



# **Student & Parent High School Diploma Handbook 2023 - 2024**

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*NOTICE: The reader should take notice that while every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of the information provided herein, The American Academy reserves the right to make unlimited changes at any time without prior notice. The school provides the information herein solely for the convenience of the reader and, to the extent permissible by law, expressly disclaims any liability which may otherwise be incurred. Additionally, the policies and procedures set forth in this handbook are not a right or part of the enrollment contract. The procedures herein do not confer any contractual rights on any student, but instead, serve as an aid to the school in its everyday decision-making responsibilities.*

## **Mission Statement**

The American Academy (TAA) helps students succeed by providing a system of high-quality education services and human support.

## **Accreditation**

The American Academy is accredited by AdvancED/Cognia: <https://www.advanc-ed.org/>.

Accreditation Headquarters:           9115 Westside Parkway  
  Alpharetta, GA 30009  
  888.413.3669

## **Admissions Policies**

The minimum age for enrollment with The American Academy is 13 years.

## **Residency Requirement**

For students enrolled on or after September 1, 2022, the residency requirement may be met by completing at least 25% of the total diploma credit requirement at The American Academy. A maximum amount of 18 credits may be transferred in.

For students enrolled prior to September 1, 2022, the residency requirement may be met by earning 2.00 credits at The American Academy.

## **Non-discrimination policy**

The American Academy does not discriminate on the basis of age, race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, disability, or veteran status. The American Academy is open to students of any age, providing coursework for grades 9-12. The principal will evaluate the admissions of students who have not completed the eighth grade. Students denied admission to The American Academy may appeal. Students who wish to appeal the denial decision must inform the TAA principal or designee in writing via email.

## **Proficiency Policy**

Prospective students who have not previously earned any high school credits will be required to take and pass a proficiency test demonstrating high school-readiness. The proficiency test will be assigned during the enrollment process and must be completed prior to finalizing enrollment.

## **Technology Requirements**

Students must have reliable access to a computer with internet access. Google Chrome is the recommended browser. A list of technical specifications is available to students. Each student must have an email account to be used for academic purposes prior to enrollment. Students agree to notify the school within 24 hours of a change to the primary email address.

## **Enrollment Process**

The American Academy accepts student enrollments at any time through its online registration system. Prospective students must follow the steps outlined on the website, including obtaining a Transcript Evaluation. The following enrollment forms must be completed and agreements

accepted by students wishing to enroll in The American Academy, prior to the student receiving access to courses:

- Online Student Enrollment Form
- Terms of Use

### **Conditional Enrollment**

Students will be *conditionally enrolled* pending completion of the following items:

- Submitted transcript
- Submitted payment for diploma cost
- Submitted first assignment

While *conditionally enrolled*, students may begin their first courses but do not have full access to all services and courses. A transcript evaluation prior to full enrollment status may be requested. Once the above items are complete, students will be considered *fully activated*. Fully activated students are assigned to a Student Services representative, receive the transcript evaluation, and are able to self-register for courses.

Conditionally enrolled students will be deactivated after 45 days if any of the above components are missing. Payment is refundable if a request is submitted in writing within 10 days of registration. Credit will not be issued for courses completed during the conditional enrollment period if the student is deactivated prior to full activation.

TAA courses with their associated credits required materials, and descriptions are published in the course catalog on the TAA website. Fully activated students may self-register in courses from the student dashboard. If preferred, Student Services is available to assist students with selecting and registering for courses.

Contact Student Services to withdraw from a course or swap a course. Changes to course registrations must be made within 5 business days and prior to completing less than 25% of the course content. Students can withdraw from a course at any point without a GPA penalty.

### **Academic Operations**

#### **Academic Calendar**

The American Academy is an open-entry, open-exit school. The academic year is calculated to begin Tuesday after Labor Day and goes through the Friday before Labor Day. The school office will be closed on weekends and federal holidays. There are no scheduled academic breaks.

