SCIENCE FOCUS PROGRAM

Student Handbook

2026-2027

Lincoln Public Schools

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For Bilingual Liaisons:

Arabic: 402-436-1715 نرجو الإتصال على هذه الأرقام إذا كنتم تحتاجون إلى خدمات الترجمة باللغة العربية

Russian: Если вам требуются услуги переводчика пожалуйста позвоните по телефону: 402-436-1942

Español: Por favor llame a este número de teléfono si necesita servicios de intérpretes: 402-436-1938

Vietnamese: Xin vui lòng gọi về số này nếu qúi vị cần có dịch vụ thông dịch: 402-436-1939

Ukrainian: Будь ласка, зателефонуйте за цим номером, якщо вам потрібні послуги перекладу: 402-436-1786

Karen: ဝံသးစူၤကိးလိတဲစိနိၣ်ဂံၢ်အဝဲအံၤဖဲနမ့ၢ်လိၣ်ဘၣ်ပ့ၤကတိၤကျိးထံတၢ်အတၢ်ဆိၣ်ထွဲမၤစၢၤ 402-436-1769

Please Note:

All procedures, guidelines and dates outlined in these documents are subject to change, based on recommendations and directives issued by the Nebraska Department of Education, the Lincoln Lancaster County Health Department (LLCHD), or other governing body.

LPS Student Calendar | 2026-27

JULY 2026

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
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AUGUST 2026

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SEPTEMBER 2026

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OCTOBER 2026

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NOVEMBER 2026

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DECEMBER 2026

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JANUARY 2027

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FEBRUARY 2027

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MARCH 2027

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APRIL 2027

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MAY 2027

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JUNE 2027

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20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

- First Day for K, 6, & 9th Grades
- First Day for 1-5, 7-8, & 10-12th Grades
- Last Day for Students
- All Schools Not in Session
- Schools Not in Session *(Professional Learning/Planning Day)*
- Quarter Start Dates
- Quarter End Dates

Graduation Dates

Tuesday, May 18, 2027 - Yankee Hill

Wednesday, May 19, 2027 - Independence Academy

Thursday, May 20, 2027 - Bryan Community

At Pinnacle Bank Arena – May 21-23, 2027

Fri: LHS | Sat: LNS, LNW, LSE, LNE | Sun: LSW, LSB, EHS

Calendar Options for Families: The Lincoln Public Schools District understands and appreciates that our community has a wide variety of rich and varied religious celebrations and observances. In the event families recognize these holidays, parents should notify schools. Students will be given excused absences and allowed reasonable opportunities to make up any schoolwork missed.

Note: Changes to the calendar may occur as a result of inclement weather or other circumstances. If sufficient school time is lost as a result of calendar changes, and it brings the total number of school hours for the year below the state minimum requirements, the Superintendent will implement a plan for making up this time, which may require additional minutes added to the day, additional days added to the calendar, days previously identified as non-student days re-scheduled as student days, or other appropriate calendar or schedule measures.

SFP
Science Focus Program
LINCOLN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

A science-based education program where a unique community of learners is transformed through critical thinking and interaction with the world.

Science Focus Administration

Lindsey Roy – Science Focus Program Administrator
(lroy@LPS.org)

