



6th - 12th Grade Student Handbook

2025-2026 School Year

“My Heart Believes It, Therefore I Can Achieve It”

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Welcome

Dear Students,

Welcome to a brand new year at Pontiac Academy for Excellence Middle/High (PAE MH)! We are excited to have you as part of our learning community. Whether you are returning or joining us for the first time, we are proud that you are here and ready to grow both academically and personally.

At PAE MH, we are committed to creating a safe, respectful, and challenging learning environment where every student is empowered to succeed. Our dedicated teachers and staff are here to support you every step of the way as you set goals, explore your interests, and prepare for your future.

This handbook is designed to help you understand the expectations, resources, and opportunities available to you throughout the school year. It contains important information about academic policies, behavioral expectations, attendance, dress code, extracurricular activities, and much more. Please take time to read it carefully and refer to it whenever you need guidance.

We believe in your potential and are here to help you achieve greatness. Let's work together to make this school year one of growth, discovery, and excellence.

Welcome to the 2025–2026 school year — let's make it your best year yet!

With pride and purpose,

The Leadership Team

Pontiac Academy for Excellence Middle/High

Mission Statement

To provide students and families a safe, nurturing and challenging educational experience that will foster the strength of character necessary to succeed in career and life.

Vision Statement

We envision a school district where students are champions of excellence in learning and life, and are supported by highly qualified administration and faculty, involved parents and an invested community, who show their dedication to educational success through their own high moral and professional standards.

Pillars of Excellence

❖ Safety

- Ensuring that staff and students remain safe from all verbal, physical and emotional harm so that hearts and minds can be open to learning perspectives that each unique life experience brings to education.

❖ Learning

- Choosing to put education first.

❖ Respect

- For each other, the rules, and the educational process.

❖ Community

- Beyond the books, caring for, and supporting each other.

Learning and Working Together

The Pontiac Academy for Excellence Middle/High Administrative Team is responsible for everything that happens within the school. It is their responsibility to:

- ❖ Ensure our daily focuses remain consistent with the vision, mission, and pillars of the district's initiatives.
- ❖ Maintain a safe, positive, and respectful school culture and climate conducive to academic growth and proficiency, while preparing students for societal success.
- ❖ Maintain best practices aligned with supporting diverse learners, including, but not limited to multilingual learners, students with disabilities, and diverse cultural backgrounds.
- ❖ Effectively communicate and collaborate with all stakeholders, including students, parents, and community organizations.
- ❖ Make data-driven decisions that are in the best interest of students, staff, and parents.
- ❖ Ensure policies and procedures outlined in the handbook are fairly interpreted and implemented by all.

Pontiac Academy for Excellence Middle/High's Staff members/Teachers have the following responsibilities:

- ❖ Maintain a safe, positive, and respectful school culture and climate conducive to academic growth and proficiency, while preparing students for societal success.
- ❖ Understand how their role and responsibilities align with the overall vision of student learning and success.
- ❖ Maintain best practices aligned with supporting diverse learners, including, but not limited to multilingual learners, students with disabilities, and diverse cultural backgrounds.
- ❖ Apply meaningful academic grades to students' work based upon the Michigan Common Core State Standards.
- ❖ Develop a positive and inquisitive classroom climate, organize and carry out preventive disciplinary actions, and apply corrective actions as required.

A Pontiac Academy for Excellence Middle/High student has the following responsibilities:

- ❖ Maintain a safe, positive, and respectful school culture and climate conducive to academic growth and proficiency, while preparing students for societal success.
- ❖ Arrive at school and classes on time and prepared. Preparation includes, but not limited to meeting all academic expectations, being dressed in uniform, pencils, notebooks, binders, paper, etc.
- ❖ Ensure understanding of each teacher's academic expectations and grading policies

A Pontiac Academy for Excellence Middle/High parent has the following responsibilities:

- ❖ Assist with maintaining a safe, positive, and respectful school culture and climate conducive to academic growth and proficiency, while preparing students for societal success.
- ❖ Ensure consistent meaningful two-way communication regarding attendance and student academic and behavioral needs.
- ❖ Foster a home environment where students are supported in their efforts of continuous academic growth.
- ❖ Participate, attend, and volunteer for all parent and student activities, such as parent-teacher conferences, school meetings, and all other school sanctioned events.

Visitors

Each visitor must report to the security desk upon entering the school to obtain a pass. Visitors must sign in identifying their name, the date and time of arrival, and the location they are visiting. Approved visitors must make the visitors pass, identifying themselves visible at all times on their outer clothing. All visitors must return to the security desk and sign out before leaving the school. Any visitors found in the building without a pass shall be reported to the principal. If a person wishes to have a conference with a member of the staff, s/he should call for an appointment prior to coming to the school.

Stopping at the security desk helps us prevent disrupting instruction as well as maintaining security and safety for all students and staff. Parents wishing to see a teacher may make an appointment through the school receptionist. **PARENTS ARE NOT ALLOWED IN THE CLASSROOM WITHOUT SECURITY APPROVAL.** Parents who exhibit disruptive behavior or who become abusive towards staff will be restricted in school visitations.

Admittance Policy

Pontiac Academy for Excellence Middle/High welcomes all students regardless of race, nationality, religion, ethnic origin, sex, gender, ability status, etc.

Only a parent or legal guardian can register their children at Pontiac Academy for Excellence Middle/High. Pontiac Academy for Excellence Middle/High has the right to refuse admittance to any student who has been expelled from another district or whose prior behavior warrants investigation and that investigation reveals that the behavior of the student in question will put other students at risk.

Parents of students who are transferring from other schools should arrange to provide copies of their academic records prior to their admission to the school. No student will be admitted until all of the registration and enrollment forms are completed by the parent and/or guardian.

No student will be admitted without immunization records being complete and up to date at the time of registration.

Students who have failed to keep up their grades, have excessive absences/tardiness or whose behavior puts other students at risk will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including expulsion as sanctioned by the Board of Directors.

School Day

Arrival and Dismissal

Parents driving students to school should not bring their children to school before 7:30 am. Doors open to all Middle/High school students at 7:30 am. Parents are responsible for the safety of their children up to this time. The first bell rings at 8:30 am. **All students should go directly to their classrooms as classes will start punctually at 8:30 am.** Students reporting after the 8:30 am bell should report directly to the main office.

