HOPE Community Academy

Student Handbook

School Year 2026 / 2027

Serving Pre-K through Grade 12

Proudly Rooted in Hmong, Karen, and Twin Cities Community Culture

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1. Welcome to HOPE Community Academy

Welcome to HOPE Community Academy! Whether you are a new family joining our school community or a returning family beginning another school year, we are honored to walk alongside you in your child's education. This Student Handbook is designed to be a comprehensive guide to the policies, procedures, and expectations that help our school run safely, fairly, and joyfully for every student, from Pre-K through Grade 12.

HOPE Community Academy was founded to serve the Hmong, Karen, and broader Twin Cities communities with a rigorous academic program grounded in cultural pride, strong family partnership, and a deep belief in every student's potential. We know that when schools and families work together, students thrive.

Mission Statement

The Mission of HOPE Community Academy is to inspire students to achieve high academic success while embracing Hmong language and culture.

Vision Statement

It is the vision of HOPE Community Academy to be a public school of excellence, with high quality staff, diverse programs, and successful students.

Core Values

- Hope - We believe in the unlimited potential of every child.
- Community - We honor family, culture, and the collective strength of our Hmong, Karen, and Twin Cities communities.
- Achievement - We hold high expectations for academic and personal growth.
- Respect - We treat every person with dignity, patience, and kindness.
- Integrity - We do what is right, especially when no one is watching.

How to Use This Handbook

This handbook applies to all students enrolled at HOPE Community Academy and to all school-sponsored activities, whether on campus, off campus, or online. Families should review this handbook together at the start of each school year and refer back to it throughout the year. Questions about any policy in this handbook should be directed to your student's Impact Coach, the Academic Team, or the Office of the Impact Office.

A Note on Updates

Policies in this handbook may be updated during the school year as needed to reflect changes in law, safety guidance, or school practice. Families will be notified in writing of any substantive policy change.

2. Non-Discrimination & Equal Access

HOPE Community Academy does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, ethnicity, immigration status, home language, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, marital status, disability, age, economic status, or any other legally protected status in its programs, activities, employment, or admissions.

This commitment applies to academic programs, extracurricular activities, discipline, and access to school facilities. Students and families who believe they have experienced discrimination should contact the Chief Impact Officer or use the Grievance Procedure described in Section 22 of this handbook.

Language Access

HOPE Community Academy is committed to ensuring that all families can fully participate in their child's education regardless of home language. Interpretation and translation services are available for Hmong, Karen, and other languages spoken within our community upon request, including for report cards, disciplinary meetings, IEP/504 meetings, and school-wide communications.

3. Enrollment & Attendance

Enrollment

As a Minnesota public charter school, HOPE Community Academy is tuition-free and open to all students in accordance with state charter school law. Enrollment is managed by the Enrollment Office; families seeking to enroll a new student should contact the Enrollment Office directly for current-year requirements, needed documents, and other procedures if applicable.

Compulsory Attendance

Minnesota law requires regular school attendance for all students ages 7 through 17. Consistent attendance is one of the strongest predictors of student success, and HOPE Community Academy takes daily attendance seriously as both a legal obligation and a core part of our academic culture.

Excused vs. Unexcused Absences

Reason for Absence	Classification
Illness of the student (with parent notification) ● A written doctor's note is required after three or more consecutive days.	Excused
Medical or dental appointment	Excused
Family emergency or bereavement	Excused
Religious observance	Excused
Court appearance or legal obligation	Excused
Pre-approved educational travel (approved in advance by administration)	Excused
Oversleeping or missed transportation without prior notice	Unexcused
Unapproved family trips during the school year	Unexcused
Skipping class or leaving campus without authorization	Unexcused

Report Absences

Absences must be reported to the school by 8:45am. Absences can be reported by calling the Main Office at 651-796-4500.

Chronic Absenteeism & Truancy

A student is considered chronically absent when they miss 10% or more of the school year for any reason, excused or unexcused. Consistent with Minnesota's compulsory attendance and truancy statutes, HOPE Community Academy uses a tiered response:

1. 1-5 unexcused absences: Attendance Team sends an attendance letter home and offers a family check-in.
2. 5-10 unexcused absences: Family meeting is scheduled with the Social Worker and Impact Coach to identify barriers and develop an attendance support plan.
3. 10-15 unexcused absences: Referral may be made in accordance with Minnesota's compulsory instruction law (Minn. Stat. 120A.22) and truancy procedures, including possible referral to county truancy services.

Tardiness

Students are expected to be in their classroom, ready to learn, at the start of the school day. Repeated tardiness disrupts learning and will be addressed through the same tiered family-support approach used for absences.

Withdrawal & Transfer

Families planning to withdraw a student should notify the Enrollment Office as early as possible. The steps below help make the transition smooth for your family and for your student's next school.

1. Reach out to the Enrollment Office to let us know your plans. We'll set up a time to talk through the reason for the withdrawal, review your student's academic records together, and share any support or options that might help before you make a final decision.
2. Complete the withdrawal form. This confirms your student's last day of attendance and, when you know it, the name of the school they're enrolling in next. Sharing that helps us send records to the right place and meet state reporting requirements.
3. Return all school property, including textbooks, classroom materials, library books, the Chromebook and charger, and any other borrowed equipment, uniforms, or devices. Settle any outstanding fees.
4. We'll walk through any balance with you and work out arrangements if you need them.
5. Records transfer. When your student's new school requests their records, we'll send them within ten business days, as Minnesota law requires. Records are released regardless of any unpaid fees or unreturned property, and we handle those items separately from the transfer.

Early Pickups

To pick up your scholar early, please call the Front Office before 1pm of the scheduled pick up day. Families must check in the Front Office and sign out the scholar. For your scholar's safety, only a parent, guardian, or an adult as an approved contact may pick up a scholar, and provide a government issued ID.

If someone other than a parent or guardian, please notify the office ahead of time. The person picking up will need to be listed as an approved contract and must bring a government issued ID.

