

Sinclair Elementary School

A Communications Magnet School

Parent-Student Handbook 2013-2014



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This handbook is intended to serve as a guide to our school. It should be used in conjunction with the Code of Student Conduct, the policies of the Board of Education, and the Texas Education Agency.



This handbook describes expectations, responsibilities, and procedures for parents and students. Within the handbook, the term parent(s) is used to refer to the primary guardian(s) of the student. Please sit down with your child to read and review the contents of this handbook together. The acknowledgement form must be signed and returned to your child's teacher. Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Information in this handbook may be changed with or without notice based upon policy changes from Sinclair Elementary School's Shared-Decision Making Committee, the Houston Independent School District's Board of Trustees, the Texas Education Agency, the Texas Legislature, or the Congress of the United States.

Note: It is the policy of the Houston Independent School District not to discriminate on the basis of age, color, handicap or disability, ancestry, national origin, marital status, race, religion, sex, veteran status, or political affiliation in its educational or employment programs and activities.

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Daily Schedule

7:30 a.m.	Drop off begins; Students may begin to pick up breakfast in the cafeteria
7:45 a.m.	Students are released to go to their homerooms
8:00 a.m.	All students should be in their homerooms when the tardy bell rings at 8:00; Instructional day begins
8:05 a.m.	Last breakfast is served
3:15 p.m.	Dismissal

Student Holidays

September 2	Labor Day
September 13	Fall Holiday
November 27-29	Thanksgiving Break
December 23-January 3	Winter Break
January 6	Teacher Work Day
January 20	Martin Luther King Day
March 17-21	Spring Break
April 18	Spring Holiday
May 26	Memorial Day
May 29 – Last day of school	

Early Dismissal Days

12:45 p.m.

September 25
October 30
November 20
January 29
February 19

Report Card Dates

<u>Kinder - 5th grade</u>	<u>Pre-K Grading Period</u>
November 1	November 22
January 10	February 21
March 28	May 29
May 29	

Arrival/Dismissal

The school building opens at 7:30 a.m. Please do not drop your child off before this time, as adult supervision is not available. Students are to report to the cafeteria upon arrival. We welcome parents to walk their children to class on the first three days of school; following the first three days, please allow your child to walk to class on his/her own. Members of the school staff are on duty to help children that may need additional assistance.

School is dismissed at 3:15 p.m. The HISD Police Department will be contacted on behalf those students who are not picked up by 4:15 p.m. If you are late picking up your child, you will be required to come into the building and sign the sign-out log.

Please keep early departure requests to a minimum. The last minutes of a class day are as important as the first minutes of the day. Teachers use this time to summarize and recap what was learned during the day. They also use the time to organize information for homework. It is very important that children complete the day with their classes. Early releases will be monitored by the teacher, registrar, and administrative team.

In order allow the school staff to account for the safety and security of our children, students will not be dismissed between 2:45 and 3:15 p.m.

Early Departure

Should you need to take your child out of school early, you will need to come to the office to check him/her out. Only the persons identified on the enrollment card for pick up will be allowed to take a child from school during regular school hours. Teachers are not permitted to release students unless this procedure has been followed. When possible, please notify your child's teacher in advance concerning your child's early departure.

After School Programs

Sinclair's school day ends at 3:15 p.m. Children must be picked up immediately following dismissal. The teachers and administration are not responsible for the supervision of students after 3:30 p.m. unless they are enrolled in tutorial or enrichment programs. Tutoring and enrichment programs end by 4:30 p.m. Our school's office closes at 4:30 p.m.

Teachers and staff are not available to stay with children after 4:30 p.m. Please be considerate of our staff by picking up your child on time. Consistent late pick-ups will result in removal from after school programs.

The HISD Police Department will be called if your child is not picked up.

Our campus is proud to offer a campus based after school program through the YMCA. Through this program, care is available up until 6:00 p.m. Please contact the Harriet and Joe Foster YMCA at 713-869-3378 for more information.

Attendance Policy

In addition to the information present here, please also refer to the Compulsory School Attendance Laws posted on our website (Parents-Parent Resources).

Students are expected to be on time and present each school day. The school day officially begins at 8:00 a.m. Students are marked absent if they are not in school by 9:45 a.m. (see exception below). Please monitor your child's attendance and ensure that your student attend school.

