip with the express permission of the Head of School or the Assistant Head of School.

Students may be taken on spontaneous field trips to local sites; this allows the Academy to take advantage of unscheduled events as teaching opportunities. To ensure that no student is taken on a field trip who needs to be taken from the school for outside appointments, etc., parents should sign the sheet hanging near the Academy door indicating when the student needs to be available for his or her appointment.

Protection of student identity: We realize parental concerns, especially by parents whose occupations bear risk to children if publicized (e.g., law enforcement). Our policy is by default to not release names of students in images. Please note that photographing by other parties in public venues is unrestricted, protected by law. Students are often photographed by parents, staff, or persons external to the school (such as newspaper reporters) at Academy events in or out of school. In general, parents grant implicit permission for such photographing, with the restriction that the identity of any child not be revealed without explicit parental approval when a photo or video is released for public viewing, such as in a newspaper or YouTube. Parents may request that no photos of their child be taken, but we regard this as an extreme measure that makes it almost impossible to have beneficial publicity or even the

satisfaction of the children seeing the record of their activities shared. Parents may wish to provide a faux name to be used with photographs of their child.

Privacy of student records: We abide by the provisions of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) in keeping all student records confidential. This is voluntary compliance on our part, as we are a private institution not receiving federal funding. Under the provisions of the spirit of FERPA, Parents have the right to inspect any records we maintain on their child, and to request that those records be amended if they are incorrect. If we disagree and choose not to amend the records, the parents have the right to a formal hearing. If we still decide not to amend the records, the parents have the right to place a statement explaining their beliefs into the records. Note that records kept by an individual teacher which aren't shared with anybody else are not included.

We generally cannot release a student's records without the explicit consent of that student's parents, although there are exceptions to this (school officials having a valid reason, another school to whom the student is transferring to requests some records, an accrediting organization requires selected records, the Academy is issued a subpoena, health and safety officials require records in emergencies, etc.) Directory information (such as name, address, phone number, date and place of birth, honors & awards, and dates of attendance) is also excepted, although we must tell parents what directory information we may publish, and they can opt out. If you do not wish for directory information about you or your student to be published, or for your child to participate in certain activities, please give us a written note explaining what you would like to opt out of.

Actions of non-Academy employees: Parents might, on occasion, hire non-Academy staff for tutoring or child care on school grounds. Parents should be aware that such persons are not acting as school employees while in these capacities; the Academy shall not be liable for any actions that may occur.

Amplification of our policies on non-discrimination & freedom of expression

When a student or adult is on campus, at an activity sponsored by LCA, or is in any way representing LCA, he or she **may not discriminate** on the basis of race, religious beliefs, color, national or ethnic origin, sex, physical disability, or sexual orientation. This applies whether the person is an employee, student, parent, volunteer, or visitor, and we take it seriously. Non-discrimination is not only a moral position. It is also the basis for the continued certification of the Academy as a 501(c)(3) organization that is relieved of many tax burdens and able to offer tax deductions to our donors. Finally, if you believe you have been discriminated against (or that someone else has), please report it so that we can address it.

Members of our Academy community, student or adult, **may express any opinion** whatsoever as long as they are not unreasonably disrupting the safe learning environment of LCA. Inciting violence or the commission of an illegal act would be considered disruptive, as would using a racial slur. The number of ways to be disruptive is beyond count, so we will not attempt to list them. We expect everyone to use better judgment in determining whether something will be disruptive.

Freedom of expression includes **equal access to platforms for expressing ideas**, whether that platform is a publication or physical space on school property. If we allow a student group of a particular type to meet in our building, other groups of the same general type, but holding different views, may also meet in our building. The same principle holds for publications. This freedom comes with a stipulation: a group's presence or platform may not disrupt the functioning of the Academy, and we can and will place reasonable restrictions on groups to avoid disruption. Groups that repeatedly or grossly violate those restrictions or the rules of common decency may be banned. In short, anyone is free to express his or her ideas as long as they are not interfering with the Academy's purpose.