Parents are discouraged from arriving more than five (5) minutes before dismissal. Parents who come inside are to report first to the security desk, then to the office.

Parents whose child(ren) are absent should call the school by 8:00 am. After that time, any student recorded as absent will receive a call from the receptionist. A tardy student must bring in a written excuse within 24 hours. Continued tardiness will result in an attendance office being sent to investigate the reason. Continuing to be late after a visit will result in disciplinary action up to and including expulsion from the school. **Parent(s)/Guardian(s) are responsible for student(s) getting to school on time.**

Student Early Pick Up

No Child is permitted to leave or be taken from the school during school time by anyone other than the authorized parent, guardian or person(s) on the release list. Proper identification is required. Students are not permitted to be dismissed within 35 minutes of the scheduled dismissal time.

We cannot accept telephone requests for children to leave the school.

The release of students during school hours is to be handled through the school office only. **No one (including a parent or guardian) may go to a classroom and take a student out of class.** This **must** be handled through the school office.

Parents are cautioned that continuous early dismissal from the same class may affect the student's grade.

Important Notice to Parents. Students who are not picked up by 3:30 pm will be taken to the main office until the arrival of a parent and/or guardian. **Students must be picked up from the school no later than 4:00 pm. Students not picked up on time will be secured by Oakland Sheriff's at the local station where he/she can be picked up by the parent.**

Cancellation of School

Cancellation of school takes place only during extraordinary circumstances such as inclement weather, equipment failure, or public crisis. We are aware of the hardship which can be caused by an abrupt cancellation. Therefore, school will not be canceled unless a significant safety risk has been created by unusual circumstances.

Every practical means will be used to notify parents of an impending cancellation including radio and TV. In the unusual circumstance where school must be canceled during the school day, teachers will determine that all students have satisfactory transportation and supervision at their home before releasing them from school.

All school days when school is not in session will be listed on the school calendar, which is distributed at middle/high school orientation and available in the front office. In instances where changes have to be made a notice will be sent home with the children.

Emergency School Closing

Parents and teachers are to watch local television stations and we will receive a robo call and email for Pontiac Academy for Excellence Middle/High school closing announcements.

Health, Illness, and Accidents

Communicable Diseases

If your child becomes ill or shows signs of developing any of the communicable diseases, you will be contacted immediately to pick up your child. In the event that your child does become infected with a contagious disease, you are requested to contact the office. Your child will be readmitted to school according to a physician's clearance. This includes lice, ringworm, measles, mumps, pink eye, etc

Students with a temperature over 101.4 degrees will be sent home. A temporary waiting area will be identified for students to wait until they are picked up from school; they will not be allowed to wait in the main office, and they will remain in the classroom if they are ill.

Medications

Students are not permitted to bring medicine to school or take medicine while at school unless written direction and permission by a physician is on file in the school office. The responsibility for maintaining scheduled dosage is on the student, not the school staff. Students are to come to the office when medicine is to be taken.

Medicine Requirements for New Students

The Michigan Immunization Law requires that “all children enrolling in any public, private, parochial, or denominational school in Michigan for the first time shall submit either a statement signed by a physician that they have been immunized or protected against smallpox, diphtheria, tetanus, pretties, rubella, measles, and poliomyelitis and tuberculin tested to determine the presence of infection from tuberculosis, a statement signed by a parent or guardian to the effect

that the child has not been immunized, or a request signed by a parent or guardian that the local health department give the needed protective injections and diagnosis test.” The State now requires Hepatitis B immunization before entering Kindergarten.

Students who do not meet the immunization requirements will be excluded from school per the law.

Illness and Accident

In case of illness or accident the student will report to the school office immediately. Parents will be notified immediately.

Minor cuts and scratches will be treated by the school staff, who will wash the wound and, if necessary, apply bandage or ice. The parent will be notified. This procedure will be followed in all instances where it is noted that the student has any type of illness or accident.

Major Accident/Sudden Illness

Parents are immediately notified. If parents are not available, we will call emergency numbers provided by instances where the parent or designee cannot be contacted, the student will remain in the office, depending on the accident or illness. If the accident/illness is severe and the parent cannot be reached, the student will be taken to the nearest hospital emergency room. An accident report will be filed in the office by the teacher in charge at the time of the accident.

In the event of a suicide threat, the social worker and parents will be notified immediately. The social worker will provide in-school support and external resources to best support the student's needs.

School Safety

Fire Drills

During the school year, we are required by law to conduct a minimum of six (5) fire drills to familiarize students as to what should take place in an actual disaster.

Students are expected to be familiar with the appropriate emergency protocols, listen carefully and follow all safety directives given by school officials.

Tornado Drills

We will conduct a minimum of two (2) tornado drills during the school year to familiarize students as to what to do in case of a tornado. Students are expected to be familiar with the appropriate emergency protocols, listen carefully and follow all safety directives given by school officials.

School Lockdown Drills

We will conduct a minimum of three (3) school lockdown drills during the school year to familiarize students as to what to do in case of an emergency. Students are expected to be familiar with the appropriate emergency protocols, listen carefully and follow all safety directives given by school officials.

In the above circumstances, students failing to act appropriately will be subject to disciplinary actions

Metal Detectors

Pontiac Academy for Excellence Middle/High installed metal detectors in each school building. Staff, students, and visitors are required to go through them to enter the building. Everyone will be asked to remove items in their pockets and will be subject to a bag search.

Our school rules do not allow for fighting, throwing rocks, or snowballs. Knives, skate boards, guns or squirt guns are not to be brought to school. **Any object that may be constructed as a dangerous weapon will be left to the discretion of the school. Violations of these rules will be subject to immediate investigation, suspension and/or expulsion. In cases involving weapons or threats, according to law, the police will be called.**

Threat Assessment and School Safety Policy

Our Commitment to Safety

Student and staff safety is our highest priority. Our academy uses a comprehensive threat assessment process whenever a student makes a threatening statement or exhibits concerning behavior. This is a school safety initiative, not a criminal process.

