



**Student & Family Handbook
2023-24**



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Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Families of Believe Memphis Academy,

We have taken on the ambitious and necessary endeavor to ensure that every student at Believe Memphis Academy is prepared to excel in high school, thrive in college, and lead lives full of opportunity. We believe the children of Memphis have to become influential, thoughtful, compassionate, and positive leaders in our city, country, and world. In pursuit of our common and unwavering mission, we present to you the Believe Memphis Academy Student and Family Handbook.

The purpose of this Student and Family Handbook is to provide clear expectations of our vision and unite the community of Believe Memphis Academy at home and at school.

While we have attempted to make this handbook clear and detailed, we recognize it may not answer all your questions about Believe Memphis Academy. If you have additional questions or concerns, please contact the school for any clarification.

We look forward to this exciting journey with you. We are grateful for your partnership. We are inspired by your children.

Believe Memphis,

Danny Song
Founder and Executive Director,
Believe Memphis Academy Charter School



Our Design

A. Our Mission

Believe Memphis Academy prepares students in grades Kindergarten through 8 with the academic rigor, robust supports, and leadership development necessary to excel in high school, thrive in college, and lead lives full of opportunity. (“Mission”)

B. Our Vision and Design

Believe Memphis Academy Charter School (“Believe Memphis Academy” or “the School”) is a Kindergarten through 8th grade school that will put the students of Memphis on the path to college and a life of opportunity.

We believe all students are capable of incredible high academic achievement, when given high quality instruction and supports. To uphold our mission of high school, college, and life success, Believe Memphis Academy is grounded in the following beliefs:

- We exist because we believe our children and our teachers deserve better.
- We act with self-awareness, honesty, and courage.
- We reimagine what schools rooted in powerful communities can look, feel, and sound like, as well as what we can achieve.
- We will differentiate ourselves by:
 - providing operations grounding in hospitality and excellence
 - protecting our community values with relationship-based accountability
 - cultivating joy and love for constant learning and growth.

C. Our Core Components

Believe Memphis Academy proposes a charter school specifically designed to meaningfully close the achievement gap between high and low students and provide options for families to meet educational needs of students. The following core components of our design were built with these priorities in mind:

- Unique Kindergarten through 8th grade model with a commitment to literacy instruction in Lower Academy (grades K-5) and robust college preparatory program in Middle Academy (grades 6-8)
- A driven focus toward math and literacy
- Robust and intensive teacher development, focused on content mastery
- Supports of the emotional, physical, mental, social, and intellectual needs of all members of the community

D. Non-Discrimination Statement

Believe Memphis Academy strives to provide a safe and supportive environment for its students. Believe prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, national origin, disability, religion, veteran status or any other category protected by Tennessee or federal law. Believe prohibits discrimination in all aspects of its educational programs and activities including but not limited to admissions, treatment of students in programs and activities, discipline and employment. Complaints of discrimination or questions about our commitment to nondiscrimination should be addressed to the Executive Director.



Attendance

Through strategic community partnerships, engagement with families, and incentives for students, Believe Memphis Academy will do whatever it takes to ensure students and families commit with us a daily attendance rate above 96%.

A. On Time

School doors will open at 8:15am and breakfast will be served for free to all students until 8:35am. Students who arrive at school after 8:35am will be considered tardy. Breakfast will stop being served at 8:35am. Once attendance is taken and verified, families of absent students will receive a call and text home.

B. Excused Absences

Excused Absence Types

- 1. Illness, injury, pregnancy, homebound circumstance, or hospitalization of a student-** The School may require a family conference and/or physician verification to justify absences after the accumulation of ten (10) days of absence during a school year. Notes must be date specific and will be required for subsequent absences beyond ten (10) days.
- 2. Quarantine due to COVID 19** - Any student quarantining as a result of a positive test result or COVID exposure is excused during the five (5) days of mandatory quarantine.
- 3. Death or serious illness within the student's immediate family** – Note will be required from family.
- 4. School Sponsored Activity** - When the student is officially representing the school in a school sponsored activity or attendance at school-endorsed activities and verified college visits the school will excuse the absence with a note.
- 5. Special and recognized religious holidays regularly observed by persons of their faith** - Any student who misses a class or day of school because of the observance of a day set aside as sacred by a recognized religious denomination of which the student is a member or adherent, where such religion calls for special observances of such day, shall have the absence from that school day or class excused and shall be entitled to make up any school work missed without the imposition of any penalty because of the absence.
- 6. A court order; a subpoena; and/or a legal court summons** – Documentation will be required to be turned in to the school.
- 7. Extenuating circumstances over which the student has no control as approved by the Executive Director** – Approval will be granted on a case by case basis and may require a meeting with the Executive Director.
- 8. Service/Active Duty** - If a student's parent, custodian or legal guardian of the student is a member of the United States Armed Forces, including a member of a state National Guard or a Reserve component called to federal active duty, the student's Executive Director shall give the student:
 - An excused absence for one (1) day when the student's parent, custodian or other person with legal custody or control of the student is deployed;
 - An additional excused absence for one (1) day when the student's parent, custodian or other person with legal custody or control of the student returns from deployment; and
 - Excused absences for up to ten (10) days for visitation when the student's parent, custodian or legal guardian of the student is granted rest and recuperation leave and is stationed out of the country.
 - Excused absences for up to ten (10) days cumulatively within the school year for visitation during the deployment cycle of the student's parent, custodian or legal guardian of the student. Total excused absences under this section (c) and (d) shall not exceed a total of ten (10) days within the school year. The



student shall provide documentation to the school as proof of the deployment of the student’s parent, custodian or other person with legal custody or control of the student.

