



LA PAZ
COMMUNITY
SCHOOL



mep
Ministerio
de Educación Pública

STUDENT & FAMILY
HANDBOOK

LA PAZ COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Our mission is to cultivate informed,
mindful citizens of the world

ONE SCHOOL
TWO CAMPUSES
INFINITE POSSIBILITIES

2024-2025

Asociación Escuela Comunal La Paz de Brasilito de Santa Cruz de Guanacaste.

Cédula Jurídica: 3-002-498041

www.lapazschool.org

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Board of Directors

board@lapazschool.org

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|------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Gabriel Chavez President | Rene Zahr Treasurer |
| Melissa Cerdas Vice President | Laura Gamboa Vocal |
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School Leaders

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Introduction

Our mission is to cultivate informed, mindful citizens of the world.

Our innovative, bilingual, experiential learning program empowers students to develop the analytical skills, cross-cultural empathy, and creativity necessary for fostering harmony within our local and global communities

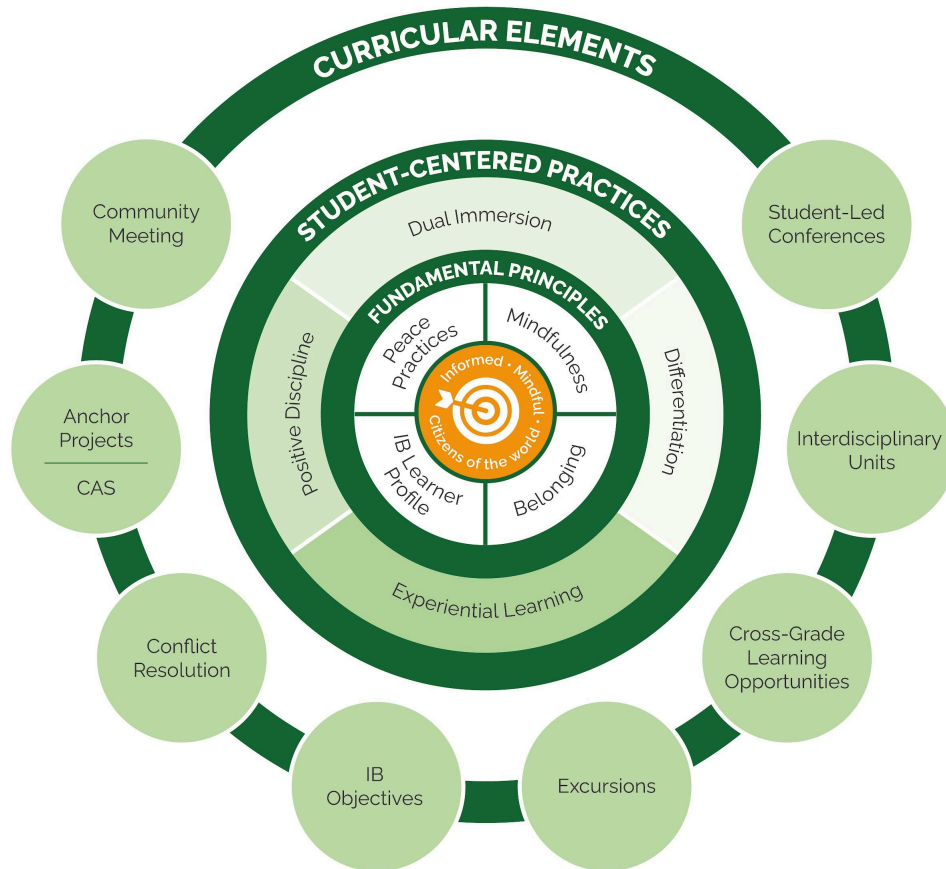
Objectives

1. To form an educational cooperative that integrates the members of a community in creating a collective, bilingual learning environment.
2. To implement meaningful service learning that empowers students to become stewards of their communities.
3. To develop skills and nurture values that cultivate the well-being of self, family, community, and world.
4. To emphasize place-based, experiential learning and discovery.
5. To uphold high academic standards through authentic assessment and grade level benchmarks.
6. To educate the whole child by incorporating the outdoors, the arts, and physical education.

School Characteristics

- A. International Baccalaureate (IB) - Diploma Program
- B. Non-Profit Association
- C. Private
- D. Dual Immersion
- E. Experiential Learning
- F. Preschool - 12th grade (Ages 1-18)
- G. Cooperative
- H. Co-educational

La Paz Core



The La Paz Core provides a framework for how to create an educational environment that unites humans across different ideological, sociocultural and socioeconomic contexts, paving the way for a new generation of informed, mindful citizens of the world. The La Paz Core focuses on programming and skills that value and promote our shared humanity.

The International Baccalaureate Community Profile

La Paz Community School focuses on the characteristics described in The IB Community Profile for all school community members, including students, staff/faculty, parents, and volunteers: we strive to be individuals described as: **inquirers; knowledgeable; thinkers; communicators; risk-takers; principled, open-minded; caring; balanced; and reflective.**

The Peace Practices

La Paz students analyze, reflect upon, and continuously live the four Peace Practices outlined on their uniform they have been wearing since they arrived at La Paz. The practices are the essence of a La Paz education and the goal is upon graduation, all students internalize and understand the complex meaning behind each “practice”.

- A. Develop the self into a peaceful, lifelong learner by improving physical and mental well being through critical thought and extension of comfortable limits.
- B. Cultivate peace amongst family and community by disseminating and sharing love and compassion.
- C. Create peace within the community by preserving the environment and respecting the delicate balance between local and foreign cultures.
- D. Spread peace throughout the world by effectively communicating thoughts and ideas as well as actively listening to all perspectives.

Belonging and Human Dignity

Our commitment to loving and supporting our students for who they are is unconditional. At La Paz Community School, we wholeheartedly embrace our diverse community; valuing and celebrating all individuals regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, faith, neurodiversity, nationality, sexual orientation, physical ability, socioeconomic status, and other personal characteristics given by both nature and

nurture. We honor human dignity by extending a warm welcome to all, fostering an environment of respect and encouragement for our employees, students, and families to share their unique cultures and stories. By doing so, we cultivate a greater sense of cultural understanding, enriching the experiences of everyone who participates in and engages with our community.

Mindfulness

La Paz Staff and Students practice Mindfulness on a regular basis which allows community members to explore:

- A. An understanding of how their brain works
- B. Attention skills
- C. Sensory awareness
- D. Emotional management skills
- E. Compassion & Empathy
- F. Ecological awareness

Accreditation

La Paz Community School is accredited through the Costa Rican Ministry of Education for Preschool, I, II, III, and Educacion Diversificada; Resolution Number C.P. 003-2008-MEP.

M.Sc. Minor Villalobos Rodriguez
Ministry Director of Private Schools

M. Sc. Katharina Müller
Ministry Director of Public Education

La Paz Community School is accredited through the International Baccalaureate World School Program (www.ibo.org), specifically for the Diploma Program (grades 11 and 12).

Master Calendar

The 2024-2025 Calendar is published by February, 2024.

[Tempisque \(2023-2024\)](#)

[Cabo Velas \(2023-2024\)](#)

The La Paz experience creates a vibrant school community that encourages consistent community involvement outside of school hours. In addition to the variety of national holidays, professional development half-days, mid-trimester breaks, trimester vacations, and extracurricular activities, La Paz offers the following enrichment experiences, demonstrating the school's commitment to encourage an all-inclusive community based organization.

Regularly Scheduled Events/Activities

Please note that all dates are subject to change.

A. Coffee House (once per year)

Enjoy the 6th to 12th grade students' variety of talents including dancing, singing, poetry, comedy, and more.

B. La Parrandera (once per year)

Enjoy the K to 5th grade students' variety of talents including dancing, singing, poetry, comedy, and more.

C. Night of the Arts - (once or twice per year)

Experience the Campus curriculum through the lens of the arts and the IB Program

D. El Morpho (once per year)

A night of storytelling for La Paz adults, families and staff.

- E. Exhibitions and Showcases - Once or Twice per trimester
View the projects and activities developed by the students during their thematic units. This provides an authentic opportunity for students to showcase their hard work and they are extra motivated to produce exemplary work because they know there will be an audience!
- F. La Paz Board Meetings - Fourth Tuesday of each month
Participate in the open public sessions of the La Paz Board

Special Events

- A. Annual General Assembly
Annual meeting of the governing body of the Association
- B. Estadio Lleno - September
A sports day at La Paz Tempisque featuring recreational and sports activities for the entire family.
- C. La Paz Costume Party (Día de las Mascaradas) - October
An opportunity to enjoy an evening of costumes and good food with La Paz families
- D. Grandparent and Special Friend Day - November
- E. Giving Tuesday - November
School fundraiser, on Tuesday after Thanksgiving
- F. Field Day - March
A sports day at La Paz Cabo Velas featuring recreational and sports activities for the entire family.
- G. Beach Olympics - March
School-wide friendly competition on the beach, celebratory of the end of the *Wellness*.
- H. Ruta La Paz - June
Annual 5k beach walk/run supporting the scholarship program
- I. Kinder, 6th, 9th, 12th Graduations - May/June/July

We celebrate important milestones during the students academic journey including preschool, cycle 2, cycle 3 and high school graduation

J. Anchor Fair

An opportunity for students to share their Anchor Projects with their families, providing more insight into the year-long, hands-on learning experience.

Academic Programs

La Paz Community School's core curriculum, based on [International Baccalaureate](#), US and Costa Rican standards and benchmarks, is supplemented by the following philosophies and programs. For more detail about specific curricular details, please click on the appropriate link or peruse the philosophy of the program below:

<https://www.lapazschool.org/we-are-la-paz/curriculum/overview/>

Academic Calendar

La Paz Community School operates on a single track modified year round calendar that focuses on minimizing extended vacations to improve student performance and retention of knowledge/skills, including practice in both English and Spanish.

