

AUSTIN ACADEMIC CENTER (AAC)

INFORMATION & EXPECTATIONS

Here at SSISD, our mission is to *“provide students with the skills that will prepare them to adapt and excel in a fast-changing world, enabling them to lead productive lives. The district shares with parents and the community the responsibility of promoting high standards and expectations as we provide opportunities for all students within our diverse community to attain personal growth and to become lifelong learners.”*

WHAT IS AN “ALTERNATIVE” SCHOOL?

Some students have circumstances which prevent them from being successful in a traditional school setting. AAC provides students with an opportunity to succeed in a non-traditional school setting and offers a positive option to larger secondary school settings, allows students to work at an accelerated pace on individualized curriculum to achieve a high school diploma, and prepare them for their next step in life, college, workforce, specialized training, etc.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR THIS PROGRAM?

Only students currently enrolled at SSHA are eligible to enroll at AAC. The student must qualify for the following:

- Retained in one or more grades in high school
- Failing 2 or more subjects in the Foundation Curriculum
- Extenuating family or health circumstances necessitating an accelerated education
- Students who have 5 or more credits; unless otherwise approved
- Students who have dropped out of school and are returning
- Students who are married, pregnant (must have doctor’s statement), and/or parenting teens
- Extenuating circumstances that put the student at risk of not completing their high school education
- Students wanting to accelerate their graduation plan
- Any At-Risk indicator

WHO IS NOT ELIGIBLE FOR THIS PROGRAM?

- Expelled students are not eligible during the term of their expulsion
- Students withdrawn from their previous campus due to non-attendance/disciplinary issues
- Students who are not eligible for enrollment in Sulphur Springs ISD
- Students over 21 years of age

HOW MUCH TIME WILL I HAVE TO SPEND IN SCHOOL?

Students enter the program for a full day: 8:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. Every semester, options may be reviewed for a modified schedule. Please see the AAC Principal for more information. Persistent absences, tardies, lack of progress, or other violations of the Student Code of Conduct may result in a loss of this privilege. This will be discussed at your interview. Students must make a commitment to remain in the program until the end of the current school year and/or until graduation.

HOW WILL STUDENTS GET TO SCHOOL?

Bus transportation is provided if needed. Students may also be dropped off by a parent, walk or drive with a valid student parking permit. Students may arrive no earlier than 7:30 a.m. and must leave or be picked up no later than 15 minutes after the end of their school day.

HOW WILL STUDENTS RECEIVE INSTRUCTION?

Students will receive instruction through online coursework via Edgenuity. This requires a great deal of self-discipline. Therefore, all students attending AAC must understand the expectations of completing work independently on a schedule. All tests and exams must be completed at school. Not all courses offered at Sulphur Springs High School are available at AAC. Students may have the ability to attend classes at SSHA through cross-entity enrollment; however, a minimum of 4 hours of instruction must be completed at the AAC campus daily.

HOW CAN I BE MOST SUCCESSFUL?

This varies for every student. On average, students who agree to spend at least six to seven hours daily working on coursework are most successful. For students who have earned the right to leave school early, working before or after school hours will help them complete their courses in a timely manner. Individual student goals will be discussed, and timelines will help students successfully graduate.

HOW SOON CAN I GRADUATE?

How soon a student graduates will depend upon how many credits the student has upon entering the program and how hard he or she is willing to work. All STAAR EOC exams must also be passed to graduate.

CAN I CHANGE MY GRADUATION PLAN?

Graduation plans can only be changed under extenuating circumstances. If district administration approves a graduation plan change for a student, the plan will change from the Foundation Graduation Program with an endorsement to the Foundation Graduation Program without an endorsement. The following are examples of extenuating circumstances, but are not limited to:

1. Current or impending parenthood
2. Documented medical condition that interferes with learning
3. 5th year senior

HOW CAN I GET AN INDUSTRY CERTIFICATION?

All students enrolled starting in the 2021-22 school year can select a career endorsement/program of study that will allow them to earn in Industry Based Certification (IBC). Please review the Endorsement and Program of Study options for SSHA by visiting our Sulphur Springs High School website - choose the Academics link then Endorsement Guide

https://schools.ssisd.net/page/sshs.careerclusters_endorsements)

WILL I RECEIVE AN AAC HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA?

All students who complete the required credits for graduation and pass the state-required assessments will receive a high school diploma granted by Austin Academic Center.

WHAT ABOUT THE STAFF'S QUALIFICATIONS?

The staff at the AAC is made up of motivated, highly qualified, certified educators who are trained in the most effective teaching and learning techniques available. All staff have specialized training to meet the needs of our diverse students.

HOW DO I APPLY?