When Threat Assessment is Activated

Our process is triggered by:

- Verbal threats to harm self, others, or school property
- Gestured threats of bodily harm such as: finger guns, stabbing or slicing gestures (both direct or indirect)
- Written/illustrated/digital threats in assignments, social media, texts, or emails
- Concerning behaviors such as obsessive interest in weapons or violence, planning harmful actions, or significant behavioral changes with threatening language

Our Response Process

1. Immediate Safety Assessment

- a. Ensure safety of all students and staff
- b. Secure evidence and implement safety measures

2. Investigation

- a. Interview the student who made the threat
- b. Interview any witnesses, including students and staff with relevant information
- c. Review student's history and consult with teachers/counselors
- d. Examine physical or digital evidence

3. Risk Evaluation

- a. Assess credibility and seriousness of threat
- b. Evaluate student's intent and ability to carry out threat
- c. Determine risk level to school community

4. Mental Health Screening (When Appropriate) Depending on investigation findings, mental health screening may be conducted when:

- a. Student shows signs of mental health crisis

- b. Threatening behavior appears related to emotional/psychological concerns
- c. Professional assessment is needed to understand students' mental state

5. Safety and Support Planning

- a. Create individualized interventions based on findings
- b. Implement safety measures and monitoring
- c. Coordinate support services
- d. Establish clear expectations

6. Parent Notification

- a. Notify parents about the process
- b. Involve families in developing support plans
- c. Maintain ongoing communication

Our Approach

Our goals are to:

- ❖ Understand circumstances behind threatening behavior
- ❖ Provide support for struggling students
- ❖ Prevent escalation before harm occurs
- ❖ Ensure community safety
- ❖ Connect students with helpful resources

Confidentiality

Information is shared only with:

- ❖ Parents/guardians of involved students
- ❖ Essential school personnel ensuring safety
- ❖ Mental health professionals providing services
- ❖ Law enforcement, when necessary or legally required
- ❖ Other parties necessary for school safety

Consequences and Follow-Up

Outcomes are based on threat nature, student intent, and safety needs, and may include:

- ❖ Counseling and mental health support
- ❖ Safety planning and monitoring
- ❖ Disciplinary actions per school policy

- ❖ Temporary removal pending assessment
- ❖ Community resource referrals

How You Can Help

Students: Report concerning behavior to trusted adults. Seek help if struggling.

Parents: Maintain open communication with your child. Contact school with concerns. Support safety initiatives.

Conclusion

Our threat assessment process maintains a safe learning environment while supporting students in need. This educational safety initiative helps identify concerns early and provides appropriate intervention and support.

This policy is implemented in accordance with state and federal guidelines for school safety and threat assessment best practices. The policy is reviewed annually and updated as needed to reflect current research and legal requirement.

Student Mental Health and Suicide Risk Assessment Policy

Our Commitment to Student Safety and Wellbeing

The safety and well-being of our students is our highest priority. As part of our comprehensive approach to student support, our school implements evidence-based mental health screening procedures when students exhibit signs of emotional distress that involve the potential risk of self-harm. These screenings are conducted by trained mental health professionals and are designed to ensure students receive appropriate support and intervention when needed.

When Suicide Risk Screenings May Be Conducted

Our trained mental health professionals may conduct suicide risk screenings when students exhibit concerning behaviors or warning signs, including but not limited to:

Verbal Indicators:

- ❖ Direct statements about wanting to die, hurt themselves, or end their life

- ❖ Expressing feelings of hopelessness, worthlessness, or being trapped
- ❖ Talking about being a burden to others

Behavioral Changes:

- ❖ Evidence of self-harm behaviors (cutting, burning, etc.)

Our Screening Process

When concerning signs are identified, our process includes:

1. **Immediate Safety Assessment:** A trained mental health professional will conduct a confidential screening to assess the student's current safety and wellbeing.
2. **Professional Evaluation:** The screening will be conducted using evidence-based assessment tools by qualified school mental health personnel.
3. **Parent/Guardian Notification:** Parents or guardians will be contacted immediately when a screening is conducted, except in cases where doing so might increase risk to the student.
 - a. Parents may be asked to sign a “Duty to Inform”. This letter is intended to signify a mutual understanding of risk. It is not a legal document; therefore, there is no penalty for not signing it.
4. **Collaborative Planning:** We will work with families to develop appropriate support plans and connect students with necessary resources.
5. **Follow-up Support:** Ongoing monitoring and support will be provided as needed to ensure student safety and wellbeing.

Confidentiality and Privacy

We are committed to protecting student privacy while ensuring safety. Information from mental health screenings is kept confidential and is only shared with:

- ❖ Parents/guardians (unless disclosure would increase risk)
- ❖ Essential school personnel involved in the student's support
- ❖ External mental health professionals as appropriate
- ❖ Emergency responders if imminent danger exists

Mandated Reporting Requirements

As educational professionals, our staff are mandated reporters under state law. This means we are legally required to report certain situations to protect student safety, including:

Child Abuse and Neglect: If a student discloses or we suspect abuse, neglect, or maltreatment at home, we must report this to Child Protective Services and/or law enforcement as required by law.

Imminent Danger to Self or Others: When a student presents an immediate risk of serious harm to themselves or others, we may need to contact emergency services, law enforcement, or crisis intervention teams to ensure safety.

Court-Ordered Disclosures: In rare cases, we may be required to share information pursuant to court orders or legal proceedings.

Important Notes About Mandated Reporting:

- These reports are made to protect student safety, not to punish families
- We will make every effort to inform parents/guardians when reports are made, unless doing so would increase risk to the student
- Our goal is always to work collaboratively with families while fulfilling our legal obligations to protect children
- Students will be informed about the limits of confidentiality in age-appropriate ways before participating in mental health screenings

We encourage open communication with families about these requirements and are available to answer questions about how mandated reporting works in practice.

Our goal is to create a safe, supportive environment where all students can thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. We appreciate your partnership in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of our school community.

This policy complies with state and federal regulations regarding student mental health services and is reviewed annually to ensure best practices in student safety and support.

Attendance

Every student of compulsory school age is required to be present daily unless legitimately excused. Regular attendance is essential to a student's success in school. Most subjects are taught in sequence, requiring the understanding of each concept in the order of its presentation. Persistent absenteeism or tardiness creates a genuine hardship for the student and is regarded as a very serious problem. This type of absenteeism will be reported to the Attendance Office. If a student has a medical problem and is absent for more than three days he/she **MUST** have a written doctor's letter.