Philosophy

The La Paz curriculum development philosophy is an evolving process where professional educators build on the content, skills, and experiences created in previous years in an organized and transparent manner. Through a carefully developed, authentic, thematic curriculum La Paz educators utilize experiences and the place of Guanacaste to drive the student's learning. Clearly defined expectations combined with an inquiry based approach guide each child's learning journey and discovery of their self, family, community, and world.

“Curriculum Mapping” is the process of connecting all content in grades prek-12 through a comprehensive thematic based yearly study plan that includes content, skills, inquiries, resources, excursions, and assessment for each of the subjects. The school utilizes the program ToddleApp to help electronically track and further develop the La Paz Curriculum Map.

General Standards

International Baccalaureate (IB) - While La Paz is accredited by the IB Diploma Program for grades 11-12, our teachers are also trained to deliver the curriculum using the core philosophies and learning outcomes set by the IB Middle Years Program (MYP for grades 6-10) and the IB Primary Years Program (PYP for Grades k-5). The content and skills for the IB Programs allow for professional educators to teach higher order thinking skills through meaningful curriculum.

Costa Rican Ministry of Public Education (MEP) - La Paz is accredited by the MEP and as such each of the core subjects Math, Science, Social Studies, Civics, Spanish, and English in all grade levels are required to adhere to the standards set forth by the MEP for the five “cycles” of learning in Costa Rica which include Preschool/Kinder, Ciclo I (grade 1-3), Ciclo II (grade 4-6), Ciclo III (grade 7-9), and Educación Diversificada (grade 10-11).

Dual Language Program

Language is taught through theme-based content planned between English/Spanish teacher grade level teams. Content learned mainly in one language is supported through sheltered instruction techniques ([SIOP](#)) and transfers over to the other language through purposeful “bridging” techniques (Beeman & Urow, 2013), in which students are taught to analyze the similarities and differences between the languages, followed by an application of the concepts in the other language.

La Paz's Two Way Immersion Program continues to evolve based on the language dynamic in our community. Approximate percentages of English and Spanish are as follows:

Preschool-12th: 50% Spanish-50% English

Service Learning, Anchor Projects, Pre-CAS, CAS

La Paz Community School firmly believes that service learning is an essential component of a community-based school. Through the use of individual strengths and cooperation, service enhances the students' connection between self, community, family and world. Students utilizing their time, talents, energy, and other resources reflect the school's commitment to benefiting the local and global community. Anchor Projects, Pre-CAS, and CAS classes (Creativity, Action Service) also teach the students how to balance the rights of citizenship with the responsibilities of community membership while integrating the current educational reform recommendations with critical community concerns. These year round experiences engage students in meaningful co-curricular classes that improve our school and local community. Grades K-8 engage in the Anchor Project classes, including projects such as recycling, compost, project localization, raising chickens, protecting monkeys, energy/water usage on campus, sustainable farming, gardening, water, etc. Grades 9-10 engage in Pre-CAS, focusing on the local community of Brasilito. Grades 11-12 engage in CAS class; each individual student or group of students create his/her/their own CAS project to improve the local community in some way.

Experiential Learning

Experiential learning requires a focus on projects and place to create a motivating and engaging learning environment.

In terms of Project-based Learning, we base our academic planning and curriculum work on the principles outlined by the Buck Institute for Education, which states that “project-based learning engages students in deep learning that is enduring and inspires a love of learning through a personal connection to create powerful learning experiences to support the academic achievement and personal growth of students”. Our teachers develop motivating questions that are engaging to students, open-ended, and aligned with learning objectives in order to create powerful projects that are tangible and practical, as well as engaging to students, both intellectually and emotionally.

“Place-based education is the process of using the local community and environment as a starting point to teach concepts in language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, and other subjects across the curriculum. Emphasizing hands-on, real-world learning experiences, this approach to education increases academic achievement, helps students develop stronger ties to their community, enhances students’ appreciation for the natural world, and creates a heightened commitment to serving as active, contributing citizens.”

- David Sobel, Place-Based Education; Connecting Classrooms & Communities

On the other hand, Place-based Learning allows students to address the questions: Where am I? What is the nature of this place? What sustains this community? It fosters not only knowledgeable, but responsible, contributing citizens in both the local and global community. In order to accomplish this, children must focus on self at a younger age, and broaden that focus to family, community, and eventually world, as they grow older. “Love of nature, one’s neighbor, and community is a prime motivating factor in personal transformation.” (Sobel ii)

Cross-Grade Learning Opportunities (CGLO)

CGLOs are very much at the heart of the La Paz learning experience as they represent a balance of both socioemotional and academic learning. Through intentional planning, teachers collaborate across grade levels to identify curricular overlaps so different grade levels can experience the enriching experience of learning/teaching/collaborating with each other. Included in the cross-grade

learning experiences is the Big-Buddy/Little Buddy program where students have the opportunity to form a unique bond with a student from another grade level.

Extra Curricular Activities and Athletics

La Paz Community School offers a variety of after school activities to the student body to enrich the academic experience. We strongly believe that student involvement in extracurricular clubs and activities greatly improve a student's social, emotional, and physical well-being while at the same time teaching them invaluable life skills such as sportsmanship, teamwork, and open-mindedness. Illustrated below are some of the unique examples of these programs. Some examples of activities that may be offered each trimester (this varies depending on trimester) are: swimming, yoga, circus arts, basketball, soccer, choir, surf club, homework help club, dance, students sponsoring students, baseball. This is an ideal avenue for parents/guardians, teachers, and other community members to share their talents and passions with our students by leading an after school activity!

Special Education (Behaviour and Education Support Team - BEST)

Philosophy: The BEST welcomes and celebrates the diversity of our students' learning needs by offering equal access to education for all enrolled students, in accordance with the Costa Rican Law 7600 y 8661. The BEST in collaboration with our Administrative Team are committed to doing everything possible to set up all students for success in an inclusive La Paz learning community. La Paz Community School has a comprehensive admissions process that is dedicated to proactively identifying the extent to which the BEST can serve the needs of all learners.

Scope: At La Paz, we are committed to providing a holistic approach to support the well-being and development of our enrolled students. We recognize that each child is unique, influenced by both nature and nurture. While we celebrate these

differences, we also understand that in certain cases, they may impact the overall learning environment of our school community.

1. Wellness and Belonging (Counseling):
 - a. Our bilingual Wellness and Belonging counseling department is well equipped to address a wide spectrum of emotional support needs using a comprehensive approach that combines remedial and preventive psychoeducation strategies. We offer a variety of services and modalities to cater to these needs, including one-on-one counseling, small group counseling, and group guidance sessions.
 - b. In certain situations, our BEST professionals may recommend that a student seeks external psychological or psychiatric support to ensure their overall well-being. In such cases, we will provide a referral to a qualified specialist. It's important to note that in accordance with MEP regulations, we do not offer psychological, psychiatric, or therapeutic services on-site.
 - c. Should a student's well-being be seriously at risk, we may request families to seek external services. In these instances, our BEST specialists are committed to collaborating with external professionals to ensure the best possible support for the student. Please be aware that failing to adhere to BEST recommendations may impact a student's enrollment status for the upcoming school year, with due process being followed.
 - d. In situations where cases present a genuine threat to the physical or emotional well-being of a student or other community members, La Paz has a legal obligation to report such cases to MEP and/or PANI, or any other relevant legal entities. Alternatively, we may collaborate with private services to support the child's development, always with a primary focus on the best interests and well-being of the student.

2. Behavioral Support:

- a. Our BEST team, in collaboration with our teaching staff, has extensive experience in developing and implementing Individualized Behavior Plans tailored to each student's unique needs. La Paz maintains a zero-tolerance policy for uncontrolled violent physical or socioemotional behaviors directed at any member of the educational community, as it jeopardizes the well-being of our school community. In cases of complaints or inappropriate behavior, the school reserves the right to initiate a disciplinary due process.

3. Academic Support:

- a. By implementing established best practices in Differentiated and Dual Immersion Instruction, our BEST Learning Case Managers and La Paz educators are well-prepared to assess and cater to a diverse range of learning needs including those of gifted and talented students as per Costa Rican law 8899. We have carefully developed a Response To Intervention (RTI) protocol that empowers our teachers and support staff to address the unique needs of all our students.
- b. In cases where pre-intervention strategies prove ineffective within a predetermined time frame, our specialized BEST team steps in to identify and address the student's learning requirements, providing teachers with effective accommodations and individual support plans. If, despite these efforts, a student's learning needs remain unmet, we have the option to collaborate with the student's family and request a comprehensive pedagogical assessment from an external specialist, along with any necessary external academic support.

The ultimate goal of the BEST is to unlock the student's full potential and identify areas for improvement, always with a primary focus on the student's best interests and overall well-being. It's important to note that not adhering to BEST

recommendations may have implications for a student's enrollment status in the upcoming school year, subject to thorough due process.

Career and College Counseling

The Career and College counseling service focuses on an exhaustive analysis of each student's vocational profile, covering their interests, skills, working values, and personality. For this evaluative purpose, counselors implement among other platforms and resources, the Computerized Vocational Counseling System (SOVI), a suite of career assessments from the University of Costa Rica. Through one-on-one sessions, individualized advice is provided to deeply explore and understand each student's talents, passions, and future career goals. In addition to this personalized support, specific assistance is offered in the application and admission process to colleges and universities, both local and international. The main goal is to provide students with the support necessary to successfully address this crucial process on their path to higher education.

