Honor Ridge Academy

2026-2027

Parent/Student Handbook

Table of Contents

Welcome 3
Mission Statement and Goals 4
School Hours/Contact Info 5
Attendance 6
Dress/Backpack 7
Cell Policy 8
Transportation 9 -10
Fire/Emergency Drills 11
School Visitors Policy 11
Curriculum and Instruction 12
Behavioral Approach/Discipline 13-19
School Rules 20
Computer Usage and Internet Policy 21
Media Release 21
Medical Emergencies 22

Welcome!

Welcome to the 2026 – 2027 school year.

On behalf of all our faculty and staff members, we welcome you and your family. Honor Ridge Academy focuses on providing a successful and rewarding educational experience that will impact your life for years to come. The philosophy of our school is to provide a supportive and enriching environment where students learn at their own pace according to their individual strengths and needs. We feel very fortunate to have the opportunity to work with you and your child this year and we want to assure you that we will do our best to provide a positive, safe, healthy, nurturing, and respectful environment which encourages learning and provides the necessary social and emotional support to facilitate growth and success. With everyone working together: students, families and our school team, this should be an excellent school year! If you are a new student, it can be difficult when transitioning into a new school. Our team is available to answer any questions and to support you with your new beginnings. We strive to help students quickly learn they are in a place where they can begin to trust and immediately feel like a part of our school culture. Once again, a big, heartfelt, welcome!

Sincerely,

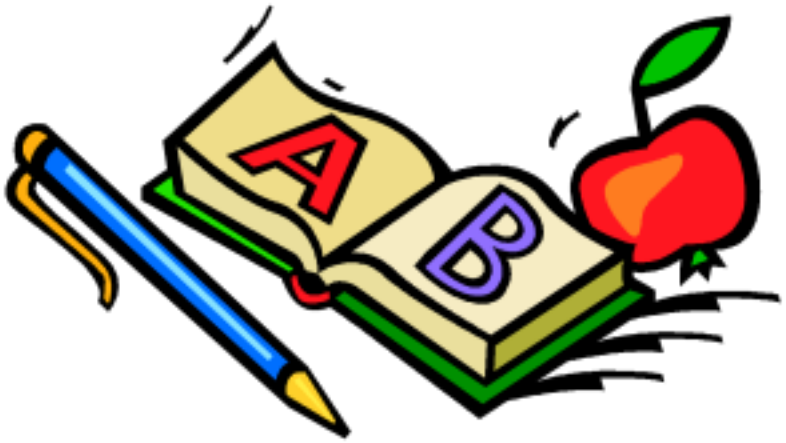
Maria Torres

Maria Torres

Mission Statement

Honor Ridge Academy strives to establish a culture that teaches to the "whole child" and provides a therapeutic, inclusive, supportive, environment that encompasses the social, emotional, and educational needs of each student.

We understand that every child has unique needs. By nurturing untapped strengths, addressing weaknesses, and building self - esteem, we strive to help all students achieve their potential and become independent, productive members of society.



School Hours/Contact Info

Honor Ridge Academy
342 Madison Hill Road
Clark, NJ 07066
Phone: (732)827.5885
Fax: (732)827.5456

Mailing Address & Business Office
170 Changebridge Road, Suite C5-3
Montville, NJ 07045
Phone: (973) 784.4787
Fax: (973)784.4788

School Hours
8:30-3:00pm
In the event of inclement weather

Honor Ridge Academy Inclement Weather Policy:

Honor Ridge Academy uses the Paradigm Instant Alert system to notify parents of any changes to the schedule.

** Check **NJ 12 (website or TV channel)** for listing of school closings.

Honor Ridge Academy makes every effort to contact each parent/guardian in the event of a schedule change. Under some circumstances, that is not possible. New Jersey 12 news, both the website and TV channel, will have any updates. Any cancelled school days may result in additional days being added to the calendar. Parents/guardians will be given as much advance notice as possible of any calendar changes.

Attendance Policy

Student Attendance Policy

Regular school attendance is essential to student success and is expected of all students enrolled at Honor Ridge Academy. In accordance with applicable New Jersey compulsory attendance laws, students are expected to attend school regularly and punctually during all scheduled school days and hours.

