

# Blackstone Academy Charter School

## Handbook 2017-2018

### **Student Welcome**

Welcome to the world of Blackstone Academy! The Student Voice Community Improvement Project (CIP) from the first quarter of the inaugural year of Blackstone Academy debated most of the ideas in this handbook. Through many discussions, deliberations, and arguments we created rules so that the teachers were not the only voices heard. We thought long and hard and looked at all sides of the issues before we compromised and came to a consensus. It took a group of many different people to create this document. We hope that you agree with the decisions we have made.

#### *Student Voice CIP 2002-03:*

Sindy Alvizures	Alex Montenegro
Amber Deslauriers	Adamaris Morales
John DosSantos	Angela Perez
Jason Fall	Eddy Sandoval
Luis Garcia	Haley Simpson
Omar Gomez	Derick Shorts
Laken Lima	Andreana Vega
Kattie Milazzo	Miguel Zapata

***Since then, all major policy changes are discussed annually with all members of the school community and several adjustments have been made to policies. The changes are approved annually by the Blackstone Academy Board of Directors***

### **Development and History**

Despite increasingly vigorous efforts in recent years to increase levels of student achievement and reduce high school dropout rates, schools in the cities of Providence, Pawtucket and Central Falls continue to face significant challenges that have limited their ability to make progress with student performance and school improvement at the secondary school level. Students and families who have sought a public school alternative to the traditional comprehensive secondary schools in the two communities have had few choices locally. This need was recognized by a group of interested educators and youth workers from the SPIRIT Educational Program who began to formulate a plan to open a secondary charter school to serve students in Providence, Pawtucket and Central Falls. These individuals had worked for many years with students from these cities. More than three years before opening Blackstone Academy, this group of individuals began to meet, formulate the plan for the school, and explore the requirements for submitting an application. Blackstone Academy, which opened in 2002, demonstrates the fruits of their extensive labors.

### **Mission Statement**

The mission of Blackstone Academy is to build a strong community of learners and leaders. In a small, student educational environment that fosters independent inquiry, teamwork, and communication, students develop the skills to solve problems and use their voice in ways that lead to success in the academic, social, and professional arenas. Students demonstrate their achievements through a process of discovery, presentation, and reflection shaped by active engagement in community life. This learning process begins with themselves, moves forward with an exploration of the local community, and ultimately integrates an understanding of the wider world as students become responsible, motivated, life-long learners.

## **Core Principles of Blackstone Academy Charter School**

Blackstone Academy is organized around the following guiding educational principles:

- 1) The curriculum is standards-based and incorporates project-based learning that is linked to an educational framework organized around community discovery and authentic performance.
- 2) Multi-age classes and low student-teacher ratios, coupled with a strong advisory system, provide the personalized guidance needed to ensure student success. Defined achievement and exit criteria provide the benchmarks for improving student learning and assessing student progress.
- 3) Teaching is focused on inquiry-based learning strategies utilizing differentiated instructional techniques that are responsive to the multiple intelligences and which incorporate the arts, technology, and an emphasis on social and emotional learning.
- 4) The curriculum is interdisciplinary and community-connected, involving multiple opportunities for students to cultivate leadership and life skills. We form partnerships with businesses and institutions that enhance student learning and discovery by providing a wide variety of integrated, community-based learning activities.
- 5) Governance is based on a partnership involving students, parents, faculty, and representatives from the wider community. These educational principles define Blackstone Academy's philosophy of teaching, learning, and administration, inform the methods for providing instruction to students, and suggest a framework for improving student learning and assessing student progress.

## **School Goals**

The overall goals of Blackstone Academy are:

1. To improve student learning through a rigorous, standards-based academic program linked to project-based learning activities organized around a "spheres of community discovery" educational model.
2. To support student growth and achievement in an educational environment marked by a strong emphasis on healthy, respectful, interpersonal relationships and defined exit criteria.
3. To utilize a wide range of instructional practices and to incorporate the arts and technology to maximize student learning.
4. To cultivate leadership and life skills and a respect for diversity through community partnerships which connect students with opportunities to develop academic and social skills in a real-world context.
5. To empower students and families through their strong participation in an inclusive school government process.
6. To strengthen the local community through student contributions to "quality of life."

## **Coalition of Essential Schools**

Blackstone Academy is a proud member of the Coalition of Essential Schools. The Coalition is a group of several hundred schools across the country trying to improve education by following several guiding principles:

1. The school should focus on helping young people **learn to use their minds well**. Schools should not attempt to be "comprehensive" if such a claim is made at the expense of the school's central intellectual purpose.

2. The school's goal should be simple: that each student **master a limited number of essential skills and areas of knowledge**. While these skills and areas will, to varying degrees, reflect the traditional academic disciplines, the programs design should be shaped by the intellectual and imaginative powers and competencies that the students need, rather than by "subjects" as conventionally defined. The aphorism "less is more" should dominate: curricular decisions should be guided by the aim of thorough student mastery and achievement rather than by an effort to merely cover content.

3. **The school's goals should apply to all students**, while the means to these goals will vary as those students themselves vary. School practice should be tailor-made to meet the needs of every group or class of students.

4. Teaching and learning should be personalized to the maximum feasible extent. Efforts should be directed toward a goal that **no teacher have direct responsibility for more than 80 students in the high and middle school** and no more than 20 in the elementary school. To capitalize on this personalization, decisions about the details of the course of study, the use of students' and teachers' time and the choice of teaching materials and specific pedagogies must be unreservedly placed in the hands of the principal and staff.

5. **The governing practical metaphor of the students should be student-as-worker, teacher-as-coach**. A student's job is to actively pursue his/her own learning. A teacher's job is to guide and support the students' learning. The coaching style of teaching will provoke students to **learn how to learn**, and thus teach themselves.

6. Teaching and learning should be documented and assessed with tools based on student performance of real tasks. Students not yet at appropriate levels of confidence should be provided intense support and resources to assist them quickly to meet those standards. Multiple forms of evidence, ranging from on-going observations of the learner to completion of specific projects, should be used to better understand the learner's strengths and needs and to plan for further assistance. Students should have opportunities to exhibit their expertise before family and community. **The diploma should be awarded upon successful demonstration of mastery**-an "exhibition". These exhibitions of the student's grasp the central skills and knowledge may be jointly administered by the faculty and by higher authorities. As the diploma is awarded when earned, the schools program proceeds with no strict age grading and with no system of "credits earned" or "time spent" in class. **The emphasis is on students' demonstration that they can do important things**.

7. **The tone of the school should stress values of unanxious expectation, trust and decency** (fairness, generosity, and tolerance). Appropriate incentives for the school's particular students should be emphasized and parents treated as essential collaborators.

**8. Ultimate administrative and budget targets should include, in addition to total student loads per teacher of eighty or fewer pupils, substantial time for collective planning by teachers, competitive salaries for staff and an ultimate per-pupil cost not to exceed that at traditional schools by more than ten percent.** To accomplish this, administrative plans may have to show the phased reduction or elimination of some services now provided students in many traditional comprehensive secondary schools.

**9.. The school should model democratic, non-discriminatory practices and inclusive policies, practices, and pedagogies.** It should model democratic practices that involve all who are directly affected by the school. The school should honor diversity and build on the strength of its communities, deliberately and explicitly challenging all forms of inequality.

## **GOVERNANCE**

### **Board of Directors**

Blackstone Academy is governed by a Board of Directors. The Board meets regularly and is composed of various community members. BACS administrators attend all meetings to report to the Board but they do not have voting power. The Board leads the school in making decisions regarding school financial, legal, and educational practices. The Board assists the school in achieving its pedagogical and organizational goal and ensures that its mission is met.

The BACS Board of Directors is considered a public entity and is governed by open meetings statute in Rhode Island. All meetings are therefore open to the public and the agenda is placed on the Secretary of State website. Minutes for the meetings are recorded and available at any time.

Students and their families who wish to appeal a decision made by Blackstone Academy administrators will be referred to the Board of Directors. A committee of Board members will hear the appeal. Further appeals typically go to the Commissioner of Education at RIDE (The Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education).

The BACS Board will convene working groups, task forces, and subcommittees to advise them on policy changes, strategic planning and important issues related to the school and overall organization. These important groups will involve parents, students, faculty/ staff and individuals from the community. Meeting will be open to all who wish to attend.

## **Student Government**

Student Government is formed when classes nominate students and they elect representatives. The group meets regularly after school and works with its advisor(s) to make up its own agenda for the year. Student Government decisions and discussions are brought to the attention of other governing groups for action. Often, Student Government will be asked to discuss a particular issue and bring the issue up with their own advisory. Students should bring their issues and concerns to their Student Government Representatives.