Academic performance – rights and responsibilities of all Academy members

We nurture a fundamental culture of mutual respect among students, teachers, parents, and visitors. Respect must be offered in words and actions, among students, teachers, staff, and visitors in class, at recess, meals, and school activities on and off campus. Respect is due in academic activities and in personal interactions. We consider adult support, understanding, and modeling by faculty, staff, and parents essential to the child's development. The extension of the Academy goals to the student's home life is very important. We offer guidelines in a section below.

Basic behavior

Timely attendance: School begins promptly at 8:30 a.m. When a child arrives late to school, the entire class is disrupted. We record tardy arrivals and note this in report cards. Often, instructions that have already been given must be repeated for the tardy student. Given that parents are responsible for bringing all children to the school, we try not to punish the child for being late. If a parent is chronically late bringing a child to school, the Head of School will contact the parents to discuss means of improving attendance.

Attendance on all school days: we have a full 180 days of instruction, which we believe is a minimum for effective education. Absences may be excused if the teachers or the Head of School are given advance notice of a valid pre-planned absence, or when an emergency occurs. The teacher may help the student make up the missed academic work. The student alone is responsible for making up work missed because of an unexcused absence. We are aware that **family trips** for medical reasons, social obligations, or unique opportunities may take students away from school for one or more days at a time. We ask that the parents carefully weigh the merit of such trips before committing themselves to them. Long absences will affect a student's academic performance. The work missed by the student must be made up, by arrangements with the teachers.

Please note also that we are required to enforce New Mexico's compulsory attendance law. This law states that a child may not have more than 10 unexcused absences per semester. If a child exceeds that limit, we must give written notice of noncompliance by certified mail or personal service on the child's parent/guardian. If violations continue, we are required to report the child to the probation services office of the judicial district where the child lives.

Rules for student behavior and punishment Students are expected to behave in a safe and respectful manner at all times while at the Academy. When inappropriate behavior occurs, and no one is injured either physically or emotionally, the student will be warned, with an explanation as to why it was wrong, but no punishment will be given. Examples of inappropriate behaviors are: making unsuitable noises in class or disrupting class; speaking to another person in a disrespectful manner; intentionally hurting another person, either student or teacher; and running in the Academy building - the floors are slippery and hard so falls may result in injury. Punishments may vary, but are typically: denial of some privilege, such as eating with friends; assignment of chores to be done during recess; or writing a letter of apology. During classes, the student may be asked to retire to a specific isolated spot in or near the classroom if there is disruption.

Clothing: We do not have school uniforms, nor do we have a formal dress code. We ask parents and students to use common sense. Students should wear clothes that are neat and appropriate for the weather and activities of the day. We do not allow students to wear clothing that is offensive to others or sexually suggestive. The Head of School shall apply judgment in any event. For extended outdoor activities, as on some field trips, students should wear clothing that is protective against sun

exposure. Remember that long sleeves and long pants are also cooler than clothing that exposes skin to solar heating, unless the air temperature exceeds 50°C, which never occurs in our area.

Preparation: what a student should bring to school and what he or she should take home: The Academy sends out newsletters that, among other things, inform the parents and students what materials the student will need. We have found that everyone has been very cooperative, and that many parents donate additional supplies. We are grateful on both counts. The school supplies basic writing materials and books. The school also supplies older students with a Homework Assignment Handbook. Each student writes his or her homework assignments in this diary, along with any special notes about tasks. He or she takes the diary home so that the parents may check on the homework that is due, in particular. The parents also need to sign that they have seen the book at least once a week. The teachers will write the grade for given assignments in the book, at the spot where the student noted the assignment was due. Thus, if a paper was due on Friday the 4th, the grade will be written in the space of Friday the 4th.

The school loans books to students to read in class and some to read at home. At present, we have not done the massive task of cataloging our extensive holdings of more than 5,000 books. We ask that parents check at intervals for books that the student has taken home and should be returning to the school.

If a student requires an inhaler for asthma intervention or an epinephrine pen for life-threatening allergies, we require that the inhaler or pen be brought to school on the first day. Parents need to present a signed form authorizing the Academy staff to offer treatment, as well as sufficient instructions about when and how to offer treatment.