Student-Athlete and Artist Support Program ([AACP](#))

Students participating in athletics and the arts may need specific support to ensure they meet academic commitments due to demanding extracurricular schedules. These supports could include, among others, academic tutoring provided by teachers, modifications to the school schedule, and reorganization of assigned tasks. Students may apply to the AACP program through their counselor with acceptance to the program contingent upon authorization by the relevant academic director.

Study Abroad Program

If feasible, a 9th or 10th grade student from La Paz may meet with the counselor to consider participation in a study abroad program that may be selected by the family. The program has to be approved by the administration and the family of the participating student always has to pay the annual / monthly fee of La Paz during her absence to maintain their place.

Volunteer Homestay Program

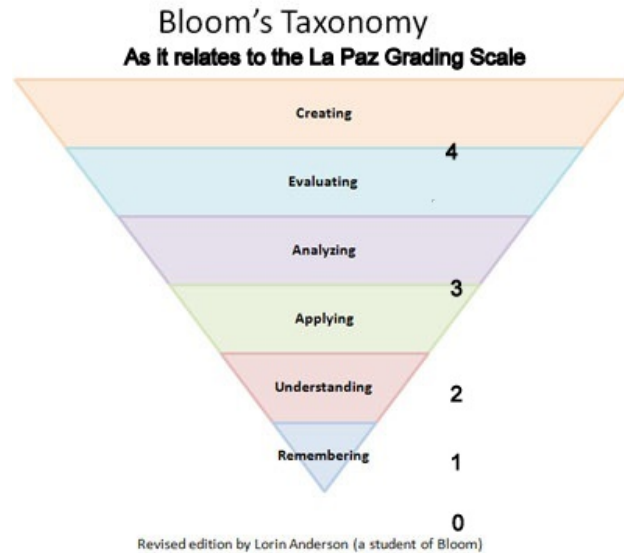
Since our foundation in 2007, La Paz Community School has created a thriving volunteer program. At any given time there is a volunteer somewhere on campus working in small groups with students or helping us with the day to day projects. The program has been so successful because of the caliber of carefully vetted volunteers that have chosen La Paz to dedicate their time, talents and creativity to. Volunteers can also earn college credit while volunteering through Omprakash Edge or local universities.

Assessment/Grading Scale

La Paz Community School's assessment focuses on process as well as product in student development of knowledge, attitude and skills. Students are responsible for creating assessment portfolios with samples of student work, student and group reflection, and student self-assessment in addition to teacher and peer feedback. Preschool assessment is primarily narrative, and kindergarten–10th grades include both numerical evaluation, narrative assessment and portfolios. From Kindergarten through 8th grade, student work and socioemotional development is assessed with a grading rubric from zero to four (0: No Evidence, 1: Emerging, 2: Developing, 3: Proficient, 4: Exemplary) with final trimester grades rounded to the nearest $\frac{1}{2}$ point. Additionally, in grades 9-12 La Paz utilizes a grading system of 1-7 that is aligned with the IB program.

In order to best prepare students for IB expectations and their post-secondary learning, Two grades will be awarded per trimester that will then be combined for one final grade rounded to the nearest tenth. One will be academic, represented by a combination of formative and summative assessments based on IB expectations and rubrics. The other "task and habits" grade will holistically assess overall performance through a rubric based on behavior, participation, self-evaluation, and attendance. The final grade earned for transcript purposes at the end of the year will be an average of the three academic grades representing 60% and the three performance grades representing 40%. La Paz will assess students in grades 9-12 (Chirripó) utilizing the IB 1-7 scale.

In 1956, Benjamin Bloom created a classification of learning objectives known as Bloom's Taxonomy, which consists of three categories: cognitive, which focuses on mental skills (knowledge); affective, which focuses on growth in feelings or emotional areas (attitude); and psychomotor, which focuses on manual or physical skills (skills). According to Bloom's Taxonomy, after a learning episode, the learner should acquire new knowledge, attitude, and/or skills: the learning happens more easily/readily based on creating, evaluating, analyzing, applying, understanding, remembering.



4: Exemplary (IB Scale 7)

A "4" signifies that the student's work exceeds the standard and expectations, and can be used as an example to show other students how to appropriately complete the task at hand. It not only demonstrates mastery of the content, but also demonstrates a careful, thoughtful, analytical and/or creative completion of the task. All the necessary components of the assignment are included.

3: Proficient (IB Scale 5)

A "3" signifies that the student's work is adequately meeting the standard and expectation, however there is room to grow. It demonstrates a general, but not necessarily profound, understanding of the topic at hand. The task is completed in an appropriate and accurate manner, and all of the necessary components of the assignment are included.

2: Developing (IB Scale 3)

A "2" signifies that the student's work is approaching the standard and expectation, however, the student is still developing in this area. It demonstrates a vague

understanding of the topic at hand. The task is completed in a less than adequate manner and is missing some of the necessary components of the assignment.

1: Emerging (IB Scale 1)

A “1” signifies that the student's work is below the standard and expectation, and that the student is at the very beginning stages of development in this area. It demonstrates little to no understanding of the topic at hand. The task is completed in an inadequate manner and is missing the majority of the necessary components of the assignment.

0: No Evidence

A “0” signifies that the student's work is non-existent, therefore the student's performance is non-assessable. This may denote that the student is not completing his/her/their work, or the student has missed multiple days of school resulting in incomplete assignments.

The above rubric focuses on various forms of mastery from Bloom's Taxonomy at La Paz including application, evaluation, and creativity as it relates to content. The grading scale can be translated into a traditional 0-100% grading scale for transcript purposes, but only if necessary using the scale below. Note that the nature of both the IB and La Paz grading system is such that content knowledge and skills are not finite, thus the traditional % scale is not an accurate depiction of exceptional work at La Paz.

1. Student example (Grade 9-12)

| | 1 TRI | 2 TRI | 3 TRI | Average | Weighted Average | Final |
|------------------|-------|-------|-------|---------|------------------|-------|
| Academic | 4 | 5 | 5 | 4.7 | $.6 * 4.7 = 2.8$ | 5.2 |
| Tasks and Habits | 6 | 7 | 5 | 6 | $.4 * 6 = 2.4$ | |

| La Paz Non-Weighted | IB Scale | % Scale | A-F scale |
|------------------------|----------|---------|-----------|
| 3.9-4.0 | 7 | 100 | A+ |
| 3.7-3.8 | 6 | 97 | A+ |
| 3.4-3.6 | 6 | 95 | A |
| 3.2-3.3 | 5 | 93 | A |
| 3.0-3.1 | 5 | 91 | A- |
| 2.8-2.9 | 4 | 89 | B+ |
| 2.6-2.7 | 4 | 85 | B |
| 2.5 | 4 | 81 | B- |
| 2.3-2.4 | 3 | 79 | C+ |
| 2.1-2.2 | 3 | 75 | C |
| 2.0 | 3 | 71 | C- |
| 1.8-1.9 | 2 | 69 | D+ |
| 1.6-1.7 | 2 | 65 | D |
| 1.5 | 2 | 61 | D- |
| 1.3-1.4 | 1 | 59 | F |
| 1.1-1.1 | 1 | 55 | F |
| 1.0 | 1 | 51 | F |
| .8-.9 | 1 | 40 | F |
| .6-.7 | 1 | 35 | F |
| .5 | 1 | 30 | F |
| .3-.4 | 1 | 25 | F |
| .1-.2 | 1 | 20 | F |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 0 | 1 | 0 | F |
|---|---|---|---|

Academic Promotion

Students must earn an average grade of a minimum of "2" (IB Scale 3) in each subject in order to advance to the next grade level. If a student earns less than a "2" in one or two of the core subjects, they can try to pass the class by doing extra work during the July/August vacation. If a student earns an average final grade of less than "2" in more than two of the main subjects, they have the right to take a maximum of two retake exams per subject before the start of the next academic year in order to earn credit for the previous academic year. Otherwise they must repeat the grade and cannot advance to the next grade level.

Learning Portfolio

Learning Portfolios are a fundamental component of the student evaluation as they involve an in-depth view into the student's learning process. The strictly protocolized portfolio process is obligatory and takes place at the end of each trimester. They are an integral part of La Paz's academic and social assessment for each student.

Student-Led Conferences

Parents/Guardians and students are obligated to attend Student-Led Conferences on the last day of the trimester with either the teacher (K-5th) or advisor (6th-10th) in order to review the student Learning Portfolios. Parents/Guardians of preschoolers will have conferences with their child's teachers.

Homework

Homework is introduced starting in Kindergarten to authentically reinforce or extend knowledge and learning practiced in school. In Kindergarten through 5th grade, homework is primarily based on literacy, math, and/or academic projects. As students advance in grade level, homework will take longer (about 10 minutes per night for each grade), beginning in Kindergarten. Students are expected to complete homework when it is assigned. A quiet place to study with no interruptions and encouragement from parents/guardians when needed is the best help a student can be given. Homework may be adjusted to meet individual and family needs. Assignments are intended to promote self-discipline, practice and reinforce classroom work, develop good study habits, and expand learning opportunities for the family.

Parent/Guardian, Student, Faculty Roles and Expectations

All La Paz Community School students and parents/guardians must read the Student and Family Handbook and sign, either by hand or digitally, the contract and the media release before the first day of school.

Cooperative Program

In addition to financial commitments, all families are asked to collaborate with a minimum of 18 hours per year (6 hours per trimester) to the school cooperative program. This type of volunteerism fosters an enriched academic environment for our students as well as builds strong community connections in our area. Family donation time can be categorized in the following ways:

- A. Office/Logistical Support: this may include answering phones, making community connections, fundraising, organizing business logistics, translating, etc.
- B. Transportation/Errands: Collaborating with the organization of as well as participation in field trips, running errands for materials and/or supplies, etc.
- C. Classroom Support: in classroom assistance, project help, one-on-one support with students, cleaning/organizing classrooms, Room Parent, etc.
- D. Specials: leading activities that parents are passionate about or that coordinate with classroom studies, assisting with the Specials program, etc.
- E. Committees: active participation in committees allows for open communication and collaboration amongst families and teachers, and creates the opportunity for critical reflection and analysis of ideas, problems and policies. Some committees include: Library Committee; the La Paz Parent Fundraising Committee; Anchor Project Committee.

