



Mt. Helix Academy
5955 Severin Drive
La Mesa, CA 91942
619-243-1400

Dear Mt. Helix Academy Family,

I am pleased to welcome you to Mt. Helix Academy, a WASC accredited school in the family of schools operated by The Institute for Effective Education.

We are dedicated to providing our students with a safe, warm, and nurturing school in which scientifically validated instructional methods and materials achieve outstanding results for all of our children.

The goal of Mt. Helix Academy is to teach the skills and knowledge necessary for its students to be high academic achievers and enthusiastic, self-managed learners, who are likeable to others and are highly ethical in social interactions.

This handbook is designed to ensure a successful and enjoyable educational experience at Mt. Helix Academy for you and your child.

I look forward to working with you and your family as valued members of our Mt. Helix Academy community.

Mike Collins
Mt. Helix Academy Director

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The Institute for Effective Education

The Institute for Effective Education (TIEE) is a California non-profit [501(c)(3)] corporation, chartered in 1972 to implement the mission statement below. TIEE operates four schools, Mt. Helix Academy, Children's Workshop, COOK Education Center and the Urban Skills Center. All of TIEE's schools have received high praise from parents and professionals. To learn more about TIEE's family of schools, visit our website at www.TIEE.org.

TIEE Mission Statement

"The Institute for Effective Education (TIEE) is dedicated to schooling that is unparalleled in scope of curriculum, effectiveness of instruction, and pervasiveness of positive ambience. To achieve this goal, TIEE is committed to using the principles and methods established by behavioral science research of the highest standard in order to educate children, adolescents, and young adults, whose talents span the full spectrum of ability.

TIEE accepts responsibility for a comprehensive curriculum that embraces the full range of potential for its students. It is a curriculum that fosters high academic achievement, education of character, citizenship, friendship, self-management, and love of learning. The choice of this curriculum underscores TIEE's dual commitment to developing students who not only excel in scholarship, but who also become quality members of the community.

In order to implement its curriculum, TIEE resolves to choose teaching materials that have proved successful with real students in real classrooms or to develop its own materials in accordance with well-established behavioral principles. TIEE is committed to the use of teaching methods that have the weight of scientific evidence, including the following practices: • Frequent positive consequences for desirable student behavior; • High rates of student responding to instructionally relevant tasks; • Direct teaching of the skills, knowledge, and procedures that students must know to achieve at high levels; and • Regular collection and evaluation of student performance data to make timely instructional decisions for individual students.

TIEE is devoted to maintaining a positive ambience that characterizes its facilities and the interaction of all individuals associated with the organization, including, most importantly, the interaction between staff members and students. To this end, TIEE is committed to teaching what is expected and to "catching 'em being good."

Finally, the dynamic development of TIEE and its schools is fostered by the on-going training of all teaching staff members in those methods and materials that have the weight of scientific evidence. This training is extended to all educators who share our interest as an expression of TIEE's commitment to bring positive, effective schooling to all students, everywhere."

Mt. Helix Academy School Program

This section of the Mt. Helix Academy Handbook summarizes TIEE's commitment to each child attending Mt. Helix Academy and to the families who trust that their children will be given the highest quality education possible in the safest and most positive school environment.

In many important respects, Mt. Helix Academy is a "traditional" school. Lessons make up the majority of each student's day; classes are led by skilled teachers; instruction emphasizes the fundamental academic skills of reading, speaking and writing, mathematics, critical thinking (i.e., problem solving), and various content areas like physical and social science. In short, students are guided along an educational path that emphasizes strong academic achievement.

Less traditional, is the emphasis at Mt. Helix Academy on each student's acquisition of skills in self-management, skills in social interaction, and skills that respect the highest ethical standard. We want Mt. Helix Academy students to do well in any school they may enter and in any educational pursuit they may choose. Above all, we want them to become highly regarded, contributing members of our community.

To prepare students this well and this broadly, Mt. Helix Academy differs from most traditional schools in fundamental ways. The teaching materials used at Mt. Helix Academy are specially designed so that all students will learn the important critical thinking strategies they need and will use. Because our teachers know how to engage students, maintain their attention on what they are learning, and maximize active participation in their lessons, students at Mt. Helix Academy often learn more rapidly than it is likely they would elsewhere. Moreover, because they are successful learners and because their teachers practice the philosophy of "catching 'em being good," Mt. Helix Academy students learn to love new learning opportunities.

Assessment and Reporting of Achievement

Achievement Testing

The achievement of Mt. Helix Academy students is evaluated in a combination of ways, because each measure of intellectual and social development has both

strengths and limitations. Among the tests of achievement are (a) the daily evaluations that teachers make of their students, which relate directly to the Mt. Helix Academy curriculum; (b) certain curriculum-based assessments of basic skills that permit evaluation of Mt. Helix Academy students against local standards; and (c) norm-referenced achievement testing that permits evaluating how well the school is doing against national norms.

Curriculum-Referenced Assessments

Basic skills are taught at Mt. Helix Academy in small groups with highly structured and well-sequenced lessons. Teaching of these lessons requires obtaining many student responses, each of which is evaluated and corrected if necessary. Advancing from one lesson to the next depends on achieving mastery of the skills taught in earlier lessons. Consequently, teachers monitor and assess their students' progress throughout each basic skills lesson.

In addition to this system of daily evaluation, student progress in the Mt. Helix Academy curriculum is evaluated in three other ways. In all skill areas, after students have undergone a period of instruction, they are assigned independent work. Because the independent work requires students to use the skills they have been learning, it provides teachers with daily samples of each student's progress in those skills.