Lack of distractions: Cell phones may not be used at school. If a student brings a cell phone for emergency use, it must be left with a teacher or the Head of School. Electronic toys are particularly disruptive and must not be brought to school.

Kindergarten and younger students may bring one stuffed animal to school. When they have the surprise box they are to leave the object in their cubbie during the school day. Older students are not to bring any toys to school unless they have received prior permission. The Academy has many toys for the students to play with; we believe it is important that students learn to share, so student-owned toys can create problems. If a student brings a toy to school they will be told to put the toy in their cubbie. If the toy "reappears" it will be taken and returned when the student is leaving for home. If the toy appears a third time it will be confiscated and disposed of. It will not be returned to the student.

Homework is an integral part of learning. We take care that our teachers assign homework that is appropriate in nature and duration. Students may have the opportunity to complete their homework assignments in a study-hall period or after classes have ended. The student needs to complete homework in a timely fashion. Parents shall check the completion of homework, aided by the statement of what each day's homework is, as recorded in the **Homework Assignment Handbook**. Homework must be completed even if the student is absent. If the student has a planned absence, such as a family trip, the parents shall make arrangements with the teachers to have the homework assignments communicated, either by advance notice or by email to be sent during the absence. If a student fails to complete homework at a frequency that is deleterious to his or her progress, the teacher(s) or the Head of School shall call for a conference with the parents.

In an appendix following the narrative here, we outline the expectations of homework for students at various grade levels.

Homework for the Chinese classes is especially important. Students readily fall behind in Chinese classes if they fail to do this homework. Our Chinese teacher sends information to parents, who must guide the completion of this homework.

Parents should establish a quiet homework environment. A standard time in the home schedule for doing homework is valuable. The work should be done by the student, with parents as supportive but

not teaching the content of the assignment. Parents gain insight into a child's progress in time management and dedication by overviewing the child's doing the homework.

Our teachers are responsible for reviewing the completed homework assignments. They give appropriate recognition to the student and retain records of the student's performance on homework assignments.

Testing: At frequent intervals, students take unit tests. These tests are part of the flow of the subject and they allow teachers to keep students on track. In Singapore math, there are tests that complete each book, nominally covering a semester, such as Singapore math 3B for the 2nd semester of grade 3. At this time, we are working to select useful standardized tests; we'll provide more information as our program develops. We are not required to have tests tied to federal or state standards, and we do not "teach to the test." We offer our detailed narrative reports as sufficing for gauging each student's progress. As we grow into a school offering grades above 5th, we will develop a suite of tests that is informative to outside evaluators while not being burdensome on students and teachers; we will not teach to the test.

Reporting of student progress: The teachers and the Head of School provide reports of student progress in several forms. The Head of School sends a **weekly newsletter** that includes reports from each teacher on the content that was covered the preceding week. The newsletter also notes events, coming and recent past, and expresses our gratitude for donations and services that we have received from parents, students, teachers, board members, and members of the community. We ask that all parents at least the relevant sections of the newsletter; it is the easiest way for us to communicate with the parents. If you have concerns, please email us at the Academy or speak with us.

Each parent also receives **report cards** twice each semester with extensive detail on the student's progress, including academic progress, social progress, and attendance. The reports are narrative, not simple letter grades. These compilations require a great deal of time, so that they are sent several weeks after mid-semester and several weeks after the end of the semester.

Parental and Academy concerns about progress as also about school operations are discussed in **LCA community meetings**, to be scheduled four times during the school year. These meetings are designed to be much more than an airing of concerns about particular school operations. They are intended to build the capacities of the Academy to educate students and to cultivate the broadest community support. During the past year, we have formed a **parent committee**, charged with involving all parents in building the LCA community. The parent committee will develop the agenda for each meeting and will work with all the parents to share ideas about the Academy's operation, mission, vision, and fundraising campaigns. They will be ambassadors to the community at large, sharing knowledge about the Academy widely with the community at large. Current members of the committee are Steve Pate, Amanda Vescovo, Rick Morales, Michelle Tatum, Andrea Camunez, and Erica Surova. The first meeting was held on 12 December 2012 and meetings are monthly during the academic year.