Student Rights

In accordance with the Ministry of Education, La Paz recognizes the rights of all students:

- The right to education
- The right to express themselves
- The right to their own identity
- The right to integrity
- The right to medical or professional support
- The right to be protected
- The right to be respected
- The right to be different from others
- The right to not be discriminated against and learn in an environment free of harassment

Bathroom Access

La Paz will maintain access to gender specific and unisex (gender non-specific) bathrooms from grades K-12 with preschool having access to individual unisex bathrooms in their classroom. In accordance with the MEP Anti Bullying Protocol for the LGBTQ+ community, students may use the single stall bathrooms or the bathroom of the gender with which they identify.

Parent/Guardian Participation

Parents/Guardians are the single most important influence in a child's life. A child's success in school directly relates to parent/guardian participation both on and off campus.

How can parents/guardians help their child?

- A. Speak with your child's teacher if you have any questions or concerns about his/her/their progress at school.
- B. Check and discuss schoolwork. Engage your child about his/her/their school day.
- C. Read and respond to correspondence or calls from the school.
- D. Encourage daily homework/reading/project time; turn off the computer, TV and/or radio.
- E. Read to and with your child (in your native language), and encourage reading at home.
- F. Support learning. Do not do the work for your child.
- G. Attend school meetings (parent/guardian/faculty meetings, conferences, school activities, committee meetings, etc.)
- H. Language Support at home learning second language
- I. Use school Problem Solving Strategies and THINK philosophy at home

- J. Validate your child's emotions so that they feel heard
- K. Create clear technology use policies at home to minimize cell phone addiction

Parent/Guardian and School Communication

Students will receive mid-trimester progress reports that indicate the student's performance half way through the trimester through the Quickschools platform. Students will also receive final report cards at the end of each trimester through the same platform, indicating their grades for that trimester. Conferences and Learning Portfolio presentations are mandatory and will take place at the end of each trimester. They are a fundamental aspect of the learning process of each child and provide an opportunity where they can lead a presentation and dialogue about their learning with parents/guardians and teachers present. Parents/guardians and teachers also communicate via phone and/or email when necessary. In some cases parents/guardians may ask or be asked to come to the school for an additional meeting.

Curricular Transparency

Our families are essential to student success and thus we will provide the following tools and channels so they are *informed* about the curriculum their children are learning so they can be *mindful* of how to continue the conversation at home. Here are some of the manners by which families can access the curriculum at La Paz.

1. Educators will share thematic newsletters two times per trimester that provide an outline of the topics and objectives in each subject in addition to important dates, events, and activities.
2. Administration (principal, coach, and wellness/belonging coordinator) will make themselves available for one open forum per thematic unit to engage in dialogue and answer any questions regarding curriculum and content.

3. Educators and Administration will be available to meet with families upon request to further help clarify any aspects of the curriculum.

The academic team commits to proactively communicate the curriculum to parents/guardians so that they may best support their child's learning.

Parents/guardians have the right to know in advance what is being taught and if they have any questions or concerns they should communicate directly with the relevant teacher or administrator. This will be the first step in a dialogue between family and school, focused on ensuring that a child is meeting grade level objectives and parents/guardians are aware of how these objectives are being met.

The La Paz curriculum will respect MEP guidelines and IB objectives while honoring and respecting the diversity of belief systems in our community. The preschool and primary school (preK-6) resources and instruction will avoid direct reference to topics revolving around sexuality. In the grade 7 through 12 program, any age-appropriate content that may be considered sensitive due to the sociocultural context of the school community will be shared in advance so that parents/guardians may have the option for their child to participate. The school commits to providing students with motivating, engaging, and relevant learning experiences that prepare them to be "informed and mindful citizens of the world".

About Unbiased Teaching

La Paz is committed to unbiased teaching practices. Sensitive topics may arise during the learning process through student driven questions/comments or through contextually relevant characters, historical figures/events, and/or concepts. The school recognizes that there are a variety of beliefs within the local and global community, and as such, will approach all topics in an objective manner that respects and honors the dignity of all community members.

Parent Communication Channels

If a parent/guardian needs to express a comment or concern, they should first speak directly with the child's teacher. If a resolution was not achieved, the parent/guardian may contact the school's Primary and Secondary Principals directly.

Fundraising

Scholarship, annual and capital campaign funding is raised each year through fundraisers, private donations, and the Guardians of La Paz program. The remainder is raised each year through various fundraising projects that involve the entire school community. Families are expected to help with fundraising and other activities designed to benefit the school and its programs.

Behavior Expectations for Teachers, Staff, Parents/Guardians and Volunteers

Appropriate adult behavior covers a wide spectrum and includes:

- A. Kindness
- B. Care
- C. Good Communication
- D. Sensitivity
- E. Safety consciousness
- F. Cultural Empathy
- G. Confidentiality

Inappropriate adult behavior similarly covers a wide spectrum and includes:

- A. Verbal abuse, including bullying, belittling, demeaning, shaming or blaming
- B. Cyberbullying including publication of videos of children and/or community members without parental/guardian consent
- C. Drunkenness/Substance Abuse

- D. Physical and/or Sexual abuse or harrasment
- E. Destroying property
- F. Any form of violence
- G. Lying
- H. Stealing/Theft
- I. Any other act that can put the well-being of the school community at risk

If adults engage in inappropriate behavior, they will be:

- A. Informed that their behavior is inappropriate
- B. Requested to stop
- C. As a preventative measure the relevant adult may be asked to leave the school premises for the security of the rest of the educational community
- D. The school reserves the right to remove parents from any and all school related social media and/or online platforms
- E. The school reserves the right to refuse entrance or access to the facilities by any parent, guardian, or community member if any behavior is observed that threatens the security, best-interests, or well-being of the general educational community.

Behavior Expectations for Students

Resolving conflict involves the use of logical and realistic consequences that assist students with their understanding of responsibility and self-control. La Paz Community School helps students learn to take responsibility for their own actions. In order to do this, we provide a system of support that assists students in creating their own plans of behavior including negotiation, mediation, and exploration of the cause of the problem. The following expectations apply to all members of the La Paz Community School community:

- A. We display courtesy and kindness to one another.

- B. We show respect to each other, to ourselves, to our community, and to our environment.
- C. We are responsible for our own actions and words.
- D. We maintain honesty and truthfulness.
- E. We sustain a safe physical and emotional environment.
- F. We respect both personal and school property.

Individual teachers may have age appropriate guidelines for their specific classrooms. Students who develop interpersonal conflicts are encouraged to first try to solve their own problems using a series of 8 Problem Solving Strategies:

- A. wait it out/cool off
- B. find other people to be around
- C. choose to just ignore it
- D. compromise
- E. use your sense of humor to calm the situation
- F. find another area or activity
- G. talk it over
- H. tell the other person what is bothering you and ask them to please stop

If these strategies aren't successful, faculty members will work with the student(s) to solve the problem. Faculty members will promote conflict resolution by offering spaces for reflection and dialogue. During this process parents/guardians will be informed and/or involved.

On such occasions that the school becomes aware that students have participated in inappropriate, dangerous or illegal behavior at non-school sponsored events, the school may communicate its concern to parents to ensure the lessons of safety, health and character. If necessary for the safety of the school community, the school will take further action.

Behavioral Boundaries

The following behavioral boundaries may result in disciplinary action if crossed during any La Paz sponsored activity, experience, or event both in and out of school.

- A. Academic Honesty:** The academic world considers ideas and ways of expressing ideas to be of great importance. Presenting the ideas of another as if they were one's own, or using the words of another author without giving credit to that person, is considered serious academic misconduct, usually treated under the title plagiarism or cheating, and will not be tolerated at La Paz.
- B. Alcohol and Drugs:** There will be no possession or use of tobacco products, alcohol or other licit or illicit drugs by any member of the school community while involved in any student-attended event including all academically related activities, all school sponsored trips, athletic events and school business functions.
- C. Appropriate Dress:** Students must dress in the required La Paz Community School attire each school day, as per Costa Rican law. This includes a uniform shirt and black shorts, skirts, pants, or skorts issued by La Paz Community School. If students arrive at school without the appropriate uniform, they will be provided a uniform and the family will be financially charged for the respective cost of the new uniform. Students must wear closed-toed shoes (not sandals or Crocs), and gym shoes during Movement class. On trips or excursions, students may be required to wear their La Paz uniform. If not, students are expected to dress appropriately and in accordance with the respected excursion.
 - a.** Students in grades 3+ must wear the appropriate PE uniform which includes a gray La Paz Movement shirt, Ruta La Paz shirt, or other La Paz sanctioned athletic shirt. Bottoms may include La Paz issued black Movement shorts and/or black spandex, yoga, or lycra shorts or leggings. Students may wear their Movement uniform to school on the

day they have Movement, and they must change into their regular school uniform after PE class, unless PE is the last class of the day. Athletic shoes and socks are required for PE.

