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# Highlands Virtual Academy Student/ Parent Handbook

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*Updated 2023 - 2024*

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Highlands School District  
1500 Pacific Ave  
Natrona Heights, PA 15065

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***Highlands School District, in partnership with Waterfront Learning, utilizes the Edgenuity and Accelerate platforms for the Highlands Virtual Academy curriculum.***

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## **Welcome to the Highlands Virtual Academy**

The Highlands Virtual Academy (HVA) is a dynamic, engaging, online learning environment designed to capture student interest and draw them into the interactive world of web-based education. The Highlands School District partners with Waterfront Learning and offers HVA with grades 7-12 using the *Edgenuity* platform, and grades K-6 using the *Accelerate* platform.

The Highlands Virtual Academy provides students with access to online educational opportunities, while maintaining the ability to participate in a wide range of district extracurricular activities. HVA offers flexible learning and is supported by Highlands' certified, and highly-qualified professional teaching staff.

## **Highlands School District Mission Statement**

The mission of the Highlands School District is to create a quality, caring educational environment and to develop academic, vocational, and social programs that will enable students to achieve their highest potential in personal growth; and that the family, the community, business and industry will share in the responsibility to prepare students to function as effective citizens in an ever-changing global community.

## **Highlands Virtual Academy Staff**

- Mr. Shawn Cressler – Highlands Virtual Academy Coordinator

[scressler@goldenrams.com](mailto:scressler@goldenrams.com)

### **High School Administrators**

- Mr. Michael Toole - Principal (Grades 11–12)
- Mrs. Kaitlyn Selfridge– Assistant Principal (Grades 9-10)
- Mr. Thomas Stanko - Dean of Students

[mtoole@goldenrams.com](mailto:mtoole@goldenrams.com)

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### **High School Counselors**

- Dr. Susie Gurrera - **Student with Last Names Beginning with A-I**
- Mrs. Beth Carrarini - **Student with Last Names Beginning with J-Sj**
- Mrs. Marilyn Skwortz - **Student with Last Names Beginning with Sk-Z**

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### **Middle School Administrators**

- Ms. Rebecca Bragan – Principal
- Mr. Cory Sakolsky – Assistant Principal
- Mr. Mitchell Shaw – Dean of Students

[rbragan@goldenrams.com](mailto:rbragan@goldenrams.com)

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[mshaw@goldenrams.com](mailto:mshaw@goldenrams.com)

### **Middle School Counselors**

- Mrs. Julie Seitz-Allman – **Students in Grades 5 & 6**
- Ms. Julie Hiester – **Students in Grades 7 & 8**

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### **Elementary School Administrators**

- Dr. Stanley B. Whiteman III - School Principal
- Mrs. Sarah Kumar - Associate Principal

[swhiteman@goldenrams.com](mailto:swhiteman@goldenrams.com)

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### **Elementary School Counselor**

- Mrs. Angela Boyer
- Ms. Kristy Skradski

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**Early Childhood Center Administrator**

- Mrs. Kristie Gizienski – School Principal

[kgizienski@goldenrams.com](mailto:kgizienski@goldenrams.com)

**Early Childhood Center Counselor**

- Ms. Kristy Skradski

[kskradski@goldenrams.com](mailto:kskradski@goldenrams.com)

## **HVA Enrollment Procedure**

Successful participation in the Highlands Virtual Academy requires motivation, self-discipline, basic computer skills, and the ability to work independently for several hours each day. Students must be able to manage their time and work productively in a less structured learning environment, often with less individual assistance and support than in a traditional classroom setting.

Only students currently enrolled in the Highlands School District are eligible to participate in Highlands Virtual Academy. Complete enrollment forms and records must be submitted to the appropriate school, before inquiring about Highlands Virtual Academy.

**Full Time Enrollment: (*Edgenuity/Accelerate*, Grades K-12)** Full time students complete all their academic and elective courses online. It is the expectation of Highlands School District that HVA students complete their work off site and do not physically report to Highlands' facilities, with the exception of scheduled office/support hours with subject area instructors or as required for success. Students who are also enrolled in Forbes Road Career & Technology Center are held to the same participation and attendance standards.

**Part Time Enrollment: (*Edgenuity Only*, Grades 9-12)** Mixed Schedule/Credit Recovery students complete the bulk of their academic on-site classes at Highlands High School. HVA classes supplement current curriculum, relieve schedule conflicts, and/or allow an opportunity for students to recover credit for failed classes.

1. The first step of enrollment is to contact the child's School Counselor to inquire if HVA is an appropriate placement option. This will include a review of the student's academic and discipline records.