Honor Ridge Academy's educational program is designed to provide consistent, structured instruction and meaningful classroom participation. Regular attendance allows students to benefit from continuity of instruction, engage in planned educational activities, develop positive relationships with peers and staff, and make progress toward their individual educational goals.

Parent/Guardian Responsibilities

Parents and guardians are responsible for ensuring that their child attends school regularly and arrives on time. Parents or guardians must notify the school of their child's absence and provide any required documentation in accordance with school procedures. Absences due to medical reasons must be supported by a physician's note when an excused medical absence is requested. The school reserves the right to request appropriate documentation when necessary. All absences will be recorded and addressed in accordance with applicable state requirements and school procedures.

If a student is absent for five (5) consecutive school days, Honor Ridge Academy will notify the student's sending school district in writing.

Student Responsibilities and the Importance of Attendance Students are expected to attend school consistently, participate in classroom instruction, and make every effort to engage in their educational program.

Excessive or repeated absences may interrupt the learning process, interfere with academic progress, and limit opportunities to achieve educational and individualized program goals. Attendance is a shared responsibility among the student, parent or guardian, school, and, when applicable, the sending school district. Honor Ridge Academy recognizes that individual student circumstances may require consideration and will address attendance concerns in accordance with applicable laws, regulations, and the student's individual needs.

Consequences of Excessive Absences

Excessive or unexcused absences will result in further review and communication with the parent or guardian and the sending school district, as appropriate. Attendance concerns may affect a student's academic progress, course completion, and eligibility for graduation, where applicable, subject to applicable requirements and individual circumstances. Honor Ridge Academy expects families to work collaboratively with the school to address attendance concerns and support each student's consistent participation in the educational program.

Dress/Backpack/Phone Policy

Dress Policy:

Honor Ridge Academy students are expected to be neat and clean in appearance (i.e., no excessively ripped jeans). The Administration will determine the appropriateness of a student's clothing if there is a question. Any clothing which promotes alcohol, drugs, tobacco products or currently recognized gang symbols, which are racially or sexually offensive or demeaning, or which otherwise interferes with the educational process is not allowed. Hats, hoods, head coverings, slippers, flip-flops, "shoe skates", and sunglasses should not be worn in school or on field trips unless deemed appropriate. Undergarments should be covered in their entirety. Footwear or clothing that has any features which may damage school property is not allowed. Students may not wear beachwear, bare midriff shirts, halters, tube tops, camisole shirts with less than 1" straps, short shorts or skirts (no more than 6" above the middle of the knee), pajama pants and tops (exception: Dr. Seuss week), baggy pants, long pants dragging on the ground, tight shear leggings without a long top covering the middle of the thigh, transparent clothing, or extremely low hip huggers. Honor Ridge Academy will not be responsible for the loss of jewelry, games, and other personal items. Inappropriate T-shirts are not allowed and will be turned inside out and should not be worn again in school. Large earrings hoops or jewelry with metal studs or chains of any kind may not be worn at school due to safety concerns. Small posts will be allowed with parental permission.

Backpack Policy:

Students are required to use a clear backpack. Any backpack that is not transparent will be checked by staff upon arrival and stored during the school day. The school staff has the right to store transparent backpacks as well, if deemed necessary.

Cell Phone Policy:

Cell phone usage in school is prohibited by students. Cell phones must be turned in daily upon arrival. If a student refuses to hand in the phone, he/she will remain in the office, and a parent/guardian will be contacted. Student will remain in the office until the student is compliant and is able to hand in the phone. A school administrator will assign the decided discipline for their non-compliance. The parent/s or guardian will be asked to keep the phone from coming to school due to the student's non-compliance. If a student is found to have a concealed phone on them, they will receive in-school suspension, and the phone will be confiscated. Once confiscated the parent/s or guardian must come to school to retrieve the phone. The parent/s or guardian will be asked to keep the phone from coming to school. A student who breaks the phone policy in any way will be ineligible to make honors or mention due to their non-compliance or concealing a phone.





