

Walton STEM Academy Code of Conduct

I. Introduction

Purpose and Philosophy

The Walton High School STEM Academy has the highest expectations for each student in each of its three academic tracks. Not only does the STEM Academy believe in the importance of a rigorous academic curriculum supplemented by a wide array of extracurricular opportunities, but the STEM Academy believes that its students should comport to the highest standards for individual character and the resulting behaviors associated with those high standards. The STEM Academy believes that academic excellence cannot truly be maintained apart from an authentic commitment to the rigorous ethical standards. When the character of our students is compromised, so is our academic validity and viability. While we operate within a school community that has established an honor code applicable to all Walton students, we wish to set out with this document the guidelines for a higher standard of behavioral expectations, to parallel the higher expectations we have of students in our classrooms, laboratories, and school community.

A Culture of Character

We believe that academic excellence is one of the most exciting aspects of our STEM Academy, but we are not only working to develop the intellectual curiosity and capacity of our students; we are also working to develop their character and their commitment to high ethical standards. We do not believe that we are successful as an academic entity if we are only turning out graduates who have made academic progress or who have gained skills or knowledge apart from an innate desire to help improve the lives of their fellow man. Knowledge and academic achievement are incredible aspirations for our students, but those aspirations do not define us as individuals – our character does. Therefore, we want exceptional character to permeate every aspect of our STEM Academy, so that every decision a STEM student makes is analyzed first through the prism of what is truly right.

A Commitment to Character – On Campus and Off

Walton STEM Academy students are expected to comport themselves to the standards of exceptional character as defined by this document in every instance and aspect of their lives while they are a member of our STEM Academy. In other words, students are expected to conduct themselves in a way that reflects the STEM Academy's high ethical standards both on campus and off – whether a student is in a classroom at Walton or on a field trip, whether at an academic competition or participating in a non-STEM related activity or sport. Ultimately, failure to demonstrate exceptional character at all times, whether as part of a STEM Academy activity or not, will lead to discipline from the Walton STEM Academy Faculty Committee, possibly resulting in removal from the program.

A Commitment to Collaboration

The Walton STEM Academy celebrates the success of our students, both as individuals and as groups, but we have a very strong commitment to students effectively working together, to help and support each other academically, and at appropriate times, socially and emotionally as well. Generally speaking, a collaborative educational experience built around shared goals and enhanced by a diverse set of academic strengths will always provide a richer experience for our students than one that is built around individual competition and isolation. The STEM Academy does not want students who see their academic journey in our program as a competition to be won, nor is this a program that is set up to guarantee any specific academic outcome. Beyond

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this, we want all three academic tracks to feel a sense of mutual investment in the STEM Academy and to maintain authentic comradery among the various groups within our STEM Academy.

II. Academic Honesty

All STEM Academy students are to conduct themselves in accordance with Walton High School's Honor Code. Beyond this, here we wish to more specifically define academic honesty for students in our STEM Academy, as well as to outline consequences for failure to maintain a high standard of academic honesty.

Academic dishonesty is defined as attaining an unfair, unethical, and dishonest advantage in the completion of any task or assignment in *any* course or academic endeavor either on campus or in serving as a representative of Walton High School. This includes behaviors associated with clubs, competitions, academic assessments outside of the classroom such as the SAT, ACT, AMC, etc. All acts of academic dishonesty could more simply be called cheating, and the STEM Academy has no tolerance for this behavior. Walton STEM Academy students should only engage in behavior that helps to build and perpetuate a culture of excellence within our program and our school, meaning that all academic work is to be completed in the same spirit as it was assigned, and with the utmost effort of the student or students involved. We do not take short-cuts to success in the STEM Academy, and we work hard to earn the distinctions that we receive.

When an instance of academic dishonesty occurs, any student involved will receive the consequences as prescribed by Walton High School, but beyond that result, the Walton STEM Academy will also issue consequences. The consequences may include but are not limited to a warning to any student involved and placement on probation for the remainder of their STEM tenure. If the academic dishonesty is considered a major infraction, the student can be removed from the STEM academy, effective the following semester. A student on probation will be removed from the STEM academy should another infraction, major or minor, occur related to any other policy outlined in this Honor Code.

Additionally, students are required to self-report all violations to the honor code, no matter how minor the violation, to a member of the STEM leadership team. The self-report requirement allows the academy to apply consistent consequences and prevent unfair advantages to those participating in such behaviors. Penalty for not reporting a violation may result in removal from the STEM academy.

III. Student Collegiality

As previously stated in this document, the Walton STEM Academy desires to see its participants forge meaningful social and working relationships with peers in the program. STEM education can only be undertaken successfully in an environment of effective collaboration where mutual trust and respect are continually evident. One of the goals of the STEM Academy is to provide an academic and social environment that nurtures the unique interests and aspirations of students who are attracted to and motivated by the various STEM fields.