Science Focus Staff

Mitch Bern – Science

Jamie Cardwell-Gemmell – Campus Supervisor

Ben Herbel – Social Studies

Sally Hunt – English

Matt Johnson – Math

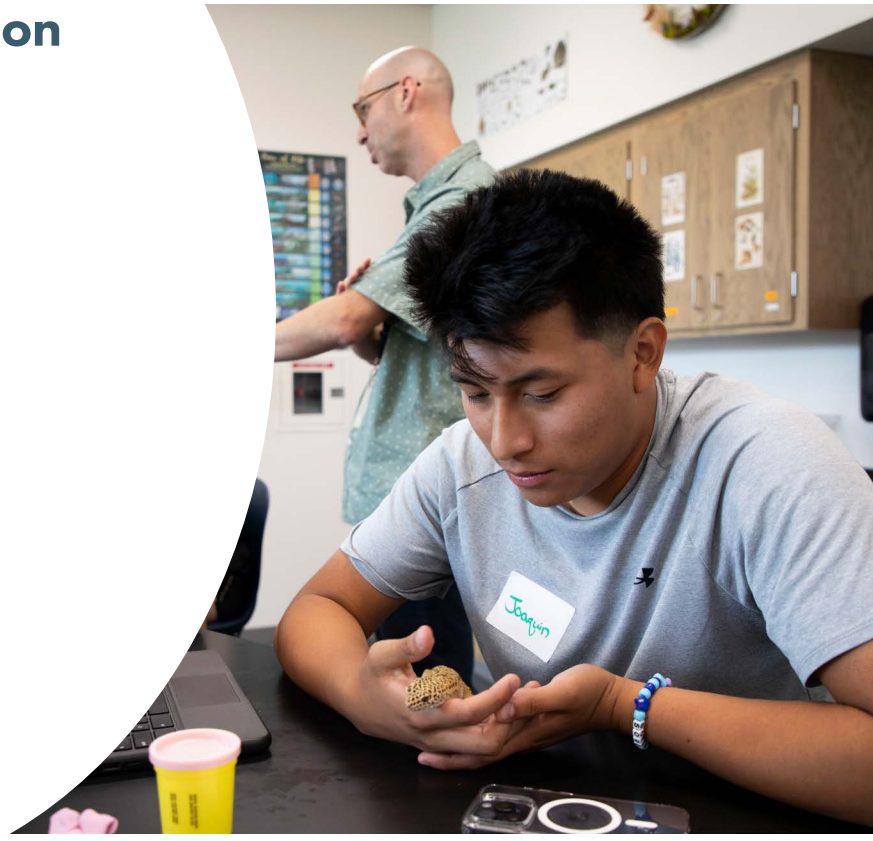
Erin Owens – Social Worker

Amy Proffitt – Executive Secretary

Emily Seifferlein – Science

Lisa Tatro – School Counselor

Mackenzie Wylie – Special Education



Intent of Student Handbook

This handbook is intended to be used by students, parents and staff as a guide to the rules, regulations, and general information about the Science Focus Program. Each student is responsible for becoming familiar with the handbook and knowing the information contained within it. Parents are encouraged to use this handbook as a resource and to assist their child in following the procedures and rules contained in this handbook.

Although information found in this handbook contains detailed and specific information on a variety of topics, the handbook is not intended to be all encompassing so as to cover every situation and circumstance that may arise during any school day, or school year. This handbook does not create a "contract." The administration reserves the right to make decisions and rule revisions at any time to implement the educational program and to assure the well being of all students. The administration will be responsible for interpreting the rules contained in the handbook. Should the situation or circumstance arise that is not specifically covered in this handbook, the administration will make a decision based upon all applicable school district policies, and state and federal statutes and regulations. This handbook is a supplement to the LPS Important Information Handbook (www.LPS.org/ii) to clarify how rules, regulations, and general information about Lincoln Public Schools applies to SFP.

What is the LPS Science Focus Program?

At SFP, we have the privilege to inhabit and create a vibrant space where students actively shape their own learning journey. We are a close knit community of about 100 learners who experience both traditional and unique approaches to education. Here, five outstanding educators provide rigorous learning experiences in math, English, social sciences, and, of course, science. We believe in fostering critical thinking about the world and ourselves, both inside and outside the classroom. If you are an independent, motivated, adventurous student looking for a creative approach to learning, you've found where you belong. Students at SFP discover their strengths, interests, and skills, preparing them for a future full of exciting choices and opportunities.

Students can apply to be a student at SFP through our website, and oftentimes students are encouraged to apply by an administrator or counselor at their home high school. Students and parents or guardians must agree to SFP expectations if selected to attend. While at SFP, students may continue to participate in athletics or other student activities at their home high school.