Transportation

I. **Bus Discipline** – All students are expected to display appropriate behavior while traveling to and from school. If a student engages in behavior that is dangerous to self or others, 911 will be called. The police may take your child to the police station, and it will be the parent's/guardian's responsibility to meet the student at the police station. Behaviors at this level will cause a student to have in-school suspension. In the event a student engages in continuous behavior that is dangerous to the student and the well-being of others, the student will receive additional in school suspensions. Additionally, the bus company or sending districts may suspend your child from the bus, in these cases, the PARENT/GUARDIAN WILL BE RESPONSIBLE for their child's transportation until a meeting can be arranged with the Parent/Guardian, Child Study Team and Honor Ridge Academy in order to review the Individual Educational Plan (IEP) and disciplinary action.

II. **Bus Arrival/ Departure –** Transporting students can be a very challenging job. Safety MUST be a PRIORITY. Please talk with your child about appropriate bus behavior.

- Listen to the bus driver and attendant.
- Stay in your seat at all times, unless directed by the driver or aide.
- Always stay buckled up!
- Engage in appropriate conversation.
- Cursing is unacceptable and will be reported!
- Soft voices should ALWAYS be used.
- Keep hands and body parts inside windows.
- No inappropriate gestures out of windows.
- No throwing anything out of the windows of the bus.

● No teasing, provoking or hitting others.
● No cell phone usage on bus or in school

When a driver or an attendant reports a student doing any of the above, the student may start his day in the office area and remain there until he is able to discuss his behavior and accept the consequences/s which are given for his actions. In-school suspensions will be given for severe and/or repetitive behaviors.

It is important for you, as the parent(s)/guardian(s), to meet the bus driver and assistant working with your son. Please be advised that buses should not arrive at Honor Ridge Academy before 8:15 a.m. Students are not dismissed from the bus until 8:30 a.m., and the afternoon dismissal from school is at 3:00 p.m.

Honor Ridge Academy is **NOT RESPONSIBLE** for **transportation. Your school district has contracted with the transportation company. Please contact the school district or bus-company directly, if you are having problems**. Make sure to exchange phone numbers with the bus driver. Honor Ridge Academy is responsible for bus drills, which will be conducted periodically, as mandated by the state.



Fire/Emergency Drills

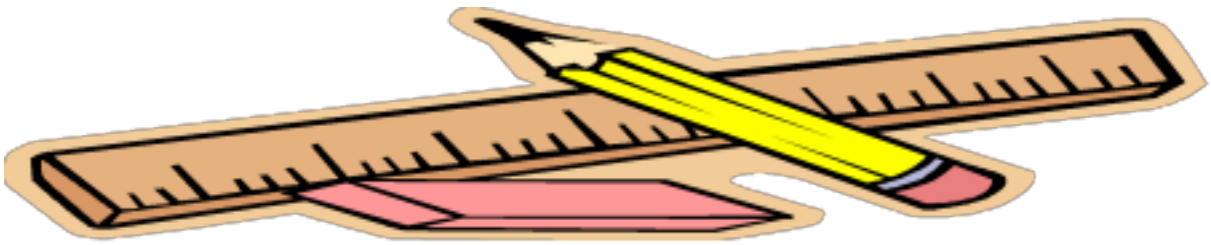
Fire drills are held once each month in accordance with New Jersey State Law. The drills help students learn to safely evacuate the building in the event of a fire. Students are taught to react quickly and follow directions during the fire drills.

Bus evacuation drills are held at regular intervals. All students are required to participate in these safety drills.

Emergency Management Drills will be held once monthly to ensure the preparedness of students to act promptly and appropriately in the event of an emergency. Teachers will be trained and in turn, guide and train the students before and during the drills.

School Visitors

In an effort, to keep our students, staff, and school secure, all visitors must be "buzzed in" to the school building and shall report to the school office vestibule to sign in and obtain a visitor's pass. A "visitor" is anyone other than an active HRA employee, or a pupil enrolled at HRA. For example, a parent, relative, special guest, or a district representative. Visitors may not consult with the teaching staff or pupils during class time without the principal's permission.



