



2014-2015 School Handbook

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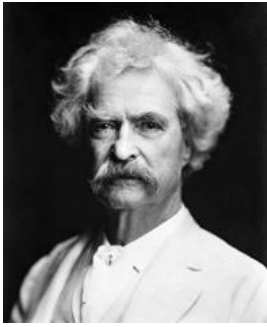
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School Hours: 8:00-3:15 p.m.

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Welcome to Mark Twain Elementary



Mark Twain Elementary School opened its doors on September 11, 1950. It was named for one of America's most beloved writers and humorists, **Mark Twain**, whose real name was **Samuel Langhorne Clemens**. Mark Twain lived from 1835 to 1910. His best-known books, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876) and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885) were written as children's stories.

Mark Twain Elementary is a Fine Arts Magnet school and since 2005, Mark Twain Elementary School has been an International Baccalaureate World School. All of Mark Twain's students participate in the Primary Years Program. At Fifth Grade, students participate in the PYP Exhibition, which is both a culmination and a celebration of their years in the PYP program. All students at Mark Twain also participate in the Literary Development Magnet. In addition Mark Twain has a Dual Language program. There is one Dual Language class at each grade level.

In 2005, Mark Twain was rebuilt as a state-of-the-art school. It is located in the heart of the Braeswood Place neighborhood near the Houston Medical Center, where people come from around the world to study and work. The Stella Link Park includes the Weekley Family YMCA, McGovern Public Library, Helen's Park and Pershing Middle School. Mark Twain Elementary is one of the most coveted magnet schools in the area and has met the Texas Education Agency state academic standards. It continues to be one of the finest schools in the state of Texas!



Primary Years Program

The Primary Years Program offers a comprehensive, inquiry based approach to teaching and learning for all children between the ages of 3 and 12 years. The program focuses on the total growth of the developing child, affecting hearts as well as minds and addressing social, physical, emotional and cultural needs in addition to academic welfare.

The aim of all IB programs is to develop internationally minded people who, recognizing their common humanity and shared guardianship of the planet, help to create a better, more peaceful world.

Mark Twain Mission Statement

Mark Twain Elementary is a community of life-long learners, built upon a collaborative spirit that fosters inquiry-based learning. Our purpose is to promote and develop responsible, active and reflective citizens of the world.

IB Mission Statement

The International Baccalaureate Organization aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect.

To this end the IBO works with schools, governments and international organizations to develop challenging programs of international education and rigorous assessment.

These programs encourage students across the world to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right.



The IB Learner Profile represents 10 attributes valued by IB World Schools. We believe these attributes, and others like them, can help individuals and groups become responsible members of local, national, and global communities.

As IB learners, we strive to be:

Inquirers – We nurture our curiosity, developing skills for inquiry and research. We know how to learn independently and with others. We learn with enthusiasm and sustain our love of learning throughout life.

Knowledgeable – We develop and use conceptual understanding, exploring knowledge across a range of disciplines. We engage with issues and ideas that have local and global significance.

Thinkers – We use critical and creative thinking skills to analyze and take responsible action on complex problems. We exercise initiative in making reasoned, ethical decisions.

Communicators – We express ourselves confidently and creatively in more than one language and in many ways. We collaborate effectively, listening carefully to the perspectives of other individuals and groups.

Principled – We act with integrity and honesty, with a strong sense of fairness and justice, and with respect for the dignity and rights of people everywhere. We take responsibility for our actions and their consequences.

Open-minded – We critically appreciate our own cultures and personal histories, as well as the values and traditions of others. We seek and evaluate a range of points of view, and we are willing to grow from the experience.

Caring – We show empathy, compassion and respect. We have a commitment to service, and we act to make a positive difference in the lives of others and in the world around us.

Risk-takers – We approach uncertainty with forethought and determination; we work independently and cooperatively to explore new ideas and innovative strategies. We are resourceful and resilient in the face of challenges and change.