Parents must submit a written excuse note to the office within three days in order to excuse absences. The excuse note must contain the student's name, date(s) of absence(s), reason for absence(s), and parent's signature. Return to school slips from a doctor are also accepted. Failure to submit an excuse note will result in an unexcused absence.

Students with medical or dental appointments in the morning should bring a return to school slip from the doctor or dentist. If they arrive at school after 9:45 a.m., the student will not be considered absent with the appropriate medical excuse.

If the student observes a religious holy day, the parent must notify the school of the absence in writing, following the procedures outlined above. Under these circumstances, a student will not be counted as absent.

Please be aware that the attendance office assigned to the school may investigate any absence.

Excused Absences

The only excuses for tardiness and absences are:

- Personal illness;
- Illness or death in the family;
- Quarantine;
- Weather or road conditions making travel dangerous;
- Participation in school activities with permission of the principal; or
- Emergencies or any unusual circumstances recognized by the principal or person designated;
- Any cause acceptable to the teacher, principal, or superintendent of the school in which the person is enrolled.

Unexcused Absences

A student is considered to have an unexcused absence if he/she does not present a written excuse within three days for one of the reasons stated above or is away from school participating in an activity not approved by the district as excusable. Vacations taken during non-specified school holidays are considered unexcused. When questions regarding unexcused absences arise, the final decision rests with the school attendance committee.

Unexcused absences may be reviewed by the school attendance committee in determining whether or not to grant a student credit for a class in which the student failed to meet the attendance requirement while still meeting all other academic requirements for passing.

Our school will attempt to notify parents/guardians of all unexcused absences immediately. Any unexcused absences are subject to be investigated by the attendance officer assigned to Sinclair Elementary School. The student database automatically informs the attendance officer of excessive tardiness or absences.

Unexcused absences may not be made up, and the student may not receive credit for the daily assignments.

Tardy Policy

School begins promptly at 8:00 a.m. each day. **Students are considered tardy if they are not in the classroom when the bell rings at 8:00 a.m.** School officials understand that occasionally traffic, weather, or oversleeping may cause a student to be late; however, persistent tardiness will require the parent to meet with the teachers and administrative team.

Tardy procedures

- When a child reaches his fourth (4th) tardy, a warning letter will be sent home indicating the days and times of arrival.
- At the accumulation of the sixth (6th) tardy, a conference will be scheduled.
- By the end of this conference, a plan will be developed to ensure the student's timely arrival at school on a daily basis.

The principal will have the option of:

- Placing a transfer student on a growth plan that will be monitored. This may result in a student being returned to his/her home school at the end of the school year.
- Requiring a student to make up lost time in an after school study program.
- Implementing other methods as deemed appropriate during the conference.

Punctuality is a lesson that we can teach our children, and it will last a lifetime.

Enrollment Forms

Please notify the office and your child's teacher if you need to update your contact information. It is also important to keep the contact information for all emergency contacts current.

School Supplies

Please send your child to school with the requested supplies. Supply lists are available by grade level on our school website, or your child's teacher can provide you with a list.

Please remember to replenish your child's supplies during the year. Many school supply items can be purchased at our school store located in the cafeteria. Please refer to the Stargazer for hours of operation.

Student Dress Code

Bottoms:

- Standard uniform pants, shorts, skirts, skorts, or jumpers
 - Colors in standard uniform navy blue or khaki
- Must be worn at waist level
- No more than four inches above the middle of the knee as judged by school staff
- Girls may wear leggings under uniform skirts; however, leggings may not be worn alone
- Uniform bottoms that have belt loops must also have belts
- Oversized, undersized, torn, cut, or frayed pants are not permitted
- Jeans may be worn on **Friday only**

Shirts, sweaters, and sweatshirts:

- Any solid color polo style shirt, either short sleeved or long sleeved
- Sinclair T-shirts
- Official 2013-2014 Sinclair T-shirts are mandatory for all field trips
- Sweaters or sweatshirts may be worn over appropriate uniform clothes
- **Oversized hoodies are not permitted**
 - Hoods may not be worn inside the school building

Shoes:

- Safe shoes must be worn at all times and must be appropriate for all school activities
- For safety reasons, platform shoes, spiked heels, combat boots, steel-toed boots, or any backless shoes including clogs, crocs, shoes with wheels, house shoes, sandals, open-toed shoes, flip-flops, or water socks are not permitted
- Students who are unable to tie their shoes independently should wear shoes with Velcro straps

Additional guidelines:

- All clothing items, including jewelry and watches, may not distract from the educational process
 - For safety reasons, earrings should be studs
- Any items depicting the occult, gang membership, death, suicide, violence, drugs, sex, race, gender obscenities, alcohol, items with double meanings, or anything else deemed inappropriate are not allowed
- Hair color and style may not be disruptive to the educational process
- Hats or caps may not be worn inside the school building
- Make-up may not be worn or carried on campus
 - Color and style of nail polish should be school appropriate

Dress codes are implemented to promote school safety and minimize distractions. Please see the Student Code of Conduct for actions that may be taken for disregarding the school dress code.

Report Cards

A report card is issued to the parent or guardian at the close of each nine week grading period. Grades obtained during the days of attendance and/or current transferred grades will be the basis for the report card grades. When a student has transferred from one or more schools within the grading period, grades on the checkout sheet or latest report card are considered as the basis for report card grades.

All report cards need to be signed and returned to the teacher the next school day. A copy of your child's report card will then be returned to you.

Report card grades will be reported as follows:

Academic Subjects

Excellent	90-100 (A)
Good	80-89 (B)
Satisfactory	75-79 (C)
Passing	70-74 (D)
Failing	50-69 (F)

Conduct

E	Excellent quality of behavior
S	Satisfactory quality of behavior
P	Poor quality of behavior
U	Unsatisfactory quality of behavior

Grading Policy

First-Fifth grade classes:

Number of grades per subject area: Math, Reading, and Language Arts will have a minimum of two grades per week. Science and Social Studies will have one to two grades per week.

Make-up assignments: If a student is absent from school, and the absence is excused, he or she will have either:

- The number of days the child was absent or
- Five days after returning to make up missed assignments

The time period needed to make up the missed work will be at the discretion of the teacher.

Reassessment plan: If a student does not pass a test (score 69 or below), the teacher will reteach the tested objectives. The student will then have an opportunity to retake the test. A maximum grade of 70% will be recorded in GradeSpeed for retests.

Incomplete projects: Incomplete projects will be assessed a penalty of ten points per day.

Weighing of grades: Each subject at each grade level will have two categories: Classwork/Quizzes and Tests/Projects. Classwork/Quizzes will count for 40% of the average, and Test/Projects will count for 60% of the average.

Definitions of assignments:

Classwork – daily learning assignments completed in the classroom.

Quiz – a brief assessment covering a few learning objectives.

Test – an assessment covering multiple objectives.

Project – a long-term assignment comprised of multiple steps. Often times some steps will be completed at school while other steps will be completed outside of school.

Entering grades: Teachers will input grades into GradeSpeed within seven days of the assignment being given to students. Grades will be entered as earned by the student.

Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten classes:

Grades for all subject areas in pre-kindergarten and kindergarten are marked according to the scale listed on the report card.

Progress Reports

The *Notice of Progress* will be sent to parents via students during the fourth week of the reporting period. Additional reports may be sent at the discretion of the teacher. Parents are asked to sign and return the report. A conference may be scheduled with the teacher to address questions or concerns.

GradeSpeed

HISD uses a web-based grading system called GradeSpeed. The user-friendly tool will be accessible to parents to allow them to monitor their child's academic progress throughout the school year. To register for these services, go to www.houstonisd.org, and click on the Students & Parents tab. There is a box at the top left of the page titled Parent Student Connect. From here you can register as a first time user, log-in, or seek help. To register, you will need to have the following information: parent first and last name, student ID number, student address, student date of birth, and the last five digits of the student social security number. If the child does not have a social security number, or if this information has not been provided to HISD, use the last five digits of the "S-Number" provided to your child. Please call the school if you do not know this number.

Parent/Teacher Conferences

During the school year, your child's teacher may request a conference to discuss your child's academic or behavioral progress. Parents may also request a conference. To schedule a conference, email your child's teacher(s) or call the school. The teacher will return your call during his/her conference period or after school.