Attendance Definitions

Unexcused absence: An unexcused absence is an absence which has not been confirmed by a parent.

School Approved Absence: A school-approved absence is an absence from school or class initiated by the school or made necessary by participating in school activities or functions.

Tardy: Class begins when the tardy bell rings. If a student is not in class when the bell rings they are considered tardy.

Excused with documentation: Any medically documented absence, funeral days, or other absence approved by the attendance office will not be counted against the student.

Suspended Absence: Suspended absence is an absence from class as a result of a violation of the Student Code of Conduct. A student on suspension may not attend or participate in any extracurricular or school activities.

Attendance Policy

Students are expected to be present daily in each of their classes. If a student is absent from a class more than ten (10) days in a semester, they are at risk of losing course credit. Absences not calculated in the ten (10) day absence expectation: The following absences are not calculated in the ten (10) day absence expectation:

- ❖ School-related absences
- ❖ Absence due to death in the immediate family
- ❖ Court/legal proceeding
- ❖ Medically unable to attend (doctor's note required)

***The school is unable to approve any other absences beyond 10 days.**

Any student who is absent for 10 consecutive unexcused days will be dropped from the school enrolment. It is the administration's discretion to determine whether or not an absence is excused or unexcused.

The students who have the following will receive a letter of their attendance, a robocall call, and an email:

- ❖ 3 absences will receive - Truancy 1st Notice Letter
- ❖ 4 absences will receive - Truancy 2nd Notice Letter, scheduled meeting with parent and student
- ❖ 5 absences will receive - Truancy 3rd Notice Letter, the truancy team will determine actions detailed in a contract to assist the student, a scheduled meeting with the parent and student to review the contract.
- ❖ 6 absences will receive - Truancy 4th Notice Letter, the contract is in violation, parent meeting will be held, and the student and parent will be reported to the Oakland County Prosecuting office

Tardy Policy

If a student is 15 minutes or more late to class, they will be marked absent for that class.

3 tardies or early dismissals in a class will be equivalent to 1 unexcused absence.

Attendance Responsibilities

A. Student/Parent Responsibilities

- a. Parents within the Pontiac Academy for Excellence Middle/High School District are required by law to have their children attend school continuously and consecutively until they have reached the age of eighteen (18).
- b. Students within the Pontiac Academy for Excellence Middle/High School District are required to attend school continuously and

consecutively for the entire year up to the time they have reached the age of eighteen (18).

i. Attendance Requirements:

1. Student absences must not exceed nine (9) days per semester.
 2. Students who exceed nine (9) days of absence per semester may be considered for loss of course credit, considered for summer school, and/or retention.
 3. The policy will be established at the discretion of the building administration.
- c. Students are expected to arrive on time and attend all assigned classes.
- d. Students are not permitted to leave the building without parent/guardian permission. If a student must leave school during the school day, the parent/guardian must sign the student out at the main office. When the student returns to the building she/he must report directly to the main office first.
- e. The day a student returns from an absence she/her must contact each teacher to arrange possible make-up assignments. If a student does not contact a teacher, she/her forfeits make-up privileges in that class. The number of days that the student has been absent is the number of days allowed to turn in make-up assignments. If assignments are not turned in, the student will receive a Zero for the work.
- f. If a student is unable to attend school or any part of the school day, it is the parent's responsibility to notify the attendance office. The parent/guardian must call on the day of the absence or the absence will be recorded as unexcused.

B. Teacher Responsibility

- a. To initiate early intervention to prevent further absences by notifying the attendance office of students with five (5) or more days absent in a semester
- b. To take attendance and maintain accurate attendance records for each assigned class; this is a legal requirement.
- c. To assist administration by reporting the name(s) of student(s) who are not physically present in class that may be loitering, skipping, or in an unauthorized area.

- d. Coaches, club advisors, teachers, etc., are to inform the main office, as soon as possible prior to the event when students will miss class due to a scheduled event and to reinforce the attendance policy.
- e. To provide make-up assignments when a student arranges for them. Alternative Placement work will be provided and credit will be given if completed in-house. Out of school suspension work will be provided upon request and the student will be given credit for work if turned in within two (2) days of student return

C. Career and College Coordinator Responsibility

- a. To assist in monitoring student attendance.
- b. To contact and conference with parents and students, upon being notified of attendance problems such as unexcused absences, excessive absences, etc.

D. Main Office Responsibility

- a. To monitor student attendance.
- b. To contact parents when students are absent.
- c. To make a referral to Oakland County Juvenile Court System for truancy.

E. Administrative Responsibility

- a. To assign an administrative consequence to students who exceed the nine (9) day limit.
- b. For every hour that a student skips, she/he will serve an administrative consequence.
- c. For each subsequent infraction, discipline will be progressive.
- d. The student may be recommended for loss of credit, summer school, and/or retention.

Doctor/Dentist Appointment

Parents are encouraged to make their children's doctor or dentist appointments outside of school hours or on scheduled free days and half days.

Eighteen-Year-Old Policy

Since January 1, 1972, the age of majority was lowered from twenty-one (21) to eighteen (18) in Michigan. Schools are, therefore, bound to accept the signature of eighteen-year-old students as valid and binding. However, schools are not bound to

make expectations of the rules solely because of age. This is meant specifically to say that legal-age adults must follow the same rules as other students as long as they are enrolled students of Pontiac Academy for Excellence Middle/High. Therefore, all students must have their parents call in for attendance and or have parents sign required documents, unless approved by the administrator.

Academics

GRADING SCALE

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	
A	93% and above	Excellent
A-	90% - 92%	Very Good
B+	87% - 89%	Good
B	84% - 86%	Good
B-	80% - 83%	Above Average
C+	77% - 79%	Average
C	73% - 76%	Average
C-	70% - 72%	Average
D+	67% - 69%	Below Average
D	66% - 63%	Below Average
D-	60% - 62%	Below Average
F	59% and Below	Fail to Meet Grade Expectation

Graduation Requirements

Pontiac Academy for Excellence Middle/High graduation requirements are dictated by the Michigan Department of Education. Basic academic requirements for graduation include completion of 18 credits. All outstanding fines and fees must

also be paid to receive transcripts and diplomas. Pontiac Academy for Excellence Middle/High expects students to graduate with 20 credits. but Pontiac Academy for Excellence Middle/High administration reserves the right to amend this expectation if the student has fulfilled the requirements stated by the Michigan Department of Education.