Balanced – We understand the importance of balancing different aspects of our lives – intellectual, physical, and emotional – to achieve well-being for ourselves and others. We recognize our interdependence with other people and with the world in which we live.

Reflective – We thoughtfully consider the world and our own ideas and experience. We work to understand our strengths and weaknesses in order to support our learning and personal development.

Instructional Programs

Our Fine Arts Magnet Program is the Literary Development Center which received the 2011 Magnet School of Distinction Award.

The **Literary Development Center Program**: Using different genres of literature as a springboard to literacy, two mentor teachers model reading and writing strategies for children and classroom teachers. The Literary Development Center supports the PYP through activities and research that supplement the planners.

Mrs. Erin Diaz, literacy teacher from kindergarten through second grade, helps develop phonics and spelling strategies within context using news of the day, stories, literary centers and small group writing sessions. The children respond to literature by authoring, illustrating and sharing their original books.

Mrs. Pansy Gee facilitates instruction for students in third through fifth grades. In her class children participate in literature studies and non-fiction research. Students explain their thoughts, opinions and original ideas orally and in writing. The enjoyment of reading and the importance of expressing their concepts in writing are stressed.

Programs

Neighborhood Vanguard Program

The Gifted and Talented program is for students identified by HISD as gifted and talented. It provides learning opportunities designed to focus on the students' strengths and extend their abilities in math and the humanities. The non-graded curriculum encourages students to explore complex questions, problems, and areas of study. All of the teachers at Mark Twain are GT certified.

Instructional Support Services

Students having difficulty performing in the classroom can be referred to the Intervention Assistance Team (IAT). The IAT will meet with teachers and parents to define the problem and develop a course of action. State Law and HISD policy requires schools adopt a three-tier approach known as Response to Intervention (RTI). Parents should work closely with the classroom teacher to identify and remediate any areas of concern whether they be academic, social or behavioral. If you have questions about any of our support services, please contact Janelle Wade at jwade@houstonisd.org.

Dual Language Program

The Dual Language Program is an innovative program that provides a cohesive bilingual, bi-literate and bi-cultural environment for an equal number of Spanish speaking and English speaking students in participating classrooms. There is an emphasis on literacy in Spanish for both groups, enrichment through a technological component and the encouragement of strong parental participation. *Applications will be available during HISD's Magnet Awareness week in November.*

Specials

Spanish

Spanish instruction is offered to every child at Mark Twain. The objectives are to build vocabulary, improve listening skills, create meaning and develop comprehension. It combines a child-centered, multi-sensory approach with an understanding of Hispanic culture.

Art

The fine arts curriculum is made of the following components, creating, responding and connecting. Through inquiry the students gain a well rounded art experience which incorporates art history, creative thinking, aesthetics and real world connections in a hands on art activity.

Music

The music curriculum includes four basic strands--perception, creative expression/performance, historical and cultural heritage, and critical evaluation. All students attend music and participate in a program during the school year.

Science Lab

The Science Lab provides hands-on experiences designed to extend lessons learned in the classroom. The lab environment provides an opportunity for improving skills in observation, prediction, and compiling and analyzing data. These skills promote logical and critical thinking.

Media Center

The traditional library has been combined with the traditional computer lab to create this unique learning space. The Media Center is where the children will learn about information and communication technology while utilizing books and Internet resources. The combination of library and computer lab will help prepare the children for a 21st century learning environment.

Physical Education

In Physical Education, students acquire the knowledge and skills for movement that provide the foundation for enjoyment, continued social development through physical activity, and access to a physically-active lifestyle. The student exhibits a physically-active lifestyle and understands the relationship between physical activity and health throughout the lifespan.