Curriculum and Instruction

Our curriculum is designed to provide each student with the most fulfilling education we can provide. We provide a full and varied school curriculum that is aligned with New Jersey Student Learning standards (NJSLS) which provide clear and consistent learning goals across nine distinct content areas to help prepare students for postsecondary success. These standards clearly demonstrate what students are expected to learn at specific grade levels and bands, so that every parent and teacher can understand and support student learning. We utilize the IEP along with the NJSLS and varying strategies to accommodate individual students who have special learning needs. We manage this important balance in several ways. By combining flexible academic instruction, with a school-wide social skills training program, positive behavioral supports, emotional/behavioral counseling and small classroom settings, which allow our teachers to provide individual support and strategies for each student. Instructional lessons are taught in smaller units over longer periods of time. As a result, students can fill in gaps in their education and learn at a more reasonable and student-centered pace.

The high school curriculum is designed to fulfill the state mandated requirements for graduation. Each year, every high school student meets with an academic advisor to make sure they are on track to graduate, and to create a plan to earn the necessary credits for each district.

"Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire."
- William Butler Yeats"

Discipline/Behavioral PointsSystem

Therapeutic Behavioral Program Description and Policy

Program Description

Honor Ridge Academy provides a therapeutic behavioral program which utilizes a multi-disciplinary team approach that combines student behavioral outcome with programmatic performance. The following system is in place to support students and to guide them toward making good choices and decisions. The goal is for students to be successful in their academic and behavioral goals. Safety is always a primary goal and one that is taken seriously. Building students' self-esteem, social and emotional skills, and teaching about healthy choices and responsibility for their choices is a focus in our program.

Point System

Students at Honor Ridge Academy ae given the ability to earn points daily which are reflective of their behavior. (See description below) Recognition daily is provided through teacher/staff praise and tangible rewards. Points are totaled each day and by the end of the week students can make an honorary status that will enable them to receive tangible rewards, trips, special privileges, etc. as selected by the principal, behavioral team, social workers, and classroom teachers. Whole classrooms can also work toward behavioral goals, allowing them to earn special trips, rewards, etc.

School Arrival

When students arrive at school they are expected to enter in an orderly way. They will be greeted each morning at the door and will be scanned by a behavioral staff member for metal detection. This is strictly done for safety purposes; respect and sensitivity are displayed during these times. Students will leave their backpacks, electronics, games, etc. with the behavioral staff.
The backpacks will be kept in a large bin. The other items will be collected, labeled, put in individual plastic bags, and kept in a safe area until needed. If students have permission from their teachers, they will be allowed to have approved items during their earned time in class. This is based on behavior and up to the teacher's discretion; otherwise, the items are given out during dismissal. Students may not use their phones during school hours.

De-escalation of Behavior

A proactive role in de-escalating behaviors and recognizing detached and or depressed behaviors is fundamental in dealing with our special need's populations. All staff will receive ongoing training in these areas. If a student becomes agitated and/or a possible danger to others or him/herself, a staff member trained in crisis intervention and/or counseling will be called upon to intervene when necessary. If needed, the student may spend a few minutes in the office to "reset" or calm down and prepare for the transition back into the classroom. If further counseling were required, the student's social worker would be involved. For ongoing serious behavioral concerns, a team approach would be implemented whenever necessary. Ongoing communication between school staff, parents, and/or guardian,

and CST case manager, is essential.

Suspension

In-school suspensions are given for dangerous or non-compliant behaviors, bringing in prohibited items, fighting, violent/aggressive or bullying behaviors. These behaviors are unacceptable in school, on the school bus, or at the bus stop. If any of these behaviors take place, an in-school suspension will be utilized. The length of in-school suspension is dependent upon the severity of the behavior, the development and maturity level of the student, and the levels of harm or act. The parent/guardian and CST will be notified. In cases of students displaying extremely unsafe behaviors, a team decision to suspend out of school may be necessary.

Termination

In the rare instance that a student behaves in a way that seriously compromises the feeling of safety for students and/or staff termination would be considered. This is a decision that would be considered carefully by the Administrative Review Committee.

