



Student Handbook

Copyright ©2014

My Dreams Academy



Table of Contents

Philosophy & Mission Statement....	p.2
Educational Model.....	p.3
Admission & Registration.....	p.4
Financial Policy.....	p.5
Attendance Policy.....	p.6
Graduation Requirements.....	p.8
Parents and Teachers Fellowship... 	p.9
Safety and General Policies.....	p.9
Student Code of Conduct.....	p.14
Uniform Guidelines/Dress Code....	p.15
MDA In The News.....	p.16

Philosophy and Mission Statement



Preparing America's young and adult population through academics, opportunities and civil service.

Academics

My Dreams Academy exists to inspire a passion for knowledge. We train students to develop a passion for knowledge, empowerment and virtues of life-long learning. Our goal is to teach students to teach themselves.

Opportunities

The school seeks to develop a person with the essential values and skills to succeed in the 21st century. Through diverse opportunities they serve family, peers and society. Students are further encouraged to develop a network of knowledgeable partners and to maintain this social and intellectual wealth for a lifetime.

Civil Service

The results of our program are civil service, upward mobility and progress. Upon graduation, graduates find job opportunities that provide for civic service to the community and to contribute to the nation's growth and prosperity.

Educational Model



Teens Program

My Dreams Academy (MDA) utilizes a proven educational model that integrates the parents (mentoring their students) in partnership with highly qualified professional instructors to gain better academic and spiritual development of the student. It integrates the home, church and school in the common goal of producing men and women who will become difference makers in the world. The academy currently uses the state mandated curriculum guidelines and self-paced, didactic academic material. Our students work on a series of modules and must complete 4 modules in order to obtain credit for a given subject. Under certain conditions, advanced students may challenge a subject via testing and move on to the next level.

Three Main Components of the MDA Model:

- An academic foundation with an emphasis on practical work application
- A general structure which seeks a high level of integration between home, society and school in the educational endeavor
- A striving for academic excellence

A Fully Developed MDA Program:

The program consists of three parts: Academic, Character Training, and Student Life. The benefits of this unique concept are:

- Control over schedule/time
- Teaches time management
- Teaches work ethic
- Teaches the love of learning
- Prepares student for college and work force
- Parents are responsible for child's educational choices and spiritual upbringing

The Parent's Role:

- Personal commitment to tutor
- Active in school activities
- Agreement with the doctrinal and philosophical statements of school
- Willing to partner with professional teachers and actively mentor their children
- Accept primary responsibility for the behavior and character development of their children

The Student's Role:

- Committed to learning, to self-discipline, and to appropriate behavior

- Willing to submit to their parents and to the authority figures that their parents have placed over them
- Willing to accept their responsibility of learning

Adult High School

Adults over 17 years of age who have been absent from an academic environment may obtain a high school diploma in as soon as 20 weeks. Among the pre-requisites for admission, previous academic experience is used in factoring placement. Candidates are also required to take an English course that teaches to write, read and understand language basics. Further, upon completion, they must also attend a 40-hour preparatory academic tutorial.

Our proprietary system utilizes a 4-module cycle that covers the core academic courses. Students undertake a series of exams to demonstrate competence and proficiency on each subject. Once the student has completed the assigned competencies for a chosen subject, he becomes a candidate for graduation. MDA requires that every candidate attends graduation.

Franchise Model

Most MDA schools operate from within church facilities and eventually the schools are passed on to the church using a franchise model. The churches collaborate in the community through client outreach and recruitment. In some cases, our graduates are then placed as employees of the school and assist in the marketing of the services and program through word of mouth and as successful example of the program outcome and impact.

Admissions



The entire MDA system is organized around the foundational premise that meaningful and positive mentoring makes the biggest difference in education. Thus, admission into MDA is a deliberate and intentional process designed to thoroughly inform the candidate student. The admission process consists of the following three mandatory components:

- Attendance at an MDA Admissions Meeting
- Student Diagnostic Testing or Transcript Evaluation

- Private Interview

Each component is explained briefly below.