## **The Blackstone Academy Family Organization**

This organization involves any and all adults who are involved with our students. The group has subcommittees such as event planning, fundraising, and graduation planning as well as guest speakers and workshops. Please contact Kyleen Carpenter for more information.

## **Other Blackstone Family Information**

We will hold Parent-Teacher conferences in the fall and winter. Families are invited to attend these events to learn more about the school and their children's academic progress. We also have multiple opportunities throughout the year for parents to attend workshops that will help them to assist in their student's success. Preparation for higher education is a focus that begins in grade 9.

The Blackstone Academy Special Education Advisory Committee (BASEAC) meets several times per year to ensure that Blackstone Academy is meeting the needs of its special education population. The Committee is made up of the Special Education Director, the Head of School, two teachers, and three parents. Parents who would like more information about special education at BACS should contact the Committee here at the school.

# **SCHOOL LOGISTICS**

## **Enrollment Process**

Students from Pawtucket, Central Falls, and Providence who are interesting in attending Blackstone Academy shall fill out an application. Admission to the school is open to Pawtucket, Central Falls, and Providence students entering grades 9-12 regardless of their age, sex, race, national origin, religion,

sexual orientation, color, or handicap. Openings may not exist at every grade level every year. If too many students apply for the number of spots that are available, a lottery will be held and students will be notified of their admission or their position on our waiting list. A detailed admissions policy is available which describes the lottery and waiting list procedures.

## **Transferring out of Blackstone Academy**

There may be students who, with their family, decide that BACS is not a good match or need to leave the school because they are moving out of the sending districts. These students may go to another school at any time with the permission of their parent/caregiver. All parents/caregivers must meet with an administrator at BACS and sign a withdrawal form so that a student can be transferred out and the proper information can be forwarded to the student's next school. Students and parents/caregivers should understand that, once a student leaves, his/her spot will be filled from the waiting list. If that student should ever want to return to BACS, s/he will be added to the waiting list or asked to reapply for the next academic year.

## **School Calendar**

BACS students will attend 180 days of school per year. Appendix A shows the current year school calendar.

## **Transportation**

### *Central Falls:*

Students are transported to/from Blackstone via First Student which privately contracts with Blackstone Academy. Families will receive a mailing in August detailing when/where their child(ren) will be picked up in Central Falls. All inquiries about pickup times and locations must be directed to Blackstone Academy. Pickup times and locations may vary from year to year. Bus drivers are not authorized to drop students off at locations that are not designated stops.

Students who engage in inappropriate conduct on the school bus may receive a warning from the bus driver. The driver will inform the school of the violation and the school will notify the family. Should a student receive two or more warnings in a school year, they may lose their privilege to ride the bus and will need to arrange their own transportation to and from school. Students should remember that bus drivers and monitors are as much a part of the BACS community as are the faculty and staff. They should, therefore, be treated with the utmost of respect.

### *Pawtucket:*

Students must arrange their own transportation, as secondary school transportation is not normally provided by the city for students in regular public schools.

### *Providence:*

Providence students will be provided RIPTA monthly passes or may arrange their own rides.

## **Snow Days/Cancellation of School**

If inclement weather should require us to cancel school, delay the opening of school, or send students home early, that information will come through local TV and radio stations. Please tune in to Channels 10 (NBC) and 12 (CBS) and radio stations 93.3 FM, 94.1 FM, 101.5 FM and 920 AM or check their websites. You can also sign up to have emails or text messages sent to your computer or phone. Go to: <http://my.textcaster.com/ServePopup.aspx?id=1638> to sign up. **Sometimes**, if Pawtucket, Central Falls or

Providence cancels school due to inclement weather, Blackstone Academy doesn't have school but we do make our own decisions, so please make sure you check. **BACS sometimes does have school when our districts do not so please make no assumptions.**

## **Meals**

Breakfast and lunch will be provided to the students at no cost if they qualify for a free or reduced lunch. Lunches offered include two hot entrees, a sandwich or wrap, a pbj and salad/fruit bar **Paid lunch is \$2.85, Reduced price lunch is \$0.40, and breakfast is free to all students**. All families are required to fill out and return to school an accurate Application for Free and Reduced Meals unless they have already filed with eDC. These are mailed to families in August. Families may be asked to verify this information if randomly selected. Selected families will be notified and supplied with the appropriate verification requirements. If families fail to submit verification materials, their child(ren) will have to pay for lunch. **Students who pay for lunch:** If students do not qualify for free/reduced price lunch, they may purchase lunch daily. Students can make payment when purchasing the meal or parents may purchase meals in advance. Blackstone accepts cash, checks or credit cards. You may pay by credit or debit by going to our website [www.blackstoneacademy.org](http://www.blackstoneacademy.org) and clicking "Donate Now" on the home page. You will be able to note what you are paying for and the student's account will be credited. Meal balances can be checked by viewing student's Powerschool accounts. Should you have any questions or concerns about the meal program, please contact the office at (401)726-1750 or Debbie Reyes at x137. Students will never be denied a meal due to lack of ability to pay. We will discuss meal payments directly with parents/guardians and will call when meal balances go beyond \$15.00. Meal balances must be paid before transferring or graduating.

Students are free to bring in their own meals or supplemental food. We do not have refrigeration for all student meals but do have microwaves available for student use. Students must spend lunch time in the multi-purpose room or in the designated outside space. They may not gather in classrooms without a pass or without a teacher present.

# **SAFETY ISSUES**

## **Fire Drills and other Emergencies**

If a fire drill, lockdown, other emergency or actual fire should occur, students will follow the instructions given by staff and posted around the school and view the posted fire emergency exit plan. For evacuations from the building, students **MUST** exit quietly and remain quiet, assemble in designated locations near the classroom teacher, and be ready for the teacher to take attendance.

## **Illness**

If a student becomes ill at school, they will be evaluated by our wellness coordinator. Staff will call parents/guardians and arrangements will be made for the students to get home. If a student is having a critical medical emergency, Blackstone Academy staff will first call 911 and then contact the student's parent/guardian to advise them of the situation. If the parents cannot be contacted, the emergency contact will be utilized.

***Students suffering from chronic illness or medical conditions must alert BACS to this fact and also provide the school with instruction on their condition. In addition, students with allergies to foods, insects, medication, or any other substances must notify BACS immediately.***

## **Medications**

There may be Blackstone Academy students who have to take medication on a daily basis. If arrangements have not been made in advance, please contact Wellness Coordinator Gilbert Rodriguez at x111 or [gibertr@blackstoneacademy.org](mailto:gibertr@blackstoneacademy.org). If it is medically advisable, the student must be brought to school in the original container that shows the type of medication along with the dosage instructions. All medications, including over-the-counter medications, will be labeled with the student's name and stored in a locked cabinet with a designated staff member. Students may not share any medications with each other. Students that supply medications to other students or accept medications from other students will be subject to disciplinary action. A parent/guardian may give written permission for students to take pain relievers or other over-the-counter drugs, but the students should supply their own medication.

## **Communication from BACS**

We will communicate frequently with BACS families either by phone, mail, or text message, voice recordings or email from Alert Solutions. Please let us know if any of your pertinent information (address, phone number, email, employment, emergency contact) changes so that we will always be able to communicate with you. Email and address changes may be made by contacting Debbie Reyes [dreyes@blackstoneacademy.org](mailto:dreyes@blackstoneacademy.org) or 7261750 x 137.

## **SCHOOL RESOURCES**

### **Advisory and Student Support**

Each student at Blackstone Academy will be assigned an advisor who is either a teacher or staff member at the school. Each advisor will be responsible for no more than 13 students. The role of the advisor is critical in the academic, social, and emotional development of the advisee. The advisor will oversee the grades, projects, and portfolios of each advisee and is also available to assist with career and college planning. They will also work to mediate conflicts that the student may be having with another member of the community. Advisors will meet daily with their advisee group and will also have time for individual meetings with their advisees. Parents should expect quarterly contact from the advisor of their son/daughter and should feel free to contact the advisor if they have a concern or question about the progress of their son or daughter at Blackstone Academy.

If either the student or a staff member feels that the student may benefit from additional professional support, the student may be connected to a member of the Student Support Team. With the permission of the student's parent/caregiver, appropriate staff will do an initial evaluation and suggest a course for additional counseling or services.

### **Special Education**

BACS adheres to state and federal regulations governing the education of children with disabilities. Please contact BACS Special Education Director Glenda Guglielmo (x123) for specific information.