Second, after a given set of lessons in each of the basic skills, mastery tests are administered, which demonstrate whether students have retained the skills and knowledge already taught. If they do not pass mastery tests, lessons are re-taught until mastery is attained.

Finally, as an occasional supplement to this information on student progress, the school Director or another teacher will teach the students and will, thereby, have an additional opportunity to determine whether they have mastered the skills being taught.

Taken together, these methods of assessment permit highly reliable judgments of the skills and knowledge our students have learned relative to the Mt. Helix Academy curriculum, and they form the basis of reports to parents concerning student progress.

Norm-Referenced Assessment

Once each year, Mt. Helix Academy students are administered a norm-referenced test which compares how our students rank against students their age from across the country. Students in the Primary Module are given an individually administered test (e.g., the Wechsler Individualized Achievement Test), while students in the Elementary and Junior High School Modules are administered a group test (e.g., the Stanford Achievement Test).

Report Cards

Parents will receive by mail a written report of their child's progress three or four times during the year. The specific reporting dates for each school year are

indicated on the annual calendar, a copy of which is provided to parents at the beginning of each school year. At the conclusion of the first reporting period in November, parents are scheduled for a Parent-Teacher Conference to discuss their child's progress in more detail.

Progress Reports

Parents of students in the Elementary Module and Junior High School Module will receive an interim written progress report midway through each quarter.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

At the conclusion of the first reporting period in November, parents are scheduled for a Parent-Teacher Conference to discuss their child's progress in more detail.

School Calendar and School Hours

Annual Calendar

Mt. Helix Academy operates on a traditional calendar. A master calendar is distributed to parents identifying the specific day on which school opens, as well as school break periods, national holidays, reporting periods, and other key dates of interest. An online calendar of events is located on our website, www.mthelixacademy.org, where additional copies of the calendar may also be obtained.

School Hours

Classes for all students begin at 8:00 a.m. The teaching staff is available to supervise the social and play activities of these students at 7:45 a.m.

Unless advance notice to the contrary has been provided to parents, dismissal for students is at the following times:

- Transitional Kindergarten & Kindergarten - 2:45 p.m.
- Grades 1 and 2 - 2:55 p.m.
- Grades 3, 4 & 5 - 3:00 p.m.
- Grades 6, 7, 8, & 9 - 3:15 p.m.

The school calendar should be consulted for pre-designated Staff Development Days and Parent Conference Days. Dismissal on those days occurs at the following times:

- Kindergarten, grades 6, 7 & 8 – 11:25 a.m.
- Grades 3, 4 & 5 – 11:45 a.m.
- Grades 1 & 2 – 12:00 p.m.

Arrival and Departure of Students

Arrival of Students at School

Students may arrive at school as early as 6:30 a.m. However, students arriving earlier than 7:45 a.m. must be taken to the Extended Day Care room and parents will be billed for the service. (See the description of Extended Day Care.) For their personal safety, students may not be left unattended on the school grounds.

Dismissal of Students from School

Students in Kindergarten – 5th grade who are not picked up by 3:15 p.m. and students in grades 6 – 9 who are not picked up by 3:30 p.m. will be taken to the designated P.M. Child Care room and parents will be billed for the service. (See the description of A.M., P.M. Child Care.) For the personal safety of students, they may not be left unattended on the school grounds.

Early Dismissal of Students from School

Mt. Helix Academy encourages parents to schedule medical and other appointments involving their child after school hours so that they may derive maximum benefit from their schooling.

However, it is recognized that this is not always possible. When it is not and the student must leave school before the end of the school day, the adult with whom the student is leaving must report to the school office and sign out the child. School office staff will then dismiss the child from school. If the child returns to school the same day, s/he must report to the school office to be readmitted.

To facilitate an early dismissal, parents are requested to provide the school office with a signed request that identifies the date, time, and reason for early dismissal before 8:00 a.m. on the day of a known appointment.

School Activities

Certain special events are planned throughout the school year to supplement daily lessons and expand on the skills and knowledge of Mt. Helix Academy students. Some of these activities are scheduled during the school day and some are scheduled after the school day. Occasionally, students hold performances in the evening to display their talents for the enjoyment of their families and friends. Very often these events have the effect of enhancing school spirit and of permitting parents to enjoy their children's accomplishments.

After School Clubs and Activities

Depending on student interest level, after school clubs are formed and enrichment activities provided for a separate fee. This permits students to engage in a variety of activities for periods lasting no more than six weeks. Several optional after school music activities are offered to Mt. Helix Academy

students at no additional fee including Advanced/Intermediate String Ensemble (1st grade and up) or Beginning Strings (1st to 5th grades). Instrumental music students have the opportunity to participate in an end of the school year recital as well as perform at our Winter and Spring Concerts.

Field Trips

Field trips are an essential part of the educational process at Mt. Helix Academy, because they permit students to apply the skills and knowledge they have been acquiring and thereby learn something of the "real world" application of their education. At the start of each academic year, a permission slip for field trips must be signed by a parent or guardian in order for a student to participate in any off-campus activities. Transportation for field trips will be arranged and provided by the school. Parents will be advised at least 24 hours in advance if special articles of clothing should be worn to facilitate the child's field trip experience.

Overnight Trips

Certain students will have the opportunity to experience overnight trips during the school year. The schedule, destination, and rationale for all trips will be available to parents early in the school year and written approval will be sought for each overnight trip as it occurs. Additional fees will be charged parents of participating students based on the number of students, program fees, transportation costs, chaperone requirements, and administrative expenses. The goal will be to make these trips both as educational and affordable as possible.