9. **Non-School Sponsored Activity** - The Executive Director or the designee may excuse a student from school attendance to participate in a non-school-sponsored extracurricular activity, if the following conditions are met:
- a. The student provides documentation to the school as proof of the student’s participation in the non-school-sponsored extracurricular activity; and
 - b. The student’s parent, custodian, or other person with legal custody or control of the student, prior to the extracurricular activity, submits to the Executive Director or the designee a written request for the excused absence. The written request shall be submitted no later than seven (7) business days prior to the student’s absence. The written request shall include:
 - i. The student’s full name;
 - ii. The student’s grade;
 - iii. The dates of the student’s absence;
 - iv. The reason for the student’s absence; and
 - v. The signature of both the student and the student’s parent, custodian, or other person with legal custody or control of the student.
 - vi. The Executive Director or the designee shall approve, in writing, the student’s participation in the non-school-sponsored extracurricular activity.

Excused Absence Policies

The Head of School (HOS) or designee may limit the number and duration of non-school-sponsored extracurricular activities for which excused absences may be granted to a student during the school year; however, such the HOS or designee shall excuse no more than ten (10) absences each school year for students participating in non-school-sponsored extracurricular activities.

A written statement within two (2) school days of the student’s return to school shall be required from the parent or guardian explaining the reason for each absence. If necessary, verification is required from an official source to justify absences.

All absences other than those outlined above shall be considered unexcused.

Families may appeal unexcused absences to their child’s school Principal (or designee). The appeal must be: (1) in writing and include documentation necessary to support the appeal; (2) submitted within five (5) school days of the parent’s receipt of the first official attendance letter generated by the District that is referenced in policy 6016 Truancy District; and (3) based on one or more of the allowable reasons for excused absences outlined in this policy. Within five (5) school days of receipt of the request for appeal, the Head of School (or designee) shall review the appeal, meet with the parents to allow them an opportunity to be heard, and render a decision regarding the appeal. The decision of the Head of School (or designee) that is compliant with applicable law and district policy is final. (This appeal process for determining unexcused absences is ancillary to a truancy decision rendered by a juvenile court judge as described in TCA 49-6-3010.)

Unexcused Absences

Number of Absences	Support
Daily absence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Automated text is sent to families when a student is absent.
3 unexcused absences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family receives a check in call from the Main Office. • Family receives a formal truancy warning letter.



5 unexcused absences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Family receives a formal truancy meeting letter. ● Social Worker and family meet to develop a support plan and contract for attendance. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Appropriate referrals and links to community partners will be made.
6-9 unexcused absences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Family continues to receive daily text messages and check in calls from the Main Office.
10 unexcused absences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Family receives a formal truancy meeting letter. ● Principal, Director of Admissions and Family and family meet to revise their support plan and contract.
11 consecutive unexcused absences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Family is withdrawn from Believe Memphis Academy. ● Report to Department of Human Services is made for educational neglect.

C. Make-Up Work

Believe Memphis Academy policy will hold that students receiving an excused absence under these provisions shall have the opportunity to make up school work missed and **students will be expected to complete make up work in order to receive credit**. All make-up work will be communicated by the teacher. If your student has not received make-up work within three (3) days of the absence, the make-up work will be voluntary. Students will have up to ten (10) school days to submit all mandatory make up assignments. Incomplete, mandatory make up work will adversely affect class grades. Extensions and/or exceptions to this policy may only be made by the Executive Director or Principal.

In the case of extended absences exceeding ten (10) school days, family must meet with Executive Director, Principal, and teachers to develop a make-up work plan to determine what student, family, and school must do to support student's ability to catch up on work and make the most of that academic year.

D. Tardiness

- Limit of two per semester
 - Your student will be sent home with a tardy slip each time they are tardy
 - On your student's third tardy, you will receive a call from the school

E. Inclement Weather

In the event of poor weather conditions such as snow, please listen to your local television or radio stations for relevant information regarding school cancellation. Believe Memphis Academy follows the same cancellation policies as Shelby County Schools, so if Shelby County Schools are closed or delayed, so is Believe Memphis Academy.

F. Arrival

Believe Memphis Academy opens its doors at 8:15 am every day at the Corry and Mallory entrance. Cars enter Claybrook via Corry Rd. to travel south down the road and allow drop off on the correct side of the street. Walkers use the crosswalks at Corry and enter the building through the same door.

Students may not enter the building before 8:15 am unless an appointment has been arranged in advance with a specific staff member.



Students are expected to arrive each day on time, in full uniform attire. Students are considered tardy after 8:35am.

G. Dismissal

Students will be dismissed from school at 3:15pm (2:15 pm on Friday) on each day. Families should pull into the parking lot that is on Mallory and wait for the students name to be called. Walkers dismiss from the front door and cross the street.

All students must depart or be picked up by 3:35pm (unless they are not attending scheduled after school activities).

If families need to speak to a teacher or conduct any other classroom business, this should occur after dismissal when teachers and staff are available.

The dismissal plans for all students are documented in the school's Dismissal tracker. Any changes to a student's normal dismissal procedure must be communicated to the Main Office prior to 12:00pm that day.

H. Early Dismissal Policy

In order to minimize disruptions to class, we ask that notification regarding early dismissals be made as far in advance as possible with a written note or phone call to the office. Doctor and dentist appointments should be limited to non-school hours to avoid students missing class time. Parents and guardians should also inform the classroom teachers of early dismissals in written form by sending a note in the child's homework folder.

In order to ensure dismissal is efficient and safe for all students, the School will not allow early dismissal 30-minutes prior to dismissal time. Families that arrive after 2:45pm must wait until 3:15 for students to be dismissed. For the extenuating circumstances when early dismissal is necessary, please communicate with Main Office by noon that day.