4. Academic Policies

Grading & Reporting

Teachers regularly assess student progress through classwork, assessments, projects, and participation. Report cards are issued each quarter, and families can expect ongoing communication about academic progress between reporting periods, especially when a student is struggling.

Homework Philosophy

Homework is assigned purposefully to reinforce classroom learning, build independent study habits, and (at the secondary level) prepare students for the expectations of college and career. Homework load is designed to be developmentally appropriate and should not routinely prevent students from getting adequate rest, family time, or extracurricular involvement.

Promotion & Retention

Decisions about grade-level promotion are based on a combination of academic performance, standardized assessment data, attendance, and teacher recommendation. Where a student is at risk of retention, families will be notified well in advance of the end of the school year and invited to participate in developing a plan to support the student.

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to complete their own work with honesty. Plagiarism, cheating, and unauthorized use of artificial intelligence tools to complete graded assignments without teacher permission are violations of academic integrity and will be addressed according to the discipline procedures in Section 6, in addition to academic consequences determined by the teacher and administration.

Graduation Requirements (Grades 9–12)

High school students must meet all Minnesota state credit requirements and any additional HOPE Community Academy graduation requirements, including required coursework, standardized assessments, and any capstone or service-learning requirements established by the school. Individualized graduation plans are reviewed annually with each high school student and family.

5. Code of Conduct

HOPE Community Academy is committed to maintaining a safe, respectful, and orderly school community where every student can learn. All students are expected to:

- Treat all students, staff, family members, and visitors with respect and kindness.
- Attend school regularly and arrive on time, ready to learn.
- Follow directions from all school staff.
- Take care of school property, personal belongings, and the belongings of others.
- Follow all safety rules, including those related to hallways, technology, and emergency drills.
- Refrain from any behavior that is dangerous, disruptive, dishonest, or discriminatory.

Positive Behavior Framework

HOPE Community Academy uses a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) framework to teach, model, and reinforce positive behavior school-wide. Our approach is proactive and restorative wherever possible, focused on teaching the skills students need to succeed rather than relying solely on punitive consequences.

Restorative Practices

When conflict or harm occurs, HOPE Community Academy prioritizes restorative approaches (including restorative conversations, circles, and repair-of-harm agreements) that hold students accountable while preserving relationships and school community. Restorative practices are used alongside, not instead of, the disciplinary procedures described in Section 6 when a Code of Conduct violation has occurred.

6. Discipline Procedures

Discipline at HOPE Community Academy is designed to be fair, consistent, and proportionate, and to comply with the Minnesota Pupil Fair Dismissal Act (Minn. Stat. 121A.40–121A.56) and other applicable state and federal law.

Levels of Response

Level of Behavior	Typical School Response
Level 1 - Minor, classroom-managed (e.g., off-task behavior, minor disrespect)	Teacher redirect, restorative conversation, natural consequence
Level 2 - Repeated or moderate (e.g., defiance, disruption, minor physical conflict)	Impact Coach referral, family contact, behavior plan
Level 3 - Serious (e.g., fighting, harassment, repeated Level 2 behavior)	Impact Coach investigation; in-school consequence; possible short-term suspension
Level 4 - Severe (e.g., weapons, drugs, violence causing injury, serious threats)	Administrative investigation; suspension and/or expulsion proceedings per MN Pupil Fair Dismissal Act

SUSPENSION AND EXPULSION POLICY

HOPE Community Academy operates its student discipline and dismissal practices in accordance with the Minnesota Pupil Fair Dismissal Act (Minn. Stat. §§ 121A.40–121A.56, "PFDA") and applicable federal laws and regulations.

HOPE's primary goal is to keep scholars engaged in the classroom, minimize exclusion from instruction, and provide the support and interventions necessary for scholars to be successful academically, behaviorally, and socially.

This policy provides a framework for scholars, families, teachers, and school leaders to understand HOPE's expectations, progressive intervention practices, and the rights and responsibilities of all parties when disciplinary action may result in removal from school. All disciplinary and dismissal decisions will be implemented consistent with applicable Minnesota and federal law, including required procedural protections and due process rights.

HOPE is committed to using nonexclusionary disciplinary practices and appropriate interventions whenever appropriate, while maintaining a safe, supportive, and productive learning environment for all scholars and staff.

Level	Definition	Type of Behavior	Examples	Response
Level 1A – Minor	A brief, low-level behavior that interrupts	Classroom-managed behavior	Off-task, talking out, minor	**No ISS/OSS.** Nonexclusionary intervention

	learning but is corrected easily through the teacher's normal classroom management.		disruption, minor disrespect, not following expectations	required first: teacher redirect, reteach expectations, restorative conversation, logical consequence.
Level 1B – Repeated Minor	A Level 1A-type behavior that continues or repeats after the teacher has already used classroom-level interventions.	Minor behaviors continuing after interventions	Repeated disruption, repeated disrespect, repeated refusal, inappropriate language, misuse of materials	**Up to 1 Day ISS or OSS.** Teacher documentation, family contact, restorative response, Impact Coach support. Maybe a day in OSS to reflect on behavior and supporting HOPE's community.
Level 2A – Moderate	A behavior serious or persistent enough that it requires support beyond what the classroom teacher can manage alone.	Behavior requiring intervention beyond classroom management	Defiance, leaving class without permission, verbal conflict, minor physical conflict, repeated refusal to follow directions	**Up to 1–2 Days ISS or OSS.** Informal conference and written notice required. Impact Coach referral, family contact, reflection/restorative intervention.
Level 2B – Significant	A Level 2A-type behavior that repeats, escalates, or does not improve after an Impact Coach or other intervention.	Repeated or escalated moderate behavior	Repeated defiance, repeated classroom removals, aggressive behavior, escalating peer conflict, repeated Level 2A behaviors	**Up to 2–3 Days ISS or OSS** Informal conference, written notice, family conference. Administrative involvement, behavior plan/intervention.
Level 3A – Serious	Misconduct that creates a	Serious misconduct	Fighting, physical aggression,	**Up to 3–4 Days OSS.**