Optional Programs

Strings Program

Violin, cello and guitar lessons are available for a fee. Students receive both a private lesson and group lesson. Parents interested in having their child participate in strings lessons should contact Victoria Sanchez at 713-295-5230 or vsanche7@houstonisd.org

Extended Instructional Day Program

The Extended Day program offers afterschool care on campus. There are a variety of options available for parents to choose from. The enrollment forms are available in the school office or on our website www.houstonisd.org/Twaines.org. Contact Stacey Karr for more information at skarr@houstonisd.org

Parent Driven Activities

In addition to core classes, many additional activities are offered to students. These programs are made possible through a coordinated effort between the staff, parent volunteers and the community. Some activities include UIL, Odyssey of the Mind, Robotics and Name that Book.

Communication

Consistent communication is a cornerstone of a successful school community. The primary method of communicating between the school and families will be the *Twain Times*, *Living Tree*, and the *Tuesday Folders*. Important communications from the school will go out on Tuesdays in the red folders and electronically.

We will continue using *The Living Tree*, which provides an easy way for the school community to communicate with each other. Teachers will invite parents to join their class group via email. Parents that wish to receive school communications such as the Twain Times electronically will need to register on the Mark Twain website at www.houstonisd/Twaines.org under the Twain Times tab. Please remember to check student folders and the website frequently to stay current on Mark Twain news.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Informal conferences can be scheduled with teachers on an as needed basis. Please remember that 8:00 a.m. is not an appropriate time to meet with teachers. If you need to conference with a teacher, please contact them to arrange a time that is amenable to all parties. Teachers are committed to working with parents to accommodate work schedules and families that have more than one child attending Mark Twain.

Student Led Conferences

Student led conferences will be held twice a year for students in all grades. This is a wonderful opportunity for the children to share their learning with parents and guardians.

Homework

The assignment of homework is the decision of the classroom teacher. Grade levels do meet on a regular basis to discuss homework and grade levels may develop grade level policies. It is the responsibility of all students to complete the homework assignments and meet all deadlines regarding homework. Teachers will provide parents with the homework policies and expectations specific to their classroom.

Homework assignments should not exceed 20 minutes in Kindergarten, 30 minutes in grades 1 and 2, 45 minutes in grades 3-4 and 1 hour in grade 5. In addition to these suggested times it is recommended that students read 15-30 minutes each night.

IB@HOME

IB@HOME provides parents with information about the current planner and a list of questions to facilitate discussion with your child about what they are studying in the classroom. The questions promote inquiry and discussion which is more constructive and meaningful than a worksheet. The IB@HOME will be distributed in the Tuesday folders during each planner and can be accessed through teachers' blogs and websites.

Gradespeed

Parents may always access **Gradespeed** to view children's progress concerning grades. Instructions on how to access Gradespeed are located on the homepage of the district website www.houstonisd.org under Parent Student Connect.

Report Cards

Report cards are given out at the end of every nine-week grading period, which indicates progress towards mastery of the grade level proficiencies. Dates below.

October 31, 2014	January 9, 2015
March 27, 2015	May 28, 2015

Progress Reports

Progress Reports will be sent home the fourth week of each 9 week grading period. These reports are sent to those students that may not be making satisfactory progress for that grading period. Progress Reports and Report Cards should be signed and returned to the classroom teacher.

Parent Expectations **Absences and Tardies**

The Texas Education Code (25.092) sets a minimum attendance requirement of 90 percent of class meetings for the award of credit. District promotion standards for grades 1-8 also require 90% attendance. The parent or guardian of a student who has been absent must present a written excuse within 3 days of the absence. Absences are excused for reasons such as personal illness, illness or death in the family, quarantine, or adverse weather or road conditions. Absences may also be excused in the cases where students are participating in school activities, permission from the principal or in special situations approved by the principal or principal designee. If an excuse is not submitted then the absence will be considered an unexcused absence.