The first half of the MDA admissions meeting is a general overview of the school and helps candidates discern if our model of education is a fit for them. The second half informs interested candidates of all the details of MDA - its history, organization, vision, course offerings, costs, graduation requirements, student activities, etc. Each candidate in attendance will receive an admissions packet that includes the student application for admission.

After careful consideration, if a candidate decides to proceed in the admissions process, the student application must be completed and returned to the school along with previous school transcripts. At which time, the student is registered for diagnostic testing.

Non-Discriminatory Policy

MDA does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion or ethnicity in its administration of educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship awards, and other school administered programs.

Financial Policy

As a private school MDA is funded through tuition, fees, donations, and fundraising. As a partner of MDA, enrollees are making a financial commitment to the school and its future. Accordingly, MDA requires that everyone read the following policies carefully. All fees assessed by MDA are to be considered a financial obligation due to the school according to the established financial policies outlined in this handbook. Student records, including report cards, will be held until all financial obligations have been met. If there is an overdue balance for two consecutive weeks, students are not permitted to continue, or to graduate from MDA.

If a family is unable to meet their financial obligation according to the established payment plan, a written alternate payment plan must be submitted to the Director of Finance. It is the desire of the administration to work with any family who is experiencing financial hardship. Money for financial assistance may be available on a qualifying basis and the school administration can approve the allocation of these funds. Applications for financial assistance are available in the school office.

FINANCIAL STANDING

A family in Good Financial Standing is defined as follows:

- Account current

- No more than 3 delinquent payments in a school year
- Timely communication regarding financial challenges

If a family fails to meet their financial obligation within sixty (60) days of any due date and fails to arrange an alternate payment plan or apply for financial assistance, registration for the subsequent Module may be prohibited. Additionally, the student may be suspended until fees are paid.

FEES

Add/Drop/Transfer

Changes to a student's schedule after the registrar has processed the course registration form will result in an administrative fee of \$25 per form, regardless of the number of changes requested. A separate add/drop/transfer form must be used for each student. This fee does not apply to scheduling changes initiated by the school.

Admissions

There is a per family admissions fee of \$200.00 (fee includes first student) due with the application. This fee is non-refundable and is assessed again if a student leaves MDA and desires to re-enroll at a later date.

Attendance Policy

Absences and Make-Up Work

All absences are planned, excused or unexcused. All absences count toward the total number of absences allowed per Module. Students may not be absent more than a maximum of 9 times per semester at most, depending on the length of the class period, and receive credit for that course (see chart below). For the adult 20-week program, a maximum of 5 absences is allowed. After the 5 absences have been exceeded, students will be required to take an additional week of classes per any additional absence. However, when a student reaches 8 absences, he/she will be suspended from the program and must repeat the entire 20-weeks. In the adult program, any 2 arrivals after 10 minutes of class commencement will constitute an absence.

Parents are required to notify office personnel by phone, email, or in person of all class absences, including study halls, within three (3) class days of the absence. No changes to the attendance records will be made after this time period. (Email communication is sometimes unreliable and it is the parent's responsibility to ensure email communication has been received by the school.) Office personnel will not notify teachers for the parents regarding student absences.

Week Days Class Hours Absences

MWF	1	9
T/TH	1	6
T/TH	2	4
Friday only	3	3

MDA differentiates between excused and unexcused absences to determine if a student may make up missed work. All absences, whether excused or unexcused, will count against the allowed number per semester. Students may not miss final exams. A record of all absences will appear on the students' report cards.

Excused Absences

Absences that occur because of circumstances beyond the immediate control of students or parents will be considered excused (sudden illness, family illness or death, or personal or family crisis situations). Parents/students are responsible for collecting any make-up work or assignments (please allow 24 hours for teachers to supply needed materials). Teachers may use their own discretion concerning make-up work due dates.

Planned Absences

Two of the nine absences may be planned absences. Planned absences are in no way to be interpreted as vacation days. They are provided for circumstances beyond the parent's control (i.e. grandparents' 50th wedding anniversary or a wedding in which you or your student in a participant, etc.). Parents are expected to schedule events around the school calendar.

