

Welcome to GATE Academy!

We are a vibrant community deeply committed to the well-being of our children and the school. This handbook serves to clarify the school's policies, procedures, and practices. By choosing GATE Academy, you consent to adhere to these policies, and those set forward by the teaching faculty and administrative staff.

We welcome your involvement and hope you will contact us if we can be of help. Good communications and a healthy school atmosphere depend on parents directing their questions and comments to the right person at GATE so matters can be addressed promptly and effectively. Please bring your questions, comments, compliments or concerns to those people who can best help you. Here's who to talk to about what:

My Question is About:

My child

My child's teacher

My child's particular assignments

My child's overall class assignments

My child's math assignments

Another GATE student

My tuition or fees

Re-enrollment

Head of Faculty or Head of Students

Head of School

School Finances

My Contact is:

My child's core teacher

Dean of Faculty & Curriculum

Core teacher

Core teacher or Dean of Faculty & Curriculum

Mathematics teacher

My child's core teacher or Dean of Students

Billing and Finance

Head of School (HOS) or Executive Chair

HOS or Executive Chair

Chair, Board of Trustees

HOS or Executive Chair

We are thrilled you are a member of the GATE Academy community, and thank you for entrusting us with the education of your child. We encourage you to become involved in school life and look forward to seeing you throughout the year.

Welcome!

GATE Academy

1 Saint Vincent Drive, San Rafael, California 94903

Main Office: (415) 491-4700

Fax: (415) 491-4701

Staff Directory

Administration

Victoria Talkington • Executive Chair

415 847-9127

Vtalkington@dunhamacademy.com

Marie Schutzendorf • Administration and Operations

415 846-6525

mschutzendorf@dunhamacademy.com

Faculty

Ian Brown • Dean of Faculty & Curriculum

415 747-5252

ibrown@dunhamacademy.com

Arin Wiscomb • Dean of Students

415 491-4700

awiscomb@dunhamacademy.com

Jocelyn Plant • Upper School teacher

415 491-4700

jplant@dunhamacademy.com

YiOu Wang • Mathematics & Science teacher

415 491-4700

ywang@dunhamacademy.com

Katrina Hammer • Lower School teacher

415 491-4700

khammer@dunhamacademy.com

France Laude Gohard • Language teacher

415 491-4700

flgohard@dunhamacademy.com

Roland Johnson • Physical Education teacher

415 286-3572

rjohnson@dunhamacademy.com

Aftercare: 415 286-3572

GATE Academy is the Marin School for Gifted Education.

Our mission is to cluster cognitively gifted students in small groups with their intellectual peers, and provide them with an inquiry-based, accelerated, self-paced curriculum, in a school environment that celebrates them for who they are.

Educational Philosophy

Learning occurs in an atmosphere of positive expectations and mutual effort between students and teachers. We encourage our students to rely on not just their intellectual prowess, but emotional and moral strength as they develop confidence, resourcefulness, resilience and a keen interest in the world.

GATE Academy is committed to the development of our children as productive citizens and leaders for the future. We address the intellectual, physical, and emotional potential of each child. We offer each student a challenging education that provides the intellectual skills for the pursuit of a lifetime of learning. We encourage ethical and social values that support productive lives of service and mutual respect.

We teach the skills that allow children to become successful life-long learners. Our graduates excel in critical thinking, quantitative analysis, and communication skills. They are also mindful individuals, respecting both themselves and others. We focus on graduating children who:

- Ask well thought-out questions
- Know how to investigate those questions
- Can analyze and synthesize the results of their investigation
- Communicate their findings articulately and to a diverse audience
- Treat themselves and others in a caring, responsible and respectful manner
- Know how to create a space to learn in
- Work to be an integral part of the community.

Our graduates are expected to understand the concepts covered by:

- The National Science Education Standards (through grade 12),
- Mathematics through advanced algebra or beyond,
- Language arts (reading, writing and oral communications) at a ninth grade level or beyond,
- A broad understanding of world history including the humanities (cultural, political, religious, economic and social) and science (archaeological, anthropological and technological) from 15 billion years ago to the present day.

Learning at GATE Academy

A child learns as a whole person. Children develop and learn across all areas—physical, social, emotional, moral, aesthetic, and cognitive. All of these areas interact.

A child progresses through stages of cognitive development. Children vary widely in their learning rates, styles, and personalities. All areas do not develop at the same rate, even within the

same child. We focus on the successes of each individual rather than on what the child doesn't know.