For more information please contact Science Focus directly at 402-436-1780.

Science Focus Program School Values

At SFP, we contribute positively to our community when...

WE OWN OUR LEARNING

Take responsibility for learning and homework, be fully present, self-directed, efficient with time, have goals, sustain effort, see failure as an opportunity

WE ADVENTURE

Take risks in learning, develop passions, take a global perspective, try new things, embrace the trial and error process, embrace discomfort, go outside to interact with the natural world

WE COLLABORATE

Be a productive group member, work with a variety of peers (consciously avoid making exclusive groups), share the workload, respectfully disagree, challenge each other on ideas

WE SUPPORT EACH OTHER

Communicate with respect, create cooperative working relationships, value others' unique set of skills, be inclusive, offer and accept support, give and receive kindness

What we do at SFP

The Science Focus Program conducts semester portfolios in lieu of semester final exams. A portfolio is an organized record of your academic experiences, achievements and professional development. It consists of a collection of documents which illustrate the variety and quality of work done, along with reflections on these documents and on development over time.

Research

Each year, all students at the Science Focus Program engage in guided independent research projects across various scientific disciplines. We enlist the support and guidance of our community partners and expert teachers to advise these projects. This experience allows students to ask questions about a scientific area of their choosing which fosters critical thinking, scientific inquiry, and science communication skills. To conclude their research, students synthesize their findings into a professional-style scientific poster and prepare to verbally share their results. During our annual "Research Day", students share their scientific journey and discoveries by presenting their poster and outcomes to peers, teachers, and families.

For 11th and 12th graders, the research experience at the Science Focus Program extends beyond Research Day. Additionally, these students participate in the Regional Nebraska Junior Academy of Sciences (NJAS) Research Fair. This event is held at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, where students' projects are rigorously judged by professional researchers. Students compete against each other and other schools to receive direct feedback from experts in their fields. In some cases, students seek to work with professional scientists who act as guides through the research process. This constructive criticism helps them refine their scientific communication, research methodologies, and analysis skills. We're proud to share that over the past several years, many of our students have achieved further recognition, successfully advancing from the regional fair to State and even National meetings, showcasing their exceptional research on a broader stage.

The culmination of our students' research journey is our celebratory Senior Research Night. At this special event, held on the SFP campus, both Juniors and Seniors proudly present their research posters to an audience of parents, extended families, friends, community members, school staff, and district officials. Students and staff consistently receive positive feedback from the broader scientific community on the quality and depth of the projects conducted by Science Focus Program students.

The Science Focus Program offers Lincoln Public School students a unique opportunity to engage in authentic scientific research in a supportive learning environment that begins with the fundamentals of asking a good question through sharing results at regional, state, and even national levels. Our guided learning program goes far beyond typical classroom learning and equips students with invaluable critical thinking, communication, and research skills that are foundational for future success in any academic, scientific or professional endeavor.

Advisory at SFP

Learning and creating quality work is a top priority at Science Focus. Students at SFP learn how to refine and improve their skills and knowledge to become successful learners, producing high quality work. To ensure academic success, all students are assigned to an Advisory time during their Research class while at SFP. Students will work with teachers to complete assignments/projects or relearn/retest over essential objectives, thus improving overall performance in school. Our goal is for each SFP student to achieve their potential in every course they are enrolled in throughout the school year. Advisory time is typically 20 minutes every other day.

Purpose of the Science Focus Advisory Program

- To provide each student with consistent academic support
- To build a community of learners around the four values of our program
- To encourage supportive relationships and build self-efficacy
- To provide students with the knowledge and skills to be successful in all academic environments

SFP Attendance Process

Developing and maintaining regular attendance is one of the most important steps to becoming a successful student, and is an expectation for students attending Science Focus. When a student is not in school, the possibility of learning the classroom objectives and earning credit is significantly reduced. SFP students will follow a three-tiered attendance system within our Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) program. The interventions listed below will be implemented to help students maintain good attendance. Incentives will also be awarded for students who make improvements to their current attendance patterns.