- D. Interpersonal Conflict:** Students who have interpersonal conflicts are expected to try to resolve the problem through negotiation or seek a mediator and work through the process of conflict resolution.
- E. Public Displays of Affection (PDA):** Any PDA beyond hand-holding, quick hugs, and a quick kiss on the cheek is not permitted. This includes (but is not limited to) sitting on laps, kissing on the lips, long embraces.
- F. Bullying and Intimidation:** Bullying includes physical, verbal, and/or emotional overpowering or belittling, and will not be tolerated. Bullying may be face to face, behind someone's back, or via media outlets such as the internet (cyberbullying) or any other form of media. Intimidation and Bullying include any act of discrimination against a person(s) because of their race, gender, sexual orientation, color, ethnic origin, or country of origin. Acts of racism, homophobia, and/or transphobia are considered bullying and will be considered "very serious infractions".
- G. Vandalism/Theft:** Acts of destruction or theft of property belonging to either La Paz Community School or another student will be regarded as a violation of the spirit of the community.
- H. Weapons:** Any item that could be construed as a weapon is not allowed on campus. This includes guns, knives (including pocket knives), etc. Toys that simulate weapons (toy guns, swords, knives) will also not be allowed on campus without explicit permission from administration.
- I. Violence:** Acts of violence against members of the school community including peers and staff will be regarded as a violation of the code of conduct and result in a disciplinary process.

Athletics and Interscholastic Participation Policy

In order to participate in extracurricular activities and athletics, students must be passing all classes with a minimum grade of “2” (on the 0 through 4 La Paz Scale), and they must follow all Behavior Expectations as stated in the handbook.

Technology and Media Literacy

Technology and the internet are invaluable academic tools when utilized appropriately. At the same time, when utilized inappropriately they can cause severe harm. Students will respect and honor the privilege of using technology at school such as laptop computers, tablets, and cell phones. The right to use technology at school is restricted to only academic purposes. Students will make appropriate decisions regarding the physical treatment and usage of technological devices. Any abuse of technology that causes physical or emotional harm to La Paz Community members will be cause for disciplinary action as per the La Paz disciplinary policies.

Use of cell phones, ipods, video games, music players or other electronic devices (excluding computers/tablets) is not permitted during school hours or on field trips/excursions unless otherwise indicated by a teacher. Time in school and during excursions is meant for students to interact with each other as well as the environment around them with minimal distractions.

In Arenal and Tenorio cell phones must remain off and away all day every day from 8am-3pm.

In 11th and 12th grade, students have the privilege to use cell phones during snack and lunch in the IB Lounge Area. During passing time and in the classroom, cell phones and headphones must remain off and away. If there is an opportunity to listen to music while working in class, students may access their headphones and

connect to their computer. Teacher discretion applies to these cases where headphones are allowed in class.

Bus Behavior

La Paz contracts bus services through reputable local companies. For student drop off in the morning and pick up in the afternoon, the buses park on campus while embarking or disembarking. Riding the bus to school is a privilege and benefit for La Paz Community School students, therefore the Bus Behavior Policy is as follows:

- A.** Students are expected to behave in a way that is safe at all times and that is respectful towards the driver and other passengers. Students must remain seated with seat belts fastened for the duration of the ride.
- B.** Bus stop safety is the parent/guardian's responsibility. The school office must be informed if someone other than a parent/legal guardian is picking up a student.
- C.** Violation of any Behavioral Boundaries as previously outlined may result in the immediate suspension of bus privileges by the administration with no reimbursement.
- D.** Three or more reports from the bus will result in suspension for the remainder of the trimester.
- E.** Parents or authorized guardians must drop off and pick up their students at the designated bus stop on time. Failure to do so may result in loss of bus riding privileges for the student.
- F.** If a student who is not a regularly paying customer needs to ride the bus, the parent/guardian must first call the bus company to make sure there is space for the child. If there is space, the parent/guardian must then send permission to the front office in writing or via email, and a daily bus fee of \$6 will be billed to the student account.

School Resources

Any proven lost, damaged or stolen resources or materials belonging to the school must be replaced within one month's time period at the expense of the student responsible. Failure to treat school resources and materials with respect may result in user privilege loss. Additionally, parents will be held financially responsible and will be asked to pay in order to adequately replace the lost, damaged, or stolen item.

Administrative Policies

For any school related issue not covered by the policies and protocols below, the school will utilize policies and/or protocols from the Costa Rican Ministry of Education.

Discipline Policy

Parents/guardians, students and school staff will be responsible for creating an environment that promotes positive behavior, respect and problem-solving skills at both school and home.

The following is a partial list of offenses that could lead to suspension of educational services via a Due Process that results in the cancellation of the contract for educational services and/or the conditioning of enrollment.

- A. Threatened, attempted or actual physical injury to another person
- B. Possessed, used, sold or furnished any firearm, knife, explosive or other dangerous object
- C. Possessed, used, sold, furnished or has been under the influence of any controlled substance, alcoholic beverage, intoxicant of any kind or drug paraphernalia
- D. Committed robbery or extortion
- E. Caused or attempted to cause damage to school or private property

- F. Committed an obscene act (including those motivated by bias or prejudice) or engaged in habitual profanity or vulgarity
- G. Engaged in harassment or bullying of any kind defined as any action or words that may provoke an emotional or violent response or inflict distress
- H. Failed to abide by the Academic Dishonesty Policy
- I. Any other infraction that merits a corrective action

La Paz Community School will open a Due Process for a student upon finding that the student committed one or more of the offenses listed above and that: (a) other means of correction are not feasible or have repeatedly failed to bring about proper conduct or (b) that due to the nature of the violation, the presence of the student causes a continuing danger to the physical and emotional safety of the other students and/or staff.

Conflict Resolution Philosophy

Conflict is an inevitable part of life and school is no exception. What defines a community is not the conflicts that it faces, rather the manner by which these conflicts are resolved. La Paz Community School practices restorative justice as its principal form of conflict resolution and mediation in order to maintain an inclusive school environment. Restorative and inclusive practices require the following in order to be successful.

- A. a community culture that is trusting in the belief that all humans can learn from their mistakes
- B. a community culture where all members are unwavering in their belief that a safe community requires everyone to honestly and transparently communicate about situations that compromise the physical and emotional well-being of community members and places a priority on the welfare of the educational community in general.

- C. a community culture open and willing to actively engage in a transparent and unbiased process that respects the privacy and rights of the students involved as well as the rest of the community
- D. a firm belief that when student conflicts, infractions, or inappropriate conduct arise, open dialogue and communication amongst community members is the prevailing resolution strategy
- E. A steadfast commitment to a reintegration process that involves restorative and inclusive practices that always recognize the equal human rights of all parties.
- F. An incident review and follow-up process where independent mediators from the faculty are offered the opportunity to ensure that inclusive, respectful, and restorative practices have been implemented through a Due Process.

Examples of Restorative Justice and Inclusionary Practices at La Paz

- A. The application of problem solving strategies
- B. Grade level circle meetings to share ideas, feelings, emotions, and brainstorm solutions
- C. The teaching of learning strategies with thematic approaches in order to proactively support student behavioral and academic needs in a group setting such as morning meeting, jumpstart, or advisory
- D. The realization of advisory activities that include individual and group workshops as well as self-reflection opportunities
- E. Scheduled periodic meetings with school counselor, administration, teachers, and advisors for socioemotional support
- F. Behavior and Education Support Team proactive interventions including Superflex and socioemotional awareness workshops
- G. Meetings with families to discuss issues, brainstorm solutions, and actively involve them in the educational development of their child.

- H. Student to student mediations to openly share feelings and emotions will be held provided that the dignity, privacy, confidentiality, values, equity, equality between the parties are respected and there is a mutual consent between those involved and their parents or legal guardians.
- I. Projects, essays, etc. related to the behavioral issues including next steps to learn from through a process of reflection with the expressed intent of improving behaviors
- J. Desired positive behavior - student is put in a position to observe/look for particular positive behaviors among other students and call attention to them in order to reinforce these in the student as well as seek to improve the common good of the school community
- K. Authentic consequences that identify a meaningful corrective action that is directly connected with and proportional to the student infraction

Disciplinary Process for “Minor” infractions

The following process illustrates the steps for “Minor” Infractions,

- A. La Paz educators will work with the student utilizing restorative practices and positive discipline as mentioned above in order to ensure an inclusive and safe learning environment for all.
- B. If the behavior persists, the educator involved will communicate with the parents/guardians to inform them about the practices, requesting a collaborative approach to addressing the behavioral issue.
- C. If the behavior persists after parent/guardian involvement as per “B”, “minor” infractions will be entered into the school's online Quickschools database by the educator directly involved in the case and the lead administrator will inform the parents/legal guardians.
- D. The following are examples of “Minor” infractions.
 - a. Inappropriate interruptions of the learning experience.
 - b. Incorrect use of the school uniform

- c. Incorrect use of electronic devices
- d. Use of vulgar or inappropriate vocabulary
- e. Use of personal articles that are not authorized by the school
- f. Disrespectful behavior towards a member of the school community
- g. Other infractions that by their very nature are considered as minor infractions

Disciplinary Process for “Severe”, “Very Severe”, and “Most Severe” infractions

Due Process: In case of disciplinary situations where accusations are made against a student that may be considered by MEP standards as “Severe”, “Very Severe”, or “Most Severe”, in order to preserve the physical and/or emotional well-being of school community members the following Due Process will be carefully followed and documented via an organized file of “Expediente del Debido Proceso”.

In cases where there are credible accusations related to bullying, sexual abuse, or suicide, the school is legally obligated to follow a protocol as outlined by the Ministry of Education

After exhausting the honest and respectful dialogue with the students and parents or legal representatives, Due Process will be carried out in the case of Severe, Very Severe, or Most Severe infractions. The stage of conciliation mentioned previously will be evaluated, determined and approved by the La Paz administration. It will depend on the consent of the parties and will not proceed for all the acts committed, but will depend on the seriousness and proportionality of the actions committed by the students.

- A. The Academic Principals hereby referred to as the “Investigation Committee” will lead an investigation process that follows the “Due Process”. When necessary, the BEST Department and lead teacher or advisor will provide consultation to the Investigation Committee.