### **Issues that may disqualify a student from participation:**

- Required credits and/or graduation requirements cannot be earned through HVA in a timely fashion
- Available course options do not match student's career focus and/or special interests
- Poor record of past academic engagement and/or performance
- Previous unsuccessful enrollment in HVA
- Excessive absences/truancy
- Disciplinary concerns, including students with pending disciplinary matters, and/or those who entered into legally binding agreements with the district in lieu of formal expulsion

2. If applicable, the student's special education roster teacher will verify that needed supports are available to ensure successful participation in HVA courses. The student's IEP and NOREP must be updated, indicating a change in educational placement and available services, before enrollment in HVA.
3. If HVA is determined to be the appropriate placement, the school administrator will provide final approval.
4. The HVA Coordinator will set up the student's *Edgenuity/Accelerate* account and add classes. High School students may be contacted to select electives or inquire about class changes if necessary.
5. The HVA Coordinator will schedule a mandatory orientation meeting with parent and student. Additional information is available online at <https://www.goldenrams.com/domain/876> or you can search "orientation" at goldenrams.com.
6. Students are to remain enrolled in HVA for the entire grading period, discipline, or academic progress concerns notwithstanding. At the interim and end of each nine-week grading period, student performance will be reviewed by the HVA staff. Staff may request a meeting with the parent/guardian, student, and appropriate staff, to discuss the student's continued placement within HVA. Students who are unsuccessful or non-compliant with program requirements, are subject to a schedule or placement change.

#### **Parent/Guardian Responsibilities:**

- Maintain a home learning environment that supports academic participation and success
- Designate a primary contact for the purposes of communicating with school staff
- Provide accurate contact information, including a phone number and email address
- Act as a Learning Coach to assist student
- Ensure School District technology is being used EXCLUSIVELY by the student to whom it has been issued
  - All district property, including Chromebooks, iPads, laptops, mobile hotspots, and assistive devices, are used for educational purposes ONLY (as per HSD's Chromebook and iPad Programs)
- Monitor student performance and attendance, and contact the HVA Coordinator as soon as possible to report technical difficulties when student progress is stalled
- Handle district property responsibly, and return all district property when requested by Highlands School District (as per HSD's Chromebook and iPad Programs)
- Contact Highlands School District, as per the Chromebook and iPad Guidelines program requirements, to report accidental damage/technology issues, and refrain from attempting to make repairs.
- Ensure student meets expectations for minimum login time on ALL scheduled school days (See Attendance Policies for *Edgenuity and Accelerate*)

**Email:**

Email is the primary form of communication used between HVA Staff and parents/guardians, students, and administrators, to share updates and pertinent information regarding progress and updates.

*Accelerate and Edgenuity* have dedicated email systems that support communication within the platform with faculty and staff. These systems should be used for specific questions from students, about course content or operations.

Parents/guardians and students are expected to communicate with Highlands Virtual Academy Staff in an appropriate manner at all times, and should use goldenrams.com address for all email communications.

If inappropriate communications occur with HVA staff, students will receive one warning and are subject to removal from the program if it reoccurs.

**Computer and Network Use Guidelines****Terms and Conditions**

The purpose of the Highlands School District technology and associated Internet resources is to support research and education through access to unique resources and collaborative work. The use of all accounts associated with Highlands School District must be consistent with the educational objectives, philosophy, and goals of the district. Use of other organizations' network or computer resources must comply with the rules appropriate for the network. Transmission of any material in violation of any national or state regulation is prohibited. This includes copyrighted material or material protected by trade secret.

System administrators and classroom instructors may access user files as required to protect the integrity of computer systems, and for academic purposes. For example, following organizational guidelines, system administrators may access or examine files or accounts that are suspected of unauthorized use or misuse, or that have been corrupted, damaged or need to be updated. Files may also be subject to search under court order.

**Possible examples of misuse include:**

1. Using the network for any illegal activity, including violation of copyright or other contract
2. Using the network for financial or commercial gain
3. Degrading or disrupting equipment, software, or system performance
4. Gaining unauthorized access to resources or entities
5. Wastefully using finite resources
6. Invading the privacy of others
7. Using an account owned by another user or allowing another user to use your account
8. Posting personal communications without the original author's consent
9. Posting anonymous messages

