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# STUDENT HANDBOOK

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Discovery Middle School





## **TO THE PARENT/GUARDIAN**

Welcome to Discovery and the 2016-2017 school year! It is a great time to be a DMS Panther! This student handbook is published so that all students and parents may have a ready reference to information that is necessary for an understanding of the daily operation of our school. It is essential that parents and students read the information contained therein so there may be as few misunderstandings as possible.

At Discovery we are committed to your child's educational excellence. We promote this through diverse curriculum, a dedicated and knowledgeable staff and a school/community partnership. Collaboration, cooperation, and open communication between home and school are keys to building a strong foundation for a successful school year.

We look forward to another great year at Discovery. DMS Panther Pride is at an all-time high. We hope students use their time in middle school to cultivate both learning and friendships that will last a lifetime. Thank you for your cooperation and support! Go Panthers!



## **TO THE STUDENT**

On behalf of the faculty and staff of Discovery Middle School, we would like to welcome you to the school. Academic success and appropriate social skills are the foundation to your future success. Discovery Middle has the reputation of high academic achievement due to the dedication and efforts of our faculty and the diligence and perseverance of the student body. Organization is one of the necessary keys to success, and we want to provide you with every opportunity to succeed. Good luck in the upcoming school term!



## **NON-DISCRIMINATORY STATEMENT**

It is the official policy of the Madison City school system that no person shall, on the grounds of race, color, disability, sex, religion, national origin or age, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program, activity, or employment. The following person has been designated to handle inquiries regarding the nondiscrimination policies: Dr. Dee Fowler, 211 Celtic Dr., Madison, Alabama 35758, (256) 464-8370.



## **SCHOOL ARRIVAL**

The official school day starts at 8:05 A.M. and ends at 3:10 P.M. Students will not be allowed in the school buildings until 7:30 A.M. as no doors will be unlocked until that time. Please adhere to this policy because the safety and supervision of students is one of our greatest concerns. Administrators and teachers officially assume their morning duty beginning at 7:30 A.M. Car riders will go into the gym and remain there until 7:55 A.M. Likewise, bus riders will go directly from the bus to the cafeteria and remain there until the 7:55 A. M. bell. Bus riders are not to arbitrarily make a decision to go to the gym prior to 7:55 A.M. Neither are car riders allowed to go to the cafeteria before time. Students who normally walk to school will use either the cafeteria or gym depending on which is closer to their arrival point. Students are not allowed in the halls, library, or classrooms until after the 7:55 A.M. bell. At that time, students

are allowed access to their lockers, and then may go to the area closest to their homeroom. Students roaming the halls in an arbitrary fashion away from their primary area will be subject to disciplinary action.



## STUDENT ABSENCE PROCEDURES

Students, who are absent from school the entire day, must bring either a parent note stating the reason for the absence or a doctor's excuse. Absent notes should be given to the homeroom teacher within **three** days of the absence, or it will be unexcused. Board policy states that work cannot be made up for unexcused absences. Good attendance is encouraged and necessary for successful grade promotion. If a student's absences exceed 5 days in one semester, the student is required to bring a doctor's excuse for any additional days. This process starts over second semester. A parent can write an excuse for a yearly total of 10 days (5 per semester). Requests to attend non-school educational activities must be presented to the principal, in writing, **prior** to the trip. The principal, at his/her discretion, will then decide if the activity will be an excused or unexcused absence based upon the State Department of Education's current School Attendance Manual.