Parent-teacher meetings are held each semester. Parents have the opportunity to talk with individual teachers. If parents want longer, individual meetings with teachers they should feel free to schedule a meeting.

The **Academy Webpage**, lascrucesacademy.org, contains extensive information about our mission, vision, philosophy, curriculum, personnel, events, finances, and business plans. We encourage parents, students, and friends to visit the site. Some private schools maintain individual teacher's Websites. This practice requires additional teacher time and funding. At our current scale of operation, then, we have chosen to rely upon strong communication between parents and teachers in person and via the weekly newsletter with its information from every teacher.

Communicating with the school about changes in the home routine: Long absences by a parent, a separation or divorce, a death in the family, or the loss of a pet can upset a child in many ways. The change may carry over into ability of the student to concentrate or to behave at school. Our teachers

can help children cope and to keep up their academic progress if the parents inform us about these life changes.

Participation of the family at school: We do not require it, but we would like each set of parents to give an average of at least an hour of time to LCA per week. See the Visitors & Volunteers section of the handbook for information. This:

- Allows parents to become familiar with teachers and other students.
- Allows the teachers become more familiar with the parents of their students.
- Allows students to meet and get to know parents of other students.
- Allows Academy to accomplish goals that may have been unattainable due to lack of personnel time.

We also request that each parent **participate actively in a classroom**, not involving his or her own child, for at least 20 minutes. Our development consultant affirms that this participation brings a greater understanding of the school functioning and aids us in gaining community support. We know that word-of-mouth publicity by parents has already proven to be our most effective route for building enrollment and donations from the community, and we deeply appreciate it.

We also request that each family donates one hour per month helping to clean the school building. This reduces the burden by school staff, who otherwise provide all the labor, and helps to keep down the expenses of running the school. Many parents find this a pleasant time to meet other parents in a relaxed setting. If a family cannot donate time the other families have asked that a \$30 fee per month be paid to pay for the cleaning supplies.

Expressing concern by parents. Parents naturally develop concerns about their child's performance. Often these concerns are resolved by discussing them with the child or by examining the report cards and other communications from the school. When these are insufficient, the parents should talk first to the classroom teacher, having made an appointment. The discussions with the teacher are most often productive without the student present. Our teachers know that confidentiality is important, so that they will not inform the student unless they agree with the parent(s) that this is best. Email communication may suffice, although we wish that parents avoid burdening teachers with excessive emails. If the issue is not resolved in discussion(s) with the teacher, the parents may contact the Head of School or Assistant Head of School to schedule a further discussion.

Participation of parents: home life: Our community of Academy families is diverse in home environments. Schedules vary, siblings pose other demands, home resources differ. Still, there are commonalities that are of value to students.

Eating dinner together is a surprisingly strong predictor of academic success. It was the only factor found to be strongly correlated with high-school students attaining a National Merit Scholarship. Other regularities in the home schedule are commonly helpful, such as in bedtimes and meal times.

Reading with your child daily is one of the most beneficial home routines of all.

Giving the child a good breakfast is effective in enabling children to pay attention and to behave well. If you can not feed the child breakfast before coming to school we insist that you send food for that purpose with the child, in addition to the normal lunch and snacks.

Television viewing and electronic game-playing should be held to a minimum. Television offers a simple way to keep children occupied, but without parents' attention to the duration of viewing and the program content, the effect on long-term achievement is typically deleterious. Truly educational programs are quite rare. Programs with content unsuitable for children can result in inappropriate behavior of the child at school, outside of parental oversight.

Talking with a child (not just to a child) and reading with him or her are much more beneficial uses of a child's time, as also is a child reading on his or her own. We offer much time at the Academy for children to read, being convinced of its intrinsic value. Reading at home can reinforce that value.