10. Downloading, storing, printing, or distributing files or messages that contain information considered dangerous to the public
11. Vandalizing the data of another user, any computer hardware, peripherals, or structural cabling system
12. Knowingly running or installing on any computer system or network, or giving to another user, a program intended to damage or over-load a computer system or network
13. Attempting to circumvent data protection schemes or uncover security loopholes
14. Using electronic mail to harass others
15. Masking the identity of an account or machines
16. Posting on electronic bulletin boards, materials that violate existing laws or the school district policy and procedures
17. Any unauthorized user attempting to monitor or tamper with another user's electronic communications, or reading, copying, changing, or deleting another user's files or software without the explicit agreement of the owner

## **Security**

If an authorized user identifies a security problem on either the Highlands School District networks or the Internet resources, the user must notify the system administrator. Problems should not be demonstrated to other users. Any user identified as a security risk or having a history of problems with other computer systems may be denied access to local networks and the Internet.

## **Consequences for Inappropriate Use:**

The network user shall be responsible for damages to the equipment, systems or software resulting from deliberate or willful acts. Disciplinary action will be in accordance with district policy and/or the Crimes Code of PA, Section 3933.

## **Disclaimer:**

Highlands School District makes no warranties of any kind, whether expressed or implied, for the service it is providing, and is not responsible for any personal costs incurred. Highlands School District will not be responsible for any damages suffered. This includes loss of data resulting from delays, non-deliveries, mis-deliveries, and interruptions caused by its own negligence or personal errors or omissions. Use of any information obtained via the Internet is at the user's risk. Highlands School District specifically denies any responsibility for the accuracy or quality of information obtained.

## **Attendance Policy and Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) Requirements**

The Highlands School District is required to monitor student attendance in accordance with Pennsylvania State Law. Responsibility for compliance with school attendance laws rests with the parents/guardians. Highlands School District is obligated to keep an accurate record of daily attendance, HVA Staff will monitor student attendance regularly. For more information about truancy, please refer to the [goldenrams.com](http://goldenrams.com) website.

### **PDE Attendance Requirements:**

1. Student is absent. (Absence is considered illegal until the school district receives a written excuse.)
2. If 3 calendar days pass after the absence, with no acceptable excuse, the absence is permanently recorded as illegal.
3. District personnel are required to report cases of habitual truancy (3 days or equivalent of unlawful absences).
4. If a student is absent 10 consecutive days, the school district is required to drop the child from active membership roll unless:
  - a. A legal excuse is provided
  - b. The school district is pursuing compulsory attendance prosecution
5. Up to 10 cumulative lawful absences (e.g. parent excused) are permitted during a school year. Any absence beyond the 10-day limit requires a physician's excuse.

*Adapted from PDE - Toolkit on School Attendance & Truancy Reduction*

<https://www.slsd.org/site/handlers/filedownload.ashx?moduleinstanceid=69&dataid=254&FileName=attendance%20flow%20chart%20pde%20bec.pdf>

### **HVA Excuses and Absence Notification:**

Parents/Guardians of students experiencing technical difficulties should report the issue to the HVA Coordinator within 24 hours. Failure to do so will result in an illegal absence(s).

If a full-time HVA student is not completing the minimum attendance requirements the following will occur:

- Parents/Guardians are notified of absence(s) by the PowerSchool system via text or phone call. A staff member will follow up with a notice or additional details of the absence.
- Students with repeated absences risk a truancy filing, and possible removal from the program, and being returned to traditional in-person classes.



## **Submitting Excuses for HVA Absences (K-12)**

Absence excuses should be submitted to the student's assigned homeroom teacher who is responsible for recording and submitting student attendance in PowerSchool. When submitting by email, include recipients (counselors, attendance officer... etc.).

When submitting a parent excuse for an absence via email, please be sure to include the following information:

- Student's first and last name
- Student's grade
- Date of the absence(s)
- Reason for the absence
  - Excused absences include illness, accidents, death in the family, religious reasons, or impassable roads
  - All other absences may be recorded as illegal.

### **Examples for reference:**

*Please excuse Anne Example, grade 9, from classes on 1/5 and 1/6/2023. Anne was sick and unable to work on her classes.*

*Imma Example, grade 5, was unable to finish her work on 2-10-2023 because of death in the family.*

When submitting a picture of a doctor's excuse or other documentation via email, please make sure the image is in focus, readable, and includes:

- Student's first and last name
- Date of the appointment, visit or absence(s)
- Name of the practice, clinic, service provider, agency
- Signature of the physician or practitioner when applicable

## **Absence for Vacation (K-12)**

*(excerpted from the HHS Student-Parent Handbook pg. 20)*

To ensure student success, we request that vacations **NOT** be scheduled when school is in session. Absences due to family vacations will only be considered legal if the following conditions are met:

- A request is submitted to the building principal on required district form, detailing the nature and dates of the vacation at least one week in advance of the departure date. Forms are available for download: <https://www.goldenrams.com/Page/5790>
- The length of the vacation does not exceed five (5) school days. Any days exceeding 5 will result in illegal absences.
- Parents are responsible for making sure that missed schoolwork is completed by the child before returning to school.