Each year students in the 4th grade have the opportunity to participate in a living history program on the Star of India, berthed in San Diego Harbor. Students in the 5th grade may participate in an annual trip to Boston, Massachusetts, as a part of their study of U. S. History.

Sixth - 9th graders have the opportunity to participate in the Pali Mountain Outdoor Education program each fall.

Science Fair

Each year, all 7th & 8th grade students participate in the development of a science project using the scientific method to investigate natural phenomena. These projects are presented at the school's annual Science Fair and may qualify for entry in the Greater San Diego Science and Engineering Fair.

Multicultural Open House

Held each year on the last Thursday of March, Multicultural Open House night has truly become one of the most popular highlights of the Mt. Helix Academy year. Hundreds of students, their families, and friends from the community immerse themselves in a multicultural world.

Visitors have the opportunity to roam our giant tent and sample delicious foods from the world's many cuisines. It's an international food fair. Afterwards, participants can tour the school's authentically decorated classrooms. Students

and staff will have collaborated for a month to make their rooms seem just like entering another culture.

The annual effort has resulted in impressive student projects that have included writing original myths and Haiku poetry; making origami, carp kites, Kachina dolls, masks, and giving Power-Point presentations on the people of various lands.

Multicultural night is a great socialization opportunity, a terrific way to sample the world's cuisines, and, most importantly of all, a valuable way for Mt. Helix Academy students to display what they have learned concerning other cultures. It is one way that the school has fostered multiculturalism to prepare our students for the modern world.

Special Performances

From time to time throughout the school year, students will present musical and/or dramatic performances or visual arts exhibits to display their talents and to entertain parents and others. The school will inform parents of such performances sufficiently in advance to permit schedule accommodation.

Student Assemblies

Throughout the school year, teachers will take many opportunities to publicly praise the achievement and effort of their students. On many of these occasions, the students themselves will laud their fellow students. In this way, each student will receive public praise many times over the years, contributing valuably to his or her self-esteem. In addition, each student will learn the value of contributing to the self-esteem of others.

Graduation

Formal commencement exercises, which are held on the last day of the school year, provide an opportunity for the school and the families of the students involved to participate in applauding the achievement and effort of eighth graders graduating from Junior High School. In addition, a Kindergarten graduation ceremony is held on the last day of school to recognize the accomplishments of our Kindergarten students.

Staffing

Teaching Staff

Mt. Helix Academy provides a teaching staff that is knowledgeable about and is skilled in using methods and materials that have documented evidence of effectiveness. Every member of the teaching staff participates in TIEE's extensive and on-going professional training in-service program.

Student-Teacher Ratio

Young students require lower student to teacher ratios than older students because young children need more frequent and more immediate attention to

ensure their future school success. Consequently, students in Trans-K -- 2nd Grade are provided the lowest average student to teacher ratio at Mt. Helix Academy. Instruction in basic skills is usually conducted in groups of 6 to 10 students. Depending on student need, instruction in certain skills may be conducted with fewer than 6 students per group. On average, however, the instructional ratio for these students is 8:1 in basic skills classes.

Students in Grades 3 - 5 are able to maintain high academic achievement with an average student to teacher ratio of 12:1. Junior High students are taught at an average ratio of 15:1.

Partnership in Education

Mutual Educational Goals

This section of the Mt. Helix Academy Handbook is devoted to those aspects of the child and his/her schooling that depend on the strength of parent-school partnership. The administration and staff will actively seek parent involvement in these areas and, as is discussed at the end of this section, will provide several ways for parents to exercise their involvement, to voice their concerns, and to make their recommendations for an improved Mt. Helix Academy.

A mutually supportive partnership between parents and school is essential to the accelerated, positive development anticipated for Mt. Helix Academy students. This partnership rests, first of all, on agreement concerning the school's goals for its students and on the methods of achieving those goals, both of which are outlined in the previous section of this handbook. The school strives to make parents and students aware of its goals and its teaching methods through this and other documents, through presentations to parents and through conferences with parents. It is assumed by Mt. Helix Academy administration and staff that parents agree to these goals and to the methods of instruction by enrolling their children in the school.

After agreement on goals and methods, it is essential that school and parents alike establish the most favorable conditions for learning and the enjoyment of learning. The teachers at Mt. Helix Academy have a profound obligation to do what is necessary to foster and maintain every student's eagerness to learn all areas of the curriculum. We believe that parents share this obligation. Children will learn best from school when their parents display support for the school, for the teachers, for the subjects taught and for the methods of instruction.

When both teachers and parents show positive interest in a child's education and maintain high expectations for both personal behavior and performance, they promote the positive attitudes that are critical to school achievement. It is for this reason that each party in the Mt. Helix Academy partnership is asked annually to state their commitment in a formal document which is retained in the student's file.

Student Wellness

To learn well, students must have healthy bodies. They require a well balanced diet, sufficient exercise, ample rest and sleep, and they must be as free as possible from pain, illnesses or ailments that require medical or dental attention. In many ways, the parent-school partnership is well suited to accomplishing these goals for all Mt. Helix Academy students.

Nutrition

Mt. Helix Academy teaches its students facts and information about good nutrition and it reinforces healthful dietary behaviors. Parents are encouraged to assist their children in selecting foods that lead to a broad palate and a balanced diet.