Outdoor activities are an integral part of growing up. Besides giving children an opportunity to run around freely and explore nature, there are several tangible physical benefits. For example, while excessive ultraviolet exposure can cause skin damage, but we need about 15 minutes a day of sunlight for our bodies to make vitamin D. Not only that, physical activity puts stresses on bones, which then increase their strength to deal with those stresses (this can prevent weak bones later in life). There are numerous other benefits, some intellectual and some physical.

Physical activity is a very important part of every life. It is necessary to develop and maintain a healthy body and mind. We have several breaks during the school day for this, but encourage the family to encourage further activity.

Children should play with blocks and/or other simple construction toys when they are young. In the first several years of childhood, children's brains are rapidly adjusting to the tasks they're being used for, to the point of killing off or failing to create parts that don't get used. By giving a child simple construction toys to play with when they're young, parents are helping to ensure the spatial relations part of their brain is well-developed, something that will serve them well later in life. Just to give a few examples, every time you give driving directions, play baseball, or try to solve a 3-D puzzle, one is using spatial relations. It doesn't hurt that playing with blocks builds motor skills, either.

Board and card games help build other parts of the brain. Specifically, they tend to help with pattern recognition and multi-step planning, both useful things to be good at. In addition, they provide avenues for direct social interaction, a must-have for children.

Give your child the opportunity to participate in the arts. This could be as simple as giving them Play-Doh™ to sculpt, or as involved as learning the violin. Regardless of what the art, it's likely to help with fine motor control and mental development.

Behavior and discipline

As a general rule, we prefer to avoid using punishment as an incentive for good behavior. Instead, whenever possible, we will simply ignore minor bad behavior. Bad behavior is usually an attempt to get attention, and punishing a student for it, or even lecturing them on it, merely fulfills that expectation, leading to further bad behavior. Students who are genuinely having difficulty controlling themselves (especially if the events are frequent) may be asked to step outside the classroom while they calm down. If we find a student's behavior is a risk to themselves or others, or that certain behavior indicates serious underlying problems, we may ask that the student - and perhaps their family - go to counseling.

Fundamentally, teachers and students and other staff must respect each other in words and actions. Disruptive behavior is not accepted. Offensive, scatological, sexually demeaning language is not tolerated. Physical or psychological bullying is not tolerated.

Conflict resolution helps everyone, in their personal relations and in their academic performance. It is in everybody's best interest that our students learn how to peacefully and reasonably resolve their conflicts without outside intervention whenever possible. The particular method of conflict resolution we will practice is called eye-to-eye, which [Assistant Head of School Paula Hines](#) introduced to the Academy from her experience at the Newark Center for Creative Learning. The technique, developed by the Quakers, is very straightforward. The teachers will model and facilitate the process, outlined below, for new students so they can become familiar with it. It is based on [active listening](#), in which the participants listen carefully to one another and then repeat what they heard the other person say in their own words. It usually requires the individuals involved meet in a neutral place, at an appropriate time, and perhaps with a neutral facilitator or mediator. The following components must be followed:

1. Only one person will speak at a time.

2. All people will make every effort to listen with respect for the other(s).
3. All people will try to understand the points of view of the other(s), and should be willing to understand that there may be differences in how issues are perceived.
4. The confidentiality of the discussions will be honored, to the extent possible. This should be discussed if necessary.

When party A feels they have a problem with party B, they request an eye-to-eye with that party. Note that a party could be one person, or several. The two parties meet in some non-public location where they won't be interrupted, and party A starts by explaining how they feel they were wronged. Party B repeats the complaint in their own words to verify that they heard and understood the complaint. If Party A confirms that Party B understood their perspective, their roles reverse and Party B explains what happened from their point of view. The two parties, now aware of each other's point of view, try to come to a resolution. If they truly cannot come to an agreement, the next step is for a mediator (this can be a teacher or administrator, but it can be anybody both parties find acceptable) to judge the argument and propose a solution. If even mediation fails, the final step is for a teacher or administrator to hear the argument and impose a solution.