A student that is not in attendance at 9:30 a.m. will be counted absent according to HISD attendance guidelines. If a student is present at 9:30 a.m. but leaves the school after 9:30 they are considered present. Parents should make every effort to have children in school and on time so that they can maximize their learning. It is important to have students at school at 7:50 to allow them time to get settled in before the instructional day begins at 8:00 a.m. If students arrive after 8:00 a.m. they are required to check in at the front office for a tardy slip. *Students who accumulate more than 8 tardies will not be eligible for perfect attendance.*

Children arriving at school after the 8:00 a.m. bell are considered tardy. Parents must also submit a written explanation every time their child does not arrive at school by 8:00 a.m. (Elementary School Guidelines XVI-30). The first few minutes of the day are critical and every effort should be made for children to arrive at school before the 8:00 a.m. bell.

STUDENTS ARE STILL REQUIRED TO MEET THE HISD ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS FOR PROMOTION. However, failure due to excessive unexcused absences can be appealed to the School Attendance Committee if the absences were due to extenuating circumstances.

Visitors

Houston Independent School District policy requires that all visitors to the school present their driver's license or other accepted form of identification to the office and register as a visitor. This includes parent volunteers and HISD employees other than those assigned to Mark Twain. Parents wishing to eat lunch with their children must sign in and obtain a visitor's badge. Private tutors are not allowed to tutor on campus per HISD policy.

Dropping Items off During Day

Once the instructional day has started parents may not drop off items at the classrooms or interrupt instruction. Any items that need to be delivered to a classroom can be left in the main office.

Textbooks

Students are responsible for the textbooks issued to them. Once textbooks have been checked out to students they are responsible for their condition. Parents will be expected to replace any textbooks that are lost or damaged.

Lost and Found

Please label all removable clothing, book bags, and lunch kits. The Lost and Found closet is located in the cafeteria. It will be cleaned out before the Winter Holiday and at the end of the school year. Items not claimed will be donated.

Arrival and Departure

Teachers open their classrooms to students at 7:50 each day and instruction begins at 8:00 a.m. and ends at 3:15 p.m. Please be mindful that teachers need those first minutes to greet their students and to prepare for the instructional day. Teachers are not available to conference with parents after the 7:50 a.m. bell or at 3:15 p.m. (unless previously arranged). If you would like to conference with your child's teacher, please contact them and arrange a time amenable to all parties.

Kindergarten Procedures

Parents may park in the Underwood lot and walk their children into the building through the gate at the northwest corner of the building (located by the cottages). In the morning, you may drop off your child in the classroom beginning at 7:50 a.m. In the afternoon, you may wait in the front rotunda until 3:10 p.m. at which time parents will be allowed to the kindergarten wing. Any student not picked up at 3:15 p.m. will be escorted to the cafeteria where they will wait in grade level lines until picked up.

All Other Grades

Parents may walk children to the classroom beginning at 7:50 a.m. Students dropped off prior to 7:50 a.m. will wait in grade level lines in the cafeteria. Parents will be allowed to gather in the front rotunda beginning at 3:00 p.m. but will not be allowed to enter the grade level wings until dismissal time at 3:15 p.m. Students can be picked up at classrooms (parents walking in and picking up) or in the cafeteria (carpoolers only) at 3:15 p.m.

Students will not be checked out after 3:00 p.m.

Carpool Instructions

The carpool lane for drop-off and pick-up of all students in grades K-5 is located on Aberdeen (south side of school).

1. Cars enter only from the westbound lane of Aberdeen-turning right into the drop-off lane.
- 2. There are no left turns into the carpool lane.**
3. There is no parking in the carpool lane; and parents are not to leave their cars.
4. Students will be called from the cafeteria and escorted to the cars by safety patrol.
5. Students exit and enter cars only from the passenger side of the car.

Parking

Parking is available in the Braes parking lot by the ball fields and on the side streets off Braes Blvd for parents who choose to walk their children into the building. The Underwood parking lot is reserved for KINDERGARTEN PARENTS. **The parking lot on Aberdeen is reserved for faculty and staff. To increase safety measures, parent parking is not allowed!!!** *When parking in the neighborhood, please make sure that you do not block a driveway and that you leave ample space for our neighbors to enter and exit their homes.*

Safety and Security

In order to ensure that Mark Twain is a safe environment all school doors (including the kindergarten entrance) will be locked after school commences at 8:00 a.m. Visitors to the building after this time must ring the bell at the front entry doors to gain entrance to the building. All visitors must check-in at the front desk and wear a visitor's badge when in the building.