The school will record dismissals as absences when the child has been at school for less than three and a half hours. In general, students must be present for at least 3 1/2 hours of the allotted instructional time on a given day in order to be considered present.



I. Calendar

Believe Memphis Academy: 2023-2024 Calendar

July 2023							January 2024						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
						1							
2	3	4	5	6	7	8	1	2	3	4	5	6	
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
16	17	18	19	20	21	22	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
23	24	25	26	27	28	29	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
30	31						28	29	30	31			
14 PD Days							19 Instructional Days / 1 PD Day						

August 2023							February 2024						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
		1	2	3	4	5					1	2	3
6	7	8	9	10	11	12	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
20	21	22	23	24	25	26	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
27	28	29	30	31			25	26	27	28	29		
23 Instructional Days							20 Instructional Days						

September 2023							March 2024						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
						1						1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
19 Instructional Days							15 Instructional Days						

October 2023							April 2024						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
22	23	24	25	26	27	28	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
29	30	31					28	29	30				
16 Instructional Days							21 Instructional Days						

November 2023							May 2024						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
			1	2	3	4				1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30			26	27	28	29	30	31	
16 Instructional Days							18 Instructional Days						

December 2023							June 2024						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
						1							1
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	23	24	25	26	27	28	29
31							30						
13 Instructional Days							180 Instructional Days / 16 PD Days						

Academics

A. Grades

Grading

Kindergarten

At Believe Memphis Academy Charter School, our Kindergarten grading policy is designed to assess and communicate students' progress in a fair, supportive, and developmentally appropriate manner. We believe in creating a learning environment where each child can have a deep connection with the adults in the building so that they can reach absolute achievement.

Assessments Methods: In Kindergarten, we utilize a variety of assessment methods to gather information about each child's progress toward mastery. We do not believe mastery is time-bound, but students will master the skills and standards necessary over time.

- **Observations:** Teachers regularly observe students during classroom activities to assess their skills, behavior, and social development.
- **Informal Assessments:** Teachers use informal methods like quizzes, classwork, and group activities to gauge students' understanding of concepts and their ability to apply knowledge.
- **Formative Assessments:** These ongoing assessments help teachers identify individual strengths and areas of improvement, allowing for targeted support and intervention.

Grading Scale: In Kindergarten, we focus on progress toward mastery rather than traditional grades. To communicate a child's growth and achievement, we use the following grading scale:

Grade	Meaning
M	Mastery
NM	Non-mastery

Promotion and Retention: Promotion shall be considered on the basis of what is best for the child in terms of school success. Special consideration for promotion and/or retention shall be given to students with special academic, social, and emotional needs. In the case of failing work being done by the child, the parents shall be informed early so that the school and home may cooperate in helping him/her improve.

Retention is used to help students improve their knowledge base by providing an additional year of instruction, thus addressing the frustration and failure often associated with inadequate skills mastery.



First thru Eighth Grade

Grading for grades 1-8 is based on an A-F letter system that is aligned with Shelby County Schools. Our grading scale is as follows:

Scale	Meaning	Grade
90-100	Mastered	A
80-89	On-Track	B
70-79	Approaching	C
60-69	Not Yet	D
59-50	Not Observed	F

B. Promotion Policy

As a school focused on a clear and unwavering mission of college preparation, we will apply rigor to promotion and retention policy to ensure all students have the support necessary for achieving that mission. Students will be assessed and promoted to each grade based on measures of achievement on grade-level standards mastery (as determined by class grades), annual growth in math or reading (as determined by interim assessments and STEP), and attendance in school.

Grades earned in class will be the primary indicator of a student's readiness to be promoted to the next grade. Any student who passes (3 or 4) both literacy and math will automatically be promoted to the next grade. Students receiving an F in both literacy and math will automatically be considered Promotion-in-Doubt and require a meeting with the Executive Director, Head of School, or Assistant Head of School during the second round of report card conferences.

To be promoted up to 7th and subsequently to 8th grade, students must pass three of the four core academic classes (math, literacy, social studies, and science). This policy will take into account any special education needs, accommodations, and modifications required by students with individualized education plans (IEPs). This policy exists, first and foremost, to protect the integrity of the academic achievement of our students.

The School will inform families of any retention risks during the second report card conferences each year. Families will be informed of student's current achievement, plan to support student's success, and what is asked of families to best support student's improvement.

The decision for promotion in the above cases will be made by the Executive Director, and this decision will be final. The Executive Director will confer with general education teachers and family members to make this decision. Initial promotion-in-doubt conversation will happen at the end of the second quarter. Executive Director will communicate the final decision to the family of the student before the last day of school.

C. Student Records and Confidentiality

Federal and state law provide parents and eligible students certain rights with regard to a student's education records, including the right to inspect and review certain records, the right to amend inaccurate or misleading records, the right to provide consent prior to disclosure of personally identifiable information from the student's education records, and the



right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by the school to comply with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act. Believe Memphis Academy will comply with federal, state and local law regarding the confidentiality of student records. If you have any questions regarding student records or confidentiality, please contact the Executive Director.

School Culture

Clear structures and systems build the culture for high-quality instruction and individualized student supports. Believe Memphis Academy implements a consistent, values-driven student investment and community values system that is rooted in the idea that students can be their full selves, excel academically, and contribute to a thriving community when expectations are clear, values are reinforced, and consistent, firm supports are provided.

For our community, consistency is the key. When students know what to expect because they are always held to the same high standard, they will meet and exceed those expectations. This vision means all expectations and values must be upheld by all staff for all students.