	significant disruption to the school or raises a safety concern for students or staff.	creating significant disruption or safety concerns	bullying/harassment, theft, vandalism, serious threats, leaving school grounds	Administrative investigation, family notification, restorative/safety intervention, re-entry support.
Level 3B – Major	Serious misconduct involving greater harm, higher risk, or repeated Level 3A incidents.	Serious misconduct involving greater harm, risk, or repeated incidents	Serious fighting, repeated aggression, significant property damage, credible threats, severe bullying/harassment, repeated Level 3A behaviors	**Up to 3-5 Days OSS.** Administrative investigation, family conference, safety/behavior plan, required re-entry meeting.
Level 4A – Severe	Behavior that creates a serious and immediate threat to the health or safety of students or staff.	Behavior creating a serious threat to health or safety	Violence causing injury, serious assault, credible serious threats, drugs/controlled substances, dangerous objects, major property destruction	**Up to 5 Days OSS.** Immediate administrative/safety response, family notification, re-entry plan; additional proceedings when appropriate.
Level 4B – Critical / Extreme	The most serious misconduct a student can engage in, presenting an immediate or substantial danger to the school community.	Most serious conduct presenting an immediate or substantial danger	Weapon-related conduct, serious assault causing significant injury, credible weapon threats, extreme violence, severe drug-related incidents, repeated Level 4 behavior	**Up to 5 Days OSS.** Immediate suspension, with safety plan in place, family notification, re-entry plan.

Progressive Behavior Support and Re-Entry Process

- **After Each Suspension:** The Impact Coach Manager will conduct a re-entry meeting with the scholar and parent(s)/guardian(s) before the scholar returns to school. The purpose of the meeting is to review the incident, reinforce HOPE's behavior expectations, identify appropriate supports, and establish a plan for successful re-entry.

- **At the 5th Suspension:** The Impact Coach Manager and School Social Worker will meet with the scholar and parent(s)/guardian(s) to review the scholar's behavioral history, reinforce HOPE's behavior expectations, identify underlying needs or barriers, and develop or strengthen a behavioral support plan.

- **At the 8th Suspension:** The Impact Coach Manager, Chief Academic Officer, and Executive Director will meet to review the scholar's behavioral history, interventions and supports provided, and the effectiveness of those interventions. The team will determine whether additional or alternative nonexclusionary supports, interventions, assessments, or services are needed.

- **At the 10th Suspension:** The Impact Coach Manager and Executive Director will conduct a comprehensive review of the scholar's disciplinary history, including the circumstances of each suspension, interventions and supports provided, and the effectiveness of those interventions. If the conduct meets the statutory grounds for dismissal under Minnesota law and nonexclusionary disciplinary practices have been appropriately attempted, HOPE may initiate exclusion or expulsion proceedings in accordance with the Minnesota Pupil Fair Dismissal Act, including all required notice and hearing procedures.

- **Expulsion Hearing and Due Process:** Any proposed expulsion will be subject to the requirements of Minnesota Statutes §§ 121A.40–121A.56. An expulsion may not be imposed without a hearing unless the scholar and parent/guardian waive the hearing in writing. The scholar and parent/guardian must receive the required written notice and information regarding their rights, including the right to have a representative or legal counsel present at the hearing.
    - **Appeal:** Following a school board decision to expel or exclude a scholar, the scholar or parent/guardian may appeal the decision to the Minnesota Department of Education within **21 calendar days** of the school board's action.

Protection Rights for Students with an IEP or 504 Plan

HOPE Community Academy will implement disciplinary actions involving scholars with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Section 504 Plan in accordance with the Minnesota Pupil Fair Dismissal Act, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and other applicable federal and state laws.

A scholar's disability, IEP, or Section 504 Plan does not prevent HOPE from responding to behavior that violates school expectations. However, disciplinary decisions will consider the scholar's disability-related needs, the services and supports provided through the scholar's IEP or Section

504 Plan, and whether required accommodations, modifications, supplementary aids, behavioral supports, and services were implemented.

1. Review of IEP or Section 504 Plan

   When a scholar with an IEP or Section 504 Plan is being considered for suspension or other disciplinary action, the appropriate school administrator will consult with the appropriate special education or Section 504 personnel to determine whether the scholar's plan contains relevant accommodations, behavioral supports, services, or other provisions that should be considered in responding to the behavior.

   HOPE will document whether relevant supports and accommodations were implemented at the time of the incident and whether additional interventions or supports may be appropriate.

2. Short-Term Suspensions

   HOPE may suspend a scholar with an IEP or Section 504 Plan when permitted by applicable law and consistent with the scholar's legal protections. For a scholar with an IEP, removals from the scholar's educational placement will be tracked to determine whether the removals constitute a change in placement under applicable federal or state law. A dismissal of one school day or less may constitute a day or partial day of suspension for a scholar with a disability if the scholar does not receive regular or special education instruction during that period.

3. Multiple or Extended Suspensions

   When a scholar with an IEP has been suspended for more than five consecutive school days or ten cumulative school days in the same school year, HOPE will follow the requirements of Minnesota Statutes § 121A.43 and applicable federal law. Relevant members of the scholar's IEP team, including at least one of the scholar's teachers, will meet as required to determine the extent to which the scholar needs services to:

   - Continue participating in the general education curriculum, although in another setting;
   - Continue progressing toward the goals in the scholar's IEP; and
   - Receive the special education and related services required by law.

   The meeting will occur as soon as possible and within the timeframe required by law. When a suspension exceeds five consecutive school days, HOPE will provide alternative educational services as required by Minnesota law.

4. Manifestation Determination

   Before initiating an expulsion or exclusion of a scholar with an IEP, HOPE will comply with applicable federal and Minnesota requirements concerning a manifestation determination. The relevant IEP team members and the scholar's parent(s)/guardian(s), as required by law, will determine whether:

   - The conduct was caused by, or had a direct and substantial relationship to, the scholar's disability; or
   - The conduct was the direct result of HOPE's failure to implement the scholar's IEP.

HOPE will not proceed with exclusion or expulsion in a manner inconsistent with applicable IDEA or Minnesota requirements.