LPS Board Policy 5140 .1 places school absences into two categories: School Excused (SE) and Not School Excused (NSE). School Excused absences include those excused by a doctor or the school health office and any absence approved by school administration such as student activities, suspensions, or students currently in alternate placements. Absences that are Not School Excused and are subject to attendance interventions include Parent Acknowledged, Illness, and Truancy. The law also states that students who accumulate 20 days of Not School Excused absences in one school year may be referred to the County Attorney.

Step One Interventions – 10 days (or the hourly equivalent) of Not School Excused absences

- Generally at this point the school will hold a **Collaborative Plan Meeting. Because SFP is a program — not a school — this will involve the home attendance school**.
- An SFP Academic Contract may be considered at this time.

Step Two Interventions – 15 days (or the hourly equivalent) of Not School Excused absences

- An SFP Academic Contract may be considered at this time.

Step Three Interventions – 20 days (or the hourly equivalent) of Not School Excused absences

- At this point depending on circumstances you may refer to the County Attorney. Because SFP is a program — not a school — this will involve the home attendance school.
- An SFP Academic Contract may be considered at this time.

Truancy:

Students are expected to be in class during class time. Leaving the building is not permitted during instructional time or passing periods. Administrator response may vary depending on the situation from verbal warning to out of school consequence depending on number and severity of the offense.

Tardy Policy:

To maximize instructional time, students will be expected to be in classrooms for the first five and last five minutes of the instructional period. Restroom and campus passes will not be issued at this time except for emergencies. If a student struggles to arrive on time, we use a tiered approach to help them get back on track.

- **Step 1: 2+ tardies in a week for 2 weeks** – SFP staff will have a problem-solving conversation with the student and an email will be sent home to keep families in the loop.
- **Step 2: Continued Tardies –** For each additional week of 2+ tardies, the students will serve a 30-minute lunch detention. Skipping lunch detention will result in additional consequences.
- **Step 3: Persistent Tardiness –** If this behavior continues, we will host a meeting with the student, parents/guardians, and an administrator to develop a Student Contract.

We believe that mistakes are a natural part of learning and growing. To give everyone a fresh start, all tardy counts will reset at the beginning of each semester.

Science Focus Academic Expectations

Science Focus is a program that students choose to attend based on a commitment to a science-based education program where a unique community of learners is transformed through critical thinking and interaction with the world.

- Students at SFP have made the choice to attend Science Focus, and students are accepted based on potential to find success in a new environment. SFP has a limited number of spaces, so students must make use of their space at SFP by attending regularly and earning credits.
- Students must be on track to graduate on time to continue their placement at Science Focus Program.

Focus Program Student Contract

- Purpose: To create a joint action plan when a student faces academic, behavioral, social-emotional, or attendance difficulties at the Science Focus Program. This plan requires a shared commitment from the student, family, and program staff to work together and regularly review progress.
- In the case of repeated failed attempts to overcome these difficulties, the student may be placed back at their home high school. The student may re-apply to the Science Focus Program in the future if they show evidence of success.
- Student placement is under the authority of the Focus Program Administrator and LPS Student Services, not the parent or student.

Science Focus Behavior Expectations

Important Information Booklet

This handbook is only a supplement to the LPS Important Information Booklet, which can be found at the following link: www.LPS.org/ii This Important Information Booklet is intended to be used by students, parents and staff as a guide to the rules, regulations, and general information about Lincoln Public Schools. Each student is responsible for becoming familiar with the handbook and knowing the information contained in it. Parents are encouraged to use this handbook as a resource and to assist their child in following the rules contained in this handbook.