Eating at School

Students are permitted two eating occasions during regular school hours, morning snack and lunch for students in the Primary and Elementary Modules; lunch and afternoon snack for Junior High School, and all students are permitted a snack during after school program. (Students who, for medically related reasons, require eating more frequently can be permitted to do so by special arrangement with the Director.)

Parents are encouraged to assist their children in choosing, packing and eating a well balanced diet at school. Fruit and energy bars are good snacks. Hot drinks or soup may be brought in a thermos bottle, but food that must be heated or refrigerated cannot be accommodated. It is recommended that lunches be packed in a sturdy container with the child's name clearly printed on it. As a matter of student safety, glass containers cannot be permitted at school.

Exercise

Mt. Helix Academy teaches its students facts and information about exercise and reinforces healthful exercise behaviors. A vigorous and varied physical education program is an integral part of the Mt. Helix Academy curriculum for all students. (Students who, for medical reasons, require limited physical activity can be accommodated by special arrangement with the Director.)

Parents are encouraged to supplement the physical education program at Mt. Helix Academy with a regular program of exercise for their children after school and on weekends. Such a program could include organized sports activities.

Rest and Sleep

Students at Mt. Helix Academy are taught facts about the body's need for rest and sleep. Periods of rest are scheduled each day for Kindergarten students. Older students may be taught relaxation strategies if needed. Parents will help

their child do well in school by arranging for eight or more hours of sleep each night.

Student Health and Safety

TIEE is in compliance with California law in having a formal Illness and Injury Prevention Program (Policy # V. A), a copy of which is in the Mt. Helix Academy administrative office.

Staff, students, and parents are encouraged to be pro-actively involved in issues of health and safety. To assist in keeping students and staff healthy and safe, a Safety Committee meets monthly to review all of TIEE's programs and facilities, including Mt. Helix Academy.

The Safety Committee includes representatives from each school site who bring to the committee any issues of compromised health and safety. In addition, each school site is inspected for safety hazards and disaster preparedness quarterly. Concerns meriting immediate attention are dealt with as soon as possible. The Safety Committee oversees any corrective action that may be required and maintains a record of such action.

Health and Safety Program

A primary goal of Mt. Helix Academy is to maintain the safety of all students and staff. To this end, the school maintains a campus environment that is physically safe and programs that are well supervised by staff. On a rare occasion, however, a student will display behaviors that are potentially injurious to himself/herself or to others, or that could cause extensive damage to property. Special procedures and training have been implemented to maintain the personal safety of all students and staff as much as possible. Staff response in such situations will be at the level most appropriate to the danger being generated by the student, ranging from a strong voice command to seeking community resource support by calling 911. Parents and/or guardians will be notified as soon as possible of such incidents.

Safety Guidelines and Regulations

The following guidelines and regulations are specific to the program at Mt. Helix Academy:

Asbestos and Toxic Chemicals

Mt. Helix Academy is in compliance with the Federal law that requires schools operated by non-profit corporations to be free of friable asbestos. The use of toxic or other hazardous chemicals is generally avoided. Household chemicals are used at Mt. Helix Academy whenever possible and janitorial supplies are maintained in locked cabinets or closets that are not accessible to students.

Fire, Earthquake, and General Safety Program

The safety of Mt. Helix Academy students is paramount at all times; however, safe behavior during rare and unanticipated events is especially important because of the emotional trauma such events can elicit. Consequently, Mt. Helix Academy students are taught safe practices and safe behavior is encouraged at school and elsewhere.

Fire drills are held monthly at unexpected times so that safe, orderly exit from the facility is well practiced. Similarly, earthquake drills are held at least quarterly and more frequently for the younger students, especially early in the school year. Such drills are prescribed by the school's Injury and Illness Prevention Program and are practiced as part of its plan for Disaster and Mass Casualties.

Students are also taught safe practices in vehicles and during off campus activities. Special safety programs and safety awareness events are held with students and staff throughout the academic year.

Flus and Colds

Flus and colds tend to spread quickly in schools, a fact parents can help prevent by keeping children at home if they have a fever, diarrhea, vomiting and/or they have mucus drainage that is yellow or green in color. Because the school has no facilities for other than routine first aid, a child who arrives at school ill or who becomes ill during the school day must be sent home. Parent(s) will be notified and the child will be made as comfortable as possible under the circumstances until the parent(s) arrives to transport her/ him home. If parents cannot be reached, the school will attempt to contact the person(s) parents have listed to contact in an emergency.

Contagious Diseases

Children cannot attend school if they have a contagious disease, such as Chicken Pox, head lice, Measles or "pinkeye". When a child has been absent because of a contagious disease, her/his return to school is contingent upon a note signed by the child's physician, which indicates that the illness is no longer contagious and that the child is well enough to attend school. Once the school is notified by a parent or a health official that one of our students has acquired a contagious disease, a notice will be sent to parents concerning the possibility that their children may have been exposed.

Immunizations Record and Medical Forms

A new student cannot be admitted to Mt. Helix Academy until all required immunizations have been obtained and all medical forms have been submitted. Parents may ask for a waiver of the immunization requirement from the School Director.

Injuries at School

A student who has received minor scratches and/or minor bruises will have those injuries treated by the student's teacher and/or the school's office staff. In

the event that a student receives an injury that requires medical attention, but is not greatly painful and/or life threatening, the school will make every effort to comfort the student, will call the student's parents or other designated party and will have the student treated in keeping with the emergency information given the school by the parent(s).

In the event that the student's injury is very painful, requires immediate medical attention and/or is life threatening, the school will call 9-1-1 for emergency service and will then call the parents in keeping with the emergency information given the school.