## **After-School Activities**

Blackstone Academy hosts a free **Extended Day Program** three days per week (Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays...except on half-day Wednesdays). All students are encouraged to participate in homework club and as many other activities as possible. A snack is provided in the Extended Day Program. Beginning at 2:45, students can receive homework help, tutoring, or take advantage of a quiet place to do homework, portfolio work or projects. Clubs and activities take place from 4:00 to 5:00 pm. Activities may include programs in music and the arts, dance, debate, martial arts and computers to name a few. Very committed students will be offered the opportunity to take classes at the Rhode Island School of Design or other outside activities. Students are expected to complete school work before taking part in other after school activities. Some after school activities will take place off campus. We ask that parents pick up their children at the end of the program day, **no later than 5:00 pm.**

## **Saturday Academics**

Saturday Academics will be available at least twice a month from 10 am-12:30 pm. Saturday Academics offer quiet time for homework, portfolio work, and project work as well as tutoring help when needed. At least once per month, college visits will be held as part of Saturday Academics. Saturday Academy schedules and college visit schedules will be posted throughout the school and sent home in quarterly parent bulletins. Depending upon the location of the college, visits may last until 2:00 or 3:00pm.

Saturday Academics are part of the **SPiRiT Educational Program**, a year-round enrichment and college-prep program that offers outreach to students, tutoring/mentoring support, Saturday Academics, and an intensive summer enrichment program to build academic skills and stimulate interest in higher education. In addition to Blackstone students, SPiRiT involves students from middle and high schools throughout Providence, Pawtucket and Central Falls. The SPiRiT Educational Program helped to start the school and is now part of the school organization. **Please contact Diego White at x113 ([dwhite@blackstoneacademy.org](mailto:dwhite@blackstoneacademy.org)) for questions/concerns about Extended Day, Saturday Academics and College Visits.**

## **Extracurricular Sports**

Given our small size, we are currently not able to field competitive sports teams. Under the provisions of the Rhode Island Interscholastic League (RIIL), our students are able to participate in team sports at their feeder schools. Students will have to provide their own transportation to sports practices and contests. Students must be in good academic standing and follow the rules of participation set forth by their teams and we are regularly in touch with Coaches and Athletic Directors to verify a student's academic standing. In the event that student athletes need to leave early to attend games or practice, they may only do so if they are in good academic standing in those classes and they are able to submit a SIGNED Sports Early Dismissal form to the office. Student athletes are responsible for all work missed due to participation in practices and athletic contests. We ask student athletes to provide a calendar of practices/games to the office.

## **Student Activities and Dances**

Interested students may approach a member of the administration if they desire to create a club, after school activity, or a special event. The student (s) must provide the following information on BACS'

standardized Fundraising Forms: the cost of the activity, any plans for fundraising, the location for the activity, the time and duration of the activity, the chaperones for the activity, any needs the organizers may have and, finally a plan for achieving those needs.

In terms of school dances, each BACS student may invite up to 2 non-BACS guests, but those friends must be of an appropriate age for a high school event. The student needs to register the friends with Blackstone Academy before the dance. The guest need to adhere to all the same rules as the BACS students. If, for any reason, the guest chooses to break a BACS rule, s/he will be ejected from the dance. The student who brought the guest will receive disciplinary consequences and the entire student body will lose guest privileges for the next dance. Students who are suspended may not attend a dance or special activity/trip during the quarter in which they were suspended (the Prom is excepted from this policy).

## **Fundraising**

Student groups, classes, and teachers who wish to participate in fundraising activities must fill out our “Fundraiser Request Forms” and follow the school’s fundraising policies and procedures. Students must also get permission before selling anything to others during or after school. . This allows us to coordinate fundraising and to keep funds that are raised secure. All gathered funds must be locked up with the Executive Director, Head of School, or Business Manager. Funds are not to be kept in classrooms or general areas of the school. Completed request forms can be turned into Carolyn.

## **Locker Rental**

Upperclassmen are allowed first choice for top locker rental per the protocol below:

1. When locker rentals are announced, a one-week period is given to upperclassmen to be able to rent top lockers. During this week, underclassmen may only rent lower lockers.
  2. After this week, underclassmen may rent remaining lockers on a first-come-first-serve basis.
  3. Exceptions can be made for height or medical conditions at any point during the locker rental period. BACS Staff members in charge of locker rentals will determine these reasonable exceptions.
- Students must leave a refundable \$3.00 deposit in order to rent a locker. Unless absolutely necessary, students will be issued a Blackstone

## **ACADEMICS**

### **Daily Schedule**

School begins promptly at 8:00 am and ends at 2:45 pm. Students are in a combination of course types every morning and afternoon. Advisory takes place both first thing in the morning and after lunch. A sample daily schedule is shown in Appendix B.

### **Graduation Requirements**

Blackstone Academy is proud of its proficiency-based graduation requirements which include both required course work and demonstrations of academic and personal development skills needed for success through portfolio presentations. Students are given course selection sheets and work with their advisors to choose courses appropriate for them. All students take a minimum of the courses necessary to be admitted to most four year colleges. Blackstone Graduation Requirements can be found on our website, [www.blackstoneacademy.org](http://www.blackstoneacademy.org).

The curriculum at Blackstone Academy is aligned in a discipline-specific way to the Common Core State Standards, RI Grade Span Expectations, and Next Generation Science Standards.

## **Important Information for Blackstone Academy Seniors**

Senior Year at Blackstone is filled with excitement, anticipation, and hard work. In order to participate in the graduation ceremony there are minimum requirements that need to be met in a timely fashion. Fortunately, seniors have a great deal of support at Blackstone in order to help meet graduation requirements. Seniors failing to meet these requirements will not be able to participate in the graduation ceremony and will be required to attend summer school in order to receive their diplomas.

Specifically, seniors and their families should be aware of the following:

1. Seniors in good standing may, with written parental permission for seniors under the age of 18, earn Senior Privileges at the point where progress reports and end-of-quarter grades are issued. In order to earn these privileges, a senior must be up-to-date on his/her portfolio and earn all honors-level grades (80 or above). Parents will sign a Senior Privilege Permission Form allowing the student to go off-campus during Senior Study blocks only. If a senior returns late, privileges will be revoked until the next assessment point. Students must be in Morning Meeting even if they have a first block free. They are free to leave early if they have last period free.

2. Senior Seminar is one of numerous graduation-required courses. As is consistent with other graduation-required courses, students who do not pass Senior Seminar will be required to pass it in summer school in order to receive their diploma and will not participate in the graduation ceremony.

Senior Seminar teachers will institute a quarterly “flag” system for seniors which will be indicated in quarterly comments sent home to families. Seniors who are on track to graduate will receive a green flag. Seniors who are not on track will receive a yellow caution flag and their advisors will be notified. Seniors who are seriously off track will receive a red flag. A red flag in Senior Seminar will prompt a student-led parent conference with both a Blackstone Administrator and the senior’s advisor present.

Flags are determined using project-based rubrics. Students MUST meet the standards of each rubric in order to pass the quarter. Assignments will be modified as needed, but all students must meet the standards on time in order to pass. Quarter grades are tied into the quarterly rubrics.

3. Seniors should be aware that deadlines are critical and must be met, especially for Senior Seminar requirements and in other graduation-required classes. College professors extend deadlines for assignments only on very rare occasions. If seniors fail to meet deadlines, this will likely result in a situation where a student may not pass a class because teachers will not have sufficient time to evaluate/assess work.

4. In order to participate in the graduation ceremony, seniors must have passed ALL graduation-required classes and have passed their Level 3 portfolio. If the student has not completed all of his/her requirements then, in lieu of a diploma, the senior will receive a specific Completion Plan for the summer. Once the Plan is completed, the student will receive a signed diploma.

5. Blackstone Administrators in conjunction with teachers and advisors will make final decisions regarding student graduation status. Every attempt will be made to provide adequate and early warning to students and families about students who may be in danger of not graduating on time.

6. Students and their families who wish to appeal a decision made by Blackstone Academy administrators will be referred to the Board of Directors. A committee of Board members will hear the appeal. Further

appeals typically go to the Commissioner of Education at RIDE (The Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education).

## **Portfolios**

In addition to completing required courses, the students must also complete and present portfolios demonstrating that they have met the criteria for each of our four Levels. Portfolios have existed as part of our graduation requirement since our opening in 2002. Students will be coached by classroom teachers and advisors as to the portfolio criteria. Helpful documents related to the Portfolio system are available on the BACS website Student Page.

Students who are not on their appropriate Portfolio Level (completing Level 1 by the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, completing Level 2 by the end of 10<sup>th</sup> grade, completing Level 3 by the end of 11<sup>th</sup> grade, completing Level 4 by the end of 12<sup>th</sup> grade) by the close of the academic year will be mandated to a summer and/or after school program at Blackstone Academy. In this program, students will attend and work until they can show a completed portfolio. Portfolios will be presented as soon as possible after completion.