- B. During the entire Due Process, the school must respect the right of the student and his parents/guardians to have full access to the curriculum and evaluations as well as the “Expediente del Debido Proceso” as this is included in their legal right to defense.
- C. For a maximum period of 10 business days, the Investigation Committee will consider the relevant evidence and testimony of any observers and participants to the infraction/incident and will identify the nature of the infraction and consequence as outlined by the MEP guidelines. Any observer/participant who is a minor must be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian during their testimony. (Artículo 146 del Reglamento de Evaluación de los Aprendizajes). If the facts surrounding the allegations endanger or make vulnerable the individual safety and the collective welfare of the educational community in general, the school by means of a precautionary and security measure reserves the right to suspend the alleged student involved for up to 10 calendar days while the investigation of the facts ensues.
- D. Once a decision has been reached and finalized, the Investigation Committee has a period of 3 business days to inform the parents/legal guardians of the accused student in writing of the accusations and possible corrective actions including the number of points that may be deducted from the conduct grade. The letter must clarify that the accused student's parent/legal guardian have the right to seek legal consult, the right to access the relevant file of the accused student that is in relation to the relevant accusations and evidence, and a right of defense. (“traslado de hechos”)
- E. In a period of no more than three business days from the notification of the above letter (“traslado de hechos”), the accused student, accompanied by a parent, guardian, and/or legal representative has the opportunity to provide the Investigation Committee with any relevant testimony and/or proof regarding the accusations. (“derecho de defensa”)

- a. The accused student and their parent/legal guardian/representative also may accept the responsibility for the accusations and that they were given the proper right to defend themselves at which point the Due Process will be closed, the final minutes will be signed, and the corresponding corrective action will be implemented.
 - b. In the event that the parent/guardian does not present the evidence in time or exercise their right of defense in the terms indicated in the preceding paragraph then the Investigation Committee will resolve the issue with the evidence that is available.
- F. In a period of no more than eight business days, the Investigation Committee with all of the evidence and minutes collected will do the following.
 - a. Deliberate to consider the evidence objectively and either select the appropriate corrective action or infraction, modify the corrective action or infraction based on the evidence presented, or archive the file. This process will also include the possible conduct grade reduction based on the corresponding infraction.
 - b. Deliver the substantiated final resolution to the parent/legal guardian of the involved student.
- G. The parents/legal guardians of the student responsible for the actions have a maximum of 3 business days to appeal the decision to the La Paz Comité de Convivencia.
- H. The La Paz *Comité de Convivencia* will have a maximum of 3 business days to review the validity of the Due Process followed in addition to all evidence in the student file from the Due Process as elaborated by the Investigation Committee and determine a resolution to support or modify and/or alter the administrative decision. The Comité de Convivencia will deliver the final resolution in writing to the parent/legal guardian at which point the decision will be final and all administrative processes will have been exhausted. Included within the responsibilities of the Comité de Convivencia is a

commitment to providing a space to cleanse the relationships of those affected by the Due Process in an effort to maintain a peaceful and healthy learning environment.

***Comité de Convivencia* Constituents**

- One School General Director
- Two Non-Administrative Teachers (outside of the relevant Casa)

N.B. The *Comité de Convivencia* will be the ultimate arbitrating entity of the school. The Board of Directors plays no part in any school disciplinary arbitration process.

Description of Severe, Very Severe, or Most Severe Infractions

- A. "Severe"
 - a. The repetition of more than three "minor" infractions
 - b. Stealing or theft of any school property
 - c. Use of profanity or disrespectful language/actions towards any faculty member, student, or member of the school community
 - d. The use of plagiarism on and/or falsification of any school assignment
 - e. The unauthorized redistribution of any school materials or assignments
 - f. The unauthorized use of graffiti on school property
 - g. The use of illegal substances including drugs, tobacco, and alcohol on school grounds and/or during any school related activity
 - h. Any other acts that could be considered "Severe" as per their nature
- B. "Very Severe"
 - a. Deliberate destruction of school property or any property of school community members on campus
 - b. Public behavior that is explicitly against the expected behaviors in the student/family handbook

- c. Possession or use of illegal substances on campus, while in uniform, or during school sponsored events/activities
 - d. Impede or incite the impediment of peer participation in any school related activity or learning experience
 - e. Incitement of peer participation in acts that are harmful to the safety and security of the school community
 - f. Possession of arms, explosives, or any other device that can harm on campus or during school sponsored events/activities
 - g. Any act of discrimination based on race, creed, gender, disability, or any act that is against human dignity
 - h. Repetition of more than three "Severe" infractions within the same school year
 - i. Any other acts that may be considered "Very Severe" as per their nature
- C. "Most Severe"
- a. Stealing, alteration, or falsification of school documents
 - b. Repetitive deliberate destruction of school property or any property of school community members on campus
 - c. Physical aggression towards any school community member
 - d. Repetitive possession or consumption of alcohol or possession/use of illicit substances on campus, while in uniform, or during school activities/events
 - e. Distribution or sale of any illicit substance on campus, while in uniform, or during any school sponsored event.
 - f. Spreading of information that is against public moral conscience
 - g. Other infractions that are considered "Most Severe" as per their nature or any accumulation of more than three infractions, one of which can be categorized as "Very Severe"

Description of "Corrective Actions" - Corrective actions must always respect the naturally given human rights, right to education, and integrity of all parties. The

following is a list of possible corrective actions that may be taken by the school as authorized by Costa Rican Law.

A. "Severe"

- a. Repairing or replacement of damaged property
- b. Transfer of student to a different section
- c. Reparation of damage caused by actions including a public retraction and apology
- d. Removal of the privilege of participating in school sponsored activities
- e. Loss of student government credentials
- f. Participation in interventions/conciliations with rules agreed upon by the legal guardians
- g. Completion of tasks that are authentically connected to the infraction committed
- h. Suspension for a maximum of 15 days

B. "Very Severe"

- a. Obligation to repair any physical or emotional damage done to person, group or property in a verifiable manner
- b. Participation in interventions/conciliations with rules agreed upon by the legal guardians
- c. Completion of tasks that are authentically connected to the infraction committed
- d. No attendance to school for a period of 15-20 days

C. "Most Severe"

- a. Obligation to repair any physical or emotional damage done to person, group or property in a verifiable manner
- b. Participation in interventions/conciliations with rules agreed upon by the legal guardians
- c. Completion of tasks that are authentically connected to the infraction committed

- d. No attendance to school for a period of 20-30 days
- e. Conditioning of enrollment for the following school year.

Conduct Grade

Student behavior is an essential component to success at La Paz. If, after Due Process, a student is found to be culpable in any form of "Severe" (including the sum of 3 Minor), "Very Severe", or "Most Severe" incidents, then the school may elect to deduct the following points off of the student's end of year Conduct Grade. The school reserves the right to condition enrollment for the following school year for any student who has a final conduct score of below 70. The Conduct Grade does not reset to 100 each trimester and as such, represents the accumulation of all conduct deductions throughout the school year. In accordance with MEP policy, if the student conduct grade is less than 70, the school may offer them service projects that are aligned with the best interests of the school and/or community in order to recuperate points. If the project is completed in accordance with clear expectations and timelines established by the academic evaluation team, the student may earn the necessary points to be eligible for re-enrollment.

- a. 3 Minor (Severe) = 10 points
- b. Severe = 11 to 19 points
- c. Very Severe = 20 to 32 points
- d. Most Severe = 33 to 45 points

Searches and Expectations of Privacy

For the safety and well-being of the school community, La Paz Community School reserves the right to inspect and search all school property and buildings for weapons, stolen goods, alcoholic beverages, controlled or illegal substances or any other substances. Refusal to submit to any such inspection or refusal to cooperate in any investigation may lead to disciplinary actions as per Due Process.

Attendance

It is very important that students arrive to class ready to learn between 7:45-8:00am and attend school each day. Parents/guardians must notify the school of all student absences, and regardless of the type of absence, students are responsible for making up the work. The school will record the absence as excused or unexcused. Excused absences are those which have been verified by a parent/guardian and which may include illness, unavoidable personal/family situations or student activities off-campus. Unexcused absences are those which do not meet the above criteria or have not been verified by a parent/guardian. Office staff will make an effort to verify the absence, but in the event an explanation is not received, the absence will be recorded as unexcused.

Every absence that is not absolutely necessary negatively impacts a child's learning experience. Students must attend at least 80% of a year and successfully complete all corresponding work for the absences in order to receive credit for that year. Although La Paz Community School is understanding of unavoidable absences, it is ultimately the student's responsibility to make up for work missed due to absences. Parents/guardians need to be aware that La Paz Community School's curriculum includes much group work, class discussions, and experiential activities, all of which are impossible to recreate or replicate.

For absences such as illnesses, parents/guardians must call or e-mail the office by 8:30 a.m. on the morning of the absence. For absences such as unavoidable personal/family obligations, the parent/guardian must notify administration and the student's teacher(s) directly. For all planned absences, students and parents/guardians should communicate with the teacher to determine a plan that will guarantee that the student completes all make-up work or replacement work in a timely and satisfactory manner.

Tardiness

All students are expected to be in their classrooms by 8:00 a.m. ready to learn. If a student arrives late more than five times in one trimester, the family may be required to meet with the student's teacher to create a plan to address the issue. Additionally, 3 tardies will be counted as 1 absence on the Report Card. It is important that parents arrive on time to pick their children up in the afternoon by 3:00 p.m. Parent pick-ups after 3:00 p.m. cannot be accommodated and parents are responsible for their children after school hours.