Class Status

Class status is NOT determined by the grade level that a student was in the previous school year. Your class status will be determined by the *number of credits* you have earned:

- ❖ Freshman status - less than 5 credits
- ❖ Sophomore status - at least 5-10 credits
- ❖ Junior status - at least 11-15 credits
- ❖ Senior status - at least 16+ credits

Students will be reclassified according to the number of earned credits

Walking at Graduation

In order for a senior to walk at the graduation ceremony, they must fulfill all graduation requirements and must be in good standing per senior class guidelines prior to the graduation ceremony. A student may be denied participation in the graduation ceremony for disciplinary concerns or a past debt (\$) owed to the school.

Participation in Senior Activities

There are many exciting events and activities during a student's senior year, such as a senior trip, pinning ceremony, senior parties, and prom. Seniors are eligible to participate in these activities if they are on track to meet the specific graduation requirements as well as *passing all current classes* at the time of the activity (coursework must be completed by the last day of senior classes). Final authority on senior events and participation rests with administration or designee.

Credit recovery

Pontiac Academy for Excellence Middle/High uses an online platform as a means for students to obtain credits that they have not earned due to previous class failure, but seniors and juniors have priority and seating is limited. Credit Recovery will be

offered during the summer and after school. Students must earn at least 70% or higher in the course for it to be considered a passing grade.

Test-Out Opportunities

Students have the opportunity to ask to waive credit by taking an end-of-semester exam that is representative of material that would normally be learned through the course. The exam will be approved and administered by a teacher certified in that subject area on a date designated by the school. Students **MUST** receive a score of 75% or higher on exams to receive credit, and may only attempt to take one test per course. A “CR” grade will be listed on the student’s transcript indicating successful testing out of a particular course. You must complete a Test Out Request Form and return it to the College and Career Coordinator for approval.

Advanced Academic Opportunities

Pontiac Academy for Excellence Middle/High offers multiple tracks for juniors and seniors who have fulfilled their credit requirements and/or prerequisite courses. These opportunities include dual enrollment and career and technical education. Please note that each of these opportunities requires teacher recommendation and college and career coordinator approval, and students may be removed if they do not meet academic and/or behavioral expectations. Students should ideally be choosing programs that align with their post-secondary education and/or career goals.

Dual Enrollment

Eligible students may participate in online or in-person college-level courses for high school credit, college credit, or both. Courses would be taken during the typical school day, and may be offered off-site or online. Students should make an appointment with the college and career coordinator for more information.

Career and Technical Education

Eligible students may participate in Career and Technical Education courses for high school credit. Courses would be taken during the typical school day, and may

be offered off-site. Students should make an appointment with the college and career coordinator for more information.

Athletics

Athletic Vision

At Pontiac Academy for Excellence Middle/High, our athletic vision is to cultivate a championship culture rooted in excellence, integrity, and perseverance. We believe that athletics are a powerful extension of the classroom, teaching critical life skills such as discipline, time management, goal setting, and resilience—skills that directly support academic achievement. Through participation in sports, our student-athletes learn to balance rigorous academic responsibilities with athletic commitments, building a strong foundation for success in high school, college, and future careers.

As part of our commitment to excellence, all student-athletes and parents will sign a **Student Athletic Compact** that outlines expectations for maintaining good behavior and a minimum **2.8 GPA**. This ensures that students understand their dual responsibility as scholars and athletes, reinforcing the importance of character and academics in achieving success.

Our athletic program promotes teamwork, leadership, and a sense of responsibility—essential qualities for thriving in society. By emphasizing sportsmanship, respect, and community pride, we prepare students to become engaged citizens and positive role models within and beyond our school community. Athletics at Pontiac Academy for Excellence Middle/High are more than competition—they are a driving force for academic excellence and the development of successful, well-rounded individuals ready to contribute meaningfully to the world.

Academic & Physical Eligibility

All students must have a current athletic sports physical on file with the school in order to try-out for a sports team. An athletic physical keeps you eligible for the entire school year. A current athletic sports physical means any physical examination given on or after April 15 of the previous school year. You can get a

form from the main office and go to any walk in clinic, urgent care, or family doctor.

Student Behavior

Bullying Policy

Bullying of a student at school is strictly prohibited. For the purposes of this policy, “bullying “ shall be defined as any gesture or written, verbal, graphic or physical act (including electronically transmitted acts - i.e. internet, telephone or cell phone, personal digital assistant (PDA) or wireless handheld device) that, without regard to its subject matter or motivating animus is intended or that a reasonable person would know is likely to harm one or more students either directly or indirectly by doing any of the following

- A. Substantially interfering with educational opportunities, benefits or programs of one or more students;
- B. Adversely affecting the ability of a student to participate in or benefit from the school district’s educational programs or activities by placing the student in reasonable fear of physical harm or by causing substantial emotional distress;
- C. Having an actual and substantial detrimental effect on a student’s physical or mental health; and/or
- D. Causing substantial disruption in, or substantial interference with, the orderly operation of the school.

Intervention for Bullying

Peer mediation will be recommended for the students involved in bullying infractions. Mediators will consist of students who attend Pontiac Academy for Excellence Middle/High. Mediators are students who help other students resolve their issues.

The school will also contact the parents and guardians of the students. This is to notify them that their child has been involved in an infraction while at Pontiac Academy for Excellence Middle/High. The staff’s administration and/or social worker will conduct a serious talk with the bully, victim, and bystander(s).

Classroom Discipline

With the support of Administration, teachers have the authority and responsibility to maintain discipline in the classroom. School discipline policies will be strictly enforced for the safety of all concerned. Below are possible steps that a teacher may take when handling behavior issues in the classroom:

- ❖ **First Violation:** verbal warning
- ❖ **Second Violation:** written discipline form and/or conference with parent to discuss the violation(s).
- ❖ **Third Violation:** written discipline form, parent contact and/or conference with administration to discuss the violation(s).