Medications

By law, Mt. Helix Academy cannot administer any medication, including prescription medication and "over the counter" medication (e.g., Tylenol), to a student without written parental permission. Permission forms for this purpose are available in the school's administrative office.

The only "over the counter" medication Mt. Helix Academy will administer is Tylenol, and only if the school has signed parental permission.

Prescription medication will be administered only if the school has parental permission and instructions for administration that are signed by the child's physician, who must be licensed in California. Any change in the prescription or the administration schedule will be made only if the school has signed permission and instruction from the physician. Mt. Helix Academy will accept for administration only those medications that are in pill or capsule form and **are in the original physician or pharmacy container.**

Release of Students by the School

For the safety of all students, the administration and staff of Mt. Helix Academy will release students only to their parents or to other adults who have prior written permission from parents to take their children from school.

Should an occasion arise when someone other than the person who regularly picks up a child must do so, the Mt. Helix Academy office must be informed in advance and in writing by a parent or legal guardian. Before the child is released to this person, s/he must report to the office upon arrival at school, must show valid identification and must be at least eighteen years old.

In situations involving court ordered custody and/or visitation arrangements, Mt. Helix Academy is required to respect the order of the court. To fulfill this legal obligation, Mt. Helix Academy must depend on the parties themselves to provide a copy of the written order received from a court having jurisdiction in the matter to the School Director or Assistant Director. Mt. Helix Academy will abide by that order until such time as a copy of a revised order is provided to the school.

Attire & Grooming

School Uniform Policy

The purpose of the Mt. Helix Academy student uniform policy is to promote an effective learning environment for all students. Students are required to wear a designated school uniform to school each day.

Students are also required to wear appropriate uniform attire for all off-campus field trips and other events sponsored by the school, unless specifically notified. If an off-campus event calls for dress that differs from the standard school uniform, parents can expect notice at least 24 hours prior to such an event. The student's homeroom teacher will provide guidelines for such an event.

School Spirit Day

Every Friday will be designated "School Spirit Day". Students are encouraged to wear a top with the Mt. Helix logo. On Fridays only, T-shirts with the Mt. Helix Academy logo and blue jeans may be worn. Jeans must be in good condition and fit appropriately (no sagging or revealing jeans).

Items Not Specifically Addressed By the Uniform Policy

Matters of dress, jewelry, make-up, hair color / style and so on not addressed by the Mt. Helix Academy uniform policy will be permitted or not permitted on campus as decided by the Director of Mt. Helix Academy, based on the degree to which the Director believes that the style or accessory in question is disruptive to student safety or the learning environment at the school. All decisions by the Director are final

Violations of the Uniform Policy

If a student violates the school's uniform policy or arrives at school in a manner of dress deemed inappropriate by the Director, the parent or guardian will be notified; the student will be required to change attire before being allowed in the classroom; and, if this is not possible, the student will be sent home.

School Uniform Guidelines

Tops

- Solid color, short or long-sleeved, collared polo shirts or turtlenecks, with Mt. Helix Academy logo or plain.
- Acceptable colors are burgundy, navy blue, or white.

Outerwear

- Navy blue sweaters, with Mt. Helix Academy logo or plain
- Navy blue fleece tops, with Mt. Helix Academy logo or plain
- Navy blue jackets, with Mt. Helix Academy logo or plain

Bottoms

- Solid color, either khaki or navy blue
- Pants - plain front, pleated front or elastic waist - no overalls, cargo pants or jeans
- Shorts – no shorter than 1 inch above the knee
- Skorts— no shorter than 1 inch above the knee
- Skirts— no shorter than 1 inch above the knee
- Solid jumper-navy blue or khaki
- Uniform material (100% cotton, cotton/polyester, corduroy - No denim or windbreaker-type material)

Shoes

- Closed toe
- Sneakers
- Loafers or oxford style shoes - no work or combat-style boots, platform or high-heeled shoes

Socks/Tights

- Plain, solid color
- Acceptable colors for tights-navy blue or white

Hats

- Hats may be worn on the playground, during recess or PE
- Hats may not be worn inside any school building.

Student Attitude and Behavior

To learn well, students must have a positive attitude about school and about learning. The school's role in establishing and maintaining a positive attitude is profound. Lessons that produce high levels of student success, clear expectations for student performance, recognition for effort and continued achievement and an absence of coercion are important elements of schooling at Mt. Helix Academy, and it is our stated goal to produce students who love learning.

Parents can help the process in many ways, particularly by modeling an eagerness to learn, assisting their child in acquiring effective learning strategies and by displaying an excitement for their child's achievements. The parent-school partnership is an ideal way to promote the positive attitudes and behaviors essential to the high achievement expected of Mt. Helix Academy students.

Attendance and Punctuality

Teachers are expected to maximize the amount of time students are engaged in curriculum related activities throughout the day. Even field trips and assemblies are carefully planned and scheduled in accordance with each module's curriculum. Moreover, the activities are designed to promote love of learning

and an excitement about attending school. Parents can contribute to their child's optimum educational growth by ensuring the regular, prompt attendance of their child.

In the Event of a Child's Absence

In the event a child must be absent from school, parents are requested to notify the school office (619-243-1400) or email your child's homeroom teacher prior to 8:00a.m. on the day of absence.