Elementary school children need the security of knowing exactly what to do when the school day is over. Please make sure that you inform your child of after school plans. There are many options available for parents needing child care after the school day. There is an Extended Day program provided at Mark Twain. The YMCA also has an after school program. In addition, there are several private agencies in the area that will pick up children from the school.

- Parents should fill out the after school plan form at the Back to School Rumble or the first day of school.
- Parents must submit to the teacher the "walk home" form located in the first-day packet if a child has permission to walk home alone or to the library.
- Children will not be allowed to leave with anyone not listed on the emergency contact form. Please make sure that you list those authorized to pick up your child and supply reliable contact numbers for yourself and those individuals. If there is any change to this information you must update the office in writing.

The Mark Twain Safety Committee meets monthly to review policies and procedures related to the safety and security of the campus community. Teachers and students are trained on emergency procedures and monthly safety drills are conducted. Campus emergency procedures are located in the main office and the teacher's lounge. Staff members have a copy of the manual as part of the Faculty Handbook. If you have any items to submit to the committee for review, please contact Janelle Wade at jwade@houstonisd.org.

Electronic Devices

Students who bring cell phones to school must leave them in their backpacks on mute. Cell phone use is prohibited during the instructional day. Electronic games and toys are also prohibited and will be collected by the teacher if they are brought to school. The SDMC developed a policy for the use of electronics in the spring of 2012. This policy will be in the first day packet.

Mark Twain Mandatory Dress Code

Mark Twain students must come to school dressed according to the dress code. On Fridays students may wear event shirts and the last Friday of each month is Free Dress Day.

TOPS

- Red, white or navy
- T-shirts (no lettering or graphics)
- Polo shirts
- Turtle necks appropriate
- Mark twain t-shirts, sweatshirts

BOTTOMS

- Navy or khaki
- Slacks, or jeans (blue, no holes)
- Skirts, jumpers
- Shorts may be worn as long as the length is

SHOES

- Tennis shoes or other closed toed shoes are most appropriate for school. Flip flops are not allowed.

Student Expectations

Student Code of Conduct

Parents will receive a Student Code of Conduct from HISD. Please review the contents of this booklet, sign the acknowledgement of receipt page and return to your child's teacher. All students at Mark Twain are expected to abide by the guidelines contained in this handbook and the essential agreements outlined as part of our PYP program.

Mark Twain is a + Works campus and in coordination with HISD's Core Value: Safety Above All Else and Texas Anti-Bullying House Bill 1942, we provide training to all staff to develop a shared definition of bullying, provide a safe environment conducive to learning, and implement strategies to detect bullying.

Positive Actions at Mark Twain –We developed essential agreements that incorporate the IB Learner Profile with behavioral expectations for students. Please take a moment and review these positive actions with your child.

During assemblies, Mark Twain students are:

Principled by entering the cafeteria quietly, following teachers' directions and respecting the performers' effort, **Knowledgeable** by practicing concert manners, **Caring** by sitting appropriately.

In the cafeteria, Mark Twain students are:

Balanced in our food choices, **Communicators** by listening to classmates & talking with "inside" voices, **Caring** by recycling items and throwing away trash.

On the playground, Mark Twain students are:

Reflective by winning and losing with positive attitudes, **Caring** by treating others the way you want to be treated and including all in your play, **Balanced** by knowing your limits, **Risk-takers** for working things out with playmates.

In the specialists' classrooms, Mark Twain students are:

Open-minded by learning from different teachers in different situations, **Inquirers** by asking questions, **Risk-takers** by trying something new.