The following are some ideas to help conferences run smoothly:

- Please be on time. At the end of the teacher's conference period, he/she needs to pick up his/her class on time.
- Please write down your questions or concerns, and bring them with you. If possible, consider providing these questions ahead of time to your child's teacher so he/she can gather the proper documents to fully address your question or concern.
- Bring any paperwork you might have to show the teacher.
- Please be open to suggestions or comments from the teacher.

Homework

Homework is a necessary opportunity for students to extend and reinforce learning. Additionally, homework builds a student's sense of responsibility and provides a connection between home and school. This also helps parents to stay abreast of the curriculum students are currently learning.

Each teacher will assign homework on a daily or weekly basis. Please review these assignments with your student, and ensure they are returned on the assigned due date. If you have questions regarding specific assignments, please contact your child's teacher.

If homework is taking an excessive amount of time at your home, please contact your child's teacher. If you feel you would like your child to spend additional time at home learning, some sources for workbooks and other learning materials are: Target, Crystal Teacher Supply, and Lakeshore Learning Center.

Curriculum and Online Resources

HISD's Library Services Department makes a variety of resources available. Now teachers, staff, students, and parents can access these resources from home.

To access the online resources from home, a login ID and password are required. For login ID and password information, please contact our school librarian.

When these resources are accessed from a computer located on an HISD network, you will not need a login ID or password.

You will be able to access magazine articles, maps, timelines, graphs, photos, charts, and all sorts of other educational materials to help students get the most from their coursework.

To access online resources:

1. Go to <http://www.houstonisd.org/>.
2. Click on Students & Parents.
3. Locate the Helpful Information banner on the right side of the page.
4. Click on Online resources.

You may also visit Sinclair's website for additional online resources:

1. Go to <http://www.houstonisd.org/sinclaires>.
2. Place your curser over the Students tab, then click on Computer Lab.

Library Books

Our students make weekly visits to the library to check out books. We encourage you to read books with your children several times throughout the week. Books are due back at school by each scheduled library day. Your child's teacher will communicate with you regarding library days. Students are responsible for their library books. A fine will be issued if library books are not returned.

Textbooks

All textbooks are owned by the state and must be paid for when lost. Another book cannot be issued until payment has been made for the lost book. Checks are not accepted for lost books.

Conduct

Classroom behavior plays a major role in instruction. In order to maximize learning time, it is essential that the classroom environment is focused. At Sinclair, our goal is to have our students learn to manage their own behavior. To communicate with parents about your student's behavior at school, a weekly conduct grade will be send home with your student. Please look for this in the Wednesday communication folder. Please sign the included

documentation sheet in the folder each Wednesday, and return it with your student on Thursday.

The following is our conduct grading system:

E= excellent behavior

P= poor behavior

S= satisfactory behavior

U= unsatisfactory behavior

Discipline

Parents and students will receive the *Code of Student Conduct: Your Rights and Responsibilities*. This book details the expectations for student behavior and the consequences for misbehavior. The teachers and administrative staff are charged with maintaining adequate discipline in the school. Teachers are expected to assume responsibility for the discipline of students in their individual classrooms with assistance from the administrative team as needed. Students will be addressed fairly and with patience, but persistent misconduct will not be tolerated. Parents will be contacted promptly by the teacher if a student exhibits consistent disregard for school or classroom rules and expectations. It is our goal to work together in order to resolve any issues or concerns.

If a student earns an unsatisfactory conduct grade (U), attendance at certain extracurricular activities (field trips, certain assemblies, or other special activities) will be in jeopardy.

Students are not permitted on campus prior to 7:30 a.m. or past 3:30 p.m. unless they are formally attending a planned before or after school activity; however, this in no way affects the authority of administrators, teachers, and/or other school staff to address discipline concerns with students while on campus outside of instructional hours.

Bus Information

Riding a bus is a privilege that may be enjoyed as long as rules and regulations are followed. Bus transportation is provided for students on a magnet transfer who live outside a two mile radius.

Listed below are the bus rules followed by all Sinclair students:

1. Respect the bus driver. Be courteous and polite at all times.
2. All parts of the body must remain inside the bus.
3. No items are to be thrown out of the bus windows.
4. Talk quietly when the bus is in motion.
5. Remain in your seat unless entering or exiting the bus.
6. Wear a seat belt when available.