**Returning Blackstone students who still have not completed their appropriate Level portfolio by the start of the academic year will be mandated to daily Lunch Detention until their portfolio is completed and passed.**

Students failing to meet the annual portfolio requirement will endanger their progression through the graduation requirements and therefore may not graduate on time.

## **Physical Education and Health Education**

It is our goal that each student understand the importance of physical activity and wellness. Each student will complete a Physical Education requirement at BACS. We will offer school-sponsored Physical Education activities at the local YMCA and other local venues that are appropriate for the level of activity. Students will be assessed in their PE classes in terms of attendance, participation, and cooperation. Students with medical concerns may be waived from the PE requirement with an appropriate doctor's note. If a student would like to complete an outside activity (i.e. organized sport at a public school) in lieu of our physical education program, they need to submit a proposal to the Head of School/Director and PE instructor. The proposal should include the name of a coach, for example, that could certify the student's participation, the duration and time commitment of the activity, and a proposal of what the student will accomplish at BACS during his/her regular PE time (i.e. study hall, community service, portfolio work). Essentially, each student will create an individualized physical education program that meets an hourly requirement for the year.

BACS will also offer Health/Wellness Education to students. The Health Education curriculum includes Botvin's "Lifeskills" curriculum, a nationally recognized program which helps students make healthy decisions throughout their life.

## **The Arts**

Blackstone Academy is committed to strong education in the visual and performing arts. In Arts classes, the students will be assessed in terms of their mastery of Arts GSEs, attendance, cooperation, and completion of projects. However, their art education will not be limited to this time. Arts education may occur in academic classes, electives, and Community Improvement Projects. We endeavor to connect our students with local artists and arts organizations to enhance their arts education and connection to the community.

## **Grading**

Students will be graded on their performance in each course through traditional assessments (i.e. projects, tests, quizzes, essays, exams) and also through the use of portfolios and rubrics. The use of portfolios and rubrics will help each student to both rely upon their strengths and build new skills. Students not meeting requirements for assessments will endanger their chances of moving up to the next grade level.

Families will receive both progress reports and quarter grades in the mail. Progress reports come at the mid-point of each quarter and grades will be mailed home after the conclusion of each quarter. Students will be assessed not only on their academic progress but also on their attendance, behavior, effort, and social skills. A student's progress can also be viewed in real-time by using PowerSchool, our internet-based student information system. Families and students will be given usernames and passwords so that they can log on to PowerSchool and track their grades and attendance.

Educational research shows that maintaining high expectations improves the overall achievement of all students. The Blackstone Academy faculty/ staff and Board agreed that the minimum passing grade for students should be raised from a 65 to a 70, effective in 2011-12. This eliminates Ds in our grade scale.

The minimum grade allowable in order to participate in Summer School is a 60.

Students who are not up to date on their portfolios will not be included in the quarterly Honor Roll and High Honor Roll, even if they achieve grades of 80 and above (Honor Roll) or 90 and above (High Honor Roll). The same holds true for grades in Advisory.

## **Summer School**

Blackstone Academy will offer limited options for Summer School credit recovery. Whereas Portfolio Summer School will be offered most every summer, course offerings may change from year to year depending upon staffing. Students who take Summer School at Blackstone Academy will pay \$50.00 for each course and must meet course attendance and work requirements in order to earn credit. Other options for summer course recovery currently include Fairlawn Summer School, CF High School, Shea High School, and Brown Summer High School. These options have different fees attached. All summer credit recovery options must be approved by a Blackstone Academy administrator and documentation of successful completion must be provided to Blackstone Academy in order to be included as part of a student's academic record.

Students who must do Portfolio Summer School will also pay \$50.00 up front. However, an incentive exists. Students who finish in the 1<sup>st</sup> week of Summer School will get \$40 back. Students who finish in the 2<sup>nd</sup> week will get \$30 back, etc...

Some students may elect to accelerate in courses over the summer here at Blackstone or outside of the school. Course offerings will depend upon staffing. Again, all summer accelerated courses must be approved by the school before enrollment.

## **Read On!**

Our school-wide reading program has been incredibly successful and has been one way that we have worked to boost student reading skills. Read On! occurs two days per week during advisory. The goal is for students to read between 3-4 books outside of the regular curriculum per year. Students may choose their own books and can work with their advisor or any English teacher to select appropriate books of interest to the student. For the 30 minutes of Read On! the entire school, including all staff members, is reading silently. After a student is done with a book, they provide the appropriate Read On evidence and review it with their advisor. Read On! is one way that students can meet the book requirement for each of their Level portfolios.

## **Community Meeting**

At Blackstone Academy, each day begins with a Community Meeting. The whole community will come together for breakfast, attendance, announcements, and discussions. Responsibility for planning and conducting Community Meetings will rotate to all advisories throughout the year.

## **Access to Higher Education**

BACS staff members are well trained in assisting students with college admission. It is our goal that all of our students go on to college or some other form of higher education. A student's advisor and the school's administrative staff will coordinate the college process and can help in many ways: helping a student to register for the SAT or take an SAT preparation class, helping a student decide which schools to apply to, helping a student meet application and financial-aid deadlines, and helping to arrange college visits. Seniors will all be enrolled in Senior Seminar, a course which supports students in their college planning and Senior Projects.

Starting in 9<sup>th</sup> grade, students are required to research and visit local college options. College visits are available at least once per month on Saturdays and at other times throughout the year. College visits are a required component in the Advisory section of each Level portfolio. Parents are encouraged to become involved in their child's college planning early and are invited to attend college visits and college fairs sponsored by the school and through the SPIRIT program's Saturday Academy program.

## **Advanced Course Network (ACN)**

The State of Rhode Island has placed a priority on helping high school students across the state access college credit-bearing courses for free. Numerous BACS students have taken advantage of this opportunity, amassing thousands of dollars of college credits at no cost and also helping to get ready for college level work. We encourage 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders to peruse the ACN options (<https://ride.gosignmeup.com/Public/Course/Browse>) and/or consider other courses offered directly at CCRI, RIC, or URI. Courses are free, but students are responsible for transportation and textbooks. Occasionally, Blackstone can help with these costs. Please speak with your advisor or Kyleen for more information.

## **Special Designations at Graduation**

Students satisfying specific criteria may be eligible for any number of special designations and certificates upon graduation.

1. Students who maintain Honor Roll status for 8 consecutive quarters, are up to date on Portfolios, and who demonstrate, in written form, their commitment to scholarship, leadership, and service may be inducted into the National Honor Society.
2. Students satisfying the criteria for Blackstone's Perkins-Funded Non-Profit Studies Academy will receive a certificate at graduation, and this achievement will be listed on their transcripts. Students need to successfully pursue a specific course of study to earn this designation. Rhonda Hanaway (x121) is our coordinator and can answer any questions.
3. Beginning with the Class of 2017, the State of Rhode Island allowed schools to develop their own criteria for a Seal of Biliteracy. By earning honors-level grades in ELA classes, and by demonstrating proficiency in another language (through a standardized test score like the SAT or AP), students may earn this Seal which is listed on final transcripts.

# GUIDELINES FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

Blackstone Academy is committed to treating every student with dignity and keeping discipline decisions confidential. We are also committed to utilizing restorative practices which include conflict resolution, mediation, restorative circles and other creative approaches when handling disruptions in the Blackstone community. Please contact Maria Silva, Student Success Coordinator for more information on our approach to discipline. X 120 [msilva@blackstoneacademy.org](mailto:msilva@blackstoneacademy.org).

## Attendance and Tardiness

Since the individual participation of each student is vital for achieving the goals of Blackstone Academy, each student must attend every day of school. Of course, if a student is seriously ill, his/her parent/caregiver should contact the office after 8:00 am to inform Blackstone Academy of the student's absence.

Students arriving late to school must check in and get a note from a designated staff member before they will be admitted to class. If a student arrives late, s/he must have a note from his/her parent/caregiver.

## Absences: Excused/Unexcused Policy

Absences are excused for sickness, court dates, and medical appointments. Other absences should be avoided.

If a student is absent, here is the procedure:

1. On the morning the student is absent, the Parent/Guardian needs to notify the school to explain the absence or tardy.
2. When the student returns to school, s/he has one week to bring in a note from the parent/guardian, doctor, or court excusing the absence or tardy.
3. Parents/Guardians can only call or write a note to excuse their children three times per quarter. After that, doctor or court documentation is required in order for the student to legitimize additional absences over the three allowed. Parents/guardians should continue to notify the school of additional absences/tardies, but these will be categorized as "unexcused" unless accompanied by a note from the doctor or court.

**Students are allowed no more than three unexcused absences per quarter** unless special circumstances are discussed and approved by a school administrator.

Eighteen year-old and older students are legally adults and can represent themselves in all school matters.