With a consistent, warm-strict approach and a message firmly rooted in our shared values, students will develop and strengthen the academic skills, leadership capacities, and character through developmentally appropriate rewards and consequences.

A. What it means to be a Badger?

We believe that in addition to an excellent academic education, children deserve the right to be developed as whole individuals. We offer robust support through

- daily Badger Huddles with Character Education components and connection building
- the support of Student Supports Specialists
- an in-school Social Worker
- an RTI-B aligned, tiered consequence system

Our goal is to create a community that supports student voice, student responsibility within the community, and student success. This mindset allows community members to:

1. **Value Self** - We value ourselves through honest self-talk, committing to our goals, and seeking help when needed. We value ourselves by making choices that will help us achieve current and future success.
2. **Value Community** - We are a diverse community and members of our community bring a wealth of knowledge through their ability, experience, and backgrounds. In all actions, we consider our impact on those around us. We embrace our community and use all opportunities to expand our worldview.
3. **Value Time** - We commit to being fully present and active participants in our lives. We consider how we choose to value our time impacts our community. We show up everyday and strive for growth.
4. **Value Space** - We create and uphold a space that allows us to value ourselves, our community, and our time.

As we consider our mission, the founders of Believe Memphis Academy have developed a shared set of core values that we believe students living into our mission must exemplify:

Value		Definition	The Badger Code
B	Belief	Faith and conviction	Badgers believe in ourselves, our community and the future we will create.
A	Ambition	Desire for personal growth, achievement, and excellence	Badgers firmly believe we will achieve great things.



D	Determination	Strength of character shown through great effort even when something is difficult	Badgers give our all to achieve our goals.
G	Gusto	Enjoyment and vigor in doing good work	Badgers take joy and pride in hard work.
E	Empathy	Ability to understand another's perspective and to take action when necessary	Badgers consider the feelings and experiences of others.
R	Respect	Regard for the feelings, wishes, rights, and traditions of others	Badgers treat all people as we would like to be treated.
S	Steadfastness	Firm and unwavering to one's community in word and deed	Badgers are loyal and true.

B. Consequence System

Our consequence system sets clear expectations and fair consequences to students across all grade levels. We know that there is a skill-building opportunity within every interaction our students have with adults and peers. Because of this, we incorporate restorative practices within our consequence system that recognize when students take steps to display positive and on-task behaviors. This system may be applied when cultural and academic expectations have been breached in any of the following settings:

- While on the school campus
- While off campus if the behavior causes a substantial disruption to the Believe community (e.g., Social Media)
- On the school bus
- During a school sponsored activity, event, or field trip

Believe Memphis Academy Consequence Vocabulary

Term	Definition
Kickboard	Kickboard is our digital school wide behavior management system. Staff members will track student behavioral success and problematic behaviors to support students in understanding what is expected of them in class and throughout our school
Merit	Students will earn merits called "Badger Bucks" when they meet or exceed classroom or school wide expectations. Example: Kameron shows self determination by completing all of his independent Math work and earns a merit in class.



<p>Check</p>	<p>Students will receive a check which will result in a deduction in their “Badger Bucks” for failing to meet classroom or school wide expectations.</p> <p>Example: Jessica continues to talk during independent practice after her teacher has given a clear What to Do. Jessica will receive a check.</p>
<p>Referral</p>	<p>Students will receive a referral if they receive five (5) checks in one day or if a major negative behavior occurs.</p> <p>Example: Paul threatens to physically harm his teacher after receiving a check. Paul will receive a referral.</p>



Problematic Behavior Classifications + Interventions

Student Behavior	Intervention
Tier I	
Not following individual directions	The teacher will assume the best in response to all of these classroom managed behaviors. Teachers will use the What to Do Cycle to address these behaviors.
Not following whole class directions	
Not connecting with the speaker	
Not sitting up straight	
Calling out or making disruptive noises	
Refusal to place backpack and personal items on the hook	
Refusal to attempt or complete work	
Off task behavior (e.g. playing with shoelaces, incomplete work due to lack of effort)	
Out of seat without permission	Student will receive an automatic check and the teacher will have a 1:1 conversation with the student.
Extended time out of class	
Running in school	
Arriving to class late	
Throwing small objects	
Inappropriate or foul language	
Teasing/Checking	
Misusing or damaging school property	
Physical contact - friendly touching or horseplay	
Refusal to turn in cell phone	



Talking when the expectation is silence	
Inappropriate/disrespectful responses to correction (stomping, sucking teeth, rolling eyes)	Student will receive an automatic check and the teacher will have a 1:1 conversation with the student.
Immediate second infraction after being given a check for same behavior within same block	
Out of Uniform/Uniform infraction	Student will receive an automatic check.
Talking in the hallways	
Tier II	
Academic Dishonesty/Cheating	Tier II behaviors are more consequential and can result in a loss of learning. As a result, teachers will respond by issuing an immediate referral and assigning detention.
Leaving class without permission	
Threatening a peer	
Threatening an adult	
Shut down (inability to engage in any resolution with the classroom teacher)	
Verbal aggression toward an adult	
Verbal aggression toward a peer	
Inappropriate or foul language (including inappropriate hand signals or motions)	
Purposefully throwing or destroying objects	
Tier III	
Chronic disruption to class - Chronic is defined as persistently recurring disruptive behaviors that have been consistently supported and documented by the classroom teacher.	Tier III behaviors require immediate support because they endanger the safety of the student or others around him/her. Tier III behaviors are an automatic referral. Based on the severity of the behavior, consequences include but are not limited to: - mandatory parent conference - mandatory parent supervision
Skiping class	
Consensual sexual activity at school	
Threats of bodily harm toward an adult	