- Students with chronic attendance will only be granted approval at the principal's discretion.

One of the inherent advantages of the HVA program is that students can complete learning activities at any time (e.g. weekends, holidays, etc.). They are not limited to Monday through Friday during normal school hours.

HVA uses two Learning Management Systems (*Accelerate* and *Edgenuity*). Attendance is handled differently for students in grades K- 6 and 7-12.

### **High School (Grades 9-12) *Edgenuity* Attendance**

- Students enrolled in *Edgenuity* (Grades 9-12) platform as full-time students (4 or more classes), must log a total of 15.00 hours of Active Time per calendar week. The 15-hour minimum is for attendance only; more time is needed for students to be successful.

The total for the week will include time accrued from 12:00 AM Sunday until 11:59 PM Saturday. Early dismissals, two-hour delays, and half days do not affect the minimum hours of required learning activities. The minimum attendance requirement will be prorated for scheduled days off, Act 80 days, in-service days, and emergency closures.

### **How to check attendance in *Edgenuity* (Grades 9-12)**

Log into *Edgenuity*.

- Student's name will appear in the upper right corner of the screen, with a downward pointing triangle.
- Click on the triangle, a drop-down menu will appear.
- Click on "Profile" and a menu will appear on the left of the screen.
- Click "Attendance Report" to display the current amount of time logged.
- Find the gray band labeled "Week 1, 2, 3 and so on...." Look for the gray band that includes dates for this calendar week.
  - For example, if you were checking attendance for the last week before holiday break you would look for the dates: "12/18/2022 -12/24/2022."
  - The time listed in the band is the total amount of time logged for the week, from Sunday to Saturday.
  - If it is 15 hours or more, the minimum requirement for the week has been met.
  - If it is less than 15 hours, more time needs to be logged for the week.
  - An absence will be recorded of 1 school day for each 3-hour or partial 3-hour increment less than the required minimum, 15 hours in most cases.
    - For example, a student who logged 7 hours would be marked absent for 3 school days, as they were 8 hours short of the requirement.
  - Absences will be marked in PowerSchool starting with the previous Monday.
    - For example, the student in the previous example missed 3 days and would be marked absent for Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday.
    - Absent days may not correspond with the days students completed work.

- Keep in mind the 15-hour minimum is for attendance only; more time may be needed to be successful.
- Click the ***Edgenuity*** logo in the upper left corner to return to the lobby screen.

## **Middle School (Grades 7-8) *Edgenuity* Attendance**

Students enrolled on the ***Edgenuity (Grades 7-8)*** platform as full-time, must log in each day the Highlands School District is in session and complete a minimum of three hours of learning activities (see: Active Time). Early dismissals, two-hour delays, and half days do not affect the required minimum three hours of learning activities. Students are not required to log on during scheduled days off, Act 80 days, in-service days, and cancellations of school or other emergencies, but will be required to log in on scheduled make-up day(s) when applicable.

Idle Time is when a student is logged on to the ***Edgenuity*** system, but not completing learning activities. This time does not count toward the daily required 3.0 hour minimum. Students will obviously accrue some Idle Time during their school day, 20 minutes of Idle Time during a 3-hour period is the maximum acceptable amount. Anything beyond twenty minutes will be deducted from the total time logged for the school day. Excessive Idle Time can result in student absences.

On the ***Edgenuity*** platform (**Grades 7-12**) time spent reviewing previously viewed instructional videos or studying eNotes will accrue Idle Time, and does not count toward a student's required 3.0 hours of Active Time. .

## **How to check attendance in *Edgenuity* (Grades 7-8)**

Log into ***Edgenuity***.

