

Amendments to the 2017–2018 Student and Parent Handbook

The following amendments to the 2017–2018 Student and Parent Handbook (“Handbook”) and Student Code of Conduct (“Code of Conduct”) are effective immediately.

- A. *Harmony’s policy for reporting potential discrimination, harassment, and retaliation has been amended. The following language will replace “Reporting Procedures,” “Investigation of Complaints,” “Confidentiality,” and “Appeal” on pages 30–35 of the Handbook. Additionally, the tables on pages 29–33 listing local compliance coordinators have been deleted.*

Reporting Procedures

A student who experiences discrimination or harassment based on race, color, national origin, religion, age, or gender, including sexual harassment, or who believes that another student has experienced such prohibited discrimination or harassment must immediately:

1. Report the experience to a teacher, a counselor, the Campus Principal, or to another school employee. The teacher, counselor, or other school employee who receives such a report must immediately relay that report to the Campus Principal, who will report directly to the:

Title IX Coordinator

Charles Lambert
Director of Internal Investigations
9321 W San Houston Pkwy S. Houston Texas 77099
Telephone: (713) 343-3333

OR

Report directly to the Title IX Coordinator:

Title IX Coordinator

Charles Lambert
Director of Internal Investigations
9321 W San Houston Pkwy S. Houston Texas 77099
Telephone: (713) 343-3333

2. A student who experiences discrimination or harassment based on disability or who believes that another student has experienced such prohibited discrimination or harassment must immediately report to the ADA/Section 504 Coordinator:

ADA/Section 504 Coordinator

Ihsan Kara
Director of Special Programs
9321 W San Houston Pkwy S. Houston Texas 77099

Telephone: (713) 343-3333

Upon receipt of a report of prohibited discrimination or harassment, the Campus Principal will forward the report to one of the two appropriate coordinators listed above for an investigation.

3. A student shall not be required to report prohibited discrimination or harassment to the person alleged to have committed the conduct. Reports of prohibited conduct involving the Title IX Coordinator or ADA/Section 504 Coordinator must be directed to the appropriate Campus Principal. Reports of prohibited conduct involving the Campus Principal are to be submitted to the local Cluster Superintendent.

Consultation and Assistance

With regard to the investigation of gender discrimination and sexual harassment investigation, the Title IX coordinator may consult with and/or request assistance from the Campus Dean of Discipline, the Campus Principal, the Area Superintendent, the Cluster Director of Operation, the Central Office Director of Student Safety and Conduct, the Central Office Employee Relations Director, or the HPS attorney.

With regard to a disability discrimination/harassment investigation, the ADA/Section 504 Coordinator may consult with and/or request assistance from the Campus SPED/504 Coordinator, the Associate Director of Special Programs, the District Special Education Coordinator, the District Director of Academics, the Area Superintendent, or the HPS attorney.

Investigation of Complaints

After receiving a complaint of prohibited discrimination or harassment, the School may, but need not, require the student to prepare a written report. Oral complaints will be reduced to written form. Upon receipt of a complaint, the appropriate Compliance Coordinator or designee shall promptly undertake an investigation. Following completion of the investigation, the Compliance Coordinator or designee will discuss his or her findings with the Campus Principal, and will prepare a written decision regarding the complaint.

When appropriate, the School may take interim action to avoid additional opportunities for discrimination or harassment. The investigation may consist of personal interviews with the person making the report, the person against whom the report is filed, and any others with knowledge of the circumstances surrounding the allegations. If the results of the investigation establish that prohibited discrimination or harassment occurred, the School shall promptly respond by taking appropriate disciplinary or corrective action reasonably calculated to address the discrimination or harassment and prevent its recurrence. The School may take disciplinary action based on the results of the investigation, even if the School concludes that the conduct did not rise to the level of harassment prohibited by law or policy.

Confidentiality

To the greatest extent possible, Harmony will respect the privacy of the complainant, persons against whom a report is filed, and witnesses. Limited disclosures may be necessary in order to conduct a thorough investigation and comply with applicable law.

Appeal

A student or parent who is dissatisfied with the outcome of the investigation may appeal through the process set forth in Board Policy PG-3.30 (Parent and Student Complaints and Grievances), beginning at Level Two.

B. The following section will replace “Freedom from Bullying and Cyberbullying” on page 35 of the Handbook:

Freedom from Bullying and Cyberbullying

Harmony Public Schools prohibits bullying as defined by this section, as well as retaliation against anyone involved in the complaint process. Bullying means a single significant act or a pattern of acts by one or more students directed at another student that exploits an imbalance of power and involves engaging in written or verbal expression, expression through electronic means, or physical conduct that:

- Has the effect or will have the effect of physically harming a student, damaging a student’s property, or placing a student in reasonable harm to the student’s person or of damage to the student’s property;
- Is sufficiently severe, persistent, or pervasive enough that the action or threat creates an intimidating, threatening, or abusive educational environment for a student; or
- Materially and substantially disrupts the educational process or the orderly operation of a classroom or the school; or
- Infringes on the rights of the victim at school.

Cyberbullying means bullying that is done through the use of any electronic communication device, including through the use of a cellular or other type of telephone, a computer, a camera, electronic mail, instant messaging, text messaging, a social media application, an Internet website, or any other Internet-based communication tool.