Intentional, potentially harmful physical touching (e.g., pushing, shoving) or fighting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- removal from after school activities (e.g. sports and clubs)- behavioral support plan- referral to the school Social Worker- out of school suspension- expulsion
Sexually explicit language, motions, hand signals, or gestures	
Purposefully throwing or destroying objects	
Bullying, cyberbullying, harassment	
Possession of pornography	
Possession and/or distribution of child pornography	
Gang related activities (e.g. fighting, initiation, recruitment)	
Vandalism	
Bomb threats	
Theft of property belonging to peer, school staff, or school	
Possession of a weapon (e.g. gun, knife, blade)	
Drug and/or alcohol possession and/or use on school property	



School Level Rewards

Name	Description	Frequency and Location
Community Meetings	Students will be recognized for exhibiting Core Values throughout the week. Community Meetings will serve to celebrate student attendance and academic success.	Community Meetings will be held every Friday. Once a month, Community Meetings will be open to families and other community members to celebrate school successes.
Outdoor Socials	Outdoor Socials will acknowledge students that are consistently doing the right thing.	Outdoor Socials will be held once a quarter. Students will gather outside on the front lawn or in the field.
Special Lunch Seating	Students that have met goals set by teachers can eat outside at picnic tables.	Students can earn this weekly based on classroom/grade level goals.
Monthly Mindset Masters	Students with positive mindsets will be acknowledged and displayed on the grade level hallway.	This will be a monthly incentive and student pictures and names will be displayed on the grade level bulletin board.
Badger Store	Student will use their earned Badger Bucks to purchase items (e.g. fancy pens, chips, fidget spinners) from a school menu.	During the month of August, the school store will be monthly. After August, the school store will be held bi-monthly.
Birthday Shout Outs	Student Council will acknowledge student birthdays each week.	Birthdays for the week will be acknowledged all at once by the Student Council.
"Pop" Up	Unexpected "pop" treats for the top 25 weekly Badger Buck students per grade.	This is an unexpected and unearned reward.

*This is not an exhaustive list of rewards.



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Suspensions and Expulsions

Suspension: Students who act in manners that threaten the safety or integrity of Believe Memphis Academy’s culture may earn out-of-school suspension (OSS). Tennessee Board of Education (TDOE) defines suspension as “dismissed from attendance at school for any reason for not more than ten (10) consecutive school days. Multiple suspensions shall not run consecutively nor shall multiple suspensions be applied to avoid expulsion from school.”

Expulsion: Believe Memphis Academy reserves the right to utilize expulsions or cumulative suspensions lasting more than ten (10) school days in extreme cases where illegal or extreme behaviors compromise the safety and integrity of the school culture. TDOE defines expulsion as “removal from attendance for more than ten (10) consecutive school days or more than fifteen (15) school days in a month of school attendance”.

- The decision to expel a student will be decided by the Principal based on the following:
 - student statements
 - staff statements
 - witness statements
 - Believe Memphis Academy Charter School discipline policies
- If a student is being expelled, the parent must receive a copy and sign the following:
 - a meeting with school personnel explaining why the student was expelled
 - a letter informing them of the expulsion and the effective date
 - a withdrawal form from Believe Memphis Academy Charter School
 - Informed of their right to appeal
- Within 48 hours of meeting with the Parent of the student, school designee will refer the student to MSCS alternative schools
- If a student appeals the expulsion, the following must happen:
 - parent will notify the Executive Director in writing within 10 days
 - appeals hearing held no more than 5 days after receiving the appeal (hearing should include the student, parent, executive director, and two members of the Believe Memphis Board)
 - appeal decision communicated to parent within 24 hours

Disciplining Students with Disabilities: Believe Memphis Academy will carry out these policies and discipline for all students, ensuring clear and consistent boundaries are present for all students. Simultaneously, we will ensure we take into account individual students’ rights according to known disabilities, IEPs, Section 504 plans, or students with special needs.

After a cumulative suspension period of over ten (10) days, the school will hold a manifestation determination meeting to determine if a student’s behavior is the primary manifestation of any disability or special needs a student has. At this meeting, the exceptional children team and family will determine a behavior plan moving forward which will include a closer communication loop between family and school and specific rewards and consequences that will result from specific behaviors exhibited by the student.



Harassment, Intimidation, Bullying: Tennessee law (T.C.A. 49-6-4502) defines “harassment, intimidation, bullying” as acts that substantially interfere with a student’s educational benefits, educational performance, and:

1. If the act takes place on school grounds, at any school-sponsored activity, on school-provided equipment or transportation, or at any official school bus stop, the act has the effect of:
 - a. Physically harming a student or damaging a student’s property.
 - b. Knowingly placing a student in reasonable fear of physical harm to the student or student’s property;
 - c. Causing emotional distress to a student or students;
 - d. Creating a hostile educational environment;
 - e. Conduct impugning the character of a student based on allegations of sexual promiscuity
 - f. Conduct aimed at defining a student in a sexual manner; or
 - g. Conduct motivated by any actual or perceived characteristic, including but not limited to, race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, mental, physical or sensory disability, socio-economic or familial status
2. If the act takes place off school property or outside of a school-sponsored activity, it is directed specifically at a student or students and has the effect of creating a hostile educational environment or otherwise creating a substantial disruption to the educational environment or learning process.

Cyberbullying: Tennessee law (T.C.A. 49-6-4502) defines “cyberbullying” as the following:

1. “Cyberbullying” means bullying undertaken through the use of electronic devices;
2. “Electronic devices” include but are not limited to, telephones, cellular phones or other wireless telecommunication devices, personal digital assistants (PDSs), computers, electronic mail, instant messaging, text messaging, and websites.