Beverages

Open beverages are NOT allowed on the school bus. If a beverage is brought to school for lunch, then it must be an unopened sealed beverage.

Illegal Substances, Alcohol, Tobacco Policy

Honor Ridge Academy is a smoke-free environment and it is a violation of the law for any person to smoke within the school building or within 500 feet of the school grounds. School

officials will confiscate any tobacco product and notify the student's guardian(s) of such possession. Appropriate consequence/s will be determined by counselors/administration. Alcohol possession or use is illegal for persons under the age of 21 and will be dealt with in a manner consistent with the New Jersey Statutes and Laws. Any student suspected of possession or use of alcohol may be subject to search.
The use or possession of illegal drugs is a crime and will be dealt with in a manner consistent with the New Jersey Statutes and Laws. Any student suspected of possession or use of illegal drugs may be subject to search. The use or possession of Tobacco, Alcohol, or Illegal substance will not be tolerated as it jeopardizes the safety of the school community.

As Honor Ridge Academy is a therapeutic educational environment, we seek to build and encourage support for any of the students' struggles/needs. Therefore, in addition to any of the aforementioned safety measures that are consistent with NJ Statutes and Laws, any student found to be in possession of and/or suspected to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol are subject to a health screening and must be assessed by a physician prior to the student's return and any follow up requirements being decided. Return requirements may include any of the following:

1. A physician's statement on the "Physician Examination Report" form stating the student is mentally & physically able to return to school.
2. Further drug/alcohol screening/assessment by a certified professional if a physician examination reports active substance use (the school provides referrals to certified/licensed professionals or will assist families to find services).

3. Further drug/alcohol screening/assessment by a certified/licensed professional if a physician examination is not completed/returned within ***24 hours.***
4. A team meeting including the guardian (s), the student, collaborating agencies, and HRA professionals may be required by the administration prior to a student's return regardless of the Physician Examination Report results.

Weapons

All weapons and dangerous instruments are expressly forbidden from the building and grounds of Honor Ridge Academy. Weapons and dangerous instruments include but are not limited to; laser pointers, guns (air, paint, BB, pellet, dart, revolver, rifle, non-working, water, toy, or collectible) slingshots, tasers, or knives of any size or use. Students may not bring hammers, screwdrivers, or any tools that could harm another person, whether accidental or otherwise. The Administration of Honor Ridge Academy reserves the right to deem any object unsafe, even if not listed above. Honor Ridge Academy views the possession of weapons with the utmost disapproval, and the possession of a weapon or dangerous instrument will result in a special meeting to address the appropriateness of Honor Ridge Academy as a continued placement, and where the law allows, will result in criminal prosecution.
The police will be notified if a student brings a weapon or dangerous instrument to school.

Team Meetings

Team meetings within the school involving teachers, administrative, social workers and behavioral staff are utilized when concerns arise. The concern may involve a whole

classroom dynamic and or an individual student or students that require a team effort and possibly a behavioral plan/s.

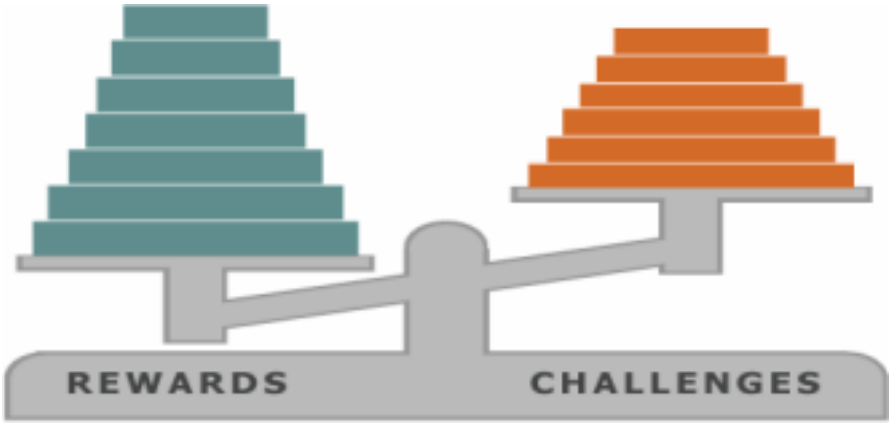
Our system-wide therapeutic behavioral program is for all students. The Code of Conduct fosters respect for self and others. The key components are: Respectfulness, Responsibility, Cooperation, Self- Discipline, and Self-Determination; these components are reflected in the school rules.
Honor Ridge Academy has five rules that are implemented throughout the school day. These include: Be There, Be Ready, Be Responsible, Be Respectful, Personal Space, Follow directions. (See on page 19). These rules are Poster size and posted in each classroom area.