5. Section 504 Scholars

   For a scholar receiving services under a Section 504 Plan, HOPE will comply with applicable Section 504 and ADA requirements when imposing disciplinary consequences. When disciplinary action may constitute a significant change in the scholar's placement, HOPE will follow applicable Section 504 procedural safeguards and conduct the required review to determine whether the behavior was related to the scholar's disability and whether the scholar's Section 504 Plan and accommodations were appropriately implemented. A Section 504 Plan will not be used to excuse behavior that is unrelated to the scholar's disability; however, HOPE will not impose discipline in a manner that discriminates against a scholar because of a disability or that fails to provide required procedural protections.

6. Behavioral Supports and Re-Entry

   When behavior indicates that a scholar with an IEP or Section 504 Plan may need additional behavioral, social-emotional, academic, or other support, HOPE may convene the appropriate team to review existing interventions and determine whether additional supports, accommodations, services, or assessments are appropriate.

   This may include, as appropriate:

   - Review or revision of the scholar's IEP or Section 504 Plan;
   - Development or revision of a Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA);
   - Development, review, or revision of a Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP);
   - Review of academic, behavioral, social-emotional, or environmental supports;
   - Restorative or re-entry interventions;
   - Social work or counseling support;
   - Family collaboration; and
   - Referral for additional school or community-based services

7. Documentation and Coordination

   All suspensions involving scholars with an IEP or Section 504 Plan will be documented and tracked by the appropriate school personnel. HOPE will monitor cumulative removals and coordinate with the appropriate special education or Section 504 personnel to ensure that disciplinary decisions do not inadvertently result in a violation of the scholar's rights.

   Nothing in this policy limits the rights or protections provided to a scholar under federal or Minnesota law. Where this policy conflicts with applicable federal or state law, the requirements of applicable law will control.

Due Process

Before any suspension, a student will be given notice of the allegations and an opportunity to share their side of the story. For suspensions longer than five school days, or for expulsion or exclusion proceedings, families are entitled to the full notice, hearing, and appeal rights guaranteed under the Minnesota Pupil Fair Dismissal Act, including the right to representation.

Suspension & Expulsion

Out-of-school suspension and expulsion are used only when necessary to protect the safety of the school community or when required by law, and only after less restrictive interventions have been considered. Administration will make reasonable efforts to provide alternative educational services during any suspension of more than five days, consistent with state law.

Prohibited Items & Behaviors

- Weapons of any kind, including look-alike weapons.
- Illegal drugs, alcohol, tobacco, and vaping devices.
- Fighting, physical aggression, or threats of violence.
- Bullying, harassment, or hazing of any kind (see Section 7).
- Theft, vandalism, or destruction of property.
- Possession or distribution of pornographic or otherwise inappropriate material.

Search & Seizure

School officials may search a student's locker, backpack, or personal belongings on school property when there is reasonable suspicion that the search will reveal a violation of school policy or law. Lockers and school-issued devices remain the property of HOPE Community Academy and are subject to inspection at any time.

7. Bullying, Harassment & Hazing Prevention

HOPE Community Academy maintains a zero-tolerance policy for bullying, harassment, and hazing, consistent with the Minnesota Safe and Supportive Schools Act (Minn. Stat. 121A.031).

Definitions

Bullying is intimidating, threatening, abusive, or harming conduct that is repeated or has the potential to be repeated, and that occurs in a context of a power imbalance. This includes physical, verbal, relational, and cyberbullying, whether it occurs on campus, at a school event, or online.

Harassment includes conduct based on a student's actual or perceived race, national origin, immigration status, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, or any other protected characteristic that is severe or pervasive enough to interfere with a student's education.

Reporting Procedure

Any student, family member, or staff member who witnesses or experiences bullying or harassment should report it immediately to a teacher, Impact Coach, Social Worker, or the Administration Team. Reports may be made verbally or in writing, and anonymous reports will be investigated to the extent possible.

Investigation & Response

All reports will be promptly investigated by the Impact Coach or a designated administrator. Confidentiality will be maintained to the extent possible. Retaliation against a person who reports bullying or harassment in good faith is strictly prohibited and will itself result in disciplinary action.

8. Dress Code Policy

HOPE Community Academy believes that a clear, consistently enforced dress code supports a positive, focused, and safe learning environment, minimizes distractions, and reflects the pride our school community takes in itself. Our dress code applies during the regular school day, on school buses, and at school-sponsored events unless otherwise specified for a particular activity (such as gym class or a themed spirit day).

General Dress Code Requirements

- Students should be in clothing appropriate for the school environment. For example, no rips, holes, or tears above mid-thigh.
- Shirts and tops must fully cover the midriff, back, and shoulders; tank tops must have straps at least two inches wide.
- Bottoms (pants, skirts, shorts) must reach at least mid-thigh in length. Use the fingertip rule.
- Footwear is required at all times; closed-toe shoes are required for recess, gym class, and science labs. Sandals and flip-flops are okay if there are no outdoor activities.
- Clothing, jewelry, and accessories may not display profanity, violence, drugs, alcohol, tobacco, weapons, gang symbols, offensive and racist language, or sexually suggestive images or language.
- Hats, hoods, and sunglasses may not be worn inside the building during instructional time, except for religious or medical reasons, or as approved by administration.
- Clothing that could reasonably be used to conceal prohibited items or that poses a safety hazard (e.g., excessively baggy clothing, chains) is not permitted.

Hoodies & Sweatshirts - Rules & Regulations

Hoodies and sweatshirts are a popular and comfortable choice for students, and HOPE Community Academy welcomes them as part of student dress within the following guidelines, which balance comfort with safety, accountability, and a focused learning environment:

1. Hoods must stay down inside the school building. Hoods may not be worn up over the head during instructional time, in hallways, or in common areas. This rule exists so that staff can see every student's face for safety, accountability, and connection - not as a judgment of the clothing itself.
2. Faces must remain visible at all times. Hoodies may never be worn in a way that covers or obscures the face.
3. Content must meet the general dress code standard. Hoodie graphics, logos, and text must not include profanity, drug/alcohol/tobacco references, weapons, gang-related symbols or numerology, hate speech, or sexually suggestive content.