However, all attendance and tardiness policies apply to them as well and must be strictly adhered to.

## **Attendance Buy-Back Program**

The connection between consistent school attendance and academic success has been demonstrated over and over. Blackstone Academy makes efforts to assist students and families with school attendance, but it is the responsibility of the students and families to make school attendance a priority.

To help motivate students to maintain good attendance, students will be given academic consequences for poor attendance and/or tardiness. **If a student has four unexcused absences in a quarter in any course, that student will earn an “F” for that class for the quarter.** However, a student may “buy back” an absence easily. The student may ask the teacher to buy back an absence. The student then needs to arrive on time to that particular course for every course meeting in one week. If they are able to do so, their number of absences will be reduced by one. Buy Back forms are available in the office and with advisors.

Two unexcused tardies to a class equals one unexcused absence. A student may also buy back an absence due to excessive unexcused tardiness.

Excused absences and excused tardies are not part of the Buy Back program. An absence is excused with a note or phone call from a parent/guardian, a note from a doctor, or a note from a court/judge.

## **Vacation and Extended Trips Policy:**

On occasion, Blackstone students are absent for several days or weeks for family trips occurring during school days. Although we cannot prohibit families from scheduling such trips during the school year, students and parents should be aware that, when Blackstone students miss long periods of school for a trip, their teachers are unable to completely recreate the classroom experience and assignments. As a result, families who choose to take students out of school for extended trips must know that they may be harming the student’s academic progress in a way that is not recoverable. Over the years, many Blackstone students who have missed weeks of school because of a trip have failed classes for a quarter or for the year as a result, even if they do complete some of the work that they missed.

**At least 4 weeks** prior to taking an extended family trip:

- The student and parent/guardian are required to communicate with Kyleen or Carolyn to inform them of the extended trip. This should be done as soon as the parent/student knows of the trip.
- The student must meet with all teachers to get assignments, as best as the teachers can do to provide these.
- The student must complete the Extended Trips Form available in the office.
- The student should be aware that s/he may likely earn zeros for work missed during this extended trip.

If the student/family does not meet these conditions, they are putting the student in potential academic danger.

## **GENERAL COMMUNITY LIFE: POLICIES & PROCEDURES**

### **The Role and Responsibility of the Students**

Students at Blackstone Academy should understand that it is *they* who are responsible for creating the learning environment at the school. Therefore, each student should behave in a way consistent with the goals of the school and in a way that will further the education of each member of the community. Each student will act at all times with respect for every member of the community, him or herself and the school

environment. This behavior should, logically, extend outside school grounds. This point is crucial. Since Blackstone Academy students are ambassadors of the school and will frequently interact with people and organizations in the community, they should always represent the school with intelligence, grace, and strength of purpose.

## **Responsibility and Respect**

At Blackstone Academy, we believe that students, parents, teachers, and administration work together to develop and sustain responsible and respectful behaviors. All members of these groups are expected to model appropriate and respectful behavior, particularly when conflicts arrive.

## **Behavior in our Building & Neighborhood**

Students should exhibit use appropriate language and exhibit exemplary behavior both in and around our building at 334 Pleasant Street. Blackstone students should be aware that the younger students from ICS are impressionable and BACS students should strive to be positive role models for those younger children to emulate. In order to maintain strong and positive relationships with our Pawtucket neighbors, students should monitor their behavior, language, and volume while near our school building.

## **Non-negotiable Behaviors**

Blackstone Academy has no tolerance for violent behavior and threats of physical harm by students. When it is determined that a threat was made with intent, students will be subject to serious disciplinary action and in some cases, criminally charged. As dictated by law with certain types of behavior (i.e. bullying), authorities will be notified. Students will be financially responsible for any damages that occur as a result of any violent behavior or vandalism.

Any reporting of false threats (bomb threat, fire, etc...) is a crime that is punishable by law. Instructional time lost due to any false report or hoax must be made up.

Any object brought to school that is considered to be a potential cause of danger to others will be confiscated and disciplinary action will occur. Penalties for bringing a weapon to school range from a Disciplinary Hearing referral to a long-term suspension (even as much as 180 days).

## **Student Searches and Interrogations**

Students are not entitled to any "Miranda-type" warnings before being questioned by school personnel, and school personnel are not required to contact a student's parent before questioning a student. Blackstone Academy staff will tell students why they are being questioned. School personnel may conduct searches of a student's belongings that are minimally intrusive, such as touching the outside of a book bag, so long as there is a legitimate reason for the very limited search. BACS staff may search a student or a student's belongings, including the contents of a student's locker, based on information received from a reliable informant. In conducting such a search, staff should attempt to get the student's permission for the search. Whenever possible, searches will be conducted in the privacy of administrative offices, and students will be present when their possessions are being searched.

## **Use and Possession of Alcohol and Drugs**

Given reasonable suspicion, students will be questioned as to their possible use of alcohol or drugs. If BACS staff have sufficient evidence to indicate that state law has been violated with respect to the use, possession, or sale of alcohol or illegal drugs (including imitations or misrepresentations of controlled

substances) the school will contact appropriate law enforcement officials and furnish them with the information. Students will also be subject to appropriate BACS disciplinary action. In all cases, parents/guardians will be contacted.

## **Dress and Grooming**

Because Blackstone Academy is recognized as a place of business, it is important that students dress in a manner that is comfortable yet conducive to a business-like atmosphere. In addition, students often go out into the community as part of their school day and community members frequently enter the school. In the founding years of the school, Blackstone students debated whether or not to have uniforms after doing extensive research into the topic. Ultimately, they chose to allow students to dress in a way that would express their individuality.

The culture and atmosphere of a school are directly affected by the overall appearance and general conduct of its students. Therefore, students are asked to consider cleanliness, good taste and appropriateness in their selection of clothing. **If it is determined by a school administration or their designee that particular clothing is disruptive to the learning environment/process and/or is offensive to community standards, the student may be asked to change or cover that clothing.** The parent of the student may be required to take the student home if the student does not comply with the request. Students can return once appropriately dressed.

The following dress code is not meant to be restrictive, but is intended to guide students and their parent/guardian in choosing clothing that is safe and appropriate to wear to school. The following articles of clothing and/or items are not to be worn in school for both males and females:

- Articles of clothing with designs or wording which is obscene, vulgar, or discriminatory (in any language) etc.
- Articles of clothing with designs or wording (in any language) referring to illegal substances such as alcohol or drugs.
- Articles of clothing which depict, in any form, acts of violence.
- Articles of clothing that would likely not be acceptable in typical office setting. Examples would include any garment that allows for the display of any underwear, see-through clothing, and any other clothing that shows too much bare skin or in any other way considered potentially disruptive to the learning environment.
- Sunglasses may not be worn in the building except for medical considerations.

The Student Success Coordinator (Maria Silva) will be designated to handle most dress code decisions. Violations of the dress code or behaviors that occur after discussions related to dress code violations will be subject to consequences.

Due to the fact that fashion trends change, it is our policy to maintain a non-controversial educational atmosphere. Therefore, improper dress will not be tolerated regardless of the fashion terminology.

\*some language adapted from Beacon Charter School and East Providence High School

## **Electronic Device Policy**

At appropriate times and with teacher permission, student use of electronic devices in class can enhance learning and create deeper connections to the curriculum. Phones, tablets, smart watches, and computers are all considered “devices.” In response to the rapidly-changing world of technology, especially as it influences the educational landscape at Blackstone and beyond, the following policy was amended in 2016 academic year.

Students must register their own personal devices and sign the updated 2017-18 Acceptable Use Policy at BACS in order to gain access to the school’s Wifi. Because of the limited technological capabilities of any wireless system, the use of all personal electronics must be restricted to academic pursuits. Students should be aware that BACS Technology Personnel continually monitor Wifi use by individual students. Students using Wifi for unauthorized purposes, or at inappropriate bandwidth levels, will have their accounts suspended and devices deactivated from BACS’ Wifi.

**Blackstone Academy lends Chromebooks to interested students/families for the duration of the academic year, provided that families sign the Chromebook loan agreement. Students must have an electronic device at all times in order to access much of our curriculum and Google Classroom, so if they don’t have their own computer, they should take advantage of this offer. The Chromebook Loan Agreement clearly outlines the terms of this important policy.**

It should be noted that BACS is not responsible for any lost, stolen, broken, or damaged electronic devices.

All students must adhere to the Electronics Policy between the hours of 8am - 2:45pm on school days when they are in classes/advisory. Students will always enter class/advisory with devices out of sight and out of use. With teacher permission and at appropriate times, electronic devices may then be used in classes/advisory. Misuse of devices will result in disciplinary consequences outlined below.