*Please see attached document: State of Alabama, Department of Education – Truancy Definition*



## CHECKING IN/OUT PROCEDURES

Students, who arrive at school after the 8:05 bell, are tardy and must be signed into school **by the parent**. **Students will never be allowed to sign themselves into school.** The student will then receive a pass to class marked either excused or unexcused. An excused tardy includes illness or a doctor's appointment. **No more than three excused tardies per semester will be allowed unless a doctor's note or legal document is produced. All tardies after the third will result in immediate assignment of after school detention. Oversleeping, missing the bus, or traffic problems are not an excused tardy.** A student who is tardy for school (unexcused) or any class period during the school day will be assigned detention. If the student misses detention, he/she will be assigned to ISS. Students missing Saturday school will be assigned to three days of I.S.S. Students may only be checked out during the day by a parent or guardian. Phone calls will NOT be accepted for checking out students. The student will be called from class upon the parent's arrival at school. Please arrive early in order to allow ample time for your child to arrive in the office to check out. If at all possible, students should be checked out at the beginning or end of a class block/period.



## GRADE POLICY

Nine-week grades are a combination of daily class grades, quiz grades, test scores, assigned reports and projects and are an indication of how a student is doing at certain points during the school year. A student's semester grade will be an accumulation and combination of all grades throughout an eighteen-week period.



## HONOR ROLL

An “A” Honor Roll will be published at the end of each nine weeks grading period. It will be an all “A” Honor Roll. Any one grade lower than an “A” will eliminate a student from the “A” Honor Roll. An “A/B” honor Roll will be published at the end of each nine weeks grading period. It will be an all “A” and “B” Honor Roll. Any one grade lower than a “B” will eliminate a student from the “A/B” Honor Roll. Students will be recognized on Awards day for their academic accomplishments.



## MAKE-UP WORK

Under normal circumstances, it is expected that students **will submit previously** assigned work upon return to school after an excused absence. All work missed on the day(s) of excused absences must be made up within three school days after returning to school. **It is the responsibility of the student to ensure he or she makes up work following excused absences. Students will not receive credit for and will not be allowed to make up any assignments, tests, work, activities, etc., missed during unexcused absences.**



## HALL PASS

Students must have a DMS planner with a pass signed by the teacher to be out of class during the school day. Misuse of their pass will result in the loss of privileges and/or disciplinary measures.



## DRESS CODE

The Board believes that good grooming; dress, and personal appearance are essential elements in the learning and teaching process because they contribute to a more favorable learning attitude and environment. Students are expected to dress and to be groomed in a manner that ensures their health and safety. Hair must be styled and colored in a manner that does not cause disruptions/distractions. Hair must also be clean, sanitary and kept out of the eyes so not to impair vision. Grooming, dress, and personal adornment, including considerations of personal hygiene, and general cleanliness, must not constitute a distraction or interfere with the educational opportunity of other students, nor must they present the possibility of injury. **Boys:** Pants may not be oversized, too tight, or allowed to sag. Undergarments must not be exposed. Pant legs must be uniform length and may not drag on the floor. **Girls:** Clothing that is too tight, short, or low cut will not be permitted. **Clothing that is shorter than a credit card length above the knee will not be allowed.**

**Boys/Girls:** Only piercing of the ears is allowed in school and then they must not disrupt/distract others as determined by school officials. Tattoos are not allowed and must not be visible at school. A student with tattoos must cover them up. **NO EXCEPTIONS! If a student does not meet dress code, parents will be contacted to pick up the student in order for him/her to go home and change into appropriate attire. Any missed instructional time as a result of dress code violation will be unexcused.** {Madison City Schools Policy JA}, Section X}.



## FIGHTING

Fighting will not be tolerated at Discovery Middle School. Students involved in fighting either before/after school, during school, or at a school activity will be suspended from school. Disciplinary hearings may be held. In addition, the student may be arrested. A parent conference will be required with an administrator.