- Student's name will appear in the upper right-hand corner with a downward pointing triangle.
- Click on the triangle, a drop-down menu will appear.
- Click on "Profile" and menu will appear on the left of the screen.
- Click "Attendance Report" to display the current amount of time logged.
- Find the date. It will list the total for the day on the same line as the date, in a light gray band on the screen.
- Add together all the Idle Time for the day. Idle Time is listed last for each session after the classes a student has worked on.
  - If there is MORE than 20 minutes of Idle Time, subtract ALL the Idle Time from the day's total time.
  - If the student has LESS than 3.0 hours after subtracting Idle Time, he/she will need to log more time to meet the attendance requirement.
  - If the student has MORE than 3.0 hours after subtracting Idle Time, he/she has met the daily attendance requirement for the day

- Click the ***Edgenuity*** logo in the upper left corner to return to the lobby screen with classes. Any time logged from 12:00 AM Midnight to 11:59 PM on a scheduled school day will count toward the day's attendance. If a student, using ***Edgenuity***, fails to complete three hours learning activities on a scheduled school day, the student will be marked absent. Because students have until midnight daily to complete their assignments, attendance is one school day behind regular in-person attendance. Notice of an absence will be provided on the following school day.

### ***Accelerate Attendance (Grades K-6)***

Students enrolled on the ***Accelerate (Grades K-6)*** platform must log in each day the Highlands School District is in session and complete a minimum of three hours of learning activities (see: Active Time). Early dismissals, two-hour delays, and half days do not affect the required minimum three hours of learning activities. Students are not required to log on during scheduled days off, Act 80 days, in-service days, and cancellations of school or other emergencies, but will be required to log in on scheduled make-up day(s) when applicable.

### ***Accelerate Two Step Attendance Procedure:***

1. HVA Instructors/Staff review daily work based on expected progress and the course calendar. If the student is completing the assignments, activities, and assessments for each day in the calendar of ***Accelerate***, he/she is marked present.
2. If the student is behind the expected level of progress in the course, but has logged three or more hours of Active Time, he/she is marked present.
3. If a student is completing the course work on hard copies, the parent/guardian must communicate with the teachers, so they wait until they receive the work to assess attendance.

A student participating in ***Accelerate*** is recorded as absent if he/she does not meet one of the criteria listed above.

### ***How to check attendance in Accelerate (Grades K-6)***

***Accelerate*** does not include a single means for students and parent to access time logged. There are other means to check attendance.

### ***Checking Attendance via course progress:***

- When logged in, navigate to the Courses screen.
  - Each course has its own course card.
  - Cards contain the following:
    - Course Name
    - Course start and end dates
    - Current score on graded activities
    - Current progress in the course as a progress bar
      - This provides an idea of how far along a student should be and is used to assess attendance.

**Course Extensions:** Students with properly documented absences may be permitted extensions on a case-by-case basis. Students with unexcused/illegal absences will not be granted course extensions. Extensions are not available for 4<sup>th</sup> quarter classes.

## **Success in HVA**

***Edgenuity*** and ***Accelerate*** both require a minimum of 3.0 hours of Active Time daily for attendance purposes. Students should expect to complete 3 to 5 hours of coursework daily to ensure success.

***Accelerate*** indicates that each course requires 30-60 minutes daily to complete. Mathematics and Language Arts courses often require more time. The minimum requirement of 3.0 hours daily will not likely be enough time to maintain expected levels of daily progress. A student's pace may vary, but up to five hours daily is needed to complete courses on schedule.

Students have the option to take notes during learning activities. eNotes may be accessed during quizzes and assignments. It is recommended that students utilize eNotes function rather than pen and paper notes.

## **Grading Policy**

Parents/Guardians of students enrolled in ***Edgenuity*** can opt to receive progress reports on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis through the Family Portal. Contact the HVA Coordinator for access.

Parents/Guardians of students in the ***Accelerate*** Program can monitor student grades via the Student Landing page displayed upon login. Current grades are displayed for each course. Instructors also update PowerSchool with ***Accelerate*** student grades on a regular basis.

Students will receive a school report card at the end of every grading period. Grades on assignments, quizzes, tests, and other graded material will not be accessible in real-time via PowerSchool. Student grades on individual activities will only be available via ***Edgenuity/Accelerate***.

The Highlands Virtual Academy follows the district-wide grading scale:

A	90% - 100%
B	80% - 89%
C	70% - 79%
D	60% - 69%
F	0% - 59%

## **Requirements for Graduation**

Graduation requirements are based on the standards set by the Pennsylvania Department of Education and the Highlands School District Board of Directors.

### **Keystone and Act 158 Requirements**

The Pennsylvania Department of Education requires that all students participate in Keystone Exams in Algebra, Biology and Literature as part of graduation requirements. Each exam is associated with a trigger course, at the end of which Highlands High School administers the Keystone Exam. These courses are noted in the course descriptions below. Students must earn a score of 1500 or above on each assessment to achieve proficiency. Students may retake the exams as necessary, prior to their senior year, in order to achieve a proficient score.