In the Event of Prolonged Absence

Occasionally, it is necessary for a student to be absent from school for several days because of a visit to relatives, a family vacation, or a prolonged illness (e.g., chicken pox or measles). If an absence is expected to last longer than two days and the child is not too incapacitated to perform schoolwork, parents are encouraged to arrange with their child's homeroom teacher for a set of home study assignments to keep their child from falling too far behind. Parents are requested to inform the school of the need for such home study assignments at least 24 hours in advance. It is expected that any work provided will be completed and turned in when the child returns back to school.

Punctuality

Mt. Helix Academy teachers will teach their students how to be ready for class and they will make classes as motivating for students as they can, so that students are inclined to be on time and ready for class to begin. Persistent tardiness will be treated as any other conduct problem (discussed below). Because of the need to monitor student whereabouts, the student who is late must first report to the office to check in as present for the day and to obtain a tardy slip.

Student Conduct and Positive Discipline

A positive discipline program is not a method of punishing misbehavior. It is a program that teaches and encourages students to enjoy doing the right thing. At Mt. Helix Academy, the positive discipline program is designed to teach and encourage students to come to school, to love learning, and to interact positively with peers, staff and others in the community. The program emphasizes teaching students what is expected and praising them for effort and achievement. Teachers at Mt. Helix Academy will report many achievements of the students to their parents. We recommend that parents praise their children for their achievements, and display excitement that is commensurate with the level of achievement and the age of the child. We also encourage parents to use special treats, prizes or awards only sparingly, if at all, and we recommend strongly against telling children that a special award may be earned by a high level of school achievement. Parents desiring assistance in establishing a positive discipline program for their children or in coordinating the home and school programs should contact the school Director.

Mild Punishments and Their Use

Even with a positive discipline program, students will occasionally misbehave. More often than not, it is best merely to redirect misbehavior to more desirable behavior. For instance, two kindergarteners are discovered in the play corner tossing blocks at one another. The teacher would be wise to say, "Blocks aren't for throwing, they're for building. Let me see you two build a tower with those blocks." However, sometimes the misbehavior is either sufficiently severe, sufficiently persistent, or it does not stop when directed by the teacher. In such cases, it may be important to use a mild punishment to stop the present episode and to reduce the likelihood of future episodes. For example, suppose the students in the example above have now been caught for the third time in two days throwing blocks at one another. The teacher might give both students a "time out" (as described below).

When teachers or parents fail to praise desirable behavior often enough (we recommend four positives for each negative), the punishment may be the child's best means of getting adult attention, so the misbehavior is actually strengthened. Punishment can also cause the child to avoid the person who punishes the child. Because of these dangers associated with the use of punishment, the staff at Mt. Helix Academy will only use brief, mild punishments and these will be used sparingly. Also, punishers that are used will only involve removing privileges; students will never be subjected to any form of corporal punishment or to any form of humiliation for their misbehaviors.

Permission from parents or guardians to use mild punishments is obtained as a condition of enrollment at Mt. Helix Academy. Included among the mild punishments that may be used are:

- **Penalties or Fines:** Students may receive a penalty or fine for certain misbehaviors including the loss of minutes of choice time or the loss of preferred activities. Penalties or fines may not be carried over beyond the school day in which they occurred.
- **Reprimands:** Students may be reprimanded but only in a quiet, calm voice. Students may not be yelled at, nor may a reprimand involve humiliation of the student.
- **Time outs:** Students may be given a time out in the classroom or instructional area, which shall not last more than one minute after the student displays instructional control. Students must be supervised throughout the duration of a time out. A "cool down" procedure, in which the student initiates going to a designated area as a means of regaining self-control is not considered a time out.

Documentation

A record of all mild punishments will be kept to determine whether they are effective in reducing the misbehavior. If they are not, the Director of Mt. Helix Academy will confer with the Module teaching team to determine whether

and/or how the program can be changed to have a more desirable effect with the student.

Reporting Use of Mild Punishment to Parents

Generally, the policy of Mt. Helix Academy is to inform parents when their child is doing particularly well. However, depending on the circumstances, parents may receive a phone call or note from the school about a particular mild punishment, the history of such punishments or information concerning specific incidents.

"Zero Tolerance" Behaviors

Although a broad range of student behavior is welcomed at Mt. Helix Academy, the school has zero tolerance for certain behaviors. Students who display any of the following behaviors at school may receive one of the penalties described below or may be expelled at the sole discretion of the Director: (a) any act or activity which is unlawful in the community; (b) carrying a weapon or threatening to use an object as a weapon; (c) using controlled substances without a prescription; (d) possessing alcohol or illegal drugs; (e) physically assaulting or threatening to physically assault a student or staff member; (f) vandalism and other malicious damaging of property; and (g) flagrant disrespect for staff members and others in position of authority; and (h) sexual harassment of students or staff.

In the event that one of the behaviors classified above occurs, but in the judgment of the Director of Mt. Helix Academy, expulsion is not a necessary outcome, one of the following penalties may nevertheless be imposed:

In-School Suspension: A student may be required to stay in school while not attending classes or participating in any school activities for no more than one school day. During in-school suspension, the student will be monitored by a staff member at all times. The student's parents or guardians will be informed of the suspension and the reason for it on the day of the misbehavior.

Out of School Suspension: In certain cases, a student may be suspended from school for one or more days. Conditions for returning to school may be imposed at the sole discretion of the Director of Mt. Helix Academy, and it is expected that the student will perform all schoolwork assigned during the period of suspension.