School administration will determine the appropriate measures to be taken concerning student behavioral infractions based on violations of the school rules listed below on a case by case basis.

Readmission conference: Students that receive an in/out of school suspension for any violation, parent/guardian and student must meet with an administrator to return to school.

Alternate Placement

An alternate placement is when students are not allowed to remain in their classroom during the school day. During this alternate placement, students are expected to complete classwork or another assigned activity. The student will be supervised by a designated Pontiac Academy for Excellence Middle/High staff member.

Out of School Suspension

An out-of-school suspension is when students are not allowed to return to school until a specific date. All students suspended are not allowed to attend or participate in after-school activities and school-sanctioned events.

Detention

Detention can be assigned by any Pontiac Academy for Excellence Middle/High staff member. Students can serve detention during the school day, after school, or on a Saturday. If a student fails to attend the assigned detention, a more severe form of discipline will be administered. If there is a conflict with the student's

ability to participate, the parent/guardian must contact the staff member who issued the detention to arrange an alternative.

Three suspensions may result in expulsion from school pending an expulsion hearing by the Pontiac Academy for Excellence Middle/High Board of Directors.

Cheating

Cheating is a serious compromise of a student's integrity and will not be tolerated. If cheating is discovered, it is up to the teacher's discretion to determine how to proceed with the incident, as outlined in their syllabus. Administrators will oversee their decisions.

Gum Chewing

Pontiac Academy for Excellence Middle/High does not allow gum chewing during school hours.

Consequences

Most students follow our rules and regulations quite well. However, a student who refuses to obey the rules and regulations or continues to cause problems will face the following disciplinary actions up to and including expulsion.

Violations of the School Rules

Any student engaging in the following types of conduct listed below (either specifically or generally) is subject to expulsion, suspension, emergency suspension, removal or permanent exclusion from curricular activities. This code of regulations applies while a student is in the custody or control of the school, on school grounds or closely proximate thereto, while at a school-sponsored function, school organization function or activity, or on school-owned or provided transportation vehicles. The proper authorities will be notified.

The Following Violations Will Lead to a Suspension and/or Expulsion from School

1. Damage or destruction of school property, property of school employees, or property of other students on or off school premises.

2. Assault of a school employee, student, or other person.
3. Verbal abuse. No student shall, in spoken or written form, use or direct to, or about a school employee, or student, words, phrases, or actions which are considered to be slanderous, degrading, or threatening in nature, and/or words or phrases which are obscene or profane as defined by the majority of our society. Name-calling and damaging, uncomplimentary and offensive remarks related to physical handicaps or defects, mental handicaps, race, religion, nationality, appearance, or other reasons are prohibited.
4. Refusing to accept detention or other properly administered discipline.
5. Forgery of school or school-related documents.
6. Gambling and/or participation in games of gambling to exchange money or property.
7. Extortion of a student or school personnel.
8. Arson or other improper use of fire.
9. Possession or use of dangerous weapons or ordnance or objects which look like weapons or ordnance, including but not limited to guns, firearms, ammunition, knives, grenades, sling shots, bows, arrows, machetes, brass knuckles, chains, studs, etc; or possession or use of objects which may render physical harm to another if improperly used, including, but not limited to, axes, hatchets, hammers, saws, ice picks, screwdrivers, knives, etc.
10. Buying, selling, transferring, using, or possessing any substance containing tobacco, including, but not limited to, vapes, cigarettes, cigars, a pipe, clove cigarettes, chewing tobacco, snuff, and dip, or using tobacco in any other form.
11. Buying, selling transferring, using, possessing or being under the influence of any controlled substance (drugs, narcotics, marijuan, etc.) or inhalants, or buying, selling using, possessing or being under the influence of any counterfeit controlled substance, (any substance that is made to look like a controlled substance, or is represented to be a controlled substance, or that is believed to be a controlled substance).
12. Turning in false fire, tornado, bomb, disaster, or other alarms, or any other activity which induces panic, is defined as: Initiating or circulating a report or warning of an alleged or impending fire, explosion, crime, or other catastrophe, knowing that such a report or warning is false.

13. Threatening to commit an “offense of violence” or
14. Committing an offense with reckless disregard of the likelihood that its commission will cause serious public inconvenience or alarm.
15. Physical aggression and harm to others, to oneself, or property
 - a. Fighting, kicking, wrestling, or the use of karate
 - b. Leaving school grounds without permission
 - c. Throwing snowballs or rocks
 - d. Rowdy behavior in the building or playground
16. Disrupting the classroom
 - a. Continued disturbance in the class
 - b. Disobedience, or refusal to perform a required task or comply with a direction given by a teacher or adult, results in automatic suspension.
17. Violations of the law: stealing, use or possession of drugs, cigarettes, or dangerous weapons, and verbal or written threat of bodily harm will result in expulsion.

In instances where threats are those that fall under Federal or State Safety Legislation, the youth division of the police department will be notified immediately as per the law. Parents will be called. Legal action and expulsion may occur.

Prohibition of Gangs and Gang Activities

No student shall commit any act that furthers gangs or gang-related activities.

Conduct prohibited by this policy includes:

- ❖ Wearing, possessing, displaying, or distributing any clothing, jewelry, symbols, or other items which may be evidence of membership in any gang;
- ❖ Communicating verbally or nonverbally to convey membership in a gang;
- ❖ Tagging or defacing school or personal property with gang-related symbols or slogans;
- ❖ Requiring payment for protection or otherwise intimidating or threatening any person related to gang activity;
- ❖ Inciting students to intimidate or act with physical violence upon any other person related to gang activity;
- ❖ Soliciting others for gang membership;
- ❖ Committing any other illegal act or violation of school district policy that relates to gang activity.

School Dress Code

Pontiac Academy for Excellence Middle/High has the expectation that all students reflect a positive learning environment. It bases its dress code upon the assumption that students are a representation of not only themselves, but their families, and the school at large. Therefore, the school maintains high standards of student dress.

Pontiac Academy for Excellence Middle/High will implement, monitor, and enforce the dress code referenced below as determined by the school administration.