Beginning with the Class of 2023, Act 158 established alternative paths to graduation for students who do not achieve proficiency on all three Keystone Exams. Students have the opportunity to demonstrate postsecondary preparedness through one of four additional pathways:

1. Keystone Composite
2. Career and Technical Education (CTE) Concentrator
3. Alternative Assessment
4. Evidence Based

For additional information, and a detailed explanation of each pathway, please contact the counseling office, or visit the district or SAS websites:

@goldenrams.com

@pdesas.org

### **Academic/Credit Requirements**

Students must successfully earn the minimum 24 credits for graduation and participation in commencement exercises as outlined below:

- English: 4 Credits
- Social Studies: 3 Credits
- Science: 3 Credits
- Mathematics: 3 Credits
- Electives: 7 Credits
- PE/Health/Aquatics: 2 Credits
- Arts/Humanities: 2 Credits

Upon successful completion of all requirements of the educational program at Highlands High School, student will be graduated, and will be eligible to participate in Commencement Exercises.

## **Academic Dishonesty / Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is strictly prohibited in all schoolwork.

Plagiarism is defined as taking or imitating the ideas, thoughts, or language of another, to represent them as one's original work. It is imperative that all work submitted by a student be representative of his/her own ideas, thoughts, and especially language capability. If the ideas, thoughts, or language from another source must be used in the work being done, it is the student's responsibility to cite the information appropriately. No credit will be awarded for any submitted work which is found to be the work of another (student, author, reference material, internet, etc.) Subsequent offenses will result in additional consequences.

*Edgenuity* partners with Copyleak's "academic integrity tool" to integrate plagiarism checks. This tool allows instructors to check a wide variety of assignments against an ever-growing database of previous submissions and a vast array of online sources.

## **Appropriate Behaviors / Language**

When in attendance at school events and participating in online studies, students will abide by all district policies and adhere to the Highlands School District's Code of Student Conduct.

Students shall not use obscene, profane, vulgar, rude, threatening, or disrespectful language toward the Highlands Virtual Academy or Waterfront Learning staff, or as part of required learning activities (e.g., email/assignments/journals/essays). Students using offensive language or engaging in inappropriate behavior will receive one warning. Any additional occurrences will result in removal from the program.

While the *Edgenuity* system automatically issues a grade for completed short answer and essay assignments, each answer is also reviewed by the course's instructor.

## **Anti- Bullying**

The Highlands School District Policy 249 commits to providing all students and employees with the right to a safe and civil educational environment, free from harassment or bullying.

Highlands School District recognizes that bullying interferes with the learning process, and may present an obstacle to students' academic, vocational, and social/emotional development. This policy is available on the district's website, posted in classrooms, and in a prominent location in every school building where notices are posted.

This policy shall be reviewed with students within ninety (90) days of its adoption, and each school year thereafter.

**Bullying** is defined as a pattern of repeated harmful behavior by a person with more physical or social power toward a less powerful person. This may include a wide variety of behaviors, with deliberate intent to hurt, embarrass, or humiliate the other person. Researchers have identified four (4) forms of bullying:

1. **Physical** –includes hitting, kicking, spitting, pushing, and taking personal belongings

2. **Verbal** – includes taunting, malicious teasing, name-calling, and making threats
3. **Psychological or Relational** – involves spreading rumors, manipulating social relationships, and engaging in social exclusion or intimidation
4. **Cyberbullying** – forms of verbal and psychological bullying may also occur on the Internet through e-mail, instant messaging, or personal profile web sites. Cyberbullying includes, but is not limited to, the following misuses of technology: harassing, teasing, intimidating, threatening, or terrorizing another student, teacher or employee of the district, by sending or posting inappropriate or derogatory e-mail messages, instant messages, text messages, digital pictures or images, or web site postings (including blogs). All forms of cyberbullying are unacceptable and, to the extent that such actions are disruptive of the educational process of the district, offenders shall be the subject of appropriate discipline.

**Bullying** is defined as unwelcome verbal, written or physical conduct directed at a student, by another student that has the intent of or effect of:

1. Physically, emotionally, or mentally harming a student
2. Damaging, extorting, or taking a student's personal property
3. Placing a student in reasonable fear of physical, emotional, or mental harm
4. Placing a student in reasonable fear of damage to or loss of personal property
5. Creating an intimidating or hostile environment that substantially interferes with a student's educational opportunities

The terms bullying and cyberbullying shall not be interpreted to infringe upon a student's right to engage in legally protected speech or conduct.

It shall be a violation of this policy for any student to bully another student on district grounds, at any school activity, or on the way to or from school.