Sexual Harassment

The State of California requires that all schools provide staff and students with a personal copy of the school's policy concerning sexual harassment. Mt. Helix Academy's sexual harassment policy has been included in Appendix C for reference. In brief, the long standing policy of TIEE is that sexual harassment of or by staff or students is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Mt. Helix Academy implements this State regulation with its students by accentuating the positive value of respect for all persons and concentrating on developing the display of socially appropriate behaviors by all of our students. In addition, each

year, students in the Junior High School Module watch and discuss a video on sexual harassment. Student attention is not otherwise specifically called to the written sexual harassment policy.

Property & Materials

Personal Property

Mt. Helix Academy recommends that all items of student property, including clothing, be marked with the student's name. Clothing can be marked with a permanent marker on the label or on another, unobtrusive place. Items that are lost or misplaced will be returned to the student when found, if they are marked with the student's name. Items found that do not have a student's name on them will be taken to the school's lost & found. Items left unclaimed at the end of each month will be donated to charity.

Certain items are not permitted in school either because of the distraction they may cause other students or the risk of loss. They are:

- Ipods, cell phones;
- CDs;
- Hand-held video games or game cartridges;
- Rollerskates and skateboards;
- Personal toys such as Beanie Babies, frisbies, small cars and Vortexes;
- Expensive jewelry;
- Student owned laptop computers, Ipads

When the items listed above are brought to school, they will be confiscated by staff, marked with the students name and taken to the office where parents may pick them up after school.

Textbooks and School Materials

At the beginning of the school year, students at Mt. Helix Academy are issued textbooks and workbooks, and some students are issued calculators. Students are taught how to use, manage and otherwise care for these items. They are also taught that the items belong to the school and are merely on loan to them for the school year. Workbooks, of course, are used up by the students during the year and are sent home when completed. However, textbooks and other equipment lent to the students for the year are collected at the end of the year for reuse the next year. Recycling of learning materials is one way Mt. Helix Academy can maintain the low cost of its educational program. Parents can help by showing their children how to care for valuable textbooks and other equipment and encouraging them to do so. Parents will be billed for lost textbooks or workbooks.

School Owned Electronic Devices

Students are provided access to school owned electronic devices such as desktop and laptop computers. At the start of each school year, students in the

Elementary and Junior High School modules sign a user agreement that outlines expectations and rules for use of school owned computers.

School Assignments and Homework

School Assignments

At Mt. Helix Academy, students are taught the skills and knowledge that are essential to move to the next level. Knowledge acquired is built on systematically lesson after lesson and reviewed cumulatively, so students ultimately learn much more, in more depth. Their errors, ineffective problem-solving strategies and misunderstandings are corrected as soon as possible and they are given practice in solving problems the most efficient and effective way. Finally, children are frequently told they are doing well and they learn to take pride in ever-increasing accomplishment. Part of the process requires students to perform certain school assignments on their own. Many such assignments are conducted in school so that teachers can monitor student progress and correct errors as they occur.

Homework

Some assignments are given as homework, which is assigned primarily for two purposes. If Mt. Helix Academy students are to become successful adults, they must be highly skilled at solving problems requiring some learning where ever they may be. Homework provides them opportunities to learn to perform learning related tasks away from school. Also, homework is designed to provide students with opportunities to practice or to extend the skills they have already mastered in school. It is not given so that students can acquire new skills. Parents are very likely to notice that they do not have to assist their children in solving homework problems. However, by ensuring that their child has a regular time set aside for homework, a place consistently available in which to do it, and encouragement to begin it and to finish it in a timely manner, parents will be assisting their children in becoming the best students they can be. Parents who find that their child has difficulty with homework or with the process involved in starting and doing it are encouraged to contact their child's teacher.

Make up Assignments

If a student is ill for only one day, it is generally possible to make up the work missed on returning to class. If it appears that a student will be absent for more than one day, it is recommended that parents contact their child's homeroom teacher for make-up assignments that can help assure the child will not fall behind her/his classmates.

Parent/Family Participation

Volunteering Time and/or Resources

Formal and informal parent involvement at school can be an important component of schooling for all students, and it is welcomed at Mt. Helix Academy. Formal involvement with the school can occur through volunteering at the school or by participating in the Parent-Teacher Group.

It is recognized that many parents have the desire to volunteer at their child's school, but their other time commitments preclude such activity. Informal involvement can take any of a variety of forms, such as donating money for computers, serving as a "room parent", fundraising to support student activities, donating food for a class party or assisting their child(ren) with homework and other school related tasks.

Participating in The Parent Teacher Group

The Parent-Teacher Group, "PTG," meets monthly at Mt. Helix Academy, alternating between mornings and afternoons during the ten-month academic year. All parents are welcome to participate and no dues are charged. The PTG elects officers at the end of each academic year and copies of its minutes are posted to the Mt. Helix Academy website (www.mthelixacademy.org.) Meetings are announced in advance via the Mt. Helix Academy website's online calendar as well as in the weekly electronic newsletter, "News from the Backpack"

Throughout the year, the PTG organizes and sponsors events for the enjoyment of the entire Mt. Helix Academy School Family, including a Welcome Back Potluck Ice Cream Social at the start of the school year; a Halloween Carnival in October, a Thanksgiving "Feast", a Bingo Night, Book Fairs, and Teacher Appreciation Luncheons. In addition, certain fund raising events are sponsored to support special school and program needs. The PTG also arranges for and coordinates the efforts of the Room Parent Program throughout the school year. An electronic copy of the by-laws for the Mt. Helix Academy PTG are located on the Mt. Helix Academy website under the PTG section.