## DRUGS/MEDICATION

Students are not to have **PRESCRIPTION** or **NON-PRESCRIPTION** medication in their possession on school premises or school buses or at school-sponsored events. Students are not allowed to transport **ANY** type of medication to or from the school. Parents must bring medications to the nurse. All medications will be dispensed in the nurse's office. Examples of non-prescription medications include but are not limited to Tylenol, Midol, Motrin, Ibuprofen, Aleve, Sudafed, Claritin, Tylenol Sinus, etc. Students who are in possession of these types of items will be in violation of district policy and therefore subject to appropriate disciplinary procedures. Any student who has medication prescribed by a physician must leave it in the nurse's office and a medication release form must be filled out by the parent and attending physician and kept on file in the main office. Any student in possession of medication, who gives away, sells or attempts to sell medication (prescription or non-prescription) may be subject to suspension or expulsion. {Madison City Schools Policy JA], Section XX}

A student who possesses, uses, or is under the influence of any narcotic substance, alcoholic beverage, controlled drug (other than prescribed to student) or intoxicant of any kind while on the school grounds or at any school activity or event shall be referred for disciplinary action and referral made to law enforcement authorities.



## TOBACCO PRODUCTS

Smoking and/or the use of tobacco products are prohibited in all school buildings and on any property owned and/or controlled by the Board of Education. Such prohibition also includes school-sponsored events. Any student found with tobacco or tobacco products will be suspended from school for no less than three days and no more than five days. {Madison City Schools Policy GAN, April 6, 2000}



## DETENTION

Students that are tardy to class will be assigned to either morning or afternoon detention. It is the student's responsibility to inform their parents of the date and time this detention is held. All students attending morning detention must sign in NO later than 7:10 A.M. on the assigned day. Students attending afternoon detention must be picked up NO later than 4:00.



## IN-SCHOOL SUSPENSION

In- School Suspension will be held daily during school hours. All students assigned I.S.S. must obey the teacher and rules at all times or will be subject to Out-Of-School Suspension.



## PROFANITY

The use of improper or profane language in school and/or at school activities is prohibited. Offenders are immediately subject to disciplinary action. Anyone using profanity toward a staff member of Discovery will be suspended and could be subject to a disciplinary hearing.



## CHEATING, PLAGIARISM, MAJOR FORGERY

A student who cheats will be subject to disciplinary consequences in Section XXII of the student code of conduct. Cheating is defined to include, but is not limited to: (a) copying someone else's work in or out of class and identifying and submitting it as your own, (b) failing to quote and/or list appropriate citations for material derived from published sources (including the Internet) and identifying and submitting it as your own, (c) the use of unauthorized notes, other materials, or assistance during the accomplishment of graded work in or out of class, (d) any other situation in which the student attempts to or accepts credit for work not his or her own.



## THEFT

The acts of theft, damage of property, assault, possession of weapons and harassment are violations of the law. Such behavior will result in immediate suspension and other disciplinary action as deemed appropriate by the administrator. Students participating in such types of behavior may be referred to appropriate law enforcement authorities.



## CELL PHONES, ELECTRONIC DEVICES & MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS

No cell phones or other electronic devices will be allowed during instructional time unless deemed appropriate by the teacher. Detention or ISS will be assigned if there is failure to comply. Matches, lighters, and laser devices are prohibited and constitute a Class II offense. **Any misuse of electronic devices will result in disciplinary consequences. Misuse is behavior such as texting, using phone or other devices to video students and/or faculty or posting inappropriate pictures or comments to social networking sites which cause disruption at school.** These items will be confiscated and kept in the office until the end of the semester. Parents may pick these up early, but the student will receive one day of ISS if devices are picked up early. Multiple incidents will result in harsher consequences. Skateboards and/or roller blades are not allowed on school grounds. The school is not responsible for the loss or theft of prohibited items or electronic devices.



## BUS RULES

Safety on school buses is essential, and it starts with good behavior from students. Students are to ride their assigned buses on a regular basis. **Drivers will not allow students who are not regular riders to board their buses without the approval of and a signed note from parents and the administration. Students should bring these requests to the office upon arrival at school to obtain permission from the administrator.**

There are consequences for breaking school bus rules. Riding the bus is a privilege that can be taken away if a student disregards rules. Listed below are rules for proper bus conduct:

- Remain seated at all times while the bus is in motion.
- Use appropriate tone of voice and language at all times.
- Obey the driver at all times.
- Be respectful of driver and other students.
- Food or beverage is not allowed on the bus.
- Keep hands, feet and all other objects to yourself.
- Throwing objects from the bus will result in an immediate bus suspension.