Expectations in the Lincoln Children's Zoo

The Science Focus Program is located within the Lincoln Children's Zoo. Students experience learning through exposure to careers, natural phenomena, and the atmosphere of a world class zoo as part of our classroom. We are allowed to use the zoo as our campus, from going out individually to study or venturing out with your class to learn. The zoo is open during school hours, so we have to be on our best behavior at all times and be aware that anyone in the public may be visiting.

Students can exit into the zoo from the door by the Multipurpose Room (if that room is not in use by the Zoo at that time) or from the first floor hallway. When unaccompanied by a teacher, students must return to school by exiting out of the main gates and walking around to Door #1.

Science Focus is a Drug/Alcohol/Tobacco/Vape Free Campus

SMOKING, TOBACCO, AND VAPING

Smoking and vaping (by students or adults) is prohibited at Science Focus, in the building or on school grounds. Students are not to have any smoking or vaping related products visible in the building or on campus.

The use and/or possession of any device or material related to smoking/vaping will results in consequences:

- Confiscation (parent/guardian will need to pick up)
- In School Suspension
- Out of School Suspension
- Possible referral to Student Services

Drug/Alcohol Related Offenses

When a student is suspected of being under the influence of drugs or alcohol and/or in possession of illegal substances, the student may be searched as well as any of their property on this campus (including vehicle searches). The student may be referred to the Lincoln Police Department and possibly cited.

Possible Consequences

- Suspension from school
- Possible referral to Student Services
- Mandatory parent/guardian conference prior to returning
- Other interventions as determined by administration

Personal Electronic Devices and Communication

Science Focus respects instructional time and wants all students to learn, earn credits, and graduate. Students who are focused on learning are much more successful than students who are missing learning due to a device.

All personal electronic devices are expected to be powered off and put away during the instructional period (this includes cell phones, smart watches, earbuds, etc.). Personal electronic devices should not be visible or used in class. Not visible means the phone can be on the student's person, as long as the student is not using the device. Students may use their personal electronic devices before and after school, between classes, and during lunch.

If a student is accessing a personal electronic device during the instructional period, then the following sequence of consequences will be applied. Compliance at any step will prevent movement to the next step.

Step 1: The teacher will ask the student to put their personal electronic device in the designated storage location in the classroom.

Step 2: The teacher will contact the office and the device will be collected and held in the main office (or designated location) for the remainder of the day and logged as an electronic device infraction (Regulation 5420.4). If the student refuses to turn over the device, they will be removed from the classroom and escorted to the office or designated problem-solving location.

ELECTRONIC DEVICE LOGGED INFRACTIONS

1st Offense: Returned to the student at the end of the school day. Offense logged.

2nd Offense: Returned to the student at the end of the school day. Offense logged. Parent/guardian notified.

3rd Offense: Return to the student at the end of the school day and a building-level in-school corrective plan developed. Parent/guardian notified. Offense logged.

If habitual non-compliance with personal electronic device restrictions leads to frequent disruptions to learning, the teacher will write a referral and the student's administrator will work with the student and family to determine a personalized plan to meet the expectation.

Additional Information: Students are encouraged to take their personal electronic device with them in the event of an evacuation as long as it results in no evacuation delay.

Recording the image or voice of another person with an electronic device, without the express permission of the person recorded, or the failure to promptly delete such a recording following the request of the person recorded violates the LPS Responsibilities of Students (Policy 5480).

If a student brings their device to class, they do so at their own risk and, in doing so, specifically agree to hold Lincoln Public Schools harmless from all liability, damages, claims, costs, expenses, or other charges of any kind or nature whatsoever resulting from bringing their device to class.

COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR STUDENT DURING SCHOOL HOURS

Please contact the SFP office with messages that need to get to students during the school day. Texting your student during class time directly disrupts instruction and the learning of everyone within the classroom setting. The SFP Support Staff is happy to help you and will quickly pass along messages. Thank you for your help with this matter and for protecting our instructional time.