#### **Pacing**

Courses are scheduled for four weeks, and students are expected to complete a minimum of one credit in the four week period. The academic week begins the Tuesday closest to the registration date and ends each subsequent Monday at midnight. Assignments that are not completed by the deadline will be automatically scored 0%. Students can self-pace throughout the week, provided the weekly deadline is met. However, daily logins are strongly recommended

for optimal success. Coursework can be completed ahead of schedule. Students may register for additional classes as soon as the current classes are completed. If a student needs a short break, they may work ahead to still meet the pacing deadline requirements.

### **Pause**

A Pause status is granted in the event of an emergency that incapacitates the student's ability to complete schoolwork, or the student needs an unscheduled break from school that would otherwise interfere with satisfactory academic progress. The Pause status must be requested via Student Services and is evaluated by the Director of Student Services or designee. The duration of this status lasts for up to four weeks and may be used once per year.

### **Accommodations**

#### **Non-English Native Language Speakers**

TAA does not currently provide ELL curriculum. All instructional content and instructional interactions are provided in English, with the exception of World Languages courses.

Placement tests will be required of students who live outside of the United States and have not demonstrated the ability to successfully engage in English-language course work. The ability to successfully engage can also be determined by previously completed course work at a U.S. institution.

Students who have English reading and writing skills in question may be placed into TAA's English 9 course to assess their ability to learn, comprehend and communicate in English. If it is determined that a student's skills are not at a level to be successful, the student's tuition for the course will be refunded.

### **Special Education**

As a private school program, TAA does not administer or provide for the administration of special education services. Students who are in need of special education services are encouraged to obtain services through their local school districts.

TAA does honor accommodations that are listed on a student's current IEP or 504 plan. A copy of the current IEP should be sent to Student Services.

### **School Operations**

#### **Change of Student Information**

Students should inform TAA Student Services of changes in address, telephone number, email, parent contact(s), or any other important directory information within two school days of the change via email or phone.

### **Enrollment Verifications**

The American Academy can supply documentation for enrollment verification provided students are in good academic standing and have completed at least one course.

## **Withdrawal**

To withdraw a student from The American Academy, students or parents/guardians of non-emancipated minors should notify the school office in writing by emailing [student.services@graduationalliance.com](mailto:student.services@graduationalliance.com). All requests for transfer of student records will be initiated by the school into which the student will be enrolled. However, records will not be transferred until all School fees have been paid.

## **Student Privacy**

TAA has done due diligence to protect students' personal information and to guard against cyber predators by using a password-protected learning management system, password-protecting and securing all computers on which student data is stored, and locking cabinets in which student records are kept. Personally identifiable information or directory information contained within a student's educational records will not be made public unless authorized by the student.

The American Academy, in compliance with Federal Laws 93-308 and 93-568, presents these facts for the information of parent(s) and/or guardian(s) and students.

1. TAA, in compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), permits parents and/or guardians or students to do the following:
  - a. Inspect and review the student's education records within 45 days of the day the School receives a request for access. Under state public disclosure law, the School must acknowledge the request in writing within five (5) working days, and unless the documents are presented at that time, an estimate will be provided as to when they will be available within the 45-day response period. Parent(s) and/or guardian(s) or eligible students should submit to the school principal (or appropriate school official) a written request that identifies the record(s) they wish to inspect. The principal will make arrangements for access and notify the parent/guardian or eligible student of the time and place where the records may be inspected;
  - b. Request amendment of the student's education records that the parent(s) and/or guardian(s) or eligible student believes to be inaccurate, misleading, or in violation of the student's rights to privacy. They should write the school principal, clearly identify the part of the record to be amended as well as specify why the information in question is inaccurate, misleading, or in violation of the student's rights to privacy. If the school decides not to amend the record as requested by the parent(s)/guardian(s) or eligible student, the School will notify the parent(s)/guardian(s) or eligible student of the decision and advise them of the right to a hearing regarding the request for amendment. Additional information regarding the hearing procedures will be provided to the parent(s) and/or guardian(s) or eligible student when notified of the right to a hearing;
  - c. Consent to disclosures of personally identifiable information contained in the student's education records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes

disclosure without consent. One exception, which permits disclosure without consent, is disclosure to school officials with legitimate educational interests. A school official is a person employed by the District as an administrator, supervisor, instructor, or support staff member (including health or medical staff and law enforcement unit personnel); a person or company with whom the School has contracted to perform a special task (such as an attorney, auditor, medical consultant, or therapist); or a parent or student serving on an official committee, such as a disciplinary or grievance committee, or assisting another school official in performing his or her tasks. A school official has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record in order to fulfill his or her professional responsibility;

- d. File a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education under Section 99.64 concerning alleged failures by TAA to comply with the requirements of FERPA. The name and address of the office that administers FERPA follows:

Student Privacy Policy Office  
U.S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20202

FERPA permits the disclosure of PII from students' education records, without consent of the parent or eligible student, if the disclosure meets certain conditions found in § 99.31 of the FERPA regulations. Except for disclosures to school officials, disclosures related to some judicial orders or lawfully issued subpoenas, disclosures of directory information, and disclosures to the parent or eligible student, § 99.32 of the FERPA regulations requires the school to record the disclosure. Parents and eligible students have a right to inspect and review the record of disclosures. A school may disclose PII from the education records of a student without obtaining prior written consent of the parents or the eligible student –

- To other school officials, including teachers, within the educational agency or institution whom the school has determined to have legitimate educational interests. This includes contractors, consultants, volunteers, or other parties to whom the school has outsourced institutional services or functions, provided that the conditions listed in § 99.31(a)(1)(i)(B)(1) - (a)(1)(i)(B)(3) are met. (§ 99.31(a)(1))
- To officials of another school, school system, or institution of postsecondary education where the student seeks or intends to enroll, or where the student is already enrolled if the disclosure is for purposes related to the student's enrollment or transfer, subject to the requirements of § 99.34. (§ 99.31(a)(2))
- To authorized representatives of the U. S. Comptroller General, the U. S. Attorney General, the U.S. Secretary of Education, or State and local educational authorities, such as the State educational agency (SEA) in the parent or eligible student's State. Disclosures under this provision may be made, subject to the requirements of § 99.35, in connection with an audit or evaluation of Federal- or State-supported education programs, or for the enforcement of or compliance with Federal legal requirements that relate to those programs. These entities may make further disclosures of PII to outside

entities that are designated by them as their authorized representatives to conduct any audit, evaluation, or enforcement or compliance activity on their behalf, if applicable requirements are met. (§§ 99.31(a)(3) and 99.35)

- In connection with financial aid for which the student has applied or which the student has received, if the information is necessary for such purposes as to determine eligibility for the aid, determine the amount of the aid, determine the conditions of the aid, or enforce the terms and conditions of the aid. (§ 99.31(a)(4))
- To State and local officials or authorities to whom information is specifically allowed to be reported or disclosed by a State statute that concerns the juvenile justice system and the system's ability to effectively serve, prior to adjudication, the student whose records were released, subject to § 99.38. (§ 99.31(a)(5))
- To organizations conducting studies for, or on behalf of, the school, in order to: (a) develop, validate, or administer predictive tests; (b) administer student aid programs; or (c) improve instruction, if applicable requirements are met. (§ 99.31(a)(6))
- To accrediting organizations to carry out their accrediting functions. (§ 99.31(a)(7))
- To parents of an eligible student if the student is a dependent for IRS tax purposes. (§ 99.31(a)(8))
- To comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena if applicable requirements are met. (§ 99.31(a)(9))
- To appropriate officials in connection with a health or safety emergency, subject to § 99.36. (§ 99.31(a)(10))
- Information the school has designated as "directory information" if applicable requirements under § 99.37 are met. (§ 99.31(a)(11))
- To an agency caseworker or other representative of a State or local child welfare agency or tribal organization who is authorized to access a student's case plan when such agency or organization is legally responsible, in accordance with State or tribal law, for the care and protection of the student in foster care placement. (20 U.S.C. § 1232g(b)(1)(L))
- To the Secretary of Agriculture or authorized representatives of the Food and Nutrition Service for purposes of conducting program monitoring, evaluations, and performance measurements of programs authorized under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act or the Child Nutrition Act of 1966, under certain conditions. (20 U.S.C. § 1232g(b)(1)(K))