**See the Madison City Board of Education Code of Conduct for additional rules.**



## FIELD TRIP POLICY

Discovery Middle School believes that students should always represent the school in a positive manner but especially on trips away from the school. If a student has any of the following on file during the semester the field trip is occurring, he/she will not be able to attend the office campus field trip. Also, if a student acquires any of the infractions listed below before the scheduled field trip, the will not be able to attend, and will not receive a refund if payment has already been made. In addition, permission to leave campus for a field trip can be decided using administrator discretion.

Infractions that prohibit field trip attendance:

- 2 or more In-School Suspension assignments
- Out of School Suspension
- Alternative School Placement



## LOCKERS

All students (Grades 7-8) can rent a locker. It is the students' responsibility to keep the locker orderly, clean and fresh. No stickers, etc. are to be placed on the lockers. Anyone abusing a locker will be subject to the replacement cost of that locker. Once you have been assigned a locker, you are responsible for the cleanliness and contents of the locker.



## PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCES

The use of parent/teacher conferences and communication is encouraged. Parent/teacher conferences should be coordinated by calling or emailing the appropriate teacher. More communication between parents and teachers contributes to the better understanding of the student's needs. If requested, a member of the administrative staff will sit in on a conference.



## VISITORS AND/OR PARENTS

**All parents and visitors must sign in at the main office. Please use the front entrance of the new wing to enter and exit the building. Picture ID is required to check out a student.** You will be issued a visitor's pass to wear while you are in the building. Any unauthorized person in the building will be considered a trespasser and must go to the main office to sign in or leave the premises.



## MESSAGES AND FORGOTTEN ITEMS

We try to keep classroom disruptions to a minimum. Students are not permitted to leave class to take phone calls except in an emergency. Please help us by seeing that your child leaves home with his/her lunch money, books, supplies, etc. Messages or forgotten items delivered during the day by parents must go through the main office. Students having a need to use the phone will use the phone at the front desk.



## LUNCH

Students are expected to act appropriately during lunch. Students have the freedom to choose their seat during lunch, and must remain seated throughout the entire lunch period. If a student demonstrates an inability to remain seated and follow lunch room rules, he/she will be given an assigned seat. Students are allowed to use their cell phones and electronic devices during lunch. They must adhere to all school rules regarding appropriate use of those devices. There will be **no visitors allowed** in the lunchroom during the lunch period. All students are required to clean up after themselves once lunch is finished.



## DRIVING

No student will be allowed to drive an automobile, motorcycle, or any other motorized vehicle on Discovery's campus. Please be aware that this is strictly enforced by the Administration. All unauthorized vehicles will be towed by DMS administration.



## STATE OF ALABAMA DEPT OF ED TRUANCY DEFINITION

A parent, guardian, or other person having charge of any child officially enrolled in Alabama public schools (K-12) shall explain in writing the cause of any and every absence of the child no later than three (3) school days following return to school. A failure to furnish such explanation shall be evidence of the child being truant for any absence determined by the principal to be unexcused based upon the State Department of Education's current School Attendance Manual. Seven unexcused absences within a school year constitute a student being truant for the purpose of filing a petition with the Court. The Interagency committee on Youth Truancy Task Force recommendations known as the Early Warning Truancy Prevention Program timeline for reporting truancy shall define the truancy status of any student as follows:

1. First truancy/unexcused absence (warning)

- (i) Parent/guardian shall be notified by the school principal or his/her designee that the student was truant and the date of the truancy.
- (ii) Parent/guardian shall also be provided with a copy of Alabama's compulsory school attendance laws and advised of the penalties that can be applied and the procedures that shall be followed in the event that other unexcused absences occur.