The bus driver is responsible for safety on the bus; misbehavior is not allowed. Students who misbehave are to be reported to the administrative team who will act in accordance with the following policies:

- First Offense: Student is given adequate warning. Parent is informed in writing or by telephone that the child is not adhering to the bus rules.
- Second Offense: A two or three day suspension from the bus.
- Third Offense: A five to seven day suspension from riding the bus.
- Fourth Offense: Exclusion from riding the bus for the remainder of the semester.

Parents will be kept informed in writing and/or by telephone concerning each offense. If a student is suspended from the bus, the parent must make other transportation arrangements.

Cafeteria

Each classroom will be assigned specific tables and times for lunch. Your child's teacher will let you know when his/her class is scheduled to eat lunch.

You are invited to eat lunch with your child whenever you would like. When coming to eat lunch, please sign in at the front desk, and wait for your student to arrive in the foyer. Please sit at the table provided for visitors. Parents, if you wish for your child to join another child's parent for lunch, please send a note to the teacher granting permission.

While in the cafeteria, students are expected to practice acceptable table manners. Only one trip will be allowed through the lunch line. Students may purchase one additional snack item.

The following expectations are taught to our students and posted in the cafeteria:

1. Use a quiet inside voice with others beside you or across from you.
2. Leave your area neat and clean.
3. Remain seated. Raise your hand if you need something.
4. Keep your hands, feet, and objects to yourself.
5. Voices off when lining up.

Lunch Money

A computerized system simplifies meal services at Sinclair. All students are issued a meal card. We encourage parents to prepay for meals; these need to be purchased Monday mornings in the cafeteria. **We can only accept cash payments; checks will not be accepted.** Children may also continue to purchase meals with cash on a daily basis. Please note that Sinclair does not loan money to purchase meals.

In order to pre-purchase your child's lunches, you can go to www.parentonline.net.

Lost and Found

All articles of clothing, as well as other belongings such as backpacks and lunch kits, should be clearly and securely labeled with the child's first and last name to prevent loss. The lost and found cabinet is located in the hallway adjacent to the cafeteria. Unclaimed items are given to charity periodically during the year.

Birthday Treats

If you choose to send a snack to school in honor of your child's birthday, please know that all treats must be store bought/pre-packaged. Any treats prepared at home will not be allowed. Items must contain a label outlining the ingredients, as many students have various food allergies. While healthy snacks are encouraged (store prepared fruit or vegetable trays, granola bars, etc.), store bought cupcakes or cookies are permitted. Cakes are not permitted, as many materials are required to cut and serve the cake.

To maintain our instructional focus, teachers will determine when to distribute the treats after the students' lunch period. Food items should be sent to school in the morning in a sturdy container.

If you choose to send birthday invitations for a home party, please consider the feelings of your child's classmates. If you choose to only invite a few classmates, please allow the teacher to discretely place the invitation in the students' backpacks.

Field Trips

Field trips are designed to be instructional extensions of our magnet and/or core academic program. Parents/guardians will be asked to contribute to the cost of field trips. If you are unable to pay the requested fee, please speak with your child's teacher to request a waiver. For any field trip, parent approval forms will be sent home by the teacher to be signed and returned. No student will be permitted to go on a trip without written permission on the appropriate form. This signed permission form must be returned to the teacher by the designated return date prior to the scheduled trip. Telephone and fax confirmations cannot be accepted.

Safety of our children is foremost. **All Sinclair students are required to purchase and wear the official 2013-2014 Sinclair t-shirt and regulation dress code bottoms on all school sponsored field trips.** Students will also wear a Sinclair button (not a name tag). This makes it easier for chaperones to spot one of our children on field trips.

Chaperones for Field Trips

Adults who have been pre-approved through the HISD VIPS Program may chaperone our students on field trips. Volunteers may register online in the school office or at home through the HISD portal VIPS link found at www.houstonisd.org. Once a volunteer has registered

online*, the volunteer will provide a copy of his/her driver's license to the main office and complete a short information form. An approved VIPS list will be updated weekly and posted in the main lobby.

*Returning volunteers do not have to reregister online each year. They only need to bring their driver's license in for a yearly update. This is a way of keeping you active in the system.