A child is an active, not a passive learner. Children learn by doing. Our learning environment of core classrooms, projects, and learning experiences fosters active learning. The teacher is a facilitator of learning, not just a giver of knowledge.

A child constructs her own knowledge of the world. Children learn from personal interaction with their surroundings, from direct experience with real objects, from talking and writing about their experiences and ideas, and from applying what they have learned.

A child's learning is individual. Every child is unique. They need exposure to different learning styles and open-ended experiences. Instead of comparing them to each other or to a certain timeline of learning, we record and celebrate their achievements through portfolio assessments.

A child's learning is a process. Children learn to problem-solve by being personally engaged in solving problems. They learn social skills by interacting with others. We use the process approach to learning where children learn skills in the process of becoming readers, writers, and problem solvers.

A child learns best when the activity is meaningful and relevant. The more meaningful an activity is to children, the more they understand, learn and remember. Learning activities are centered on children's interests and needs.

A child learns from social interaction. Children learn from interacting with each other. They learn by observing differences in others. As they work together, they discuss differing viewpoints and learn to explain their views and ideas. We use social interaction in core classrooms, group discussions, cooperative groupings, and peer tutoring to foster social interaction.

A child learns by imitation. Children learn by imitating their parents, their teachers, and their peers. Modeling is a powerful educational tool in multi-age classrooms.

A child's emotions impact his learning. Children's emotions and feelings directly interact with learning. When they are interested in a topic, they enjoy learning. Gaining self-confidence in their abilities helps children to love learning.

School Structure

Gifted children typically exhibit asynchronous development, meaning that they are not equally gifted across the entire cognitive domain. Some students, for example, are much earlier readers than others; while others have a deep passion for and firm grasp of arithmetic at a younger age.

To accommodate their cognitive differences, and to address their social and emotional needs, students in each classroom have a range of ages. The classroom to which each student is assigned is that student's core classroom and is where he or she spends the majority of the school day.

When a student exhibits advancement in a particular academic realm—mathematics for example—that student may attend math class in a different classroom with students who are at

that level in mathematics, and return to their the core classroom afterwards. Students who exhibit academic advancement in multiple areas will attend classes appropriate to their level.

This fluid structure is designed to address two basic needs of gifted children; one is the need to spend time with their chronological, or age group, peers, and the other is the need to work at his or her academic level.

In addition to exhibiting academic advancement in one or more domains, some children exhibit advanced social and or emotional maturity for their chronological age. It is therefore sometimes appropriate to assign a child to a homeroom with other children who are chronologically older but at the same level of maturity as the younger child. Our goal is to create a match that best fits each child.

Homework Assignments and Expectations

GATE Academy does not assign busy work at any time. Most student work takes place at school, and no homework is assigned in the lower school.

Once a child is in the upper school, learning is extended outside the classroom through homework assignments geared to enhance the student’s understanding of the concept that’s being learned, to further an independent project (such as a current event or an inquiry project), or to complete an assignment started in class.

Independent projects provide an opportunity for students to explore deeply subjects they have a personal interest in, to expand writing and analytic skills, and to develop self-discipline and time-management skills. Inquiry projects also present a valuable opportunity for students to seek out sources and people who have expertise in the student’s chosen topic, furthering inspiration and collaboration. We encourage parents to contact their child’s core teacher to clarify any assignments.

GATE considers independent exploration on inquiry projects vital for complete learning. True education is a partnership between the individual student, his or her classmates, teacher, and parents—but it is ultimately the child’s own responsibility. It is important that assignments be complete, on time, and of a high quality. We ask that parents guide students only to the degree necessary so that the full measure of accomplishment and learning rests solely with the child.

Evaluating Progress: Grades and Assessment

Evaluation of student progress is a continuous process. GATE Academy does not issue formal grades or grade report cards to students in Kindergarten through 5th grade. Students receive formal report cards beginning with grade 6.

We do not issue formal grades to our younger students because we want them to focus on doing their best work, without the stress of earning “good grades.” We do use portfolio and other assessments to track the progress of and quality of these students’ work.

Formal grades and grade report cards are issued beginning with 6th grade. We continue to use portfolio and other assessment tools along with the issuance of grades to assess the work of our Upper School students.

All students will receive progress reports every other week. The progress report is intended to be a quick, easy-to-understand method of communicating a child's performance to his/her parents. (The progress report does not replace formal portfolio conferences.)

On the reports, students earn green, yellow, or red marks in language arts, math, science, social studies, foreign language, art, physical education, as well as core graduate, and organizational skills. Students are expected to earn green marks in all assessed areas.