The parent must notify the school office at least two class days prior to the planned absence for it to be excused. For example, a parent should notify the school office on Monday if his/her student will miss a class on Friday. Furthermore, the parent must make arrangements with affected teacher(s) at least two class days prior to the intended absence. All work that is due during the excused planned absence must be turned in prior to the excused planned absence date(s). Arrangements must be made with the student's teacher(s) for make-up tests, quizzes, and other in-class work. Although email is convenient, it is not a completely reliable way to notify a teacher regarding a planned absence. Please notify the teacher by phone or in person to ensure that the two day requirement is met.

Please send requests for planned absences that do NOT fit the above criteria at least four class days prior to the intended absence. Once the decision has been made, the Director will notify both the front office and the parent via email regarding the request. If the decision made is excused, follow the steps for an excused planned absence, unless an alternative is indicated. Otherwise, the unexcused absence policy will apply.

Planned absences which do not fit the above definitions or are not accompanied by the required notifications explained above will be classified as unexcused. Additionally, planned absences in excess of the number allowed will be classified as unexcused.

For students in positions of responsibility where the absence would negatively affect the team or school, (i.e., role in a performance, game, student council leadership, etc.) advanced written permission must be obtained from teacher/coach/adviser in order to avoid being permanently removed from position/role and/or failing the course.

Unexcused Absences

All absences that do not fit the above definitions are unexcused. Students may not make up any missed grades due to unexcused absences.

Graduation Requirements

High School Foundation Program

All candidates must successfully complete a minimum of 22 credits to graduate. Students must maintain a grade point average of at least 2.0. Students must be enrolled in one class during their spring semester to participate in graduation and other senior events. Graduates must pay a \$200 non-refundable graduation fee prior to graduation.

Mathematics-3 credits

Algebra -1 credit, Algebra II-1 credit, Geometry-1 credit

English-4 credits

Writing-2 credit, Grammar-1 credit, Composition-1 credit

Languages, Other than English-2 credits

Science-3 credits

Life Science/Biology-2 credit, Chemistry-1 credit

Social Studies-3 credits

US History-1 credit, World Geography-1 credit, World History-1 credit

Physical Education-1 credit Personal Fitness

Speech-1/2 credit Communications

Reading- 1/2 credit English Reading

Fine Arts-1 credit Art, Dance, Music, Theatre

Elective-5 credits Foreign Language, Math, Chemistry or science, Advanced conversational Spanish, Personal Finance, Creative writing, Career development

Grading System

My Dreams Academy grading is based on the 4 point system:

A=90 to 100, B=80 to 89, C=79 to 70, D= 69 to 60, F= 59 or below.

Parents and Teachers Fellowship

MDA PTF is a very important school Organization. The purpose of the PTF is to unite the ideas of Parents and Teachers. Our meetings give both the Parents and Teachers a forum to express ideas and needs for the school. Every Parent and Teacher is a voting member of the PTF. That is why it is very important to attend as many meetings as possible.

The PTF is very active in providing for the school's needs. With fundraising, we are able to provide playground equipment, computer and library needs, teacher wishes, and outreach programs. The PTF was developed to bridge Parents, Teachers, and the needs of the school.

Safety and General Policies

BAD WEATHER

In case of inclement weather (snow, ice, etc.), MDA will announce a late-start or school closing on via evening news, by text or by email by 6:00AM. The academy follows local ISD protocol on closures. If the local ISD cancels classes due to bad weather, so does MDA.

In the event of storm conditions causing the need for shelter during the school day, classroom evacuation and shelter instructions are posted on each classroom doorway. A weather radio is kept on in the school office, as well as several staff computers that are kept on weatherbug.com to monitor our area. The school will initiate ongoing drills throughout the school year to prepare for such cases of bad weather.

School Lock Down

Condition

Lockdown is called when there is a threat or hazard **inside** the school building. From parental custody disputes to intruders to an active shooter, Lockdown uses classroom and school security actions to protect students and staff from threat.

Public Address

The public address for Lockdown is: "**Lockdown! Locks, Lights, Out of Sight!**" and is repeated twice each time the public address is performed.