The Harmony bullying policy applies to:

- Bullying that occurs on or is delivered to school property or to the site of a school-sponsored or school-related activity on or off school property;
- Bullying that occurs on a publicly or privately owned school bus or vehicle being used for transportation of students to or from school or a school-sponsored or school-related activity; and
- Cyberbullying that occurs off school property or outside of a school-sponsored or school-related activity if the cyberbullying:
 - Interferes with a student’s educational opportunities; or
 - Substantially disrupts the orderly operation of a classroom, school, or school-sponsored or school-related activity.

Reporting Procedures

Any student who believes that he or she has experienced any form of bullying or believes that another student has experienced bullying should immediately report the alleged acts to the

Principal or designee, a teacher, counselor, or other school employee. A report may be made orally or in writing, and may be submitted anonymously. Any school employee who receives notice that a student has or may have experienced bullying shall immediately notify the Principal or designee. The Principal or designee will notify the victim, the student who engaged in bullying, and any student witnesses of available counseling options.

The Principal or designee shall provide notice of incident of alleged bullying to:

- A parent or guardian of the alleged victim on or before the third business day after the date the incident is reported; and
- A parent or guardian of the alleged bully within a reasonable amount of time after the incident.

Investigation of Report

The Principal or designee shall determine whether the allegations in the report, if proven, would constitute prohibited harassment and, if so, proceed under that policy instead. The Principal or designee shall conduct an appropriate investigation based on the allegations in the report, and shall take prompt interim action calculated to prevent bullying during the course of an investigation, if appropriate.

The Principal or designee shall prepare a written report of the investigation, including a determination of whether bullying occurred. If the results of an investigation indicated that bullying occurred, the school shall promptly respond by taking appropriate disciplinary or corrective action reasonably calculated to address the conduct in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct. Harmony Public Schools may take action based on the results of an investigation, even if the school concludes that the conduct did not rise to the level of bullying under this policy.

Discipline for bullying of a student with disabilities shall comply with applicable requirements under federal law, including the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. § 1400 *et seq.*). Harmony Public Schools may not impose discipline on a student who, after an investigation, is found to be a victim of bullying, based on that student's use of reasonable self-defense in response to the bullying.

The Principal, or the Principal's designee, may make a report to the police department of the municipality in which the school is located or, if the school is not in a municipality, the sheriff of the county in which the school is located if, after an investigation is completed, the Principal or designee has reasonable grounds to believe that a student engaged in conduct that constitutes an offense under Section 22.01 (Assault) or 42.07(a)(7) (Harassment), Texas Penal Code.

Confidentiality

To the greatest extent possible, Harmony Public Schools shall respect the privacy of the complainant, persons against whom a report is filed, and witnesses. Limited disclosures may be necessary to conduct a thorough investigation.

Appeal

A student or parent who is dissatisfied with the outcome of the investigation may appeal through the Harmony Public Schools' grievance procedure.

C. The following items have been added as Level III Offenses under the Code of Conduct, and are subject to disciplinary consequences (not in order of progressive disciplinary measures): any applicable Level I or Level II Disciplinary Consequence; out of school suspension for five–ten days; expulsion.

44. Engaging in bullying that encourages a student to commit or attempt to commit suicide.
45. Inciting violence against a student through group bullying.
46. Releasing or threatening to release intimate visual material of a minor or a student who is 18 years of age or older without the student's consent. "Intimate visual material" means visual material that depicts a person (a) with the person's intimate parts exposed; or (b) engaged in sexual conduct.

Amendments to the 2017–2018 Student and Parent Handbook

Dear parents and students:

We have recently updated certain portions of our Student/Parent Handbook (“Handbook”) and Student Code of Conduct (“Code of Conduct”) to reflect recently adopted legal requirements and School policy. The full text of these updates is being provided to you along with this notice. Additionally, copies of the amendments are available in hard copy form at the front office at each campus and Harmony’s Central Office. Please refer to the full text of the amendments when reading and relying on your Handbook and/or Code of Conduct.

Following is a brief summary of the amendments to the Handbook and Code of Conduct:

1. Harmony has updated its policy for reporting potential discrimination, harassment, and retaliation. Please follow these updated procedures if there is a need to report discrimination, harassment, or retaliation.
2. Harmony has updated its policy concerning student freedom from bullying and cyberbullying to match comprehensive anti-bullying laws recently passed by the Texas Legislature. Please contact your Campus Principal if you have questions concerning this updated policy.
3. Harmony has updated its Code of Conduct by adding three Level III disciplinary offenses relating to bullying and cyberbullying. These updates also match the comprehensive anti-bullying laws recently passed by the Texas Legislature. Please note that students who engage in any conduct listed as a Level III disciplinary offense are subject to school discipline, up to and including expulsion from Harmony Public Schools.

Parents and students are responsible for reviewing and following the updated policies and procedures contained in the Handbook and Code of Conduct. Any questions concerning these changes or how to access the complete text of the amendments should be directed to your Campus Principal.

**Acknowledgement of Receipt of
Amendments to the
2017–2018 Student and Parent Handbook**

By signing below, I acknowledge that Harmony Public Schools has informed me of amendments to the Student/Parent Handbook (“Handbook”) and Student Code of Conduct (“Code of Conduct”), and provided instructions on how I may access these changes. I understand that my child and I are responsible for reviewing these amendments, and the information contained in the amended Handbook and Code of Conduct is applicable to me, my child, and all Harmony staff. I further acknowledge that all portions of the Handbook and Code of Conduct that have not been amended remain in full force and effect.

Student Name (please print)

Grade

Student Signature

Date

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

Please sign this page and return it to the Front Office.