Sexual Harassment: Sexual harassment means conduct on the basis of sex that satisfies one or more of the following:

1. An employee of the school conditioning the provision of an aid, benefit, or service of the school on an individual’s participation in unwelcome sexual conduct.
2. Unwelcome conduct determined by a reasonable person to be so severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive that it effectively denies a person equal access to the school’s education program or activity
3. Activity that meets the definitions of sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, or stalking.

Sexual harassment includes but is not limited to:

- a. Conduct that has the purpose or effect of having a negative impact on the student’s academic performance or of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive educational environment.
- b. Unwelcome leering, sexual flirtations, or propositions
- c. Unwelcome sexual slurs, epithets, threats, verbal abuse, derogatory comments, or sexually degrading descriptions.
- d. Graphic verbal comments about an individual’s body, unwanted sexual comments or questions, or overly personal conversation.
- e. Sexual jokes, derogatory posters, notes, stories, drawings, pictures, obscene gestures, or computer-generated images of a sexual nature.



- f. Electronic communications containing comments, words, or images described above, including interactions and posts on social media.
- g. Spreading sexual rumors.
- h. Unwanted messaging, grabbing, fondling, stroking, or brushing the body
- i. Harassment based on gender identity, gender expression, transgender status, stereotypical ideas of gender or failure to conform to gender stereotypes.

Restraint: Physical holding restraint is the only allowable type of restraint within schools in the state of Tennessee. T.C.A § 49-10-1303 defines physical holding restraint as “the use of body contact by school personnel with a student to restrict freedom of movement or normal access to the student’s body.”

Only Believe staff who have received CPI training and have an up-to-date certification, will restrain a student when an emergency situation arises. When a restraint occurs, the parent/guardian will be contacted, [restraint documentation](#) will be logged, the restraint will be entered into PowerSchool and a debriefing will be conducted with all involved Believe staff.

Restraint and/or seclusion may only be used in an emergency situation only.

Shelby County Schools (SCS) defines emergency situations as a situation in which “a child’s behavior poses a threat to the physical safety of the student or others nearby.”

1. Example of an emergency situation where restraint or seclusion MAY be used – A student is repeatedly punching a glass window with the intent to punch through the class.
2. Example of a non-emergency situation where restraint or seclusion MAY NOT be used – A student throws a Chromebook on the floor in an effort to break the computer.

Restraint and/or seclusion may never be used as a means of forced compliance or retaliation.

Isolation/Seclusion: T.C.A § 49-10-1303 defines isolation or seclusion as “the confinement of a student alone in a room with or without a door, or other enclosed area or structure where the student is physically prevented from leaving.”



Student & Family Transportation Agreement

Student safety is our primary concern when it comes to transportation. Students will have a safer trip if drivers can concentrate on driving, not disciplining. The school bus is considered school grounds, so anything within 6 feet of the school bus is considered to be on school property. Please be advised of the following expectations for Students and Families required to ensure the safety of each ride.

Student Expectations

1. Students must follow all instructions and requests provided by the bus driver and/or monitor.
2. Students must follow all protocols and policies of the bus, including but not limited to COVID protocols such as ongoing mask mandates.
3. Students must board and exit the bus orderly and safely.
4. Students will have assigned seats.
5. Students must always remain seated while the bus is in motion.
6. Students must not consume food or drinks on the bus.
7. Students must maintain an appropriate volume level on the bus as directed by the bus driver and/or monitor.
8. Students must be polite and courteous to one another.
9. **Students will not be allowed to use their cell phones on the bus**
 1. **If a student is found using their cell phone during the bus ride to school, the bus monitor or driver will be allowed to take their phone. Their phone will be turned in to a staff member at the school and won't be given back until the end of the school day.**
 1. **If a student is found using their cell phone during the bus ride from school to home, the bus monitor or driver will be allowed to take their phone and hand it back to him/her at their final destination.**
 1. **If a student refuses to turn in their phone, they will be issued a 3-day suspension from the bus. (This goes right to the second referral).**
 1. **If a student still doesn't cooperate after coming back from suspension, it will go to the third referral (10-day suspension), and if it continues, it goes to the fourth referral (expulsion from the bus).**
2. The following behaviors will lead to the appropriate bus referral:
 1. Throwing objects outside/inside of the school bus.
 1. Bullying (verbal, physical, cyber, etc.)
 1. Tripping, shoving, yelling, or using profanity.
 1. Moving away from assigned seat
 1. Vandalism
 1. Playing loud music
2. The following behaviors will result in a loss of bus privileges for the remainder of the year, and a School-based consequence will follow:
 1. Fighting
 1. Threats to the bus driver, bus monitor, or student that makes the bus unsafe.
 1. Bringing weapons, tobacco, alcohol, drugs, or any other prohibited item.

Family Expectations

1. Parent(s)/Guardian(s) understand that his/her student(s) will serve consequences or lose bus privileges if the student(s) violates the rules and expectations of the bus.