Appropriate School Clothing

If a student's dress interrupts or distracts from classroom activities or is seen as inappropriate for the school setting, the student will not be permitted to continue wearing the clothing in school. This includes, but is not limited to, the following examples: offensive/obscene/vulgar; hate speech; reference to or advertises drugs, alcohol, or tobacco; threatens safety; gang symbols; guns/weapons/violence. Clothing must cover all private parts and undergarments. The administration will be the judge of appropriate apparel. Students wearing inappropriate clothing will be asked to turn the items inside out or change clothing. There are times that students will be outdoors and expectations for dressing appropriately will be communicated in advance.

Student IDs

Students will use their ID to scan into the building. New IDs can be reprinted at the home high school for a fee.

Mental and Behavioral Health Point of Contact

home.LPS.org/socialworkers/mental-behavioral-health-points-of-contact

Arrival and Dismissal Procedures

Arrival

- The building opens at 8:00 a.m.
- Class begins at 10:10 a.m.
- Students will be allowed to enter the building upon arrival.
- Students must enter the building through Door 1 (Main entrance through the Main Office).
- Students must scan their student ID each morning at the Student Check-In Center in the vestibule.
- For student absences, notify both your home high school and SFP through ParentVue or by calling the office

Dismissal

- Students are dismissed from the building at 3:00 p.m.
- Students should go home without delay, unless participating in an activity.
- The building closes at 4:00 p.m., and students not participating in a club or activity, should be off school grounds.

Note: Students waiting for rides after 3:30 p.m. are expected to wait in the office. Please note, the office closes at 4:00 p.m. Students are expected to be off school grounds after this time. There are three reasons for this expectation:

1. Supervision is only provided outside until 3:30.
2. Parents will know where their students are located.
3. During cold or inclement weather, this is a warm and dry location.

Dismissal from school during the school day

Students are required to check out in the main office when leaving the campus for any reason before the end of their scheduled day. Parental notification is required for all students under 19. If a student is dismissed due to illness, he/she must be seen in the office prior to exiting and a parent will be contacted.

Bell Schedule

Science Focus Bell Schedule

*BLOCK	TIME
A1/B1	10:10-11:35
A2/B2	11:40-1:05
LUNCH	1:05-1:35
A3/B3	1:35-3:00

A/B days alternate. See ParentVue, the SFP Website, or the SFP Family Newsletter for daily schedules of A/B days. You can subscribe to the SFP Calendar on the SFP website at science.LPS.org.

Lunch

Students will either bring their lunch, purchase lunch from the Zoo Cafe, or pre-order school hot lunch for the following week. Students will be allowed to eat lunch in the halls, commons, Multipurpose Room or outside, including the zoo. When finished, they will be allowed to spend the remainder of their lunch period in these same areas or going out into the zoo.

Students in 9th and 10th grade are required to stay on campus for lunch.

Consequences for students in 9th/10th grade leaving campus during lunch.

- 1st Offense – Verbal Warning
- 2nd Offense – Verbal Warning/Parent Phone Call
- 3rd Offense – Lunch Detention/Parent Phone Call
- 4th Offense – Lunch Detention/Parent Phone Call
- 5th Offense – Day of ISS/Parent Phone Call
- 6th Offense – Day of OSS/Parent Meeting
- Continued Issue – OSS and Possible Referral to LPS Student Services

Honors and Awards at SFP

Students' GPA at SFP is combined with their home high school where they will be recognized for academic and classroom achievement, including Graduation Honors at their home high school.

Foundation for Lincoln Public Schools Inspire Award:

Each year the staff select one student to receive the Foundation for LPS Inspire Award. We select one student who acts as a leader, inspires other students, and is active in their school community, or takes what they learn and applies it to their lives.

Subject Specific Awards

Each year SFP teachers select outstanding senior student(s) to receive recognition for their efforts. Each award may be given to one or more students. Students are recognized at the SFP End of the Year Celebration, and commemorated on a plaque that is located in the school.