The green, yellow, and red marks are defined to mean the following:

Green means GO! Your child is doing well in this area. The quantity and quality of work are in accord with the child's capabilities. Green indicates A or B level work (80% or greater mastery of the material.)

Yellow means CAUTION! Your child could and should be doing better in this area. Yellow indicates C level work in this area (70%-79% mastery of the material.)

Red means STOP! Your child is performing at an unacceptably low level, far below their capability. Red marks require immediate intervention by parents and faculty to resolve the problem with this area.

Newsletters

On alternate wednesdays, teachers will email a classroom newsletter highlighting core material the class studied that week, key projects, assignment updates and occasional photos.

School Schedule

GATE Academy operates on a year-round schedule. The current academic calendar is included in your packet.

Attendance

Regular attendance and on-time arrival are critical to a child's success in school. We encourage parents to ensure that children come to school on time, as even few minutes' tardiness disrupts the child's day and the entire classroom.

Our schedule typically includes from 190 to 195 school days each year. Students are expected to attend a minimum of 180 days.

The school day begins promptly at 8:15 a.m. for all classes. The day ends at 3:15 p.m. Please call the school at (415) 491-4700 if your child is going to be late or absent. If the school hasn't received notification of absence by noon of the same day, an unexcused absence will be recorded on the student's attendance record. Excused absences will be determined by GATE Academy.

Under state law, a pupil who, without a valid excuse, is absent from school for three full days in one school year, or is tardy or absent for more than 30 minutes during the school day on three occasions in one school year, is considered truant. GATE Academy complies with this law.

Before- and After-school Program

Providing our students with unstructured, supervised social time with their cognitive peers is a core part of our mission. We provide before- and after-school care, from 8:00–8:15 am, and from 3:15–6:00 pm each day.

There is a fee in addition to tuition for this extended care, which must be pre-paid to the administrative support coordinator.

Please contact the PE/After-school teacher for substantive questions about the after-school program, or the administrative support coordinator for billing questions.

GATE Academy Student Conduct: Expectations, Disciplinary Consequences and Procedures

Student Attitude and Conduct

We believe that rights and responsibilities are inseparable. The GATE Academy code of conduct is based on these guiding principals:

- 1) **Consideration** for the feelings, property, time and effort of others and for the needs of the community.
- 2) **Respect** for oneself and others, for property belonging to or shared by others, and for the learning environment of each classroom.
- 3) **Responsibility** for one's own conduct and speech, for safety, for use of time and materials, for work, for honesty and for productive participation.

GATE Academy students have the right:

- To be treated with kindness, fairness and respect
- To learn and play in a safe, clean environment.

GATE Academy students are required:

- To arrive on time
- To maintain self-discipline
- To treat and speak to adults and other students with respect
- To accept direction from adults in positions of authority and responsibility and to follow the instructions of supervising adults at all times
- To help others when they need assistance
- To use and share school materials and equipment with care
- To keep the community clean: to clean up after oneself, to put belongings away, to pick up litter and to dispose of trash appropriately.
- To be a mindful, attentive listener while others are speaking

- To use indoor voices indoors
- To make certain other children feel welcome to participate in classroom activities and playground games

Behavior in the Classroom

Disruptive behavior in the classroom will not be tolerated. GATE Academy follows a “three strikes and you’re out” rule concerning classroom behavior. A student who is exhibiting disruptive behavior in the classroom will be given a time out in an in-classroom area, and may return to work/class activities on his/her own initiative. If the behavior occurs again, the student is given another in-class time out, returning to normal activities at the teacher’s request. The third warning means that the student is required to leave the classroom, usually to another classroom where a staff member is present to supervise, and will not be allowed to return until the instructor decides it is appropriate. Disruptive students may temporarily lose recess and/or other privileges to help them remember that appropriate behavior is expected from them.

The classroom teacher has discretion at all times to modify this series of consequences based upon the type of conduct that occurs in his/her classroom. Some behavior may lead to a student’s immediate removal from the classroom, with more serious consequences as outlined further in this section.

Basic Consequences for Irresponsibility and Misconduct

A student’s conduct in any realm within the school experience, which constitutes the learning environment, in class or outside of class, may affect his/her privileges to participate in school activities. The revocation of privileges—the exclusion of a student from certain activities due to his/her irresponsible behavior or other misconduct—is intended to serve the community by maintaining the standards by which we can continue in our mission.