Students earn points for meeting school and classroom expectations. Each student starts every class period with zero points. Students do not lose points for misbehaviors rather they earn points for appropriate behaviors.

Students can earn: High Honors if they make 95% of their points, Honors if they make 86% of their points and Mention if they make 75% of their points. The possible weekly points total is 100 points.

When students earn status, they can purchase items from our school store on Fridays, as well as earn honor's trips, special events, special tangible rewards or treats. The class as a whole may work toward motivating each other in the class to earn status for a special trip, treat, etc. If students continuously earn status consecutively, they are eligible for more desirable trips, i.e. bowling; tangible rewards, or privileges.

In addition, students may take advantage of Honor's Art the last period of the day on Fridays. They are also eligible to attend an Honor's swim at the YMCA on Friday mornings. Students with Honors and Honorable Mention status must choose between Friday's activities. High Honor Status' students may participate in both activities.







Honor Ridge Academy Rules

Students earn points for meeting school and classroom expectations. Each student starts every class period with zero points. Students do not lose points for misbehaviors rather they earn points for appropriate behaviors.

Be there be ready:

- Transition appropriately to and from class.
- Enter room quietly and sit appropriately.
- Remain in assigned area.
- Focus eyes on speaker.

Be responsible:

- Participate in all class activities.
- Work quietly.
- Focus on self.
- Use anger management strategies when upset.
- Use materials appropriately.
- Be respectful:
- Remain quiet when others speak.
- Use appropriate gestures.
- Encourage others to do well.
- Treat teachers, staff, and peer with respect.
- Use polite and appropriate language.
- Raise your hand to speak.

Personal Space:

- Keep hands and feet to yourself.
- Maintain appropriate social distance.
- Use only your own materials unless given permission.

Follow Directions:

- Follow directions and procedures the first time they are given.
- Ask questions when confused.

Computer/Internet Usage Policy

Internet Terms and Conditions

Use of the Internet, which has great potential for education, also carries a potential for abuse. It is the purpose of this policy, as well as the contract for Internet use, to assure that all who use the school service Internet or other telecommunications, both students and faculty, use this valuable resource in an appropriate manner.

Acceptable Use:

The purpose of the Honor Ridge Academy network Internet access is to support research and education in the school. Use of the Internet should be in support of education and research consistent with the education objectives of the school.

Media Release

Media Release

Upon admission, parents will be asked to complete a media release form. It is up to the parent/guardian to decide whether pictures of their child can be utilized for the website, brochures, or other reasons when pictures would be shared for public purposes. This applies to all media, with the exception of in-house photos. We do take pictures of students for the yearbook, our honors program, and for classroom projects, etc.

The yearbook is a normal and appropriate celebration of a school year that includes all students and staff. Also, the honors board and in-class projects are for our eyes only and are not shared outside of the school. We will take and utilize photos for in house use or the yearbook unless a parent/guardian writes a letter to the principal requesting that their child's picture not be taken and displayed under any circumstances

Medical Emergencies

Medical Emergencies

In the event of an emergency, students will be taken to:

Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital Rahway

865 Stone St,

Rahway New Jersey 07065

or

JFK Medical Center

65 James St, Edison, NJ 08820

Or

Trinitas Regional Medical Center

225 Williamson St, Elizabeth, NJ 07202

Allergies/Medical Conditions:

Honor Ridge Academy employs a full-time School Nurse during school hours. The nurse should be notified in the event of any medical conditions or allergies that may arise or exist.