4. No hoodies as a substitute for a required uniform layer. On days or in classes where a specific uniform top is required (if applicable to a given grade level or program), a hoodie may be worn over it but not in place of it, and must still allow the required uniform shirt/logo to be visible if required by the classroom or program.

5. Hoodies may be worn during outdoor recess, arrival, and dismissal without restriction on hood use, given the practical need for warmth in Minnesota weather.
6. Drawstrings should be safely managed. For younger students (Pre-K–Grade 2) in particular, families are asked to consider hoodies without long drawstrings due to a safety/strangulation risk during play; if a drawstring hoodie is worn, strings must be tucked in or removed.
7. Staff may ask a student to remove or adjust a hoodie. If a hoodie's graphic, fit, or condition violates the general dress code, or if a hood is not lowered after a respectful reminder, staff will address it the same way as any other dress code matter - with a conversation first, not a punitive first response.

Why We Have a Hood-Down Rule

This rule is about safety and relationships, not about hoodies themselves. Being able to see every student's face allows staff to check in on how a student is doing, greet students by name, and quickly identify anyone who does not belong on campus. It also supports our school-wide culture of respect and presence during instructional time.

Dress Code Enforcement - Our Approach

1st instance: A private, respectful reminder from staff.

2nd instance: Impact Coach follow-up conversation; parent/guardian notified.

3rd+ instance: Meeting with family to problem-solve; a change of clothing may be offered or requested; repeated refusal to comply may be treated as defiance under the Code of Conduct (Section 5-6).

Dress code violations are never grounds for removing a student from class time for longer than necessary to resolve the issue, and are never treated as a Level 3 or 4 offense unless combined with another prohibited behavior.

Physical Education & Athletics Attire

Students must wear appropriate athletic shoes and clothing that allows for safe movement during physical education class and sports practice or competition, per additional guidance provided by PE teachers and coaches.

Cultural & Religious Dress

HOPE Community Academy proudly welcomes traditional Hmong, Karen, and other cultural and religious dress, including for cultural celebrations, holidays, and everyday wear. Traditional and religious attire is never subject to restriction under this dress code beyond the basic safety standards that apply to all clothing (e.g., footwear at recess).

Dress Code Exceptions

Families may request an accommodation to any part of the dress code for religious, medical, disability-related, or gender-identity-related reasons by contacting the Impact managers or Chief Impact Officer. Requests will be handled promptly and respectfully.

9. Technology, Devices, & Social Media

Acceptable Use of School Technology

School-issued devices, accounts, and internet access are provided for educational purposes. Students are expected to use school technology responsibly, safely, and in accordance with the school's Acceptable Use Policy, which every family signs at the start of the school year.

Personal Devices

Cell phones and other personal electronic devices must be kept off and out of sight during instructional time unless a teacher grants specific permission for an educational purpose. Devices used in violation of this policy may be collected by staff and returned at the end of the day, or to a parent/guardian if the violation is repeated.

Social Media & Cyberbullying

Students are expected to interact online, including on personal social media accounts, in a manner consistent with HOPE Community Academy's Code of Conduct. Cyberbullying, harassment, or threats made online - even outside of school hours - that disrupt the school environment or target a member of the school community will be addressed under Section 7 of this handbook.

Artificial Intelligence Tools

The use of AI tools for schoolwork is governed by individual teacher and course guidelines. Students must not use AI tools to complete graded work in violation of academic integrity expectations described in Section 4.

10. Health, Safety & Wellness

Immunizations

All students must provide proof of immunization or a legally valid exemption on file with the school health office in accordance with Minnesota law before the start of the school year.

Illness at School

Students who become ill during the school day should report to the health office. Parents/guardians will be contacted for pick-up if a student has a fever, is vomiting, or otherwise needs to go home. Students should remain home if they have a fever of 100.4°F or higher, are vomiting, or have a contagious illness, until they are symptom-free per school health guidelines.

Injuries at School

For minor injuries, a staff member or our Health Office will provide basic first aid, such as cleaning and bandaging a scrape or applying ice. Scholars will be able to return to class once they feel comfortable.

If a scholar has a more serious injury, our Health Office will assess the situation and contact you right away. Depending on what your scholar needs, we may ask you to pick them up.

In an emergency, HOPE's first priority is scholar safety. HOPE will call 911 and provide care until help arrives, and we will contact you as quickly as possible.

All scholars seen in the Health Office for an injury will be documented.

Medication at School

Prescription medication must be provided to the health office in its original container along with a signed medication authorization form from a parent/guardian (and prescriber, for prescription medication). A new medication form must be signed each new school year and if there is a change to the dosage or how the medication is administered. Students may not carry or self-administer medication at school except as permitted by an individual health plan (e.g., asthma inhalers or epinephrine auto-injectors with proper authorization). Medication must be picked up by a parent/guardian within one week of the last day of school.

Individual Health Plans

Families of students with chronic health conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, severe allergies, or seizure disorders) are encouraged to work with the school health office each year to establish an Individual Health Plan (IHP) or Emergency Action Plan.

Mental Health & Social-Emotional Support

HOPE Community Academy's Social Work team supports the social-emotional wellbeing of every student. Students or families who would like support - including for grief, anxiety, family stress, or other concerns - can reach out to a School Social Worker directly, or through a teacher or Impact Coach.

Mandated Reporting

All HOPE Community Academy staff are mandated reporters under Minnesota law (Minn. Stat. 260E.065) and are legally required to report any reasonable suspicion of child abuse or neglect to Child Protective Services or law enforcement.

Emergency Drills & Safety Procedures

HOPE Community Academy conducts regular fire, tornado/severe weather, and lockdown drills throughout the school year in accordance with Minnesota Department of Education requirements. Families will be notified of the school's emergency communication procedures at the start of the year.