If a sack lunch is required for a field trip, please make sure that all items are disposable (no lunch kits or reusable containers).

When volunteering for a field trip, please be aware that:

- All volunteers must be an approved volunteer and wear a special "Sinclair Volunteer" name tag.
- You will need to ride bus transportation with students.
- Siblings may not attend field trips.
- Students will not wear nametags. This would allow a stranger to "know" our child.

Regulations Concerning Care of Illness

It is not the function of public school personnel to administer medical treatment or medication, including over-the-counter drugs. HISD policy is based upon the following rationale expressed by the American Medical Association:

Since treatment is not a function of school health programs, no drugs should be included in school first aid supplies. Even the simplest and safest drugs sometimes cause reactions. When they mask pain or other symptoms, they may be a factor in delaying correct diagnosis and treatment.

Teachers and other school personnel are expected to limit themselves to the usual and accepted practices of first aid in managing emergencies due to sickness or accident. They cannot diagnose illness nor administer medication of any sort except as outlined below. First aid materials are not to be used for subsequent treatment of injury and illness or as a substitute for the care of a physician.

Pupils who are: not contagious and on long-term medications, preventive medication, or medication for a prolonged period of time, which cannot under any arrangement be administered other than during school hours, may take medication in school under the following restrictions:

- a. A physician must state in writing that a pupil should have a certain medication during school hours. He/she should describe the type of preparation, color, quantity, and time of administration. Form #40.3740 must be signed by the physician and renewed at the beginning of each year.
- b. Parent consent signature must also appear on Form #40.3740.

- c. Physician's orders may not be altered in any way by school personnel without written permission of the physician. Discontinuation of the medication is permissible upon verbal order of the doctor.
- d. The school principal will designate the person to administer medication in the absence of the nurse; the assigned school nurse must in-service those persons as to the specific mode of administration and toxicity of the drug.
- e. A record of administration of each dose by school personnel must be documented and on file.

Immunizations

The law requires that students be fully immunized against specific diseases in accordance with the Texas Department of Health Immunization Schedule (25 TAC §97.63) and shall show acceptable proof of vaccination prior to entry, attendance, or transfer to a school Texas.

Head Lice

Students who are infested with head lice must be treated immediately. Absences due to head lice will be excused. A child may not attend school if there are any visible signs of lice or nits. The nurse must examine your child before he/she may return to the classroom.

PTA

Sinclair offers parents and other adults who wish to support our school the opportunity to become involved in the Parent Teacher Association (PTA). PTA dues are \$5.00 per adult PTA member, and general meetings are held on the 3rd Thursday of each month. There are many ways you can volunteer your time and talents. We encourage all parents to participate in some way. For further information, please contact the school office.

Parking

Parking spaces in the parking lots on Manville and Grovewood (with the exception of the handicapped parking spaces) are reserved for Sinclair staff. Please do not park in the fire lanes in both the circle drive and Manville lot; this is a safety issue.

School Telephone and Cell Phone Use

If a situation arises where a child needs to speak with his/her parent, the student's teacher must grant permission to the child in writing before the child will be permitted to use the phone in the main office. If you need to get a message to your child, please relay the information to office personnel; students will not be called from class in order to take phone calls.

Students with cell phones on campus must turn their phones off prior to entering school. Cell phones are to remain in backpacks and not be seen during the school day. Please see the *Code of Student* Conduct for additional information regarding unauthorized use of communication devices on campus. If cell phones are used during the school day, they will be confiscated. Confiscated cell phones will not be returned directly to the student; a parent or designee (at least 18 years old) must collect the device from the school and pay a \$15.00 fee.

Classroom Visitation

We welcome all visitors to come and observe Sinclair in action. We are very proud of our teachers and our students. Certain guidelines are in place to ensure that visits do not interfere with the delivery of instruction or disrupt our school environment. All visitors must sign in at the front desk and receive a name tag which will need to be worn while you are in the school. We ask that our visitors merely observe the class and not interact with any of the students or the teacher as he/she interacts with his/her class.

If you would like to observe, contact your child's teacher to schedule a mutually agreed upon time. Observations are limited to 30 minutes, and it is not to be used as a conference time with the teacher. We appreciate your cooperation with these guidelines.