### Guidelines for Electronic Device Use During Classes/Morning Meeting/Advisory

1. Using headphones to listen to music on a device (only with teacher permission)
2. Apps or social networks (only with teacher permission and only for academic purposes)
3. Texting on a phone, tablet, smart watch or computer (only with teacher permission)
4. Phone calls (only within Senior Seminar, and with SS teacher permission)
5. Seniors NOT in good standing (i.e. not finished with Level 3 portfolio and failing any class/advisory at progress report or end-of-quarter) will not be allowed to use devices in Senior Seminar for other than purely academic purposes.
6. Some teachers may ask students to put devices face up on desks, thereby ensuring that devices are off and not in use. Other teachers may use a cell phone lock box. And others may ask you to surrender your phone if you use the lavatory during class.

**\*Device use is prohibited in the hallways while class/advisory/morning meeting is in session.\***

### Guidelines for Electronic Device Use Outside of Class and Advisory

1. Electronic Devices must always be on silent, without exception.
2. Outside of class, headphones/earbuds should never be **in or on** ears.

3. Devices may not be used during In-School Suspension.

#### Guidelines for Safe and Legal Use of Electronic Devices

1. Electronic Devices may not be used to transmit unauthorized content.
2. Students may not use their personal electronic devices to:
  - Take unauthorized photos of staff, faculty, or other students
  - Film/record activity in any area of the building
  - Upload filmed/recorded sounds, text or pictures to social media sites including but not limited to Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, SnapChat, etc... without permission from the individual.

Disciplinary consequences:

- First offense = Device confiscated (returned at end-of-day)
- Second offense = Device confiscated (returned to parent/guardian)
- Repeat offenses will have consequences determined by the School Climate Coordinator, Deans, Advisor, Student, and/or Administrators and decisions will be guided by the Stages listed in the BACS Handbook.

(Some parts of this policy were adapted from Dartmouth High School Handbook, Dartmouth, Massachusetts.)

### **Food and Drink**

In addition to meal times, students may also be given permission by teachers to consume food and drink in class or for special events. Food and drink may not be consumed in the science classrooms unless permission is given. Consumption of food and drink is never permissible near a computer. The BACS "Wellness Policy" complies with State regulations on nutrition and food sales and encourages healthy eating at all BACS events.

### **Leaving School Grounds**

Students at Blackstone Academy will enjoy many off-campus trips in conjunction with their course of study at the school. They may not leave school grounds during the school day unless they receive specific permission from their parent/caregiver and a staff member. In this case, the student must sign out in the office. This policy also includes students separating from a group that may be off-campus. Students choosing to engage in this behavior will be subject to disciplinary action.

### **Driving and Parking**

Blackstone student drivers are required to drive with **extreme caution** around the neighborhood, as there are many BACS and ICS pedestrians, especially right before and after school. As per RI General Law, seat belts are required and texting is prohibited. BACS students are strongly encouraged to park in the parking lot of the apartment building at Taft/Tidewater which is owned by Blackstone's landlord.

### **Tobacco Policy**

As per Rhode Island state law, smoking is prohibited within 100 feet of the school building. This includes the use of e-cigarettes and any vaping paraphernalia.

## **Mediation**

Occasions may arise where either professional and/or peer mediation is needed in order for students to work through conflicts with each other and/or with BACS staff. On these occasions, mediation will be scheduled if all parties are willing to come to the table. In mediation, an agreement is reached between all parties so that the conflicts do not inhibit either the social or academic progress of anyone involved.

## **DISCIPLINE POLICIES & PROCEDURES**

There may be circumstances that arise at school that merit disciplinary action. Listed below are the consequences for students who do not follow the guidelines of Blackstone Academy. Offenses are divided into stages and consequences correspond to each stage. The Student Success Coordinator, classroom teachers and staff will issue most Stage 1 offenses. Stage 2 and higher will likely be made by the Director/Head of School in consultation with the Faculty and Staff, including the student's advisor(s). The advisor will act as the student's advocate in all major disciplinary cases.

### **Stage 1 Offenses**

Tardy to class with no documentation

Inappropriate use of language

Unauthorized use of electronic devices, including headphones

Play fighting

Disrespect to another member of the Blackstone Academy community or any other individual that a student may encounter during the school day

### **Stage 1 Consequences**

Student may be asked to write a reflection of their actions for discussion with staff.

Student may be asked to speak with his/her teacher after class.

Student's advisor will be informed of offense.

Student may be asked to stay for either lunchtime or after-school detention.

Student may be asked to keep a behavior log

If Stage 1 offenses become repeated behaviors, students will be required to meet with the teacher, advisor, Director/Head of School and parent/caregiver to determine an appropriate course of action.

### **Stage 2 Offenses**

Skipping a class, advisory or meeting

Lying to a Blackstone Academy faculty or staff member

Leaving school grounds without permission

Tobacco use on school property

Verbal language used to discriminate

Gross disrespect to another member of the Blackstone Academy community or any other individual that a student may encounter during the school day  
Gambling for profit or loss

## **Stage 2 Consequences**

In addition to Stage 1 consequences, the following may apply:

Student will be referred to the Director or Head of School.

Parent/caregiver of student will be notified of offense.

Student may serve an in-school or out-of-school suspension.

A meeting will be called with parent/caregiver, student, advisor, and the Director or Head of School.

Student may be required to submit a written or oral apology to the appropriate persons(s) and/or the entire community.

Student will be prohibited from attending special school events.

Student may have special privileges revoked.

Student may be required to attend a mediation or other restorative action with the appropriate individual(s).

## **Stage 3 Offenses**

Sexual harassment

Fighting

Hazing and/or bullying

Stealing \*\* (See below)

Forgery and Cheating and/or Plagiarism \*\*\* (See below)

Vandalism

Possession or use of a weapon or explosive

Assault

Drug or alcohol use or possession

Intent to sell or distribute drugs or alcohol.

Sexual activity on school grounds, on school time, or during school sponsored activities

Consumption of inappropriate print materials (i.e. pornography) or Internet web sites

False alarm, threat or hoax

## **Stage 3 Consequences**

In addition to Stage 1 or 2 consequences, the following may apply:

Student may be referred for a Disciplinary Hearing or Manifestation Determination.

Student will be suspended from Blackstone Academy, up to 180 days.

Student will be required to offer restitution.

In addition, the proper authorities will be contacted in cases where students have broken a law (i.e. assault; drug/alcohol consumption, use or possession; theft; vandalism; false fire alarm; use or possession of weapons or explosives).

\*\* Stealing property will not be tolerated. Restitution will be expected( item returned or equivalent funds).

Stealing property may result in police involvement. In these cases, students will have to meet with a

School Administrator or their designee and the student's parent/caregiver. The student will serve a minimum of a one-day in-school suspension and may have to attend mediation with the victim.

## **Special Notes on Plagiarism and Cheating**

\*\*\* Plagiarism is the submission of another's ideas or written words as one's own. This includes the purchase or use of on-line essays.

Cheating includes copying another's work on an assignment or assessment or allowing that your work be copied.

In order to prevent cheating and plagiarism, students will be taught about what plagiarism is and how to avoid it beginning in 9<sup>th</sup> grade and continuing through 12<sup>th</sup> grade, as is appropriate to their assignments. This includes teaching students about proper citation. Students who plagiarize and/or cheat will be assigned a reading and reflection assignment which will be due at the conclusion of their suspension. For students who don't complete this assignment to a proficient level (determined by a Blackstone staff member), s/he will be assigned an additional disciplinary consequence.

The penalties for plagiarism and cheating are:

1<sup>st</sup> offense: Zero on assignment or assessment; parent/caregiver contacted; one-day in-school suspension (student may be allowed to re-do the assignment during in-school)

2<sup>nd</sup> offense: Zero on assignment or assessment; parent/caregiver contacted; one-day out-of-school suspension; Disciplinary Hearing

Blackstone students must be aware that plagiarism and cheating are the same as stealing and lying. If students choose to plagiarize/cheat, they are stealing the work and ideas of another individual and are severely compromising their own integrity. Once they choose to submit this work to their teacher with their own name on it, they are lying to their teacher. The work is not their own.

Blackstone students will be required to sign an Academic Honesty Pledge at the beginning of each year. Some teachers may also request that students sign another copy of this document for specific assignments. This is a common practice at all colleges.

## **Miscellaneous Disciplinary Notes**

1. Students at Blackstone will forfeit their right to attend special school functions in the quarter in which they receive either an in-school or out-of-school suspension. Because of the planning and financial impact involved, the All-School Prom is exempt from this policy except in cases where a student poses a real or perceived threat to the community. In these cases, individual decisions about attending the Prom will be made by a committee of Blackstone staff members which includes at least one administrator. Students may be given the opportunity to demonstrate rehabilitation from their offense if the committee decides to allow this option. Rehabilitation may take the form of public apology, performing service to the school, and/or researching and writing about their offense.

