



August 31, 2017

All Parents
American Heritage School
2017–18 Academic Year

Priorities, Policy Updates, and Reminders

Dear Parents,

Welcome to American Heritage School for another exciting and enriching year! Following is a brief overview of strategic priorities for the upcoming school year, as well as a summary of important updates included in the current 2017–18 Parent Handbook. The complete Parent Handbook can be accessed online at the “Quick Reference” section of the school’s homepage footer, as well on the Veracross Parent Portal.

School Priorities 2017–18

1. *Product leadership through transformational teaching and learning.* Initiatives include increased experiential learning opportunities K–12; paid mentors for new teachers; professional in-class coaching for all teachers; more time for teachers to pursue professional development, preparation, and collaboration; shift from “one size fits all” to customized learning; and various technology initiatives to give students more personal ownership over their learning pace and progress.
2. *Intentional culture of physical and emotional wellness.* Initiatives focus on the school’s commitment to care for the physical and emotional wellness of students and employees; policy, program, and mentoring support to help teachers give less but more meaningful homework; and the “I Am American Heritage” campaign to celebrate the uniqueness and diversity of individuals in the school community.
3. *Mission-aligned growth in the areas of “physical arts” and STEM.* Initiatives include major investment in PE, intramural, athletic and dance facilities; hiring and training of coaches in the “character athletics” approach; addition of physics and math lab; and increased use of digital tools in the teaching and learning process.

Updated and New School Policies

Please review the attached document entitled “Summary of Updated Policies 2017–18” outlining new and updated school policies reflected in the 2017–18 version of the Parent Handbook. Many thanks to the entire school community for helping us to improve our policies each year as we grow.

Important Policy Reminders

Online Tracking for Parent Service, Training, and Meeting Attendance. Please use the “Parent Service & Training Record” link on the Veracross parent portal to track required parent service hours, training, and meeting attendance. Completion of this Veracross form is a condition of readmission and helps administration in granting teacher requests. As in previous years, at least one parent is required to attend each of the two required all-parent meetings in person. If conflicts or circumstances do not allow for attendance by at least one parent, please contact an administrator and we will provide to you instructions for how to view the recording of the all-parent meeting. AHS Foundations Training as well as reading the Self-Directed Study in the Principle Approach (FACE publication: *Renewing the Mind for Teaching and Learning*) both require completion only once, but may need to be re-marked as “completed” each year on the Veracross “Parent Service & Training Record” link.

As part of the terms and conditions of enrollment, students and their parents are asked to provide much-needed service to the school. The minimum service hour requirement is 30 hours. The school depends on parent participation for everything from lunchroom assistance to special event costumes and set design. As in past years, parents who have not completed their service hour commitment by April 1 will be contacted by administration to discuss plans for fulfilling their commitment before the academic year-end, which is a condition for readmission to the school each year.

Student Uniform Policy (Parent Handbook, Section 12 and Appendix E). The student uniform is an important teaching tool and supports many of the character-based objectives that are central to our mission. Please read Section 12 and Appendix E carefully. Students will not be admitted to class without the proper uniform; however, we have trained teachers in consistent and positive techniques that we are confident will help students to have a positive experience, even when they need a gentle reminder. One approach that we have found effective in recent years is the “uniform help closet,” which has a supply of crew socks, ties, and other approved uniform items for students in all grade levels, on hand in the front office to assist students and parents that have forgotten the appropriate item (we even have many pairs of good, used, uniform-approved shoes). Our desire is to uphold the uniform standard in a way that is consistent, comfortable, non-confrontational, and as supportive of the students and parents as possible.

First Aid & Medications (Parent Handbook, Section 16.7). All medications at the school—prescription and over-the-counter—must be stored, secured, inventoried, and administered by the AHS Health Aid. Also, for students to carry and self-administer medications (including asthma inhalers), a written authorization from both the parent and health-care provider must be completed and submitted to the AHS Health Office. Mr. Wheeler, the school’s Director of Health & Safety, as well as our front office staff and members of our Safety Committee, have been trained in procedures necessary to serve as health office personnel for the school.

Calendar. The official school calendar circulated to you in the Welcome Guide over the summer may change occasionally throughout the year as unforeseen circumstances arise. The most current version

of the school calendar is always posted on the school website, which we strongly encourage you to use in place of hard-copy school calendars.