Bullying may include acts that occur outside of the school if those acts are intentional, electronic, verbal or physical, are directed at another student or students, are severe, persistent or pervasive, and have the effect of (I) substantially interfering with a student's education; (II) creating a threatening environment; or (III) substantially disrupting the orderly operation of the school.

Each staff member is responsible to maintain an educational environment free of bullying and cyberbullying. Students are encouraged to report bullying or cyberbullying complaints to district employees.



Employees who receive a bullying or cyberbullying complaint shall investigate. If the behavior is found to meet the definition of bullying or cyberbullying, written documentation must be submitted to the building principal.

### **Investigation Procedures**

1. A student reports a complaint of bullying or cyberbullying, orally or in writing, to the teachers, building administrator, or counselor.
2. The building principal or his/her designee will inform parents/guardians of the victim and person accused.
3. The administrator will investigate the alleged conduct.
4. The administrator may ask assistance from other employees in the investigation process.
5. After the investigation, the building principal or designee shall be notified in writing of the complaint, and the results of the investigation, and shall take corrective action to ensure that the conduct ceases.
6. A copy of this policy, a report of incidents, and any information relating to bullying prevention, intervention and education programs shall be submitted to the Pennsylvania Department of Education Office of Safe Schools, as part of the district's annual report.

### **Consequences/Intervention**

Consequences for students who bully others will result in disciplinary actions that may include counseling, a parent/guardian conference, detention, suspension, or other consequences as provided in the Code of Student Conduct.

### **Confidentiality**

The Highlands School District recognizes that both the complaining student and the alleged bully have an interest in maintaining the confidentiality of the allegations and relative information. The privacy of the complaining student, the individual(s) against whom the complaint is filed, and any witnesses, will be respected as much as possible, consistent with legal obligations to investigate, to take appropriate action, and to comply with Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), and any discovery or disclosure obligations. As limited by FERPA protections, the principal or his/her designee may inform the complaining student/parent/guardian, of the outcome of the investigation.

### **Reprisal**

Any student who retaliates against another student for reporting bullying or extortion, or for assisting or testifying in the investigation or hearing, may be subject to disciplinary action.

## **Health Records / Screenings**

Health screenings (vision, hearing, dental, sports physicals) are conducted throughout the school year. The parent/guardian and student are responsible for keeping up to date with all school health regulations, and to take part, when necessary, in all health screenings. Contact the appropriate school nurse at Highlands High School 724-226-2400 ext. 4700, or at Highlands Middle School 724-226-2400 ext. 3700.

## **Announcements**

Both *Edgenuity* and *Accelerate* allow faculty and staff to post text-based announcements.

*Accelerate* announcements often include assignments, tasks, and links to Zoom meetings. It is important for Parents/Guardians, and/or Learning Coaches, to be aware of current announcements and any posted tasks.

*Edgenuity* announcements are largely informational (testing schedules, links to resources, graduation requirements, etc). Students are expected to read and respond to any task or requests posted in a timely fashion.

In addition to *Accelerate* and *Edgenuity* announcements, parents/guardians, students, and Learning Coaches are responsible for checking the goldenrams.com website for district level announcements.

Please refer to the Highlands School District calendar for important district information, annual policies, notices, initiatives, and school health procedures.

## **Athletics / Extra-Curricular Activities**

Students enrolled in the Highlands Virtual Academy have an opportunity to participate in district extra-curricular programs, consistent with students who are attending Highlands High and Middle Schools. Students who participate in district-sponsored, extra-curricular activities are subject to academic and attendance monitoring as per district, WPIAL, and PIAA policies and procedures. Students will be held to the same level of review based on the district's Code of Student Conduct, and participation and/or attendance at district-sponsored activities may be revoked at the discretion of Highlands School District Staff. It is the responsibility of the student and/or parents/guardians to contact the coach for game and practice schedules.

## **PSSA / Keystone Exams**

Students enrolled in HVA (Grades 3-12) are required to participate in state mandated assessments. Assessments are administered during the regular school day in Highlands School District facilities.

Testing guidance from the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) requires students to participate in person. **There are no provisions or adaptations approved by the PDE that allow students to undertake testing remotely.**

Students will be notified through announcements, email, and/or via PowerSchool when state assessments are scheduled by PDE. Any requests for make-up testing must be scheduled through the school's administration.