2. Students who leave school grounds without permission and/or skip classes will be required to make up that time to the school. This could occur during lunch, before or after school or, in some cases, an in-school suspension. Students may be required to do coursework during this time or perform service to the school.

## **Anti-Discrimination Policy**

This policy states that Blackstone Academy is committed to maintaining an educational environment where bigotry and intolerance including discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, disability, or age have no place. Also, any form of coercion or harassment that insults the dignity of others and interferes with their freedom to learn is unacceptable. Examples of such unacceptable behaviors may include: using insulting language or actions, refusing to let a member of the Blackstone Academy community participate in an activity, or violence against a member of the community. A detailed policy and procedure specifically dealing with transgendered students is available on the website [www.blackstoneacademy.org](http://www.blackstoneacademy.org).

## **Discipline Hearings**

Appropriate disciplinary action will take place when students are disrespectful towards school personnel, refuse to respond to a reasonable request, or display flagrant disregard of school rules. Students violating major school rules (see Disciplinary Procedures) may be subject to a Disciplinary Hearing at Blackstone Academy. Present at a Disciplinary Hearing may be the student, the student's parent/caregiver, the student's BACS advisor, another BACS staff member, the Director or Head of School, and another adult in the BACS community.

At a Disciplinary Hearing, the Director or Head of School will present the evidence. The student and his/her advisor/advocate will both speak on his/her behalf. The committee will then conduct a question and answer session with the student. The student will then be dismissed while the committee discusses and forms their decision. The student will then be notified of the decision of the committee. The committee may choose from a wide range of consequences or may create other appropriate consequences given the situation at hand. Some possible consequences could be suspension, mandatory community service, a public apology, or a mediation.

A Manifestation Determination Meeting is reserved for students with Individualized Educational Plans (IEPs). The Special Education Director will conduct an IEP review meeting. At the IEP meeting, the appropriate individuals will review the actions of the student to determine if the behaviors of the student are or are not a manifestation of the disabilities in the IEP. If they are, then a new IEP will be formulated to better serve the student. If they are not, the student may be subject to BACS' school discipline policies. BACS adheres to Rhode Island regulations governing appeals processes, therefore, parents can appeal school decisions through the Board of Directors or the Rhode Island Department of Education.

## **Appeal of Discipline Decisions**

Blackstone Academy will provide due process to every student when making all discipline and academic decisions. Should the students and their parent/caregiver disagree with our decisions, there are several levels of appeal. The first level of appeal is to the Director/Head of School and/or a committee which includes one of these administrators, the students' advisor, and at least one other staff from the school. The next level of appeal is to the BACS Board of Directors. After that, the decision can be appealed to the Office of the Commissioner at the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Other appeals can be heard through the Rhode Island Human Rights Commission in Providence and/or the Office of Civil Rights in Boston.

## **Computer Acceptable Use Policy**

### **Responsibilities of the User**

Access to computing resources and network capacity is a privilege to which all BACS faculty, staff, and students are entitled. Access may also be granted to individuals outside the school for purposes consistent with the mission of the school. Certain responsibilities accompany that privilege; understanding them is important for all computer users. These responsibilities are listed below.

### **Institutional Purposes**

Use of BACS computing resources and network capacity is for purposes related to the school's mission of education, research, and public service. All classes may use computing resources and network capacity only for purposes related to their studies, their instruction, the discharge of their duties as employees, their official business with the school, and their other school-sanctioned activities. The use of BACS computing resources and network capacity for commercial purposes is permitted only by special arrangement with the appropriate computing center or computer system administrator.

### **Security**

The user is responsible for correct and sufficient use of the tools each computer system provides for maintaining the security and confidentiality of information stored on it. For example:

- Computer accounts, passwords, and other types of authorization are assigned to individual users and should not be shared with others.
- The user should select an obscure account password and change it frequently.
- The user should understand the level of protection each computer system automatically applies to files and supplement it, if necessary, for sensitive information.
- The user should be aware of computer viruses and other destructive computer programs, and take steps to avoid being their victim or unwitting vector.

### **Legal usage**

Computing resources and network capacity may not be used for illegal purposes. Examples of illegal purposes include:

- Intentional harassment of other users.
- Intentional destruction of or damage to equipment, software, or data belonging to BACS or other users.
- Intentional disruption or unauthorized monitoring of electronic communications.
- Unauthorized copying of copyrighted material.

### **Ethical usage**

Computing resources and network capacity should be used in accordance with the high ethical standards of the BACS community as described in this student handbook. Examples of unethical use follow; some of them may also be illegal.

- Violations of computer system security.

- Unauthorized use of computer accounts, access codes, or network identification numbers assigned to others.
- Intentional use of computer telecommunication facilities in ways that unnecessarily impede the computing activities of others (randomly initiating interactive electronic communications or e-mail exchanges, overuse of interactive network utilities, and so forth).
- Use of computing facilities for private business purposes unrelated to the mission of BACS or BACS community life.
- Academic dishonesty (plagiarism, cheating).
- Violation of software license agreements.
- Violation of network / computer usage policies and regulations (i.e. visiting inappropriate websites, downloading programs without Administrator permission and damage to equipment).
- Violation of another user's privacy.

## **Facilitative usage**

BACS computing resource users can facilitate computing in the BACS environment in many ways. They include:

- Regular deletion of unneeded files from one's accounts on central machines.
- Refraining from overuse of connect time, information storage space, printing facilities, or processing capacity.
- Refraining from overuse of interactive network utilities.
- Refraining from overuse of network capacity.

## **Sanctions**

Violation of the policies described above for legal and ethical use of computing resources will be dealt with seriously. Violators will be subject to the normal disciplinary procedures of BACS and, in addition, the loss of computing privileges may result. Illegal acts involving BACS computing resources may also be subject to prosecution by state and federal authorities

## **Student Personal Laptops**

More and more Blackstone students bring their own personal laptops/Chromebooks to school. Although we encourage this to in order to make more Blackstone computers available for student use, there are guidelines that must be followed. Failure to follow these guidelines may result in student access to our network being restricted for personal laptops.

1. Blackstone students must register their computer with the Technology Coordinator. The Technology Coordinator will give students access to a student wireless internet account.
2. Blackstone students must consent to have our virus protection software installed on their personal laptop at no cost. Not all virus protection programs protect computers adequately and we must do this in order to maintain security of our own network.
3. Students using their own personal laptops at school must also adhere to our Computer Acceptable Use policy as stated above.
4. Students are responsible for storing and securing their own laptops when not in use. Blackstone Academy is not liable for damage or theft of student personal property.

# **BLACKSTONE ACADEMY WELLNESS POLICY**

**Created by the BACS Wellness Coalition, BACS School Council and initially adopted by the Board of Directors 2009; Updated 2016.**

## **Wellness Policy Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to ensure a total school environment that promotes and supports student health and wellness. The policy specifically helps to reduce childhood obesity and meets the requirements of Rhode Island public law Chapter 080, 16-21-7. Congress passed the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act in 2004, which required all schools participating in the national school meals program to create a local school wellness policy. This policy includes guidelines specific to nutrition as well as overall health and wellness concerns.

## **Wellness Coalition**

The Blackstone Academy Wellness Coalition was created in March of 2007. This coalition consisted of a variety of school personnel, parents, and students, and community representatives. The involvement of all members of the school community was essential in establishing this policy. Student Michael Murphy coordinated the completion of the BACS Wellness Policy as part of his senior project during the spring of 2008.

## **Nutrition**

At Blackstone Academy we have a strong commitment to nutrition education and awareness. This commitment is demonstrated in several ways in our school environment. The wellness class educates students about nutrition and behavioral health concerns. The class is very unique because it trains students to be peer educators. This practice has shown positive results in our community. For instance, we have started to see students question their nutritional choices. Another benefit to peer educated students is that they help to spread the word about health and wellness through informal conversations making their lessons relevant outside of the classroom.

We strive to sell healthy beverages and snacks in our school store and at school fundraisers or as part of fundraising activities. Our school breakfast and lunch program is committed to serving local foods when possible and to follow the guideline developed by the State of Rhode Island, which are stricter than federal guidelines. These “healthier” beverages and snacks are based on Rhode Island public law Chapter 06-231, 16-21-29, which lists the definitions for both healthy snacks and beverages.

### **Blackstone Academy Goals for Nutrition Education and Promotion**

- Offer healthier foods and beverages for celebrations in school.
  - o Have the school staff bring healthier food for advisory parties and events.
  - o Promote healthier foods at all school events
- Offer less food-based incentives for students
  - o Non junk food rewards for honor roll.
  - o Get gift certificates and prizes for honor roll and other rewards that are non-food related

- Continue to offer nutrition education to students through the wellness class and integrated into science and other health classes. Continue to nurture peer educators.
- Improve participation in the school lunch program by ensuring student input on the menu and student understanding of the school lunch program.
- Continue to partner with our food service provider around these goals.