Parents will be notified of an incident involving misconduct if, in the judgment of a teacher or administrator, it is serious enough to warrant a parent’s immediate involvement. In such a case, parents may be requested to meet with faculty, administrators or staff to discuss the incident. Parents’ prompt attendance at such meetings is mandatory. At the school’s sole discretion, the offending student(s) may not be allowed in school until such a meeting takes place.

Consequences to poor behavior choices may include a variety of restrictions or remedies including, but not limited to: (1) a period of detention for reflection and an oral or written response to the situation; (2) the cleaning, repairing, or replacing of property; (3) the preparation of a lesson to reinforce for self and others the value of the principles involved; (4) assistance to other students, teachers, or members of the staff; (5) exclusion from class or class activities, field trips and so on; (6) probation, suspension, or expulsion as described below.

Probation Contract

Under some circumstances, when a student persistently undermines the positive efforts of others to build and maintain a productive educational community, the student(s) in question may be

placed on probation. This regards participation in school or class activities that are considered privileges, including any all-school activities or assemblies, field trips, special class activities such as cooking, recess, aftercare, graduation or commencement ceremonies, and class celebrations. In such a case, a student and his/her parents will be expected to sign a Probation Contract. The terms of the contract will explain the reason for the probation, the privileges revoked, and how and under what circumstances they might be regained. The issuance of a Probation Contract usually assumes that the student possesses the ability to rejoin the community fully. It therefore provides the opportunity for the student to correct his/her behavior, and thereby re-establish the trust necessary for the school to permit his/her participation in activities, by giving assurance that he/she can do so with respect and dignity. Under such a contract, a student's behavior will be monitored on a daily basis, and decisions will be made by the school regarding participation for each activity.

Placing a student on probation is at the sole discretion of the school. The final authority regarding probation rests with the Dean of Students who may consult with the Dean of Faculty & Curriculum, Head of School or Executive Chair. A parent or student shall have no right to appeal the school's decision regarding probation. A student's failure to fulfill the terms of the Probation Contract may result in further disciplinary action.

A Probation Contract may be required even in cases considered not serious enough to warrant immediate suspension or expulsion. Certain serious, hazardous or dangerous actions or omissions, or persistent violations of or disregard for guiding principles or specific rules or instructions, may result in a student's suspension or expulsion from the school with no option for a Probation Contract.

Suspension or Expulsion

In the case of any matter of a serious, violent or persistent nature, and with consideration of facts and circumstances, a child may be suspended from school for a period of time deemed appropriate by the Dean of Students, which decision may be made in consultation with the Dean of Faculty & Curriculum, the Head of School, or the Executive Chair. The parents of a child suspended in such a case, if expulsion remains a possible consequence, may be requested to withdraw their child from the school before an expulsion order is invoked.

Certain serious or persistent offenses may result directly in immediate suspension or expulsion by administrative action. Such offenses may include, but are not limited to: violence against or abuse of another person; harassment of any sort including bullying or cyber bullying; disrespect directed toward an adult acting on behalf of the school in a position of authority or responsibility; noncompliance regarding safety of self or others; vandalism or theft; the possession of controlled substances in any manner; or possession of a weapon or facsimile of a weapon in any manner.

The final authority regarding expulsion rests with the Head of Students, after consultation with the Dean of Faculty & Curriculum, Head of School, and Executive Chair.

Bullying

Bullying is not tolerated. Bullying is a form of harassment that substantially interferes with academic progress and a sense of emotional, and potentially physical safety in one's school community. Bullying includes, but is not limited to, physical or verbal aggression (hitting, kicking, choking, taunting, teasing, threatening, ridiculing, etc.), relational aggression (harming or threatening to harm relationships or acceptance, friendships, or group exclusion; fomenting divisiveness or disrespect), emotional aggression (unkind teasing, threatening, or intimidating others).

Cyber-Bullying

Harassment in the form of cyber-bullying is not tolerated. Cyber-bullying includes digital/electronic conduct towards any member of the school community that is inappropriate, hurtful, harmful, intimidating, factionalizing, disrespectful, anonymous, or threatening. Cyber-bullying includes but is not limited to slurs, jokes, verbal, graphic or offensive conduct, published to others in any digital/electronic format, including on websites, instant messaging or texting, online chatting, emails, or by using camera phones, webcams, digital recording devices or by using other forms of technology. It includes actions occurring outside school on personal computers/electronic devices as well as during school time.

Community members who feel that they have been the victims of such misuses of technology should not erase the offending material. They should print a copy and immediately report the incident to the Dean of Students. All reports of harassment in cyberspace by anyone in the school community will be investigated fully, including a police report if necessary. Sanctions may include, but are not limited to loss of computer privileges, detention, probation, suspension, separation, or expulsion from the school.