Carpool Procedures (Section 15.21) and the First Weeks of School. Please be aware that historically during the first weeks of school, many parents elect not to carpool or are still organizing carpools, and therefore vehicle traffic before and after school is heavier than normal until families adjust to their carpool groups and routines. Please take a moment to review all of the carpool procedures in Section 15.21 of the Parent Handbook. We are grateful to have the parking facilities and multiple public road access points that we have; however, even with these blessings, we request your continuing patience as we monitor what kinds of traffic flow adjustments are necessary (if any) as we grow. We continue to encourage clockwise traffic flow around the building during carpool times, and we request once again that all patrons refrain from parking or stopping in red zones, and from loading or unloading in the middle of carpool traffic lanes. Also, please encourage your children to use designated crosswalks to reach carpool vehicles. It is tempting for children and adults to walk between queued vehicles and cross traffic lanes at undesignated locations, but it is also dangerous. We have never had a serious carpool accident yet, and we hope to keep it that way.

Students Checking Out Early and Closed Campus Policies. Sometimes parents have the need to check students out early. We realize that there are many legitimate and unexpected reasons for this; however, it is important that parents understand that the process of interrupting class to inform a teacher of a student who is being checked out early from class is disruptive—and can sometimes happen repeatedly in the same class during the last half-hour of the day. Also, please note that AHS is a closed campus. Requests (by parents or students) for unsupervised student lunch leave, particularly in the case of high school student drivers, are strongly discouraged. Students who leave campus without administrative approval may be deemed truant, which usually results in automatic suspension.

Fundraising and Strategic Plan

Since 2007, the school's Strategic Plan has included ambitious goals such as: (1) increase faculty compensation to maintain and attract the right people, (2) improve programs and offerings K-12, (3) make the school available to more families through physical expansion, including high school and additional capacity in elementary and middle school, (4) make the school available at a lower cost to families around the world through web-enabled curriculum, (5) increase the safety and security of the building for the benefit of all families who come here, and (6) achieve full accreditation to help the school and its families become a contributing part of the regional and national education community.

On all counts, we have achieved amazing results in each of these areas. The cost of strategic and capital improvements has been over \$30 million from the time that we formalized our Strategic Plan in 2007, not including the additional \$15 million in land and buildings that was donated to construct our current campus in 2001. Virtually all of these improvements have come from donated funds, not tuition receipts.

Clearly, our fundraising efforts to date have been very successful, and especially this past year, with a higher number of first-time donors than ever in the history of the school. Total funds raised in our 2016–17 Annual Fund Campaign was \$800,000, which provided financial aid for many students and families, improved school programs, and provided important benefits and professional development experiences for our faculty. THANK YOU for making this possible!

In an effort to continue blessing the lives of AHS teachers and families, our Annual Fund dollar goal for the 2017–18 year will remain the same as last year: \$800,000 for student financial aid, scholarships, employee benefits, and employee professional development. However, more importantly than this goal is our participation goal for the 2017–18 school year: aiming for 100% of families to make a contribution to the Annual Fund, in any amount, by October 31. In addition, the Board of Trustees continues to pursue private donations for campus expansion projects related to athletics, fine arts, and improved curricular and extracurricular programs.

As we focus on our long-term Strategic Plan, we feel a strong sense of urgency to continue meeting and exceeding the level of excellence in education that we have provided over the last forty years—while raising tuition as little as possible. We do not use tuition for major capital expansion projects, and we never have. Raising tuition has always been a last resort, and is only done for the purpose of maintaining basic, mission-critical people and programs. In fact, tuition at American Heritage School represents only half of the true cost of a seat. This financial model of providing the highest quality programs—while keeping tuition as low as possible—is only accomplished through a spirit of sacrifice and personal responsibility by each individual family in the school community.

With blessings always come responsibility. Can you help us? We need your help now as much as ever. You can help in the following ways: (1) continue to encourage good families to apply to the school and fill vacant seats (we still have a few openings in various grade levels); (2) attend our annual benefit dinner and auction, this year on Saturday, October 14, and consider any goods or services that you or friends might be able to donate to our auction; and (3) consider areas of the school that you would like to see improve, and donate financially, even a little extra per month, to help support our mission.

Thank you for carefully reviewing these reminders, and welcome to American Heritage School! May we celebrate our blessings, and never forget our responsibility that comes with those blessings. The Lord requires “the heart and a willing mind” (D&C 63:34). Let’s make American Heritage School better every year, for the sake of every child and parent who is led to become a part of our important mission.

Yours very truly,



Grant Beckwith
Principal