Pontiac Academy for Excellence Middle/High Dress Code (Middle School):

- ❖ **Girls:** Black or tan pants. Black or burgundy pleated skirt. Black, white, or yellow/gold polo or button-down shirt. Black button-down sweater or pullover crewneck.
- ❖ **Boys:** Black or tan pants. Black, white, or yellow/gold polo or button-down shirt. Black button-down sweater or pullover crewneck.

Pontiac Academy for Excellence Middle/High Dress Code (High School):

- ❖ **Girls:** Black pants. Black or burgundy pleated skirt. Black, white, or yellow/gold button-down or polo shirt.
- ❖ **Boys:** Black pants. Black, white, or yellow/gold button-down or polo shirt.

Senior Dress Code Only:

- ❖ Seniors are required to wear black pants or a black pleated skirt(must be knee-length or worn with leggings)and a white button-down shirt.

Students will be prohibited from wearing:

- ❖ Head covering of any kind (except for religious or medical reasons).
- ❖ Excessive make-up
- ❖ If Pontiac Academy for Excellence Middle/High identifies that the students' nails are a safety concern, Pontiac Academy for Excellence Middle/High administration reserves the right to request removal
- ❖ Jeans (casual dress only - no hoodies permitted on casual day), polyester, spandex, or lycra pants/skirts, skorts/shorts, capri pants, and culottes

- ❖ Leggings or tight-fitting spandex-type pants, pants with side slits or holes above the knees, see-through pants, tights, or leotards worn as outer garments.
- ❖ Jackets may NOT be worn during the school day.
- ❖ Clothing and accessories that promote alcohol, tobacco, or drug usage, or which display weapons or violence, and which cause or are likely to cause disruption within the school environment.
- ❖ Clothing and accessories that contain vulgar, derogatory pictures, slogans, or words that may be interpreted as offensive and that cause or are likely to disrupt the school environment.
- ❖ Clothing symbolic of gangs that cause or are likely to cause disruption within the school environment.
- ❖ Tank tops, tube tops, mesh tops, sheer tops, sleeveless tops, halter tops, or bare midriff tops. Shirts must cover the shoulders, have sleeves, and extend past the top of the pants.
- ❖ Pajamas, loungewear, and dorm pants
- ❖ Sagging pants, pants worn low on the hip to reveal underwear or skin. Pants must be worn with both legs down, and pant legs may not extend past the sole of the shoe.
- ❖ Bedroom slippers, roller sneakers, and high-heeled shoes are prohibited. Shoes must be worn at all times. Flip-flops, sandals, open-toed, and open-heeled shoes are prohibited.

Pontiac Academy for Excellence Middle/High Gym Dress Code:

1. School-appropriate T-shirt
2. Gym shoes and socks must be worn
3. School-appropriate gym shorts or sweats
4. Students attending gym will be expected to CHANGE INTO GYM CLOTHES in the locker room after attendance is taken in the gymnasium.

Dress Code Violation

- ❖ First Violation
 - If a student does not have an appropriate uniform, they will receive a written warning, and a parent will be contacted by phone.
- ❖ Second Violation

- The student will need to either be picked up from school or the parents/guardians will need to bring appropriate school uniforms for the student to wear.
- ❖ Third Violation
 - The procedures for the first and second violation will be followed, along with a parent/guardian meeting.

Student Services

Child Find

This public school academy is participating in identifying, locating, and evaluating all children who may have disabilities. For more information regarding assistance for these students or if you suspect a child may have a disability, please contact the main office.

Inclusion

At Pontiac Academy for Excellence Middle/High, inclusion means making sure everyone feels welcomed, accepted, and supported, just as they are. We are committed to creating a learning environment where all students have equal access to opportunities and are treated with dignity and respect. Inclusion is not just about being present; it's about being heard, valued, and understood.

We proudly embrace and support students of all races, ethnicities, cultures, religions, genders, gender identities, sexual orientations, learning abilities, and socio-economic backgrounds. We also include students with disabilities, English language learners, and those who come from different family structures or life experiences.

Approach to Determination of Eligibility for Special Education

The eligibility determination for special education services is made collaboratively by a multidisciplinary team, including school professionals and the student's parent or guardian. After a comprehensive evaluation and review of all relevant data, the team determines whether the student meets the criteria for one or more of the disability categories under IDEA and demonstrates an educational need for specialized instruction. If it is determined that a student is found eligible, the team

will proceed with developing an Individualized Education Program (IEP) to address the student's unique needs and ensure appropriate support and services are in place.

Lockers

All Pontiac Academy for Excellence Middle/High students will be assigned a locker **with a lock** when school begins each fall. There is no charge for use of the locker, except if the locker is damaged. Students are advised not to share the locker combination with **anyone**. Only the student(s) assigned to a locker should have the combination. The student is responsible for the locker and the school district property within the locker.

Lockers are the property of Pontiac Academy for Excellence Middle/High. Lockers are to be used for storing clothes and supplies that the student needs to be successful in school. School employees respect the rights of students and their property. However, the school reserves the right to inspect lockers if they deem it necessary.

Textbooks

Textbooks and workbooks are very expensive; they are supplied to the students by the school. Students are held responsible for the condition of the textbook assigned to them. The students are required to cover their textbooks with a book cover in order to assist in protecting the book. The parent is responsible and will be charged for the loss of any textbook or workbook. Normal wear and tear of textbooks will carry no charge, however, **loss of a workbook or one that is damaged beyond repair or abuse beyond the usual wear and tear on textbooks will be charged to the parent.**

Communication/Conferences

Student/Parent-Teacher Conferences occur during Report Card marking periods or as needed. Parents are expected to meet with the teacher of each of their children, regardless of the progress of child.

The report card summarizes the student's achievement and gives an evaluation of the child's behavior.

It is not necessary to wait for the regular conference time if a parent has a special concern.

Parents may schedule conferences with the teacher or principal if they have some concerns regarding their child's progress. Should it be necessary, a weekly exchange of information may be arranged.

If you need to schedule a conference with the Principal, please contact the office receptionist to make an appointment.

Phone Calls to the School for a Student

The office telephone is a business phone and is not to be used by any student to call home except in an emergency. Students will not be called on the phone while school is in session. Parents wishing to contact their student in an emergency may leave a message with the school receptionist.