Volunteering at School

There is always room in Mt. Helix Academy classrooms for a parent who has time and talent to share in support of the educational achievement of our students. As with any volunteer effort, consistency and reliability are the keys to success. Parents who have an interest in volunteering on a regularly scheduled basis, are encouraged to make that interest known to their child's teacher or to the Director.

Mt. Helix Academy Family Directory

An online parent directory is available to parents via our online student database system. Parents have the ability to elect to have their contact information available to other parents via the online system.

Parents as Drivers

Frequently, parents volunteer to assist in field trips and after school activities by driving. Because of insurance restrictions, parents cannot be permitted to drive school vans, nor can parents transport Mt. Helix Academy students other than their own children to school functions.

Parent Communication

Mt. Helix Academy intends to provide clear and timely communication for parents and students concerning all school related matters. In its attempt to provide as much useful information for parents as possible, Mt. Helix Academy provides several channels of active, open communication, including the Mt. Helix Academy website (www.mthelixacademy.org), notices and electronic newsletters, conferences and school visitations. The administrative staff of TIEE is always available to respond to inquiry, and the Director of Mt. Helix Academy and the teaching staff of the school are committed to keeping themselves readily accessible to parents and students.

Mt. Helix Academy's Website

Our school website, www.mthelixacademy.org, provides information about the philosophy, methods, and programs at Mt. Helix Academy. Families can check the calendar of events, download forms, view the online photo gallery, and read the News and Notes section to find out more about the activities of our students. The website is also a great source of information for families to share their school with out of town relatives or potential Mt. Helix Academy families.

Notices and Newsletters

Mt. Helix Academy provides a weekly electronic newsletter, "News from the Backpack", to keep parents informed of the current Mt. Helix Academy achievements, happenings and activities, which is emailed to each parent's email address we have on file. Occasionally, additional notices are sent home highlighting important issues and events beyond those covered in the newsletter. Similarly, matters of TIEE policy or notices of school program changes are communicated to parents by letter from either the Director of Mt. Helix Academy or the Executive Directors of TIEE. The school also maintains a 24-hour voice mail system for evenings and weekends in case parents have need to inform the school of issues or events (619-243-1400).

Conferences

Parent-teacher conferences are intended to be a valuable part of each student's education, and serve the need parents may have in discovering more about Mt. Helix Academy and its unique program, or in resolving any questions or concerns about a student's program or progress. In addition to the regularly scheduled Parent/Teacher Conferences at the end of the first trimester, conferences can be scheduled with a student's homeroom teacher, skill-area teacher or with the school's Director by contacting the school's administrative

office. In addition to conferences, which are conducted in private and held in confidence, all parents are invited to our "Back to School Night", held in September. Teachers from each Module take the opportunity to acquaint parents with the materials and teaching methods to be used with students in that Module for the coming year.

Visiting The School

Parents are often interested in visiting their child's classroom while it is in session. They are welcome to do so providing the observation does not create undo disruption of the classroom activities. Observations are limited to twenty minutes and will not normally be scheduled for the same parent more than once a month. Observers are asked to refrain from interacting with the students unless permitted to do so by the classroom teacher, and to refrain from taking the teacher's time away from students and their lessons.

Arrangements for a classroom observation can be made by contacting the Director or Assistant Director at least twenty-four hours in advance of the desired observation. In all cases, visitors, including parents, must first report to the office, sign in and obtain a Visitor's Pass before going into a classroom, the lunch area or onto the playground.

Videotape Program

Mt. Helix Academy has a continuing concern about the progress of its students, the best programs for students and the best preparation for teachers. Consequently, videotapes will occasionally be made of students to more effectively monitor progress toward a student's educational goals. Such tapes often provide excellent opportunities for parents to view their children actively involved in lessons and other activities. They are frequently much superior to actual classroom visits discussed above because students are less distracted and the tape can be reviewed numerous times if necessary. In addition, videotapes may be shown to professionals in training for the purpose of illustrating effective teaching strategies and techniques. In all cases in which tapes are shown to individuals other than the student's parents or teachers, the student's anonymity will be safeguarded by TIEE personnel.

School Services for Parents

Mt. Helix Academy recognizes the important role that parents play in the education of their children and the value of a strong partnership between parents and school in maximizing student achievement. It is also recognized that certain school-based services are of great help to some families. Extended day care, after school enrichment activities and a financial assistance program are currently among Mt. Helix Academy's services for parents. The school encourages parents to recommend other services they feel might be helpful.

Transportation to and from School

Mt. Helix Academy is pleased to facilitate car-pooling by families who live in the same general vicinity. Families are advised to make their interest known to the school's administrative office. The school does not evaluate or certify parents as drivers; nor does the school determine whether parents carry adequate automobile insurance.

Before and After School Program

The before-school program opens at 6:30 a.m. and the after-school program closes at 6 p.m. each weekday, unless advance notice to the contrary has been provided to parents. The service is available at an hourly fee billed in 15-minute increments. The before and after school programs provide supervision of students before and/or after school, but it does not offer the directed activities that are available in the after school clubs and enrichment activities described elsewhere in the Handbook.

Tuition Assistance Fund

For many children, the need for a quality education outside a public school setting is real, but family financial circumstances are such that tuition is only affordable with assistance. It is for such families that TIEE has established a Tuition Assistance Fund. The Tuition Assistance Fund is used exclusively to support families of Mt. Helix Academy students who demonstrate a financial need. Assistance levels are reviewed annually. TIEE's Business Office administers the program. Tax-deductible contributions to this fund are welcomed from individuals and corporations. To apply for Tuition Assistance, please contact the Director or Assistant Director.