It is the purview of the building administrators to determine if participation in standardized testing is counted towards daily HVA attendance. Please be aware that assignments will continue to accrue during testing, and it is strongly recommended that students log time, even during testing, to prevent them from falling behind

## **School Counselor Services**

All HVA students (Grades K-12) have access to school counselors as needed, throughout the school year. At the secondary level (Grades 7-12), it is the student's responsibility to schedule a meeting with the counselor to select classes for the following school year. Contact the counseling office to make an appointment and check the [goldenrams.com](http://goldenrams.com) website for further information.

Students in grades 9 – 12 are required to attend a mandatory meeting with their counselor each semester. Counselors will contact students to schedule these meetings.

## **Senior HVA Students**

It is the responsibility of the senior HVA student to provide information necessary for graduation from Highlands High School. Please check the [goldenrams.com](http://goldenrams.com) website and the high school office for further information. It is also recommended that seniors and their parents reach out to the senior class advisor to make sure they have met requirements, deadlines, or information regarding graduation.

## **Student/Parent Signatures**

**I have read and understand the Highlands School District Code of Academic Conduct and HVA Handbook.**

**By signing below, I agree to its terms, expectations, and consequences.**

Student Name: (please print)\_\_\_\_\_

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date:\_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Name: (please print)\_\_\_\_\_

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

Additional resources regarding plagiarism and how to document your sources can be found at [goldenrams.com](http://goldenrams.com).

## HVA Pre-Enrollment Questionnaire

Full Name	Grade
Parent/Guardian	
First Name	Last Name
Parent/Guardian	
First Name	Last Name
Parent/Guardian Contact Information	
Parent/ Guardian Accurate Phone Number	Parent/Guardian Active Email Address
Does this student have Internet access at home?	
Yes / No	
Reason for HVA Placement	
Parent/Guardian Concerns?	
What hours will I work on HVA per day?	Where will you be completing your HVA work?

Who will be home when I complete HVA work?	If my school device does not work or breaks, how will I work on my HVA assignments?
I can independently send an email	I know how to use Zoom to meet with my teachers.
Yes / No	Yes / No
I am aware that failure to pass courses could result in my return to the brick and mortar setting	
I am aware that plagiarism will result in my removal from the HVA program and result in my return to the brick and mortar setting.	
I am aware that I am required to take any PSSA or Keystone test triggered by my class enrollment. Failure to do so will result in my removal from HVA and a return to the brick and mortar setting.	
Grades 3-8: ELA and Math (PSSA)  Grades 4 and 8: ELA, Math, and Science (PSSA)	Algebra (Keystone)  Biology (Keystone)  English 10 (Keystone)

## **Highlands Virtual Academy – Pre-Enrollment Meeting Form**

Directions: Completed by school counselors during the initial meeting with parents

1a. First Name		1b. Last Name	
1c. Middle Initial	2. Gender	3. Birthdate	4. Grade
Parent/Guardian			
5a. First Name	5b. Last Name		5c. Relationship
Parent/Guardian			
6a. First Name	6b. Last Name		6c. Relationship
Contact Information			
7a. Address 1		7b. Address 2	
7c. City/Borough/Township		7d. State	7e. Zip Code
7f. Cell Phone	7g. Work Phone		7h. Home Phone
<b>Parent/Guardian MUST have a valid address for HVA communication.</b>			
7i. Email Address (for HVA communication)		8. Email Address Verified?	
		Yes / No	

9. Does this student have Internet access at home?		
Yes / No		
10. Reason(s) for proposed HVA Placement (complete ALL that apply)		
Discipline	Please describe in detail or provide germane documentation	
Truancy	Please describe and provide attendance documentation	
Historical evidence indicates that HVA placement exacerbates truancy issues. Ongoing truancy is grounds for removal from HVA.		
Medical	Please provide germane documentation	
Parent/Guardian Request	Please describe in detail Parent/Guardian concerns	
11. Does this student have an IEP? Yes / No		
If NO, skip to question 13.		
<p>If YES, please include/attach a copy of the students current IEP/NOREP/ER</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The student's IEP must be updated prior to enrollment in HVA, constituting a "Change in Placement" and in "Services."</li> <li>• HVA adaptations are extremely limited and may not align with student achievement needs.</li> <li>• The assigned Special Education teacher will continue to be the student's Special Education roster teacher, and continue progress monitoring and parent contact during HVA placement.</li> </ul>		
12. Has the Director of Student Services been contacted regarding this proposed change of placement?		
Yes / No	If YES, please indicate the date and means of contact	If NO, contact the Director of Student Services before proceeding
13. Please provide a copy of the student's current schedule and most recent report card		



Prepared by Counselor	Date:
Signature:	
Reviewed by Administrator	Date:
Signature:	
Date submitted to HVA Coordinator:	