In hallways & stairways, Mark Twain students are:

Caring by looking at other's work displayed and walking quietly, **Knowledgeable** that others are working, **Principled** by going directly to our destination.

In the restrooms, Mark Twain students are:

Knowledgeable by washing hands with soap. **Caring** by throwing away used paper towels, **Principled** by rejoining class quickly and quietly.

Health & Medical Information

The policy of the Board of Education does not authorize Houston school personnel to give medication of any kind. That includes aspirin, similar preparation, or any other drugs.

Nurses and other school personnel, however, can give medication during school hours under the following restrictions:

- Pupils who are non-contagious, on long-term medication, on preventative medication, or for a prolonged period on medication that cannot under any arrangement be administered other than during school hours may take medication in school.
- A physician must stipulate in writing the type of preparation, color, quantity, and time of administration.
- The healthcare provider's statement must be accompanied by written permission of at least one parent.
- The required form for the administration of medication can be accessed on the HISD website under Health and Medical Services.

Physician orders cannot be altered the school personnel without written permission from the physician. Any medications must be brought to the school nurse by the parent or guardian. Students may not carry medication except in certain cases such as diabetes or asthma. It is important for parents to communicate any health/medical issues that may impact the student while at school with the school nurse.

Food Allergies

Effective August 1, 2012 HISD will implement policy that reflects recent legislation requiring school districts to establish measures that protect students with food allergies through prevention of exposure to identified food allergens and emergency response in case of accidental exposure.

Life-threatening food allergy is a serious public and personal health concern that affects approximately 4% of children under the age of 18 and 12 million Americans overall. Individuals who develop anaphylaxis as a result of exposure are at risk for a closed airway due to swelling, making CPR ineffective. Once exposed, specific emergency medications and actions are urgent life-saving measures.

Mark Twain has developed plans to ensure that proper attention and care is provided to those students who have allergies. Parents are responsible for notifying our school nurse, Mrs. Andrea Hill, regarding their child's allergies.

Cafeteria Information

Breakfast is served between 7:30-7:50 each day. Please have your child at school in time for them to be in their classrooms no later than 8:00 a.m.

Parents may eat lunch with their child at one of the guest tables. Students may invite one classmate to join them at the table. Please remember to obtain a visitors pass when you join your child for lunch.

Federal regulations do not permit foods with minimal nutritional value to be served in the cafeteria during mealtime. In an effort to fight childhood obesity, HISD guidelines aligns with the [Foods of Minimal Nutritional Value Policy \(FMNV\)](#) which restricts such foods as soda, water ices, chewing gum and certain candies from being served or provided on the school campus. **Elementary campuses are restricted from serving these items throughout the entire school day.**

Birthday treats need to follow HISD nutritional guidelines. They may be served after lunch in the classroom or on the pavilion.

Lunch Applications

- Free and Reduced Price Meal Application can be accessed online <https://mealapps.houstonisd.org> which cuts the processing time in half so your child's benefits will start sooner. Paper applications will still be available at your child's school. Please note that families must apply EVERY year for free or reduced-price meal status.
- Students school meal account can be managed online <https://www.parentonline.net>. From this website you can prepay for your child's meals, track your child's spending history, and restrict the sale of individual a la carte food items.
- HISD Food Services provides information on the HISD website under Food Services.

Contacts:

Principal	Melissa Patin	mpatin@houstonisd.org
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Magnet	Janelle Wade	jwade@houstonisd.org
IB	Kathleen Blakeslee	KBLAKESL@houstonisd.org
Special Education	Colleen Jones	Cjones41@houstonisd.org
School Secretary	Anna Rangel	arangel@houstonisd.org
Dual Language	Gracie Martinez	gmartin6@houstonisd.org
Volunteer Registration	Liz Cisneros	ecisner1@houstonisd.org
Registrar	Denise Rodriguez	drodugu@houstonisd.org
PTO President	Tony Houck	tvhouck@msn.com

