

Highlands

Parent & Student Handbook 2024 - 2025



Dear Parent or Guardian:

Governing boards of school districts are required to notify parents or guardians of certain rights and responsibilities as specified in the Education Code and other state and federal regulations. This booklet contains the Education Code sections that are concerned with these rights and responsibilities, along with other important information.

Your signature on your child's emergency card or online registration acknowledges that you have received this notice. (Please return the emergency card immediately if you did not register online.)

SAUGUS
UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT
Excellence in Elementary Education

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Site-Specific Information

This Parent and Student Handbook contains an information section specific to your school, district-wide information, as well as information which the state requires districts provide to parents and guardians annually. Please take the time to familiarize yourself with the contents of this handbook. If you require additional information, the school office will assist you.

It is with great pleasure that we welcome you to Highlands Elementary School, a Gold Ribbon School! Our staff looks forward to the 2024-2025 school year! **We are especially excited about our continued success with our Spanish dual-language immersion program continuing for the fifth year, our new science/flex lab opening this school year, and the opening of our new library space.**

This Parent & Student Handbook contains information about the school that I hope you find useful and informative. You will find policy and procedures of both Highlands Elementary School and the Saugus Union School District. Please read through the handbook and keep it for future reference.

The goal at Highlands is that each student is provided the opportunity to be successful, not just in school, but also in life. It is our hope that each child will be a responsible learner and citizen who achieves his/her full potential. Parental involvement is a very important component of a child's education. Parents and school are a team, working together to provide the best for each student. Close communication between home and school is essential. If at any time you have a concern or question, please contact your child's teacher or me. With these thoughts in mind, I invite you to participate to volunteer at Highlands. Join the PFO, attend all school events and activities, volunteer in the classroom and support your child in every way you can. No act is too small when it comes to your child's future.

Thank you for your support! We look forward to an amazing and successful school year!

Sincerely,
Dr. Ernestina Aguilar, Principal

Weekly School Newsletter

A school bulletin is sent home Sunday evenings of each week via ParentSquare. The bulletin includes a message from the principal, dates to remember, and information about school and PFO activities and events. If there is a Monday holiday, the bulletin may be sent home on Tuesday. All notices require principal approval prior to distribution.

Visitors & Volunteering

Highlands Elementary School encourages active parent involvement in the educational decisions and processes of our school. For the safety of our students and staff, all volunteers and visitors **must** sign-in and out at the office using the Raptor Visitor System and wear their printed identification sticker badge. All volunteers must attend a training, review and sign the SUSD Volunteer Code of Conduct, and have a current T/B test which must be delivered to the school office. T/B tests are valid for four years.

In addition to volunteering at the school, parents may visit classes. Visitations must be prearranged with the classroom teacher to avoid unnecessary interruptions to the instructional program. Visitations are limited to twenty minutes.

Parking/Drop-Off Area

Parking at Highlands is very limited and we want to insure safe drop off and dismissal of our students. **For the morning drop-off of students, there is a drop off lane on Catala Avenue just above the main school entrance. Please make sure to pull up to the top of the lane before stopping to drop off your children.** This will allow the cars behind you the opportunity to drop their students off in a timely manner. Parent drivers may not enter the school parking lot during this time period unless a handicap placard is displayed. Should you need special accommodations for drop off and/or dismissal, please contact our school office; we are happy to assist.

Dress Code

"Dress for Learning" is a first step toward maintaining the safety of students within our school and community and enhancing the learning process.

Apparel and grooming must not inhibit participation or cause disruption in any phase of the instructional program. Casual clothing is recommended for school except for special "dress-up" occasions. Tennis shoes are essential as students do not change for P.E. and feet need to be protected. Crocs are not allowed for safety reasons. Students may wear sun-protective clothing (EC 35183.5) including, but not limited to, hats while outdoors.

In order to assist us in maintaining an effective learning environment and to keep the focus of the classroom on learning, the following attire is **appropriate** for students attending our Saugus Schools:

- Jeans, cords, denims, slacks, simple dresses, skirts, and shorts (finger-tip length)
- Shirts, T-shirts, blouses, and sweatshirts
- Tennis shoes with flat, non-skid soles – socks are to be worn at all times

The following attire is **inappropriate** for students:

- Oversized and baggy clothing, cut-offs (i.e., shirts, pants, jeans, tank tops with oversized armholes, pants are to fit around the waist and not drag on the ground)
- Clothing with inappropriate language or advertisements, or any reference to alcohol, drugs, tobacco, or gangs
- Gang-related clothing (i.e., long belts, trench coats, chains, chain wallets, caps worn backwards, etc.)
- Tube/halter tops, spaghetti strap tops/dresses
- Bare midriffs or revealing tight-fitting shirts and shorts

Students not adhering to our school district's dress code policy will call home for a change of clothing.