2. No earlier than the fifth unexcused absence (conference)

- (i) The parent, guardian, or person having control with the attendance officer and principal or his/her designee and/or participate in the early warning program provided by the juvenile court.
- (ii) Attendance at one of these conferences shall be mandatory except where prior arrangements have been made or an emergency exists.
- (iii) Failure to appear at the school conference and/or to appear at the early warning program shall result in the filing of a complaint/petition against the parent under *Code of Alabama (1975), S16-28-12(c) (failure to cooperate)* or truancy against the child, whichever is appropriate. No earlier than seven unexcused absences, but within ten (10) school days (court)
- (iv) File complaint/petition against the child and/or parent/guardian, if appropriate.

3. Child under probation

- (i) The school attendance officer should be notified by the juvenile probation officer of all children in the school system under probation supervision by the juvenile court as consistent with state stature, *Code of Alabama (1975) S12-15-100 and 105*
- (ii) Where a child under probation is truant, the school attendance officer should immediately notify the juvenile probation officer.
- (iii) Where a child under probation is truant, the school attendance officer should immediately notify the juvenile probation officer.



## SECTION 504 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973

“No otherwise qualified individual with handicaps in the United States shall, solely by reason of her or his handicap, as defined in section 706 (8) of this title, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance or under any program or activity conducted by any Executive agency or by the United States Postal Service.” (29 U.S.C. Sec. 794)



## DMS Instructional Improvement Target

### Content Planning

- (T) Teachers will plan daily, well-constructed learning targets based on the content standards.
  - (T) Teachers will collaborate on a consistent basis in the content area to plan lessons, share strategies as well as differentiated practices that include higher-order thinking skills.
  - (T) Teachers will incorporate literacy and writing standards across the other content areas.
  - (T) Teachers will ensure assignments are grade level appropriate and will provide examples of exceptional work.
  - (T) Teachers will use data available to them to make informed decisions when planning for instruction and to customize lessons.
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- (S) Students will demonstrate understanding of the skills being taught through various types of mastery platforms.
  - (S) Students will show evidence of higher level writing skills based on the implementation of the writing standards across the content areas.

### Instruction

- (T) Teachers will create higher-order level questions and stems to generate deeper levels of thinking.
  - (T) Teachers will provide best practices and ensure high expectations for all students.
  - (T) Teachers will integrate a variety of technology platforms, tools, and devices for learning.
  - (T) Teachers will address the learner’s needs using small group instruction based on data for intervention and acceleration purposes.
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- (S) Students will take an active role in their own learning as well as make real-world connections.
  - (S) Students will show mastery of learning targets using different types of formative feedback.

### Assessment for Learning

- (T) Teachers will use varied types of assessments, both formal and informal, for grading as well as feedback for learning.
  - (T) Teachers will align assignments and assessments with learning targets and standards.
  - (T) Teachers will collaborate to discuss data and develop strategies to target identified areas of need to improve student growth.
  - (T) Teachers will use formative assessment as feedback for student improvement.
  - (T) Teachers will use common assessments that reflect real-world application.
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- (S) Students will show mastery of content evident through various assessment tools.
  - (S) Students will create and share quality products that reflect higher levels of learning.
  - (S) Students will bridge learning with real life experiences in different content areas.

### Community Building

- (T) Teachers will promote and participate in collaboration for students’ benefit.
  - (T) Teachers will provide, model and commit to character education lessons.
  - (T) Teachers will make classroom and school expectations visible and clear to students.
  - (T) Teachers will demonstrate and model leadership.
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- (S) Students will participate in character education opportunities and are encouraged to model the expected positive behaviors.
  - (S) Students will demonstrate leadership characteristics by participating in leadership roles representing DMS.
  - (T/S) Teachers and students will develop positive relationships with other teachers and students while creating a safe, positive, and bully-free learning environment where diversity is accepted and differences are respected.