2. Parent(s)/Guardian(s) understand that if his/her student(s) had to be removed from the bus that day due to disciplinary action, they are required to pick up their student to and from the school.
3. Parent(s)/Guardian(s) understand that if a student(s) is suspended from the bus or school, he/she is not allowed to enter the bus. The bus driver or monitor will deny entry if he/she is at the bus stop.
 1. If a student disregards this, it could lead to a further suspension from the bus.
2. Parent(s)/Guardian(s) understand that they are not allowed to enter the bus per state law unless given the proper permission from the bus driver. Here is the law stating such:
 1. "Section 1. G.S. 14-132-2 addresses willful trespassing upon, damaging, or impeding the progress of a public school bus.
 - (a) Any person who shall unlawfully and willfully demolish, destroy, deface, injure, burn, or damage any public school bus or public school activity bus shall be guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor.
 - (b) Any person who shall enter a public school bus or public school activity bus after being forbidden to do so by the authorized school bus driver in charge thereof or the school principal to whom the public school bus or public school activity bus is assigned, shall be guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor.
 - (c) Any occupant of a public school bus or public school activity bus who shall refuse to leave said bus upon demand of the authorized driver in charge thereof or upon demand of the principal of the school to which said bus is assigned shall be guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor.
 - (d) Any person who shall unlawfully and willfully stop, impede, delay, or detain any public school bus or public school activity bus being operated for public school purposes shall be guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor."

Kindergarten – 1st Grade Guidelines

1. Parent(s)/Guardian(s) understand that they will have to be at the bus stop every morning and evening for his/her student(s). No kindergarten through 1st grade student(s) can be left alone unsupervised; must always have an older sibling (at least 11 years or older) or a parent with them.
2. If a parent/guardian is not at the bus stop waiting for their student for dismissal, the bus company is obligated to bring the student back to the school after the route is complete. The student will then be picked up at the school by a parent/guardian. This is only allowed (2) times, before bus privileges will automatically be revoked.
3. If a parent/guardian is not responsive in picking up their student(s), and emergency contacts are unreachable, the local authorities and/or Child Protective Services may be called.

Bus Discipline Policy

When a student chooses to deviate from appropriate behavior, the steps for consequences will be as follows:

1. **First Referral** – Student will receive a written warning, which will include a telephone call by school personnel.
2. **Second Referral** – Student will be suspended from bus privileges for three (3) school days, which will include a telephone call by school personnel.
3. **Third Referral** – Student will be suspended from bus privileges for ten (10) school days, which will include a telephone call by school personnel. If a student receives a 10-day suspension, it will require an in-person meeting to reinstate the student back on the bus.
4. **Fourth Referral** – Student will lose bus privileges for the remainder of the school year, which will include a telephone call by school personnel.



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Any student(s) that initiates a FIGHT on the bus will no longer be allowed to ride the bus for the remainder of the school year.

Any student(s) FILMING the incident will receive a 10-day suspension and be counted as their third referral once an investigation is completed and source found.



C. Uniform Policy

Our uniform policy seeks to relieve the burden of determining what to wear every day. We want our students to feel a sense of belonging and community and having a uniform dress code helps us accomplish this.

Believe Uniform Policy- Monday -Thursday	
Permitted	Not Permitted
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Believe Uniform Polo ● Believe Uniform Sweatshirt ● Khaki or Navy Bottoms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Pants ○ Shorts (finger tip length) ○ Skirts (finger tip length) ● Tennis Shoes ● Boots* <p>*Students must wear or bring tennis shoes on days they have PE.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Jeans ● Polo shirts without the Believe logo ● Non-Believe hoodies and outerwear ● No Crocs or slides ● No hats, ski masks or head wear ● Excessively tight-fitting bottoms , including leggings ● Clothing with rips or tears ● Bottoms that sit below the waist

Believe Uniform Policy- School Spirit Fridays!	
Allowed	Not Permitted
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Believe T-Shirt ● Bottoms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Jeans (no rips or tears above the knee) ○ Shorts (finger tip length) ○ Skirts (finger tip length) ● Tennis Shoes/Boots <p>*No rips or tears above the knee</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No Crocs or Slides ● No hats, ski masks or head wear ● Excessively tight-fitting bottoms ● Sweatpants ● Mid drifts ● Clothing with rips or tears above the knee ● Bottoms that sit below the waist

Students who come to school out of uniform will receive a deduction from their daily pay-check and be permitted to change into a borrowed school uniform to attend classes. If the student opts to remain out of uniform, the parents will be called to pick the student up or provide a change of clothes.

A. Shirts

- Students may wear a Believe-branded polo shirt that can be purchased from the school.

B. Pants/Skirts/Jumpers/Shorts

- Students wear navy, or khaki-colored pants, skirts, dresses, jumpers or shorts.
 - We ask that students refrain from wearing jean material.



- Pants must be full length and fit around the waist.
 - Students are encouraged to wear belts to ensure proper fit.
- Skirts, dresses, and shorts jumpers must come to the tips of the students' fingertips at their side.
- Pants, skirts, jumpers or shorts must be appropriately sized without rips or tears.

C. Footwear

- Tennis shoes must be worn every day and be in suitable condition for indoor and outdoor physical activity.
- Flip flops and sandals are not permitted.

D. Accessories

- No head apparel is allowed inside the building, except for medical or religious reasons, or if distributed by the School.
- Hair accessories are allowed as long as they are school-appropriate and do not distract from learning.
- Other Believe-themed accessories can be purchased from the school based on grade level.

E. Sweaters and Outerwear

- Students may purchase Believe-branded sweaters and/or sweatshirts.
- Students may wear long sleeve shirts in a solid color underneath polo shirts.

School Safety

A. Closed Campus

Safety and security of our students is the most important priority of Believe Memphis Academy. Starting with secured entry into the building, it will be our policy that no door leading to the outside of the building is to remain open or unlocked during school hours. In addition, all visitors to the school must enter through the front doors and sign in at the main office.