Levels of intervention and action: Eye-to-eye resolution may not always suffice. A student may display chronic behavioral problems, or may display disruptive or offensive behavior in more general ways than in interactions with one or a few individuals in the Academy community. Teachers then do more direct consultation with such a student. The next level for resolution is referral to the Head of School. In the case of repeated or serious offenses, the Head of School will inform the parents of the student, asking them to enter a discussion. If the result is unsatisfactory, the Head of School shall convene a group of teachers and advisors, held to a condition of confidentiality, to decide upon action. Options for action include: a requirement that the parents obtain consultation, such as with a psychologist; temporary suspension of the student; or expulsion. Parents will be informed of the decision in adequate detail.

Miscellaneous

Fees and fines. Optional activities like field trips may involve additional fees. On Fridays we have lunch with food from an outside vendor, with parents paying for the cost of the food their student ate. We inform parents about the amount and timing of payments for trips and food. To keep bookkeeping simple, we ask that checks for payment be made to the appropriate party. For example, for food, payment is usually made to the Head of School and not to the Las Cruces Academy, avoiding the need to pay in and pay out of the Academy accounts.

Lost or damaged school property will usually result in a fine equal to the amount it costs us to replace or repair the property unless we waive that fine. If a child damages the property of a third party (e.g. museum property on a field trip) and LCA has to pay for the damage, we will pass the cost on to the parents in the same way we would if it had been LCA property. We will inform you of the party to whom the check should be made.

As described earlier, there is a \$10 fee for each time a student is not picked up by 5:30, and a further \$20 fee if the student is not picked up by 6:00. We currently do not charge for after school care because we feel it is important for the students to interact and have time to do their homework. We ask that parents not abuse this luxury.

Helping the Academy

You can help the Academy and your child in diverse ways:

1. Offering constructive suggestions about our operations, academic, financial, or otherwise. LCA community meetings are an excellent venue. We discussed them in an earlier section of this handbook.

2. Volunteering to help at the Academy. Volunteers have helped with cleaning, student supervision in silent reading, planning events and preparing for them, and offering special one-time classes, such as on art. We can always use such help, and we greatly appreciate it. Another need of ours is cataloguing our vast holdings of books. We have a barcode scanner and software that volunteers can use.

3. Attending programs and events at the Academy. Especially, it brightens the lives of children when parents and friends come to student performances.

4. Paying tuition in timely fashion. We depend upon our cash flow from tuition for the bulk of our income. Large expenses arise at some times of year, such as for insurance; it is important for us to have cash reserves to cover these.

5. Charitable giving. As other non-profits do, we rely on donations to cover the shortfall of income that is a fact of life, even with our Head of School and Board Chair working without pay. Donations also help us to improve our educational efforts by providing for teacher development and educational resources. We are working on developing annual fund campaigns, designed with the help of a professional fundraising consultant with over 30 years of experience. Giving by 100% of parents, according to ability, is a virtual necessity in our approach to prospective donors in the community at large and with foundations. The gifts join with those from the board members, teachers, students, friends, corporations, and foundations in keeping the Academy growing and improving. We also value the participation of grandparents and other relatives.

Guidelines for attendance by a child who is ill or has been ill recently

Evidence of having a communicable illness, or an illness that will make a student unable to perform academically. The guidelines here are not comprehensive but cover most cases of possible illness.

- Fever, chills, or sweats: A child with these symptoms is very likely to be ill and to have a communicable illness; the child **must be kept at home for at least 24 hours** after a fever has subsided. Parents may gauge a child's temperature informally or with a thermometer, either oral or infrared. Please note that oral temperature readings do not accurately reflect body core temperature if the child has eaten food or drunk liquids recently.
- Sneezing: when accompanied by aches or fever, sneezing indicates illness. The child should be kept at home. If the child does not have aches or fever, he or she may simply have allergies. Parents should use judgment in deciding if a child is well enough to attend school.
- Coughing: a cough that is painful, that produces phlegm, or that causes wheezing or shortness of breath indicates illness. Medical care should be sought and the child should not go to school.
- Gastrointestinal distress: "stomach aches" and / or diarrhea and /or nausea are common symptoms of gastrointestinal infection by any of a wide variety of agents – bacteria, viruses, or protozoa. These diseases are very contagious, debilitating, and, to be sure, messy. The child must be kept at home. Some cases of GI distress arise from a temporary condition of food poisoning, such as from over-age food. While the condition is not contagious, it is debilitating and messy. The child must be kept at home.
- Pinkeye: this is a condition described well by the name. It can originate from exposure to wind or sun, but most of the time it is an illness that is highly contagious, caused by a viral or bacterial infection. Preventing the spread involves strict attention to handwashing; children are not capable of this care and must not attend school when they have pinkeye.