The school encourages parents to monitor their children's use of technology and partner with the school in educating children about the potential dangers inherent in cyber-space communications.

Behavior Outside of School

A student's behavior outside of school can have an impact on his/her academic progress and emotional well-being. Outside behavior that is brought to the attention of the school and is considered (1) harmful to oneself, (2) harmful to others (i.e. bullying and cyber bullying), (3) damaging to the reputation of the school or its staff or (4) illegal will result in the school's involvement. The school will help to implement resolution and/or repair strategies, and may take disciplinary action against the offending student(s), which may include suspension or expulsion.

Authority of the School Administration

Guidelines set forth in this or other sections of the GATE Academy Handbook, regarding the responsibilities of students, their conduct and consequences for misconduct, shall not be construed as to limit the authority of the administration. The administration maintains the

authority, as needs arise, to add items or definitions, to expand the scope of, or to interpret matters relevant to circumstances involving the health and welfare of the student body, faculty, and staff.

GATE Academy Netiquette Policy

GATE Academy is a K-8 school, and part of K-8 student education is learning to stay focused and on task with school work and projects, not to be distracted by electronic media, and to exercise self-control and respect of others. Another part of K-8 education is learning to communicate directly with others in person. Important aspects of in-person communication involve skills of active listening, effective speaking, thoughtful and respectful language, and noticing and understanding non-verbal messages that are conveyed by facial expressions, tone of voice, gestures, and body language.

GATE Academy also recognizes the value of computer and other electronic devices in an educational setting. Electronic devices and the Internet can be used to obtain access to a wide range of information, to communicate certain types of information quickly and over long distances, and are convenient as tools to create, record, and store student work. For these reasons, GATE Academy provides wireless Internet access throughout the building, and permits Upper School students to use school-provided computers on school premises during certain classes, for certain specific purposes, only as specifically directed by their teachers.

Limitations on Electronic Device Usage at GATE Academy

Student use of school computers and access to the Internet as directed by faculty is a **privilege** and not a right. **GATE Academy students may not use electronic devices—whether school-issued computers or their own personal electronic devices—for any other reason except as directed by faculty.** For example, while on school premises, students may not make or receive phone calls, send text messages, participate in online chat, send emails, use online social media, or otherwise employ electronic media to communicate with anyone. In an emergency, parents will be contacted by a staff member. Teachers have the right to monitor students' computer use for any reason, at any time.

Limitations on Use of Family Email Directory

To enhance the administration and operation of the school, GATE Academy gives its families a directory that includes email addresses that would otherwise be private information and unavailable through any other means. GATE Academy recognizes that use of its parent email list can be valuable for communication between parents, and accordingly approves limited use of email between parents **solely** in relation to issues concerning volunteering, fundraising, and hospitality. GATE Academy parent emails may not be used to express personal opinion regarding other students, staff members, or other families, or for any inflammatory or malicious exchange concerning school business, school policy, school administration, school faculty, school students,

school families, or school staff. These emails may not be used for advertising services or products, or for soliciting or promoting any political agenda or other cause for any purpose.

GATE Academy supports open and constructive communication between parents, students and staff and endorses appropriate channels for grievances. Matters of a strong emotional or volatile nature must always be dealt with in a person-to-person manner.

User Agreement

(to be signed by all adult users and student users above grade 5)

I have read, understand, and will abide by the above GATE Academy School Handbook. I further understand that any violation of the regulations may lead to school disciplinary action, up to and including expulsion, and/or appropriate legal action may be initiated.

USER NAME

DATE

USER SIGNATURE

Parent Agreement

(to be signed by parents of all student users under the age of eighteen)

As parent or guardian of _____ *(Name of Student)* I have read the GATE Academy School Handbook. I understand that this policy is designed for educational purposes and effective school operations. In addition, I understand that GATE Academy has taken reasonable steps to control my student's access to the Internet, but understand that GATE Academy cannot guarantee that all controversial information will be inaccessible to student users. I agree that I will not hold GATE Academy responsible for materials acquired on the Internet. I accept full responsibility for Internet and electronic device supervision when my child's use is outside the school setting. I will responsibly use email addresses of other GATE Academy families and staff only as outlined above. I further understand that any violation of the regulations may lead to school disciplinary action, up to and including expulsion, and/or appropriate legal action may be initiated. I have discussed these policies with my child.

PARENT NAME

DATE

PARENT SIGNATURE