Attendance, Office Procedures & Communication

Regular and prompt attendance is critical to your child's education as stated in the Education Code of the State of California.. Medical and dental appointments should be made after the school day, if at all possible. School Starts at 7:50 am. Children will be marked tardy if they are not in class by 7:50 a.m.

Absences: When your child is absent, parents are requested to call the school's 24 hour attendance line on the day of the absence. Please indicate the following: student's name, date, teacher and the reason for absence. We prefer a call from parents over a note sent with students as notes sometimes do not make it to the office.

Tardies: Tardies take away learning time for all students in the classroom, not just the child arriving late. The teacher must stop his/her teaching to bring the tardy child up to date, collect his/her homework, change the attendance, etc. As a result, the smooth flow of the classroom is interrupted.

Please see District Policy regarding absenteeism.

Check Out: If you need to check your child out of school during the school day, you must do so at the office. If someone other than yourself is picking up your child, please notify the office prior to check-out time. All persons will need to show proper identification before a student is released from our school site.

Lost and Found

Please label all clothing, lunch pails, and backpacks with your child's first and last name. Items left in the lost and found are donated to a charitable organization at the end of each month. Valuables, such as keys, money, watches, etc., are turned in to the office.

Celebrations

District policy allows for two classroom parties per school year, which traditionally take place before winter vacation, and during the last week of school. Food provided by parents for these celebrations must be commercially-prepared and delivered in the original sealed package. Homemade foods cannot be distributed to students. For student birthdays, we ask our parent community to respect our goal of meeting the needs of every child by celebrating birthdays and other special days at home, rather than in the classroom. Parents are requested not to send in food treats for the class. Thank you for respecting this school policy.

Physical Education

Excuses from physical education because of minor illness or injury are obtained by written request from the parent. If a P.E. excuse is expected to cover a period of more than three days, we request that a physician certify this with a note to school, or that you contact the school about the problem. Students who are excused from P.E. will not be allowed to participate in playground activities during recess and lunch times. All P.E. notes are to be given to the classroom teacher at the beginning of the day.

Injured Students

Students requiring the use of crutches, casts, or any other physical assistance equipment will need a note from the attending physician authorizing their use at school. All children with casts and crutches will be reassigned to an alternate activity during a.m. recess and lunch recess. A "Re-Admission Form" obtained in the school office needs to be completed and signed by the attending physician. Minor first aid and illnesses will be handled by the office personnel. If necessary, parents will be called for additional assistance. We will always inform you of a head injury reported to the office.

Lost & Damaged Materials

Students are responsible for returning any books, including library books, to the school in a timely manner. Any books

and/or materials lost or damaged must either be replaced or paid for before a student is allowed to check out other books/materials from our school.

Bicycles & Safety

Bicycles & scooters are important and an enjoyable means of transportation and should be used carefully for the safety of the rider and pedestrians. Upon recommendation of the Sheriff's Department, we ask that riding bicycles/scooters to school be limited to grades 3-6.

Please review the following guidelines very carefully so there is no misunderstanding about the use of these items at school.

1. Each bike must have a chain and lock and is to be secured in a bike rack. Locks may not be shared with others.
2. Students must wear helmets when riding bikes/scooters, follow the rules of the road, and adhere to school behavior expectations.
3. Bicycles/scooters must be walked on the school grounds as a safety precaution to others. The "school grounds" includes the parking lots, blacktop, grass areas and sidewalks.

Conduct and Discipline

We expect the students to use good judgment in their actions at school and respect themselves, their teachers, and the rights of other students. Positive behavior is essential for effective learning and teaching. Those who lack self-discipline interfere with their own learning, but also prevent others in the class from learning.

We want **all** of our students to be successful at school. During the 2024-2025 school year, we will continue to implement our school-wide behavior expectations: **Have respect – Act responsibly – Work together – Keep safe – Sour to success.** More information about behavioral expectations will be communicated once school begins.

Our discipline plan follows progressive steps to insure the safety of both students and staff. Teachers work with the students first regarding any type of behavior problem and contact the parents if the problem persists. Students who need additional support are referred to the principal for further action. The principal then works with the student, the teacher, and the parent, taking the appropriate action in each case.

Details of each teacher's behavior expectation plan will be reviewed with students during class, and with the parents at Back-To-School Night.

Disaster Preparedness

Highlands has a clearly defined emergency plan. The District and PTA assist in providing supplies and materials to keep our emergency bin current and organized.

Students and staff practice Fire Drills and Lockdown Drills on a monthly basis. These drills are extremely important as they help to reinforce procedures and routines for emergency preparedness. Schoolwide disaster drills requiring drop, cover, and hold procedures along with search and rescue are also held periodically during the year.

We are excited for you to be a part of the Highlands Community! Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact our school office at (661) 294-5320. Thank you!