- Earache: this is typically from illness. While it is not contagious, it is debilitating and unlikely to improve without medical care. The child should not come to school.
- Measles and chickenpox: these have very characteristic rashes. They are rare, now that immunization is almost universal. If your child has not been immunized and has the symptoms, they must not attend school, and they must get medical attention. Complications can occasionally be severe.
- Head lice: the signs are an itchy scalp and the presence of small, wingless insects on the scalp and very small, yellowish eggs on hair shafts. Head lice do **not** indicate poor hygiene or low social status, but they are contagious via close contact. A child with head lice should not come to school, and should be treated with shampoos containing 1% permethrin (Nix).

Guidelines: expectations regarding homework

Kindergarten first-grade students do not have daily homework. Families are encouraged to read with their child for at least 30 minutes per day.

Students in second grade and higher grades have daily homework assignments. Teachers write the assignments on the board in class and the students are expected to write down the assignment in their Homework Assignment Handbooks. We expect that parents of older students will check the student's handbook for the nature of the assignment and for its timely completion, and will attest to this by signing the handbook on a weekly basis.

The assignments increase in depth and required time with grade level. Assignments will cover each subject. For younger students, the assignments will require about 30 minutes each night. By fourth grade, they will typically require about one full hour.

Some homework will be assigned on a weekly basis rather than a daily basis. Students need to hand in completed homework in timely fashion.

Policy on parents driving their own children on field trips

In parallel with policies of other schools, such as the Minnetonka, MN school district, we have a policy that any adult who drives an LCA student or students for an LCA event must have his or her driving record on file with the Academy. This requirement does not apply to dropping off and picking up a student or students to begin or end their school day. **However, it includes the case of transporting one's own child or children on an LCA trip**, such as a field trip. We have this policy so that students are protected to the extent we can offer and so that the Academy is not needlessly exposed to legal actions in case of vehicular accidents. When students are on a trip as part of the Academy school day, we must assume a proper degree of oversight and responsibility.

Parents can have a driving record sent to the Academy at 4904 Calabazilla Dr., zip 88011, by going online at <https://secure.mvd.newmexico.gov/RenewalServices/DHR/Individual/>. The approval process takes at least 48 hours. Please plan accordingly. There is a nominal fee of \$6.33. The driving record should be current, no less than two years old at the time that the adult wishes to transport any student or students.

Schedules – yearly and daily

The schedule for the school year is posted on the Academy Website. There is a link at the upper right of the home page, entitled "Calendar." We follow a full 180-day school year, closely matched to the Las

Cruces Public School (LCPS) calendar overall. We do not have teacher development days that the LCPS specifies; we hold class on those days.

The first and last days of classes vary slightly each year. Dates are posted on the Website. For the spring semester 2013, the relevant dates:

- First day of classes: Monday, 11 August 2014
- Last day of classes: Friday, 19 December

The holidays and breaks that we observe are:

Fall semester

- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving week
- Winter – New Year’s break, approximately 2 ½ weeks

Spring semester

- Spring break – full week – in 2015, this is 23 – 27 March

In order to have 180 days of class during the year, we will have class, unusually for us, on Martin Luther King Day, Monday, 20 January 2014. The students will provide a re-enactment of one of the notable events in the struggle for equality; families are invited.

We have a number of special events throughout the year, such as student performances with potluck dinners, open houses, and book fairs. We note these on the Website.

The **daily class schedule** is sent by email to parents. It is not put on the Website in public view because it identifies children, if only by first name, so that parents can see which class sessions their children are in.