11. Nutrition Services

HOPE Community Academy participates in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs and provides meals to all students in accordance with federal and state nutrition guidelines.

All students must complete the Lunch Application (Application for Educational Benefits) on an annual basis. Regardless of families' income status, all scholars at HOPE receive a free breakfast and lunch. If a scholar stays for an after-school program, dinner may also be provided free of charge.

School Menus

The school menu is posted in the cafeteria and on HOPE's website. Menus are posted one week before the next school month.

Food

We encourage healthy eating habits. Candy, soda and snacks may only be brought for activities that have been approved ahead of time.

Families are welcome to pack breakfast or lunch for their scholar. HOPE encourages families to pack balanced meals that give scholars the energy they need to learn and grow. Packed meals from home cannot be shared with other scholars. Scholars may only eat packed meals in approved spaces such as the cafeteria or a classroom.

Families are welcome to send in treats for special occasions, but those treats need to be store-bought rather than homemade. When picking something out, please review the USDA's School Snack Guide at foodandhealth.com/usda-school-snack-guide/.

Peanut & Seashell Free School

Hope is a peanut and seashell free school. To keep all our scholars safe, please make sure any food sent to school does not contain peanuts and/or seashell.

Sharing Food Allergies and Dietary Needs

If your scholar has a food allergy or needs a special dietary accommodation for religious or cultural reasons, please inform HOPE. HOPE recommends families to share this information with the Front Office at the start of the school year, or as soon as a new allergy or dietary need comes up.

For food allergies, please provide a note from your scholar's doctor so our Health Office and Food Services team have what they need to keep your scholar safe. For religious or cultural dietary practices, simply let us know what foods your scholar avoids and we will work with you to make sure meals and classroom activities honor those needs.

Joining Your Scholar for Breakfast or Lunch

If a family member chooses to join a scholar for breakfast or lunch, adult meal prices are $1.75 (breakfast) and $3.75 (lunch). Payment can be made via cash or check to the Kitchen Manager.

12. Transportation

HOPE works with families to help scholars get to and from school safely each day.

Bus Transportation

HOPE provides bus transportation for all eligible students in the St. Paul and surrounding areas. Families will receive their scholar's bus route, stop location, and pickup and drop-off times before the school year begins.

Van Transportation

Any students that are outside the range of buses will be provided with alternative van transportation as long as they are within a 25 mile radius of HOPE.

Bus and Van Expectations for Scholars

Students are expected to follow the same Code of Conduct expectations on the school bus/vans as in the classroom; drivers may submit conduct referrals that are handled through the standard discipline procedure in Section 6, and repeated serious bus misconduct may result in a temporary or permanent loss of transportation privileges.

Parent Pick Up and Drop Off

Families who drop off or pick up their scholar by car should use the designated drop-off and pick up area at Door 6 behind the alley. Families cannot drop off students in the mornings before 8:15 AM. Whether families want to pick up early or during dismissal times, they must call the Front Office no later than 1:00 PM. It is the families' responsibility to inform HOPE staff and teachers in a timely manner.

If there is someone that is picking up a student and is not in the emergency contacts list, parents or legal guardians must provide written consent either by email or text message to the Front Office Coordinator. The Front Office will not release any students to unknown family members not listed in the HOPE student information system until written permission is received.

Changes to Transportation

If there is a change to custody, living arrangement, or address, please notify the Front Office.

Requests to change a scholar's pickup or dropoff address must be submitted to the Front Office and allow 3-5 business days to process. Families must call the Front Office to request this change. During processing time, it is the family's responsibility to ensure the scholar has reliable transportation to and from school. Once updated transportation is processed, families will be notified right away on new bus information and effective start date.

13. Family & Community Engagement

Family partnership is central to HOPE Community Academy's mission. The Family Engagement team offers regular opportunities for families to connect with the school, including orientation events, family nights, parent-teacher conferences, and cultural celebrations honoring Hmong, Karen, and other community traditions.

Communication with Families

Families can expect regular communication from teachers, Impact Coaches, and the school regarding academic progress, attendance, and school events, through channels that may include phone calls, texts, written notices, and interpreted meetings as needed.

Volunteer Opportunities

Families interested in volunteering at school events or in the classroom should contact the Family Engagement office for current opportunities and any required background check procedures.

14. Special Education & Section 504 Services

HOPE Community Academy is committed to serving students with disabilities in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and Minnesota special education law. Students suspected of having a disability that impacts learning may be referred for evaluation through the school's Special Education team; families may also initiate a referral at any time by contacting the school in writing.

Students with an active Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Section 504 Plan will have that plan followed by all staff, including any necessary modifications to the discipline and dress code procedures described elsewhere in this handbook.

15. English Learner (EL) Services

HOPE Community Academy provides English Learner services to support students who are developing English language proficiency, in accordance with state and federal law. Students are screened for EL services upon enrollment, and families of identified students will be notified of available services and given the opportunity to accept or decline them.

16. Library

The HOPE Community Academy library supports literacy and a love of reading for every student. Students may check out books according to grade-level borrowing guidelines. Families are responsible for the cost of lost or significantly damaged materials, though the library will always work with families to find a reasonable resolution.

Student Library Privileges

Students will make visits to the Library and be able to check out materials when their classroom visits or if they have a pass to the Library during Advisory.

Check out limit, Grade PK	No check outs
Check out limit, Grade K	1
Check out limit, Grades 1-12	2
Due date	Items are due 2 weeks after check out
Due date, end of year	May 10, 2027
Lost or damaged fee	$5 per item

Other Information

- Students making visits to the Library with a pass will be required to sign in/out at the Library.
- Students will not be allowed to check out new items until old items are returned.

Care of Materials

Students are responsible for the materials they borrow from the Library. Please review the following care reminders with students:

- Keep books and other materials clean and dry.
- Be mindful of your library materials.
- Use a bookmark to keep track of where you left off in a book.
- Keep library materials away from babies and pets.
- Do not write or color in books.

Library staff are able to make easy repairs – like fix a small page rip or replace a missing book sticker – but students will be charged a damage fee for materials damaged beyond repair.