Change of Address-Telephone

Every student record must contain up-to-date addresses and telephone numbers. Please notify the school immediately if you have a change of address, telephone number, or emergency contact information. The school cannot be held responsible for communicating with the parent if the phone has been disconnected or new number information has not been forwarded to the school.

Cafeteria Information

Pontiac Academy for Excellence Middle/High has a hot lunch program. Students that are not having a hot lunch are required to bring a bag lunch to school. Students are not allowed to have outside food delivered to the school via food delivery

services (i.e., DoorDash, Uber Eats, etc.) However, an authorized parent/guardian can bring food to the student.

The cafeteria requires guidelines for acceptable behavior. These are no more than what reasonable courtesy and good manners dictate. Such things as disrespectful behavior towards the staff, throwing food, improper cleanup, shouting the length of the lunchroom, running, and fighting at the table will not be tolerated and will result in the student(s) not being allowed to eat with the other students. Failure to follow the cafeteria rules will result in disciplinary action.

Leaving School Grounds

Students are not allowed to leave the school grounds during school hours for any reason. Any violations will result in an automatic three (3) day out-of-school suspension or longer.

Motor Vehicles

Students have the privilege of driving to school and parking on campus (in the designated lot). To obtain a permit to park on campus, the student must have a valid driver's license, registration, and proof of insurance on file in the main office. No students are to be in vehicles during the day without administration approval.

The process for obtaining a parking permit is as follows:

- ❖ Complete the Student Parking Application
- ❖ Submit required documents
- ❖ Receive and display your parking permit

Field Trips

Field trips within our city and to nearby points of interest are scheduled by various classroom teachers and staff throughout the school year. These trips are designed to supplement different aspects of the classroom curriculum and to introduce students to the resources of the community. Parents will receive notices of field trips well in

advance of the scheduled trip date and will be asked to sign a field trip permission form.

At times, there may be an admission fee associated with a field trip. During that time students will be asked to pay the fee to attend the trip. Parents are encouraged to attend field trip outings with their child(ren) and must have an annual background check two weeks before attending the field trips. These trips will be planned at the discretion of each teacher. All students are expected to go on field trips when planned by the teacher. This is an activity that will supplement the academic program.

Transportation to and from locations will not be provided for non-students and non-chaperones. Students may not be dismissed from a field trip with a parent volunteer.

Bicycles

The school administration and staff will not be responsible for any bicycles on the premises.

Video Surveillance

A video monitoring system may be used on a school bus, and a video monitoring system may be used in public areas of the school building. These systems have been put in place to protect students, staff, visitors, and school property. If a discipline problem is captured on videotape, that recording may be used as the basis for imposing student discipline. If criminal conduct is recorded, law enforcement personnel may view the footage.

Electronic Devices

In the school environment, cell phones (and other electronic devices) have become a distraction and interruption to the proper teaching and learning in our classrooms. Cell phones and other electronic devices **MUST** be turned off upon arrival at the school building. Tardy students **MUST** check their cell phones and other electronic devices into the front office.

- ❖ Students who use cell phones in violation of any school rules stated or implied within the Student Handbook will be subject to disciplinary consequences.
- ❖ Any staff member who discovers that a student is using a cell phone in violation of this policy is required to confiscate the cell phone and report it to the administration.
- ❖ Students should not have AirPods (or other earphones)

Cellphone and/or other Electronic Device Policy Violations

- ❖ First offense - Staff members will remove cell phones (or other electronic devices). Parents MUST pick up the cell phone.
- ❖ Second offense - Staff members will remove cell phones (or other electronic devices). Students will receive a suspension, and parents MUST pick up cell phones (or other electronic devices).
- ❖ Third offense - Staff members will remove cell phones (or other electronic devices). Students will receive a suspension and authorized parent/guardian MUST pick up cell phones (or other electronic devices), and a parent meeting upon students' return to school.

Students who continue to violate the cell phone policy will be subject to further disciplinary action. Violations will be handled on a case-by-case basis.

Any student who refuses to hand over an electronic device when asked to do so by a staff member will be subject to disciplinary action of up to three (3) days out of school suspension for insubordination.

Internet/Technology Acceptable Use Policy

Prior to receiving authorization to use the Internet and/or Technology, students and their parents/guardians must sign the Internet Acceptance Use Policy.

The student will abide by the Internet/Technology Acceptable Use Policy. The student will understand that the Internet contains material inappropriate for school use and, therefore, will take personal responsibility not to access this material. The parent will recognize that it is impossible for Pontiac Academy for Excellence

Middle/High to prevent access to all controversial materials, and will not hold the school responsible for materials found or acquired on the network. The parent further understands that any violation of the regulations in this policy is unethical and may constitute a criminal offense. Should the student commit any violation(s), the student's access privileges may be revoked, and appropriate school discipline and/or legal action may be taken.

Consequences

The key to a successful Internet safety system is adult supervision. Nothing can replace the influence of a vigilant teacher. Students who knowingly violate the recommended guidelines will lose their Internet or computer privileges, and in extreme cases, a parent conference must be scheduled.

The school has filtering hardware that monitors and blocks inappropriate web usage. The technology coordinator, in cooperation with the principals, will work to prohibit access to sites that are not appropriate, such as game or entertainment sites with no academic value. Filtering hardware is not perfect, but it is an important part of our overall program

Notice to Parents-Students

Parents/Guardians who threaten or use abusive language towards staff, other parents, or students will be barred from the school and not permitted within 1000 feet of school property as the law allows. The school will seek legal actions against any parent, student, or guardian who strikes or in any way causes physical harm to a staff member or his/her property

Audio/Video Recording of School Performance(Copyrighted Material)

Performance includes copyrighted materials which have been properly licensed specifically for this event. However, audio and/or video recording for re-broadcast or distribution in any way without the express written consent and proper license from the author is a violation of Federal copyright law and is prohibited.

Notice of Discrimination

Pontiac Academy for Excellence Middle/High does not discriminate based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age in its programs and activities. The following person has been designated to handle inquiries regarding the nondiscrimination policies:

Jasmine Brewington, School Leader
196 Cesar E Chavez
Building D
Pontiac, MI 48342
(248)745-9420