Public Health Policy: Lice/Nits

- A. No student will be sent home in the middle of the day if they have lice or nits because it is an unnecessary interruption to the learning experience and causes unnecessary socioemotional harm.
- B. If a student is seen to be repetitively and visibly itching then the classroom teacher may send them to the office during recess or lunch for a lice/nit check if it is not readily obvious.
 - a. If a student has lice or nits then they will remain in class and the school will do the following.
 - i. Send a QS letter to the grade of the child indicating that a case of lice has been identified at grade level. The letter will include a series of solutions that parents can follow if their child has lice. The letter will remind parents that lice are not a public health hazard but they are a preventable annoyance. It will include important information about how to prevent/eliminate lice.
 - ii. Send a letter directly to the child's parents that indicates that the child has live lice and/or nits and that the child will be checked upon their return to ensure that they have no live lice. The letter will demand that parents confirm receipt of the message. If a

child has nits or lice upon their return then they are allowed to continue with their studies; however, the school will send a letter home followed by a phone conversation from the front office.

- C. If a child has lice on three occasions during the school year then the school may call a meeting with the parents to share more detailed information about lice treatment.
- D. On a monthly basis the school will send out a reminder to all parents in the weekly news to check their child for lice and include the strategies for prevention listed above.
- E. On a monthly basis, the maintenance coordinator will ensure that the classroom pillows are washed by his staff.
- F. On a weekly basis, the maintenance coordinator will ensure that the classroom carpets are vacuumed.
- G. Teachers will remind students on a regular basis to keep their hair up and avoid unnecessary contact with each other's hair.
- H. If there is an obvious risk to the community and to the health of the students, the educational institution may establish immediate precautionary actions in the best interests of the students.

Pick-Up/Drop-Off

Students must take their predetermined mode of transportation to and from school (bus, private car, walking, etc.). Administrative assistants must be informed of how each student will arrive and leave school. If a child will be taking an alternative ride to or from school on any given day, the parents must call or email the school to give their son/daughter permission to do so. Students are not permitted on school grounds more than 15 minutes prior to the start of the school day unless authorized by a faculty member. Students may only stay after school if they are registered for a school authorized extracurricular program unless they are in 10th-12th grade.

Admissions Policy

La Paz Community School does not discriminate on the basis of race, gender, sexual orientation, color, ethnic or national origin in the administration of its educational policies, admission policies, financial aid programs or any other school administered programs.

Admissions decisions are based on student performance, effort, ability, behavior, and attendance. Also considered is the commitment of the student and family to the school program and philosophy. As a guide, Admissions will also consider whether:

- 1) La Paz Community School has an appropriate program to meet the student's needs;
- 2) the student is interested in a unique school community where scholarship, leadership, bilingualism, and service are essential;
- 3) the parents/guardians are interested in supporting both La Paz Community School's mission and its students, staff, faculty and administration; and
- 4) the parents/guardians fully understand the financial and time commitment expected.

Application Process

Interested applicants and families should complete the following admissions sequence:

- A. **General Tour:** Interested families and/or applicants will complete a tour of La Paz Community School's campus, preferably when school is in session.
- B. **Application:** Applicants will complete the online application form along with the necessary documents specified on the application form.
- C. **Family Interview:** In the event that appropriate grade-level space becomes available, the applicant and his or her family may be called for an interview with a member or members of the La Paz Community School staff.

Acceptance Procedures

- A. Sign an Enrollment Agreement, Medical Release Form, Student/Family Handbook Contract, and Cooperative Contract by a specified date (before the first day of school).
- B. Pay the appropriate, non-refundable deposit.
- C. Provide a copy of the child's passport or cedula. By Costa Rican law all children must be 5 years old by September 15th of the year entering Kindergarten (Transición II in Costa Rica). This is also valid for each subsequent academic year; however, grade requirements may be honored for non-age qualified students who are transferring from other accredited schools. In addition students must complete two years of formal schooling prior to entering first grade.
- D. Provide a copy of the parent's/guardian's passport or cedula.
- E. Provide a copy of the student's most recent transcript/school file.
- F. Provide a copy of the student's up to date vaccine booklet.

Failure to pay or fill out an agreement/contract by the designated deadline may result in loss of the student's place in school.

Matriculation Process

The matriculation process starts in February of each academic year. Regular enrollment fees are due by the end of November or late enrollment fees totalling are due by the end of January. Returning families who neglect to pay by the given date will no longer have a priority during application consideration, and may lose their student's place for the following year.

Scholarship Program

La Paz Community School's Scholarship Program was developed in order to celebrate the diverse cultural community and socioeconomic diversity in the region of Guanacaste. The parents/guardians, educators, and community members who founded La Paz Community School have a common goal and vision; to bridge the cultural gap between the Costa Rican population and the expatriate population in the area. Because several regional families are unable to pay for their child to attend La Paz Community School, scholarships funded by individuals, families, organizations, corporations, the Students Sponsoring Students Program, and La Paz itself have been created to assist eligible students with their school tuition and fees. Scholarships are awarded based upon a student's economic need as well as academic potential.

Once a Scholarship Application Form has been completed, each scholarship applicant undergoes an interview and home visit by an educator on the La Paz Community Scholarship Committee before the child is accepted into the program. Since La Paz operates as a non-profit co-operative, each sponsored family is asked to contribute a determined percentage of the tuition in order to ensure a sense of ownership and investment in their child's education. In addition to financial commitments, all families (including sponsored families) are asked to donate a set number of hours to the school cooperative program each term. This type of volunteerism fosters an enriched academic environment for our students as well as builds strong community connections in our area. The La Paz Community Scholarship Committee will conduct 3-4 home visits per year with the scholarship families to ensure the sponsored student's and family's success and well-being as members of La Paz. Scholarship applicants must have Costa Rican citizenship or residency in order to apply.

If at any time, the scholarship student and/or family requirements are not being met, the Scholarship Committee reserves the right to terminate a scholarship. These

requirements include: financial responsibility; donations to the Cooperative Program; proficiency in academic and social behavior; and, consistent attendance.

Tuition

The Board of Directors approved the 2024-2025 La Paz Community School tuition structure below for the school year beginning in September of 2024. Tuition includes school supplies for grades preK-5 and books for all grade levels, but excludes a laptop computer and graphing calculator. Additionally, the tuition will include all field trip transportation expenses with the exception of any excursions outside of the country. Details can be found on the La Paz website here:

<https://lapazschool.org/discover/admissions/tuition-2023-2024/>

Payment

Payments will be made on a trimester or monthly basis (as agreed upon in the signed enrollment agreement) via wire/bank transfer, check deposit, or cash deposit. La Paz Community School will not accept cash or check payments in the school office. **Payments of enrollment, non-resident, new student, and annual/trimester/monthly fees made to La Paz Community School are non-refundable.** If a parent/guardian does not pay school fees on time, the school has the right to suspend educational services of the corresponding student in accordance with the rules and regulations of the Private School sector of the Ministry of Public Education.

Bank Transfers

Nombre del Banco: Banco de Costa Rica

Nombre de la Cuenta: Asociación Escuela Comunal La Paz

Cuenta Corriente Dólares: 325-00018309

Cédula Jurídica: 3-002-498041

SWIFT: BCRICRSJ

IBAN: CR27015201325000183099

Dirección del Banco: San José, Avenida Central y Segunda Calle 6 y 8

Nombre del Banco: Banco Nacional de Costa Rica

Nombre de la Cuenta: Asociación Escuela Comunal La Paz

Cuenta Corriente Dólares: 200-02-193002651-6

Cédula Jurídica: 3-002-498041

SWIFT: BNCRCRSJ

IBAN: CR20015119320020026517

Dirección del Banco: San José, Avenidas 1 y 3 Calle 4

Banco BAC San José

IBAN: CR98010200009499906188

SWIFT: BSNJCRSJ

Dirección: Avenidas 3 and 5, San José Costa Rica, CA

La Paz Community School believes in maintaining a low cost tuition structure while offering a diverse, world class, academic setting for students and families to thrive in. In order to ensure the effective operation of the school as well as reinforce our commitment to maintain the highest possible student retention rate, the business department has established the following protocol that will be strictly followed and put in place. La Paz has the right to deny access to educational services to any student who is not up to date with their payments as per Ministry of Public Education decree #24017

- A.** One month prior to payment due date: Formal invoice sent electronically to all La Paz families
- B.** Each week leading up to the due date: Community reminder in the Wednesday parent update
- C.** One week late: Email notice of late payment with invoice attached
- D.** Two weeks late: Reminder phone call from operations manager

- E.** Three weeks late: Final email reminder with invoice and 5% late fee to be applied
- F.** Four weeks late: Email showing new balance owed with 5% late fee
- G.** Six weeks late (halfway through the trimester): Email sent to parents requesting obligatory meeting with business and development director. At the meeting the following points are discussed and agreed upon:
 - a.** Specific structure to eliminate this balance over a 6 week period (by the end of the corresponding trimester)
 - b.** Signed agreement with new payment structure that ensures payment of invoice and late fee within 6 weeks of meeting
 - c.** If at any point during the 6 week period the payment structure is not met then an immediate meeting is called with parents, Business Director, Operations Manager, and School Director to discuss the potential end to student enrolment at La Paz
 - i.** Outcome (a): Committee decides to terminate student enrolment at La Paz at the end of the trimester due to the inability of the parents to adhere to the established adjusted payment schedule.
 - ii.** Outcome (b): A new 6 week payment agreement is reached between the family and school.
 - d.** If Outcome (b) is chosen and the new payment structure is not followed then the student will not be permitted to matriculate at La Paz for the following trimester.

Departure from the school for any reason does not exempt the responsible party from outstanding debt owed to the school.