Enrollment is limited. Students may request an application from their SSHS school counselor. Once completed, the application must be turned in to the campus school counselor. The student's counselor will complete the last page of the application. Once Austin Academic Center receives this application, a required parent/student interview with the AAC administration will be scheduled. If approved by the AAC Principal, a start date will be established once there is an opening available.

HOW DO I REMAIN IN GOOD STANDING AT AAC?

Students are expected to meet program expectations in attendance, behavior and academics. Student progress will continually be evaluated. If there are attendance, disciplinary, and/or academic problems, a student may be removed from AAC. All students must meet program expectations to remain a student at AAC. Students are under the Sulphur Springs ISD Student Code of Conduct, in addition to AAC expectations. Students who apply are making a commitment to complete his/her educational journey, recover credits and/or graduate while attending AAC. To remain in good standing a student must complete a minimum of 2 full credits within a nine weeks period.

RETURNING BACK TO SSHS:

AAC and SSHS administration will work together to decide the best placement for each student. Ultimately, the decision will be made by the Austin Academic Center Principal. Please see the AAC Principal regarding the possibility of withdrawing from AAC and returning to SSHS.

SCHEDULING APPOINTMENTS:

Please make every effort to schedule all appointments (doctor, dentist, etc.) before or after your class time. We will work with every parent, however, we feel very strongly that instruction time is important and should be protected.

TELECOMMUNICATION DEVICES:

Students must surrender their cell phones and other personal technology daily because the devices are prohibited during instructional time. Parents may call the office at (903) 885-4942 ext. 1210 in case of emergencies and messages will be delivered to our students. Students' success is our number one priority. Consequences will be applied for students who refuse to surrender their devices. We must focus on academics while in the learning environment.

PROCEDURES FOR ABSENCES:

A parent must call the office at (903) 885-4942 ext. 1210 and leave a message before 8:10 a.m. the morning of the student's absence. The message must include the name of the student and the reason for being absent. Upon returning to school the student must have the appropriate documentation for the absence to be considered an excused absence. A doctor's note specifying the reason the student was out and the time frame that is to be excused will be required after the 3rd consecutive absence.

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING COMPONENT:

In order to ensure students are well rounded, we have incorporated a social emotional learning component into our program. Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process through which children and adults understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions. Students at AAC will be required to participate in our social emotional learning program each Friday.

ATTENDING EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES:

All students may attend any extra-curricular events they choose outside of the school day. Students may not attend daily events scheduled at the Sulphur Springs High School during the regular class time unless AAC is scheduled by the Principal to attend the event. Students who attend AAC are prohibited from participating in co-curricular activities such as athletics, band, choir, etc. Students are not allowed, under any circumstances, to be on the campus of Sulphur Springs High School at any other time without permission from AAC staff. This is considered out of location and a disciplinary action will be taken.

DRESS CODE:

District Wide dress code will be followed unless otherwise approved.

Remember that enrollment in AAC is a privilege. School leadership has the authority to use their discretion to enforce the rules and regulations should a situation arise that is not specified by these regulations and expectations. Because of the many changes that occur during the school year regarding the interpretation of the Texas Education Code, this application packet is subject to change without written notice to parents and students. However, due process will be offered to students with regard to any changes.

PLEASE SEE PAGE 5 FOR STUDENT AND PARENT EXPECTATIONS

STUDENT EXPECTATIONS

AAC staff works collaboratively with students to establish a safe and civil learning environment. Every student is responsible for playing his/her part to ensure a positive school climate. With this in mind, every student should:

- Read, understand, and adhere to the Sulphur Springs ISD Student Code of Conduct (Students who do not adhere to the policy may receive in school suspension, out of school suspension or DAEP placement.)
- Arrive on time and depart at the end of your assigned school day
- Surrender personal technology daily
- Remain at AAC campus unless authorized by a school official
- Complete at least 2 full credits per nine weeks
- Attend all tutorials, pull outs, Saturday schools, and field trips as directed by school officials

PARENT EXPECTATIONS

AAC staff encourages and promotes partnerships between home and school. This partnership thrives on communication and interaction between parents, teachers, administrators, and community members. With this in mind, every parent should:

- Encourage his/her student to put a high priority on education and commit to making the most of the educational opportunities the school provides
- Review the information in this handbook as well as the Student Code of Conduct with his/her student
- Monitor his/her student's academic progress and contact teachers as needed
- Attend scheduled conferences and request additional conferences by contacting the school office as needed
- Review his/her student's records including attendance, test scores, grades, and disciplinary records, applications for college admissions, and state assessment instruments that have been administered
- Participate in our campus improvement process parent surveys