Fee Information

Students and families may be notified by letter or phone to pay a replacement fee for items that are damaged beyond repair or lost while in the student's possession.

However, there will continue to be flexibility for paying fees. Students and families may speak to Library staff about other ways to pay off fees.

Book Purchase Requests

We welcome library book purchase requests from employees, students, and community members. Fill out this Google form to submit a request.

Important Dates

Last week for visits	May 3- 7, 2027
Last day to check out materials	May 7, 2027
Due date / return all materials	May 10, 2027

17. Out-of-School Time & Summer School

HOPE Community Academy offers Out-of-School Time (OST) programming and Summer School to extend learning and enrichment beyond the traditional school day and year. The Code of Conduct and general school policies in this handbook apply to all OST and Summer School programming; specific program details, hours, and registration procedures HOPE Community Academy offers Out-of-School Time (OST) programming and Summer School to extend learning, enrichment, leadership development, cultural programming, athletics, and student support beyond the traditional school day and school year. The HOPE Community Academy Code of Conduct and all applicable school policies remain in effect during OST, after-school, athletic, enrichment, field trip, and Summer School activities.

Specific programs, eligibility requirements, schedules, transportation options, fees (if applicable), and registration procedures will be communicated separately each school year.

Program Registration and Participation

Students must be properly registered before participating in OST programming. Registration may be required separately for tutoring, enrichment clubs, athletics, cultural programming, Summer School, or other activities.

Enrollment may be limited based on program capacity, staffing, grade level, academic need, available funding, or program requirements. Submission of a registration form does not guarantee placement when space is limited.

Parents/guardians are responsible for providing accurate and current emergency contact, medical, transportation, and authorized pickup information.

Attendance

Students enrolled in an OST program are expected to attend consistently and arrive on time.

Parents/guardians should notify the school when a student will be absent. Repeated unexcused absences may result in the student's placement being reviewed so that available spaces can be offered to other students.

Students participating in academic intervention or targeted tutoring programs may have additional attendance expectations based on the purpose of the program.

are shared each year separately.

Student Conduct

The HOPE Community Academy Code of Conduct applies during all OST activities.

Students are expected to:

- Follow staff directions and program expectations.
- Treat students, staff, volunteers, and guests respectfully.
- Use school materials and facilities appropriately.
- Participate safely and appropriately in activities.
- Follow established expectations regarding technology and personal devices.
- Maintain behavior that supports a safe and productive learning environment.

When behavioral concerns occur, staff will use appropriate interventions and restorative or positive behavioral supports whenever possible. Serious or repeated behavior concerns may result in parent/guardian contact, development of an individual support plan, temporary removal from an activity, or review of continued participation.

Transition to After-School Programming

Students must report directly to their assigned OST location at the designated transition time.

Students may not leave school grounds and return to participate in an OST program unless specifically authorized by the OST Manager or school administration.

OST staff will establish procedures for student check-in and attendance to ensure students are accounted for during the transition from the regular school day.

Student Release and Authorized Pickup

Students will only be released according to the transportation and pickup information provided by the parent/guardian.

Students may only be released to individuals authorized by the parent/guardian unless other arrangements have been approved by the school.

Parents/guardians must notify the school of changes to normal pickup arrangements according to established school procedures.

For student safety, staff may request identification before releasing a student to an adult they do not recognize.

Late Pickup

Parents/guardians are expected to pick up students by the established program dismissal time.

When a student is not picked up on time, staff will attempt to contact the parent/guardian and emergency contacts.

Repeated late pickups may result in a conference with the family and development of a pickup plan. Continued late pickups may result in review of the student's participation in the program when appropriate.

Students will remain supervised until an authorized individual arrives or school emergency procedures are followed.

Transportation

Transportation availability may vary by program and will be communicated during registration.

When transportation is provided, students must follow all school transportation expectations. Families are responsible for arranging transportation when school-provided transportation is not available.

Students may not change their normal transportation plan without appropriate parent/guardian authorization.

Meals and Snacks

Meals and/or snacks may be provided depending on the program. Students must follow school expectations during meal periods, including food safety, cleanliness, and respectful behavior.

Families should communicate relevant dietary needs or food allergies through established school procedures.

Academic Programs and Tutoring

Academic OST programs may use student achievement data, classroom performance, teacher recommendations, assessments, and other educational information to identify students who may benefit from additional support.

Academic programming may include targeted instruction, tutoring, skill development, progress monitoring, and other interventions designed to strengthen student achievement.

Participation expectations and academic goals may vary depending on the program.

Enrichment, Clubs, Athletics, and Cultural Programs

HOPE may provide enrichment opportunities including clubs, sports, leadership activities, cultural programming, arts, and other student activities.

Individual activities may establish additional expectations related to attendance, participation, equipment, safety, performances, competitions, or eligibility.

Students participating in these programs remain subject to the school Code of Conduct.

Health, Safety, and Emergencies

OST staff will follow HOPE Community Academy procedures regarding student health, injuries, emergencies, medication, mandated reporting, and school safety.

Emergency contact information must remain current.

Field Trips and Off-Campus Activities

OST students may participate in field trips, competitions, performances, athletic events, or other off-campus activities.

All school field trip procedures, permission requirements, transportation expectations, student behavior expectations, and safety procedures apply to OST-sponsored activities.

Additional parent/guardian permission may be required before participation.

Communication with Families

Program-specific information will be communicated to families through approved school communication methods.

Families are responsible for reviewing information regarding program schedules, cancellations, special events, transportation, and changes to programming.

Parents/guardians should contact the designated program staff or OST Manager with questions or concerns regarding OST programming.

Program Cancellations and Schedule Changes

HOPE Community Academy may cancel, modify, combine, or reschedule OST programming because of weather, staffing, school closures, transportation concerns, low enrollment, safety concerns, or other circumstances.

Families will be notified through established school communication systems whenever possible.

In an emergency, staff will take reasonable actions necessary to protect student safety and will contact parents/guardians and emergency services when appropriate.