### **National Standardized Achievement Testing**

The American Academy's ACT/College Board school code is **450480**.

### **Credit for Courses**

Credit for coursework is awarded as a percentage with a corresponding letter grade. Students must earn at least 60% of the total points possible in the course and pass the final exam to earn credit. However, students may be exempt from the final exam if the overall course score is a minimum of 80% with all assignments completed.



## **Grading Policies**

The following grade scale will be used to determine letter grades and associated point values:

<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Letter Grade</b>	<b>Grade Point Values</b>
<b>93-100%</b>	A	4.0
<b>90-92.9%</b>	A-	3.7
<b>87-89.9%</b>	B+	3.3
<b>83-86.9%</b>	B	3.0
<b>80-82.9%</b>	B-	2.7
<b>77-79.9%</b>	C+	2.3
<b>73-76.9%</b>	C	2.0
<b>70-72.9%</b>	C-	1.7
<b>67-69.9%</b>	D+	1.3
<b>60-66.9%</b>	D	1.0
<b>0-59.9%</b>	NC	0.00

The minimal passing mark is D (1.0).

Grade Point Average (GPA) is calculated as the total of the point values earned for all courses attempted divided by the sum of the credits for all courses attempted. Courses can be repeated to improve the GPA, but all grades received, except NC, will be recorded on the transcript. Similar courses should be taken to improve GPA for previously failed courses.

Grading policies are established by the principal and are in compliance with Utah state and school guidelines. Grading information and other course-specific information are provided online within each course. Teachers have three business days from the submission date to grade students' assignments.

Students wishing to appeal a grade in a course must follow the appeals process:

Identify and submit to the course instructor, in writing, any assignment(s) that he/she would like re-evaluated, explaining why the student believes the grade on each identified assignment should be revised. Instructors will respond to the student's questions in writing. The instructor reserves the right to assign a grade that is either higher or lower than the original grade. If the student is not satisfied, he/she may request an evaluation of the identified assignments by another instructor of the School's choice. The student must submit all of the documentation from the process described above. The School's designated evaluator's decision will be final.

## **Graduation Requirements**

Diploma-seeking students must meet all TAA diploma requirements published at the time the student begins coursework at TAA.

Diploma candidates enrolled on or after September 1, 2022 must earn at least 24 credits in the subject areas listed below:

Subject Area	Credits Required
<b>English</b> Required: English 9,10,11, 12	4.0
<b>Math</b> Required: Algebra I, Geometry, Math elective	3.0
<b>Science</b> Required: Earth Science, Biology, Physical Science/Chemistry	3.0
<b>Social Studies</b> Required: World Civilizations, U.S. History, Social Studies elective	3.0
<b>Health &amp; PE</b>	2.0
<b>The Arts</b>	1.5
<b>Career &amp; Technical Education</b>	1.0
<b>Educational Technology</b>	0.5
<b>Financial Math</b>	0.5
<b>Electives</b>	5.5
<b>TOTAL CREDITS</b>	<b>24.0</b>

Diploma candidates enrolled prior to September 1, 2022 must earn at least 20 credits in the subject areas listed below:

Subject Area	Credits Required
<b>English</b> Required: English 9,10,11	3.0
<b>Math</b> Required: Algebra I, Geometry	2.0
<b>Science</b> Required: Earth Science, Biology	2.0
<b>Social Studies</b> Required: World Civilizations, U.S. History	2.5
<b>Health &amp; PE</b>	2.0
<b>The Arts</b>	1.0
<b>Career &amp; Technical Education</b>	1.0
<b>Educational Technology</b>	0.5
<b>Financial Math</b>	0.5
<b>Electives</b>	5.5
<b>TOTAL CREDITS</b>	<b>20.0</b>

Note: College-bound students intending to apply to a four-year university should consider using elective course credits to meet the minimum entrance requirements. Check with the higher education institute for requirements, as they may vary by institution and program.

TAA students on the 24-credit graduation plan may take a maximum of 27 credits via the

diploma program pathway, including transfer credits. TAA students on the 20-credit graduation plan may take a maximum of 23 credits via the diploma program pathway, including transfer credits. Exceptions to the credit limit may be made pending written approval.

### **Transfer Credits**

Transfer students must provide or authorize a transfer of official transcripts for all previous high school work at the time of enrollment. Credits may be transferred to TAA from an accredited institution. TAA reserves the right to refuse transfer credits from non-accredited institutions.

Credits earned from institutions outside of the United States must be evaluated prior to transfer, and may or may not be accepted. The World Education Service (WES) performs this service. The student is responsible for the associated fees for the transcript evaluation. More information is available at the WES website: <https://www.wes.org/evaluations-and-fees/>. Another option for credit evaluation is the National Association of Credential Evaluation Services: <https://www.naces.org/members>.

### **Transcripts**

Transcripts requested by students will be forwarded to colleges, educational institutions, and/or employers as requested by the student, provided there are no unpaid fees or fines. Transcripts only include courses that have had the final grade submitted.

Official transcripts will be mailed directly to the institution or employer-requested by the student. To complete this process a student can select “Additional Products” and then choose “Transcript Mailing.” There is a \$5 fee per transcript, which must be paid at the time of service.

Unofficial transcripts contain all of the information contained on an official transcript. These transcripts are available on-demand at no cost in electronic format through the student portal, provided there are no outstanding fees.

The American Academy does not provide Apostilization services.

### **Satisfactory Academic Progress**

Students are expected to meet satisfactory academic progress by following the weekly pacing schedule and successfully completing one credit every four weeks to be considered in good academic standing. Students who do not keep pace with the satisfactory academic progress are designated as “Expectations Not Met.” Deactivation will automatically occur after three consecutive months of failing to meet satisfactory academic progress. Once a student is designated “Expectations Not Me,” they must earn one credit every month for two consecutive months to be removed from the At Risk of Deactivation status. If a student meets one month of good academic standing while on the warning status but does not complete a class the next month, they will remain in the at risk status. If the student continues to not make satisfactory progress the following month, they will be withdrawn from the program. Students wishing to

re-enter after being deactivated for lack of satisfactory progress must apply to re-enroll and submit an appeal for approval to the principal or a designee. Students may only be re-admitted one time following an academic appeal within a one year period.

### **Tuition and Fees**

A current schedule of tuition and fees for courses and services are available to current and prospective students on The American Academy's website:

<https://www.theamericanacademy.com/>

The standard cost of the TAA diploma is \$999. Students who are paid in full, and who maintain satisfactory academic progress while enrolled, will have up to 24 months from the time of enrollment to complete the program. (Students who have transfer credits will not have 24 months to complete the program. Students with transfer credits will be given a completion deadline based on the number of remaining credits to meet our graduation requirements.) If the program is not successfully completed within the allotted time period, the diploma option may be repurchased to extend the enrollment time.

The American Academy stopped offering payment plans September 1, 2022. If a student is on a payment plan and remains current they will be able to remain on the plan. In the event that a student on a payment plan falls into default, the plan will be canceled. In order to re-enroll with The American Academy, the student must either pay the balance of their plan plus a re-entry fee or pay in full to return to school, pending the amount of time the student has been inactive (see the next section below).