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With that said, it is imperative that students learn to form and maintain positive relationships with peers within and across the various branches of the STEM Academy. Therefore, we wish to outline the expectations pertaining to collegiality for all member of the STEM Academy.

The first expectation is that all STEM Academy students support one another academically, socially, and emotionally. As stated previously, the STEM Academy is not an incubator of intense academic competition between individual members. In fact, quite the opposite – the STEM Academy provides an environment where individual and group success is celebrated and where the achievement of your peers should be perceived as a positive confirmation of the quality of the Academy in which you are a member. Envy and jealousy and their harmful antecedents are anathema to the spirit of collegiality we wish to maintain in the STEM Academy.

The second expectation is that STEM Academy students will not engage in decisions and behaviors that harm the collegiality of the program. These negative behaviors include but are not limited to

- Bullying
- Misrepresenting a peer in any way, whether through slander or libel
- Gossip
- Any and all types of biases or discrimination, whether based on gender, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, political preference, or any of the other myriad differences that make us unique individuals
- Not acting as a “team player” – not offering assistance, within the bounds of academic honesty, to a peer who may be struggling or who may need your help for various reasons
- Treating teachers, administrators, and STEM Academy leaders with any form of disrespect
- Any behavior that does not respect or attempts to denigrate the individual worth of any STEM Academy member or stakeholder

Obviously, due to our universal human imperfections, we can all thoughtlessly engage in behaviors that (sometimes unintentionally) disrupt the peace-of-mind or shake the confidence of our peers. It is important to be mindful of our interactions with peers, making sure they are positive, uplifting, and helpful. Consequences of not meeting the two delineated expectations of collegiality can vary depending upon severity and frequency of the infractions. Ultimately, any student who is displaying negative behaviors that harm STEM Academy collegiality will be warned, and if there is not a positive change in behavior, will receive additional consequences from the Walton STEM Academy Faculty Committee, up to and including removal from the program.

IV. Standards of Communication

As time passes and technology becomes more sophisticated and varied, defining appropriate standards of communication between Walton STEM Academy members becomes more complicated. Here, we wish to simplify our prescription for positive and effective communication. To put it simply, all communication between members of and groups within the STEM Academy should be governed by the aforementioned expectations of collegiality (part III of this document).

First, let us define the types of communication for which you are accountable to the STEM Academy:

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- Face-to-face communication
- Indirect communication through intermediaries
- Emails
- Text messages
- Any and all social media platforms
- Any other forms of electronic communication

It is imperative to remember that context, tone, mood, and intent are all difficult to ascertain in electronic communication. Misunderstandings do occur quite often, so you must be deliberately clear and careful in communicating with peers, whether formally through email or in-person conversation, or whether informally through text message or social media post. Remember that electronic communication is just as serious as any other type, with the added distinction that electronic communication leaves a trail of evidence.

Any communication, in any form, that bullies, belittles, mocks, complains about, threatens, or in any other way disparages any stakeholder in the STEM Academy is strictly prohibited. When a verifiable instance of inappropriate communication occurs, any student involved will receive the consequences as prescribed by Walton High School, but beyond that result, the Walton STEM Academy Faculty Committee will meet to determine additional consequences, up to and including removal of the program depending upon severity and frequency of the offense.

V. Representing the Walton STEM Academy

Walton STEM Academy students travel throughout the state, region, country, and world representing our program and school in a wide array of academic competitions, conferences, and presentations. As stated previously, STEM Academy students are expected to exhibit the highest standards of behavior, professionalism, fairness, and ethical standards in all situations. Beyond these standards of conduct, Walton STEM Academy students are also expected to represent the program well in terms of physical appearance. When appropriate, STEM Academy students will dress in a professional and appropriate manner that is commensurate with the various activities that they engage in.

VI. An Obligation to Report

Walton's STEM Academy's success is dependent upon the decisions and actions of its individual members. STEM Academy students are expected to take a proactive role in creating and maintaining a positive academic community. One of the obligations connected to that role is to report behaviors and actions that compromise the integrity and validity of the program. Any STEM Academy member who witnesses or learns about behavior that is in violation of the STEM Academy Code of Conduct has an obligation to report that behavior to a member of the faculty or administration at Walton High School as soon as possible. Students who fail to report such known behavior are as accountable for the infractions as those students who actively engage in the negative behavior.

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VII. Closing

The Walton STEM Academy wants to provide an enjoyable, challenging, and memorable experience for our students. This Code of Conduct has been set forth as a prescription for behaviors that lead to the most positive outcomes for individual students as well as to our academic community as a whole.