Procedures and Operations

Lunches and Snacks

La Paz Community School operates its own lunch program, La Cocina de La Paz, that operates Monday through Friday. Families will be provided with a monthly menu and students can choose and pay for those lunches they wish to purchase. All students are asked to bring a reusable water bottle, snack, and lunch (if not purchased through the Hot Lunch Program) every day. Nutritious and balanced meals are essential for children. Candy, soda, and food deliveries from unauthorized entities are not permitted. Reusable containers are encouraged, and utensils should be packed with the students' lunches. Please label your child's lunch box, thermos and personal items. Microwave ovens are available.

Field Trips

Field Trips and excursions are an important extension of the learning process that occurs off campus. All members of the La Paz Community School community must conduct themselves in an appropriate and respectful manner during excursions as well as on campus (failure to do this will result in disciplinary action). Students and parents/guardians will be notified of upcoming field trips via Field Trip Permission Slip Forms, and may be expected to pay for the trip (especially for food, accommodations, possible transportation, etc.), depending on the nature of the planned excursion. Students who do not bring in their Field Trip Permission Slip Form and money (when applicable) will not be allowed to participate in the field trip, and may need to engage in make-up work that he/she/they missed by not attending the excursion.

Sustainability

We promote a conscious use of the resources in our environment, thus encouraging eco-friendly and responsible practices that will contribute to create a more sustainable environment for our school community. For better environmental

practices during activities and celebrations, we suggest avoiding the use of balloons for decorations, disposable containers, plates, and single-use plastic.

Instead, we recommend using paper decorations, paper balloons, or lanterns. For serving beverages and food, we encourage the use of reusable cups and cutlery. To eliminate the use of plastic bottles for drinks, we suggest using coolers with dispensers for water or beverages. It is essential for all students to have a reusable water bottle for daily consumption.

To promote students' responsibility for their own waste and raise awareness of the amount we produce daily, we only have containers for collecting organic waste to make compost and a box in each classroom for paper recycling.

Birthday Celebrations

No birthday cakes or sweets are to be brought in for student birthdays. In lieu of class parties and treats to celebrate a child's birthday, each student may donate a book of their choice to the La Paz library, and share it with the school community during Community Meeting on his/her/their birthday. The student will fill out a sticker to place on the inside cover of the book with his/her/their name and birthdate. Additionally, no birthday invitations are to be handed out in school unless the child invites the entire class.

School Library

The school has a library with a wide variety of literary genres. A part-time Library Specialist works at organizing and improving the Library collection and resources while also working with students on research and citation skills. Also, a Library Committee assists and supports the Library Specialist. Students have the opportunity to check out library books every Friday and/or during various class projects and activities. If a student checks out a book and loses it, the family is

expected to replace the exact book as soon as possible. The Library Checkout Policy is as follows: Students are permitted to check out 1 to 2 books each week when they visit the library, depending on their grade. Students must return their books before they are allowed to check out any new books. For all books 3 weeks overdue, the book will be considered lost and the student account will be charged a \$20 fee. Any student who has lost a book and not paid the fee will not be permitted to check out books until the fee is paid. If a student has lost / failed to return a certain number of books, even if he/she/they pays the fees, he/she/they can lose library checkout privileges.

Money and Valuables

Students need to consider carefully what they bring to school. We expect honesty and respect for others' property, but it is an unnecessary risk to bring expensive jewelry, watches, toys or large amounts of money. La Paz Community School is not responsible for personal items brought to school.

School Supplies

In order to ensure an inclusive and equal opportunity learning environment for all students, La Paz will be purchasing the majority of school materials for children in grades preschool through 5th with the exception of a few particular items.

Disaster Preparedness

La Paz Community School has classroom and campus evacuation procedures for fires, floods, earthquakes, and other emergencies that the children practice and are familiar with. Evacuation plans and maps are laminated and posted in all rooms of the school.

Medication

No medication may be administered by any school personnel without written direction from the physician, parent or guardian. Any medications brought to school are to be submitted to the appropriate teacher who will place the medication in a secure location. Medications must be in their original containers or prescription bottles, including over-the counter medication. Parents/Guardians must fill out and sign the Medical Release Form in order for medications and/or non-prescription medication to be administered.

Medical Information

All parents must fill out and return the appropriate medical release forms before school begins: parents must also provide a copy of the child's vaccination records. Additional release forms may be sent home throughout the year to cover long-term or special outdoor education, field trips, and/or specific projects. A medical release form is kept on file for each child. Please notify the office of any changes in your address, telephone number, place of business, emergency contact information or changes in your child's medical needs.

Accidents and Insurance

Every precaution is taken to ensure the safety of students at school and on excursions. Immediate first aid will be given and parents or the family doctor will be notified promptly should an accident occur. If the school is unable to reach the parent/guardian, emergency contact, or doctor, the student will be transported and treated at the nearest medical facility for his/her/their well-being and best interest. All students are required to have school accident insurance and thus will be registered with the school INS policy unless the parent/guardian provides proof of existing coverage to the office prior to the start of the school year.

Incident Weather and Circumstances

In case of heavy rains, lack of water or electricity, or other unsafe weather conditions, La Paz Community School may choose to close school, delay the start of the school day, or have the school day end early. In any of these cases, parents will be notified via Facebook, Whatsapp, Email, and/or Text.

School Hours

All grades, Kindergarten and up, attend school from 8:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m with the exception of preschool students who can opt for the 8am-1pm program.

Students should consistently arrive on time. The first greetings and sharings of the day have positive emotional and psychological value that should not be underestimated. Some of the most important communication and instructions are given during the first few minutes of the school day. Students who come late miss this and are at a disadvantage. Students should arrive no earlier than 7:45 a.m. Supervision is not available prior to this time, and La Paz Community School is not liable for student safety during non-school hours. Students not picked up by 3:00 p.m. will remain in the main office until they are picked up.

Transportation

Various methods for student transportation to and from La Paz Community School are possible:

- A.** Students may pay for the private bus system that operates under parent and faculty collaboration and organization.
- B.** Students may travel in family or neighborhood car pools using family vehicles.
- C.** Students may ride a bike or walk with the parents' consent.

Please send a note or call the school if your child's ordinary dismissal routine is altered.

La Paz is not responsible for any accidents that may occur arriving to or departing from the school campus.

Visitors

All visitors to La Paz Community School campus must sign in at the main office and receive a Visitor Pass. He/she/they then must report to the appropriate teacher.

Student Expediente (File):

Upon leaving the school every parent/guardian has the right to request a certified transcript from the school as well as their child's file. A signed parent/guardian solicitation for a file or transcript must be presented to the central offices at which point the requested files will be delivered in no more than 5 business days. The student file includes all Report Cards, Secondary School Transcripts, curricular modifications, and documentation provided to the school by the student's previous school during the application process.

Board Complaint Procedure

The Board of discretion does not act as an arbitrating body for academic or disciplinary matters. Additional parent/guardian concerns should initially be brought to the attention of the corresponding faculty member(s). If the parent/guardian is still not satisfied with the school response and has exhausted all communication avenues, then the parent/guardian may lodge a formal complaint with the school Board of Directors through the following procedure. Written complaints may be hand delivered to the board at a meeting or sent via email to board@lapazschool.org.

1. Once a formal complaint is received, the Secretary of the Board shall disseminate such complaint to each Board member for their review and understanding.

2. At the subsequent scheduled meeting of the Board, the complaint will be agendized for a closed session discussion.
3. The initial meeting to discuss the complaint will result in an approved Action Plan that is specific to the nature of the complaint.
4. A subcommittee shall be formed to spearhead the investigation and return their findings and recommendations to the Board.
5. The Action Plan will include objectives, timeframes, and specific actions that the subcommittee will undertake to issue written findings to the complaint.
6. The President of the Board shall, within 48 hours of the approved Action Plan, communicate such Action Plan directly to the parents who submitted the complaint.
7. The established subcommittee will effectively conduct all such interviews, document reviews, and meetings necessary and as outlined in the Action Plan.
8. The subcommittee shall draft Findings that will be presented to the Board of Directors in closed session at regularly scheduled, or an extraordinary, Board meeting following the completion of the subcommittee's findings.
9. The Board of Directors shall review, modify if necessary, request the subcommittee to conduct further information gathering, and ultimately approve the findings of the subcommittee.
10. The Secretary of the Board of Directors shall formalize and send the findings of the Board of Directors to the parents who filed the complaint.
11. The Board will make every effort to respond in writing to all complaints within 30 days of written receipt of such complaint. If circumstances require more time for review, the Board shall notify the parents, indicating the reason for any delay in written response and an estimated date of when the Board intends to send a formal response. Under no circumstances will the Board delay more than 60 calendar days before issuing a formal response to the parents.

Action Plans shall be developed according to each unique situation that may be presented in a complaint, however the following guides may be used by the Board of Directors in developing such plans.

1. Establish a subcommittee comprised of three or more Board Members responsible for the management and completion of the Action Plan and reporting back to the Board of Directors
2. Inform the General Director of the complaint to ensure that all avenues of communication have been exhausted
3. Establish reasonable timeframes and schedules based on the availability of all parties to investigate the complaint
4. Notify those teachers, staff, and/or administrators that are identified in the complaint that the Board of Directors is investigating a parent's complaint that involves them.
5. Conduct in person, closed session meetings with the parents to fully understand the context and issues that comprise their complaint
6. Conduct in person, closed session meetings with every individual that is directly or indirectly associated with the complaint and who has first hand knowledge of the facts surrounding such complaint
7. Request, collect, and review all pertinent documentation from parents and staff that are applicable to the review of the complaint
8. Conduct subcommittee meetings in private to consider and draft findings for review by the board of directors
9. Prepare formal findings and present such findings to the Board for review, discussion, and approval

Family/Student HANDBOOK and MEDIA RELEASE CONTRACTS

All Parents/Guardians must sign [this online form](#) as part of the formal enrollment process