- Social Science Award
- Recognition of Outstanding Senior Research
- English Language Arts Award
- Science Award
- Math Award

Courtney Cusick and Michael Berg Award

These two scholarships are awarded each year for two SFP students that carry on the qualities Courtney and Michael exemplified in the Zoo School Community:

- avid learners
- reflective, critical thinkers,
- generous hearts and spirits,
- community builders within and beyond Zoo School,
- fun-loving and creative,
- pioneers.

The families of these two great friends have established scholarships in Courtney's and Michael's names, who we lost too soon in a tragic accident. We are privileged to be able to award these scholarships to two current students whom we feel carry on the qualities that Courtney and Michael exemplified in the Zoo School community. Read more about their legacy at SFP.

Academic Integrity

The Science Focus Program is committed to reinforcing high academic standards. Core values of diligence, civility, and honesty demonstrate academic integrity.

Due Process Procedure

Any work that violates the rights of another in academic work or that involves misrepresentation of a student's work is considered dishonest. The process to address instances of academic dishonesty are outlined below.

- The teacher and student will conference. The teacher may write a discipline referral.
- The teacher calls and informs parents/guardians.
- Teacher and/or administrator may meet with the student to determine if the student will be expected to complete an alternative assignment or form of the assessment for full, partial, or no credit.
- One instance of academic dishonesty may mean possible exclusion/dismissal from the National Honor Society at home high school.
- In the case of multiple events, additional and more severe consequences will follow (i.e.,possible exclusion from the academic honors, additional disciplinary action, etc.).

Context and Definitions

Cheating: Using or attempting to use unauthorized materials (including AI), information, or study aids to gain an unfair advantage over other students in any academic exercise. Examples include using notes/ cell phones to obtain materials or talking during a test or exam; copying from another student's homework, class work, test, or quiz; and receiving information between exams in multiple sections of a course.

Plagiarism: Representing the words or ideas of another, including artificial intelligence (AI), as one's own in any academic exercise. Examples include failing to enclose a direct quotation from a reference source in quotation marks, using AI generated text as your own, or paraphrasing the words or ideas of another person without proper citation or documentation.

Fabrication: Falsifying or inventing information or citations in an academic exercise. Examples include making up fake statistics for an essay or padding a works cited page with references not cited in the text.

Forgery: Imitating or counterfeiting of images, documents, signatures, and the like.

Multiple Submissions: Submitting the same assignment in two or more courses without the prior permission of the respective instructors. Examples include using the same (or essentially the same) term paper/essay/speech in two classes without obtaining both instructors' permission.

Misuse of Materials: Abuse or unauthorized removal of academic materials from the classroom, library, or any other campus location. Examples include removing the pages from a book or magazine in the library, taking a book from the library without checking it out, taking pictures of academic materials with a cell phone, or stealing an exam from a faculty member's office or desk.

Misrepresentation: Presenting false excuses or using deception to receive a higher grade or to avoid fulfilling the specific requirements of an assignment or course. Examples include giving a false excuse to miss a test or obtaining unauthorized help from another student on a take-home exam.

Technology Misuse: Disruptive, unethical, or illegal use of any electronic device, including any actions which violate the school's rule and regulations. Examples include but are not limited to: any unauthorized sharing of any test/quiz materials, storing notes on the cell phone/ electronic device or calculator, sending text messages with questions, answers, or pop quiz warnings, use of AI programs, etc.

Facilitation of Academic Dishonesty: Helping another student to violate any of these provisions. Examples include allowing a student to copy from your paper on homework, class work, or during an exam; informing another student of the contents of an exam before he/she takes it; writing a paper for another student who subsequently submits it for course credit; and transmitting a false excuse for another student to a faculty member.

Adapted from Central Michigan University Policy on Academic Integrity, Clayton High School Plagiarism Policy, LSW Academic Integrity Procedures, LHS Cheating and Plagiarism Procedures, LNS Academic Integrity Procedures, and LSE Academic Integrity Procedures.

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