"Lockdown! Locks, Lights, Out of Sight!
Lockdown! Locks, Lights, Out of Sight!"

Actions

The Lockdown Protocol demands locking individual classroom doors, offices and other securable areas, moving room occupants out of line of sight of corridor windows and having room occupants maintain silence.

There is no call to action to lock the building outside access points. Rather, the protocol advises to leave the perimeter as is. The reasoning is simple - sending staff to lock outside doors exposes them to unnecessary risk and inhibits first responders' entry into the building.

Teacher, staff, and student training reinforces the practice of **not** opening the classroom door, once in Lockdown. Rather, no indication of occupancy should be revealed until first responders open the door.

Incident Command System

The School Incident Command System should be initiated.

Responsibility

The classroom teacher is responsible for implementing their classroom Lockdown. If it is safe to do so, the teacher should gather students into the classroom prior to locking the door. The teacher should lock all classroom access points and facilitate moving occupants out of sight.

Reported By

Lockdown is typically reported by students or staff to the school office. The office staff then invokes the public address and informs administration.

It may also be reported to the school office by local emergency dispatch.

Preparation

Identification of classroom access points that must be locked in the event of a Lockdown is essential preparation. These may include doorways, windows, loading docks, and fire escape ladder access points.

A "**safe zone**" should also be identified within the classroom that is out of sight of the corridor window. Teachers and students should be trained to not open the classroom door, leaving a first responder or school administrator to unlock it.

Students, staff, and teachers should be advised that a Lockdown may persist for several hours and during an incident; silence is essential.

Drills

In Texas, Lockdown drills must be performed at least twice per school year, once per semester. If possible one of these drills should be performed with local law enforcement personnel participation. At a minimum, law enforcement participation in the drill should occur no less than once every 2 years.

Contingencies

Students and staff who are outside of classrooms when a Lockdown is announced, should get into the first available classroom with a teacher or a room that can be secured. In the event a student or staff cannot get into a room before doors are locked, they should be instructed about other options. In this situation, students and staff should be trained to hide or even evacuate themselves away from the building or area. Students and staff should receive training on where to go, if they evacuate, so they can be safe and accounted for.

If, during a Lockdown, an additional hazard manifests inside the school - i.e.: fire, flood, hazmat, then situational decisions must be made. There should be discussions about reacting to a fire alarm if it is activated during a Lockdown. This may require following additional directives of the SRP.

Examples of Lockdown Conditions

The following are some examples of when a school or emergency dispatch might call for a Lockdown.

- Dangerous animal within school building
- Intruder
- Angry or violent parent or student
- Report of a weapon
- Active shooter

CLOSED CAMPUS

MDA operates under a closed campus policy.

1. Students may arrive and leave according to their unique class schedule. When a student deviates from his set schedule in any way, they must check in or out at the school office in order to leave campus, arrive late, or return. Deviation from set schedule must have parental permission in order to avoid disciplinary action for truancy.

2. Students are to be under supervision by being physically present in the class, study hall, or extra-curricular activity for which they are registered. The following conditions will result in

disciplinary action: Being present on campus but not in the class, study hall, or activity for which he or she is registered, being present on campus at a time when the student does not have a scheduled class, study hall, or activity; being off-campus during enrolled class without express permission.

3. Students should not arrive on campus earlier than fifteen minutes before their first scheduled class unless they have leadership responsibilities to fulfill.
4. Students who do not have a class, study hall, or extra-curricular activity must leave the MDA campus within 15 minutes of the end of their last class. Students who have not been picked up by their parent or carpool will be asked to wait in the office. If this happens on a continual basis, the student may be placed in a study hall as a drop in student at the parent's expense.
5. Students who attend Labs or tutorials on Fridays must sign in/out upon arrival and departure.
6. Parents are responsible for the method in which their student arrives and leaves campus.
7. Students must remain on campus during the lunch period.
8. Unless prior arrangements have been made through the office, leaving a class early will be treated as a discipline issue.