18. Athletics & Extracurricular Activities

HOPE Community Academy's Sports program and other extracurricular activities are an important part of the whole-student experience. Students must maintain satisfactory academic standing and attendance, and must follow the Code of Conduct, in order to remain eligible to participate in athletics and extracurricular activities. Additional team-specific rules (such as practice attendance and equipment care) will be provided by individual coaches and advisors at the start of each season. Participation in athletics provides students with opportunities to develop essential life skills that extend beyond competition. Student-athletes are expected to demonstrate discipline, responsibility, punctuality, a strong work ethic, and good sportsmanship. These values not only contribute to individual and team success, but create habits that positively impact academic achievement, personal growth, and success within the classroom and school community.

Student Expectations

Students participating in athletics and extracurricular activities must:

- Maintain satisfactory academic standing and attendance.
- Follow the HOPE Community Academy Code of Conduct.
- Attend practices, meetings, games, and events consistently and on time.
- Demonstrate respect, responsibility, teamwork, and good sportsmanship.
- Follow coach/advisor directions and team-specific expectations.
- Properly care for uniforms, equipment, and school property.
- Follow all safety, transportation, pickup, and dismissal procedures.

Eligibility & Support

Academic, attendance, or behavioral concerns may affect a student's eligibility. When appropriate, staff will work with the student and family to provide support and an opportunity for improvement before restricting participation. Serious or repeated concerns may result in temporary suspension or removal from the activity.

Coaches & Advisors

Coaches and advisors are responsible for communicating expectations, maintaining student attendance and supervision, promoting safety and sportsmanship, communicating concerns with families, and following school procedures for injuries, incidents, and emergencies.

The goal of HOPE athletics and extracurricular activities is to help students develop skills and habits that contribute to success in the classroom, school community, and beyond.

Equipment and School Property

Students are responsible for properly using and caring for uniforms, equipment, instruments, technology, supplies, and other school property issued for an activity.

Students must return school-issued items at the conclusion of the season or activity, or when requested by the coach, advisor, or school.

Lost, intentionally damaged, or improperly used equipment will be addressed according to school procedures.

Transportation and Dismissal

Students must follow established transportation, pickup, and dismissal procedures for practices, games, competitions, performances, and other activities.

Parents/guardians are responsible for arranging timely pickup when transportation is not provided by the school. Students may only leave with authorized individuals according to school procedures.

Students may not leave an activity without notifying and receiving approval from the supervising staff member.

Eligibility Concerns and Progressive Support

When concerns arise regarding academics, attendance, behavior, sportsmanship, or participation expectations, staff should use a progressive approach whenever appropriate.

- **Step 1 – Student Conference:**
  The coach or advisor meets with the student to identify the concern, review expectations, and establish steps for improvement.
- **Step 2 – Family Communication:**
  If concerns continue, the parent/guardian is contacted and informed of the concern and expectations for improvement.
- **Step 3 – Support Plan:**
  The student may be placed on an academic, attendance, behavior, or participation improvement plan. Support may include tutoring, check-ins, restorative conversations, goal setting, or other interventions.
- **Step 4 – Participation Review:**
  Continued concerns may result in temporary restriction from practices, games, performances, competitions, or other activities.
- **Step 5 – Removal from Activity:**
  Serious or repeated violations may result in removal from the team or activity in accordance with school policies and administrative review.

Serious behavior or safety concerns may require immediate administrative intervention without progressing through each step.

Guiding Principle

HOPE Community Academy athletics and extracurricular activities are designed to develop students beyond the game, competition, or activity. Students should leave these programs with stronger habits of **discipline, responsibility, punctuality, teamwork, leadership, work ethic, and sportsmanship**. These skills support success not only in athletics and extracurricular activities, but also in the classroom, at home, and throughout the broader school community.

19. Student Records & Privacy (FERPA)

HOPE Community Academy maintains student educational records in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and Minnesota's Government Data Practices Act. Parents/guardians (and students who have reached age 18) have the right to inspect and review their student's education records, and to request correction of records they believe are inaccurate or misleading.

Directory information (such as a student's name and participation in school activities) may be released for limited purposes, such as yearbooks or honor roll announcements, unless a family opts out in writing by notifying the front office.

20. Visitors & Campus Safety

All visitors, including parents and guardians, must check in at the main office and wear a visitor badge while on campus. A government-issued photo ID may be required for verification upon entry. Visitors who do not sign in or who are not wearing a visible visitor badge will be asked to return to the main office.

Visitors who wish to meet with a staff member must make an appointment in advance. All visitors must return to the main office when leaving and sign out.

This policy exists to protect the safety of every student and staff member, and is applied consistently and without exception.

21. Emergency School Closures & Communication

In the event of inclement weather or an emergency requiring a school closure, delay, or early dismissal, HOPE Community Academy will notify families as early as possible through phone, text, and/or email, consistent with the contact information on file. Families are responsible for keeping emergency contact information up to date with the Enrollment Office.

22. Grievance & Complaint Procedure

HOPE Community Academy wants to hear from families when something isn't working. Students and families with a concern or complaint are encouraged to follow these steps, in order, whenever possible:

1. Speak directly with the staff member most closely involved (e.g., classroom teacher) to try to resolve the concern informally.
2. If unresolved, contact the student's Impact Coach or the Dean of Students.
3. If still unresolved, submit a written complaint to the Chief Impact Officer, who will investigate and respond within a reasonable timeframe.
4. Complaints regarding discrimination, harassment, or special education services may also be filed directly with the Minnesota Department of Education or other applicable state/federal agency at any point in this process.

No student or family will face retaliation for raising a good-faith concern or complaint.

23. Acknowledgment of Acceptance

Please sign and return this page to your student's Impact Coach, or complete the acknowledgment through the family portal if directed to do so.

I acknowledge that I have received, and had the opportunity to review, the HOPE Community Academy Student Handbook for the 2026–2027 school year. I understand that this handbook describes the policies and expectations that apply to my student, and I agree to support my student in following them.

Student Name (print): _____ Grade: _____

Parent/Guardian Name (print): _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____