B. Visitor Policy

No child may be picked up from school by any individual who is not an individual authorized by the family for pick up. Should a family friend or other family member need to pick up a child, the school must be notified directly by the parent or primary legal guardian. Non-family member guests who wish to tour the building or observe classrooms must notify the school 48-hours in advance and must sign in at the front desk. All guests and non-staff members who wish to tour the building (including family members) may only do so with the accompaniment of a staff member. A person wishing to volunteer at the school must subject himself or herself to a background check before being allowed to volunteer at the school on a regular basis, exceeding 5 hours during any week. Any visitors to the school building must follow the current COVID safety protocols.

C. Emergency Plans

On an annual basis, the Chief Operating Officer and the Executive Director create school crisis plans that will articulate the school's process for emergency situations. The school has emergency plans for fire, tornado, flood, earthquake, bomb threat, emergency lockdown of school with armed intruder inside building, and emergency lockdown of school with



danger outside building. Staff members receive training on these plans during the summer and throughout the year, and students regularly practice the procedures of each plan.

D. Student Searches

In order to maintain the security of all students, Believe Memphis Academy reserves the right to conduct searches of its students and their property. If searches are conducted, the school will ensure that the privacy of the students is respected to the greatest extent possible and that students and their families are informed of the circumstances surrounding and results of the search. School cubbies and desks, which are assigned to students for their use, remain the property of the school and students should, therefore, have no expectation of privacy in these areas. Such areas are subject to canine searches and to random searches by school officials at any time.

E. Mandated Reporter Policy

According to TCA 37-1-403(i)(1), all school personnel are mandated reporters of suspected abuse and/or neglect. Mandated reporters are required to report suspected child maltreatment immediately when they have reason to believe that harm has come to a child that “reasonably appears to have been caused by brutality, abuse or neglect.” Under this law, failure to report such abuse is a Class A Misdemeanor. Once any staff member becomes aware that a student may be the victim of abuse or neglect, they must:

- Call the DCS central intake hotline at (877) 54-ABUSE (552-2873)
- Notify the Executive Director
- Complete a Believe Memphis Academy incident report.

When calling the hotline, the staff member must have the following information (or as much as is known): the name, birth date, and address of the alleged victim; the name, address, age or birth date, and relationship of the alleged perpetrator; what type of injury or harm was allegedly done to the victim; and a description of the incident (time/date, place in which it occurred, and indication of intention to harm). The staff member should also have the names and ages of other children in the household, information as to whether or not English is fluently spoken by the parents and the work phone number of the alleged perpetrator. While these steps are taking place, Executive Director will assist both the faculty member and student in understanding the ramifications of the call. The Executive Director will debrief the student and, when appropriate, will contact the parent(s)/guardian.

Family Involvement

We believe active and engaged families are key to the long-term success of our students. We want our families to have strong relationships with the leadership team members and teachers within our school, actively volunteer with school projects and events. We desire for our families to support teachers and show appreciation for them, and have an active voice in the experience of their students at Believe Memphis Academy.

A. Parent and Family Advisory Council

Believe Memphis Academy will form a Parent and Family Advisory Council (“council”), consisting of Executive Director, Dean of Families, at least one (1) teacher, and at least one (1) parent. We will have a maximum of two (2) teachers and five (5) parents on the advisory council – one from each grade. This council will convene at a minimum of once per trimester, and as often as once per month. The council will be led, in Year 1 of operations, by the Executive Director. In



Year 2 of operations, the Executive Director will appoint a family member to chair the council. Every year following Year 2, the council will vote the chair of the council for the upcoming year at the end of each school year.

The primary purpose of the council is to engage families of the school, create opportunities for parents and families to be involved at the school, launch annual listening campaigns where the council actively seeks the input and parents and families, and find ways to support and encourage the teachers in school.

All families are asked to take an active role in the school. In the service of our students and our Mission, we ask all families to commit to the following:

- Sign and follow through with our School-Family-Student Agreement
- Assume the best in all situations regarding school decisions and policies, and when issues or questions arises, share concerns with school staff
- Support students academic success at home with activities such as reading each night or practicing multiplication facts
- Keep active communication with student regarding progress in school academically and behaviorally; notify the school of any concerns or issues raised by the student
- Attend all requested family meetings, family conferences, and return phone calls from the school regarding students' achievements, progress, or concerns
- Respond to requests from school or teachers for communication within 48-hours
- Consistently communicate with the school regarding any changes in student's mood or behavior at home to ensure we can effectively partner with family in monitoring development of every student
- Take an active interest in learning about the school by participating in orientation sessions, Badger University Nights, pep rallies, and all school celebrations and ceremonies.
- Donate class materials as requested at the beginning of each year.

B. Scheduling Meetings with School Personnel

The Executive Director is happy and open to meet with all our families. To ensure he can set aside the appropriate time to dedicate his full attention to the meeting, families are asked to schedule a meeting in advance. If you would like to schedule a meeting with the Executive Director, please email or call the office to schedule a meeting.

Should a family member like to schedule a meeting with other school personnel, including teachers or other administrators, they may do so by contacting the operations team of the school, and/or directly contacting that person.

C. Complaint Policy

If an individual would like to issue a complaint against a specific individual, decision, or policy of the school, he or she should submit the complaint in writing to the Executive Director. If the individual would like to issue a complaint directly to the board, he or she may speak during the public hearing portion of the monthly public board meeting. Board will review complaint and issue a response within 30 days of hearing the complaint. If Board does not address the complaint to his or her satisfaction, individual may file complaint for Shelby County Schools School Board. A parent/guardian may file a complaint with Tennessee Department of Education at any time if he or she believes that the school has violated any federal or state law or regulation.



Compliance with Applicable Law

It is Believe Memphis Academy's intent to at all times comply with applicable federal, state and local laws. The policies in this Handbook are not intended to conflict with applicable law and should not be interpreted such. If you have any questions about any policy contained herein, please direct them to the Executive Director.