COMMUNICATION

Communication between the school and the home is vital. MDA administration and teachers will communicate regularly with parents by telephone, the school's website and online database, email, letter, meetings, and most importantly, the assignment sheet. Since MDA utilizes three important computer/electronic methods for a significant amount of school communication (the school's website, online database, and email), it is essential that parents have appropriate technology available at home to check school communication and that they do so on a regular basis. Families who are unable to have the necessary technology to stay current with school communication or who experience temporary computer problems at home should notify the main office staff to arrange for alternate communication.

Parents and students are encouraged to contact teachers by email or phone calls to clarify assignments or expectations. Concerns or problems however, should be addressed in a personal meeting or telephone conversation. Conversations on the phone or in person promote trust and understanding. When in conflict, please refrain from discussing issues with other parents or students. Only discuss concerns with the parties directly involved. If the issue cannot be resolved satisfactorily, the parent or student should talk with the appropriate department head, then the director, then the dean of the department, and finally, the Administrator. It is our desire to cultivate a positive and effective relationship with the parents to ensure the students' success. Parents and students should read all school communications and attend all school meetings. Any

questions about events, school policies or guidelines, or other general information should be directed to the school office.

Students Code of Conduct



The following rules are strictly enforced:

- Church/School and teachers Staff are to be respected at all times by MDA students. A title (Mr., Mrs., Coach, Dr., etc.) should be used when addressing a staff member. (There may be exceptions to this rule if a guest speaker chooses to be addressed otherwise.) Students are also expected to treat teachers with respect in their demeanor, tone of voice, and willingness to receive instruction. Acts of insubordination will result in disciplinary action leading up to dismissal.
- Any use of violence against any school/church staff will be prosecuted and the violator expelled permanently.
- Students will treat each other with respect, kindness, and compassion just as God commands us "So in everything do to others what you would have them do to you."
- Students are expected to take exams at the time they are offered. In the event of a missed exam, the student must make it up by the next class period. The student will receive an "F" grade after this grace period has expired. In rare occasions and circumstances, valuable reasons will be evaluated by the school staff to grant a make-up exam beyond this period.
- MDA maintains a strict attendance policy. Students in the Youth High School may refer to the attendance policy as included in this handbook. Adults over 17 years of age are allowed 5 absences total in the "20 week" program. Adult students are penalized with a one week added to their schedule per any additional absence up to 8 absences. After an adult student has accumulated 8 absences, the student must begin the program completely from the beginning at his own expense. Students with medical and physical conditions that require time away from classes may be placed in the homeschool program and as such will be assigned a tutor. These students are required to provide medical documentation.

- Tuition payments are due at time of enrollment. A student will be prohibited from continuing in the program until all fees are paid.
- School, church facilities and grounds are to be kept clean and orderly. No trash should be discarded on church/school property.
- Horseplay, running, or rough play during or between class periods is not acceptable.
- Use of profanity is in no way tolerated.
- Public displays of affection such as handholding, frontal hugging, kissing, etc. are not permitted. This rule applies for all MDA sponsored events.
- Radios, CD/DVD players, records, iPods, or computer discs should not be brought to school unless specific permission is given by the school administration. Use of cellphones during class is strictly prohibited.
- Tobacco products, illegal drugs, alcohol, or weapons (including pocket knives) are not allowed on church/school property or at any MDA sponsored event.
- Snacks or beverages and water, may be consumed during class periods, without disruption to teaching.
- Code of Conduct violations will be treated as discipline issues.

Uniforms Guidelines and Dress Code

The Academy does not require the use of a uniform. However, clothing worn to classes should be discreet and proper for public display. Indiscreet attire is described as any clothing that reveals private body parts, underwear, sexually attractive or suggestive such as short skirts, low cut blouse, underwear showing over the pant line and such. Moderation is the rule for MDA student's attire. Any suggestive or provocative attire will result in the student receiving a verbal and written warning. After 2 warnings the student will be prohibited from entering school facilities until proper attire is worn.



MDA In The News



Univision Dallas, Channel 23, 10:00 pm News

“Abriendo Puertas” August 6, 2014

www.univisiondallas.com

Nuestra Voz de Tarrant County, Monthly
Newspaper

“2014 Graduation Ceremony”, My Dreams Academy

July 12, 2014