## **Physical Activity and Health Education**

Blackstone Academy has a very unique program for physical education which is aligned to RI Grade Span Expectations for Physical Education. We provide many alternatives to the type of physical education typically seen at schools. For example, we have offered sailing, rock climbing, and yoga as physical education courses in addition to the more traditional courses. Non-traditional physical education courses such as the ones offered at Blackstone Academy are very important because the courses provided students an opportunity to get physical activity doing something that might interest them. It is also very important to have these alternative courses because of the lack of participation shown in many traditional physical education classes.

Physical education has been extended to the after school program at Blackstone Academy. Some of the programs offered have included the BACS Volleyball and Soccer Teams, Martial Arts, Latin Dance Crew, Climbing Club, and the Running Club. Blackstone Academy also has many classes that promote and educate students about healthy life choices. These classes have included "Let's Talk About Sex," Powerful Teens, the Wellness Class, and the Born 2 Run CIP.

### Goals for Physical Activity

- A variety of exercise programs for students and staff.
- Increase staff wellness through fitness competitions, stress management events and participation in fitness events such as walkathons and road races.

## **Healthy School Environment and Whole Student Approach to Learning**

Blackstone Academy promotes a healthy school environment on a daily basis. A balanced healthy school environment consists not only of nutrition education and physical activity, but also includes the promotion of positive behavioral health. Blackstone Academy believes in the "Whole Child" approach to learning as promoted by organizations like The Association of Curriculum Development and Supervision (ASCD). As stated in the ASCD Whole Child initiative, a whole child environment is one where "each child learns in an intellectually challenging environment that is physically and emotionally safe for students and adults." Social emotional learning is integrated throughout the BACS environment and can be seen throughout the portfolio system, advisory practices, and student/staff relationships.

We have two full time staff members who spend most of their time assisting students with social/emotional concerns. Additionally, we have a part time, on site, clinical psychologist and school social workers. We have a long standing partnership with the Rhode Island College School of Social Work. The RIC School of Social Work provides us with at least four masters and bachelor level interns per year.

### Goals for an Overall Healthy School Environment

- Wellness integration to staff including events to assist with stress reduction.
- Increase extra-curricular behavioral health programs

- Provide more guest speakers to students/parents.
- Promote healthy lifestyle messages throughout the school.
- Improvement of health records and access to medical services within the school
- Increase the linkages to local medical services an access to free or affordable healthcare
- Provide additional staff training on mental health.

## **Policy on School Response to Bullying, Teen Dating Violence, and Sexual Violence**

### **The Lindsey Burke Act**

#### **PROHIBITION AGAINST BULLYING, TEEN DATING VIOLENCE, AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE (Created by BACS School Council and adopted by the Board of Directors, 2009)**

Harassment, intimidation, bullying, teen dating violence and sexual violence are prohibited at Blackstone Academy Charter School in Pawtucket, Rhode Island. [R.I.G.L. 16-21-26, 16-21-30] The prevention of bullying, teen dating violence, and sexual violence is part of Blackstone Academy Charter School's strategic plan [R.I.G.L. 16-7.1-2(e)], school safety plan [R.I.G.L. 16-21-24], and our Wellness Policy. Bullying, Dating Violence, and Sexual Violence will not be tolerated at Blackstone Academy Charter School.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- raise school-wide awareness about bullying, teen dating violence and sexual violence;
- provide direction in responding to incidents; and
- prevent new incidents of bullying, dating violence, and sexual violence.

#### **DEFINITIONS**

**At school** means in a classroom, on or immediately adjacent to school premises, on a school bus or other school-related vehicle, at an official school bus stop, or at any school-sponsored activity or event whether it is on school grounds or not.

**Bullying** occurs when a student intentionally assaults, batters, threatens (including threats if the victim "tells" on the perpetrator), harasses, stalks, menaces, intimidates, extorts, humiliates, or taunts another student. Bullying also occurs when a student or a group of students organize a campaign of shunning against another student or when a student or a group of students maliciously spread rumors about another student. Cyberbullying occurs when any of the above occurs over the computer or other digital device and is included in this policy.

**Dating violence** is a pattern of behavior where one person uses threats of, or actually uses, physical, sexual, verbal or emotional abuse to control his or her dating partner.

**Sexual assault** includes behaviors that are attempted or perpetrated against a victim's will or when a victim cannot consent because of age, disability, harmful threats or promises, or the influence of drugs or alcohol. Sexual assault may involve actual or threatened physical force, use of weapons, coercion (using force or intimidation to gain compliance), intimidation, or pressure and may include:

- intentional touching of someone in ways that are unwanted
- voyeurism (observing sexual objects or acts)
- exposure to exhibitionism (undesired observation of sexual images or private body parts)
- undesired exposure to pornography

- public display of images or
- stalking behavior

### **REPORTING RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Blackstone Academy School Council has established – and is prominently publicizing to students, staff, volunteers, and parents – how to report bullying and how such reports will be acted on. The victim of bullying (including cyberbullying), dating violence, or sexual violence; witnesses/bystanders to such actions; or anyone who has information that these actions have occurred may file a report. If a Blackstone student is involved in an incident of bullying (either victim or offender), we will follow the appropriate protocol, supply the student with relevant information and resources, and involve the parents and/or police, if appropriate.

### **INVESTIGATION**

The school administration has developed procedures and guidelines for the investigation of a bullying, dating violence, or sexual violence report. If the allegation is found to be credible, appropriate disciplinary sanctions, subject to due process, shall be imposed. Whenever bullying, teen dating violence, or sexual violence involves conduct that violates criminal law, the police shall be notified.

#### **Procedures & Guidelines for Reporting and Investigating**

- All reporters will complete the Complaint Form and submit it immediately to a school administrator or other trusted adult. Every effort will be made to maintain the anonymity of the reporter.
- Reporters will be provided with both appropriate school-based and out-of-school services and resources.
- An investigative protocol will be followed for each incident, informing the appropriate parties and taking disciplinary action.
- If appropriate, a legal no-contact order and/or a school-based “stay away” agreement will be implemented. This may include changing a student’s schedule or vigilantly monitoring contact between students.

### **DISCIPLINARY SANCTIONS**

Disciplinary sanctions for bullying, dating violence, or sexual violence will range from Stage 1 to Stage 3 consequences as outlined in the Blackstone Academy Handbook. Such sanctions may include loss of privileges to participate in extra-curricular activities, loss of school bus transportation, detention, or suspension from school. Additional methods may also be employed with the goal of educating both the perpetrator and the victim. These methods may include mediation, counseling, participation in a bullying/violence education program, or community service. At all levels of violation, parents/guardians will be notified and will become part of the process. At appropriate levels of violation (see Appendix C), the police will also be involved.

### **VICTIM RIGHTS & PROTECTION**

Blackstone Academy is committed to creating a school environment (which extends off-campus during school-sponsored events) that promotes timely and fair adjudication of bullying, teen dating violence, and sexual violence cases. Administrators shall establish guidelines to protect the rights and privacy of the alleged victim as well as the due process rights of the alleged perpetrator. The administrators will follow the suggested protocol in the “student-on-student altercation response chart” which is attached. This protocol provides specific guidelines for the treatment of both victim and alleged perpetrator.

### **PREVENTION**

The administration of Blackstone Academy shall ensure that students and staff are instructed on how to identify, prevent, and report bullying, teen dating violence, and sexual violence. The administration shall also ensure that the

school health program and counseling services include the appropriate social skills training to help students avoid isolation and help them interact in a healthy manner. Our Student Support team members are well-integrated into our small school community and have an open door policy for students and staff.

Blackstone Academy staff shall model correct and courteous behavior to each other, to students, parents and visitors. Abusive or humiliating language or demeanor shall not be accepted. The staff shall ensure that each student is known by a teacher/staff member that the student can turn to if abuse develops. This is accomplished through our comprehensive advisory system. To the extent possible, the influence of cliques and other exclusive student grouping shall be diminished by the creation of inclusive school activities in which all students are encouraged to participate. Our annual Mix-It-Up Day organized by students is one example of our efforts to reduce cliques and student groupings. Relevant hotline information and community resources are posted around the school and in the school office. In addition, our multi-age classes allow for different groups of students to interact on a daily basis. Finally, the Blackstone Family Organization provides programming to parents and other family members on bullying and dispenses relevant information regarding community resources and regarding this policy.

**APPENDIX A**  
School Calendar

**APPENDIX B**  
Weekly Schedule