Students who remain on a payment plan and elect to withdraw **without** completing the diploma program will be responsible for paying the difference owed at the individual per credit cost from TAA's credit enhancement/recovery program to release the credits earned.

### **Re-enrollment**

Students deactivated for lack of academic progress may apply for re-enrollment.

- If the deactivated student applies to re-enroll within 6 months, an administrative fee of \$119 will apply to reactivate. After 6 months of inactivity, or a subsequent deactivation for lack of satisfactory academic progress occurs, the diploma option must be re-purchased.

Students who elected to withdraw may also re-enroll.

- Students who elected to withdraw and have paid the diploma cost in full may re-enroll after paying a reactivation fee of \$119 within a six month period from the date of withdrawal. After the six month period, students who elected to withdraw may re-enroll after re-purchasing the diploma.

### **Refund**

Refunds are available to students who pay in full for the diploma or for individual courses. A refund must be requested in writing via email to [student.services@graduationalliance.com](mailto:student.services@graduationalliance.com)

within 10 business days of enrollment. A full refund will be issued if the request is received within the allotted time frame and the courses have not been started. If coursework has been attempted and the refund is requested within the designated time frame, a full refund will be issued minus a \$99 administrative fee.

By agreeing to participate in the program and committing to diploma completion with the associated financial obligation, students who withdraw early are no longer financially associated with the diploma program. They are responsible for the individual credit cost for completed courses, instead. The per-credit cost is published on the TAA website.

## **Code of Conduct**

### **Academic Honesty**

The American Academy has a zero-tolerance policy for academic dishonesty.

Cheating (giving or receiving information) and plagiarism on classwork will result in a 1% grade for the assignment. Students will not have the opportunity to complete an extra credit assignment to make up lost points.

The following procedure governs identification and discipline for instances of academic dishonesty:

For a first offense, the instructor assigns a 1% grade, notifies the student in writing that an instance in which the work's authorship is in question has been identified, and reports the incident. The student will be permitted a retry after discussing plagiarism with the teacher or designee. The student is placed on internal academic watch. For subsequent offenses, the instructor assigns a 1% grade and will notify the student in writing. No retry will be permitted. Continued academic dishonesty will result in a referral to the principal or designee for disciplinary measures. Additional disciplinary action may be taken.

Cheating on a final exam will result in an automatic NC failed grade for the course and will require retaking the course.

### **Online Conduct**

The American Academy believes the school should reflect the desires and expectations held by our community for our students and that the school must provide an environment that ensures the safety and wellbeing of students. For this reason, the following guidelines regarding online interaction have been put in place:

Students are expected to adhere to "netiquette" guidelines; respectful interactions with peers and instructors. The American Academy has a zero-tolerance policy towards intimidation, bullying, fighting, and/or harassment of any kind.

TAA will promptly and thoroughly investigate reports of harassment and bullying. If it is determined that either has occurred, the School will act appropriately within the discipline codes of the School.

## **Discipline**

### **Discipline Philosophy**

Discipline should be thought of as a learning experience with behavior modification as its objective. Unwanted behaviors are modified easiest when the school and parents work together as a team. In addition, any consequences that are used to modify unwanted behaviors should be supported at home, imposed immediately, be firm, fair, consistent, and progressive.

### **Discipline Process**

Internal interventions are first implemented to modify behavior. If warning(s) is insufficient and inappropriate behavior continues, the student will be referred to the principal, who will determine the appropriate disciplinary steps. Inappropriate behavior may result in removal from the online classroom. Behaviors such as: violence toward others, bullying, harassment, intimidation, disrespect toward instructors, non-compliance, and other behaviors deemed disruptive to an orderly learning environment may result in an automatic referral to the principal.

### **Readmission**

A student, who has been long-term suspended or expelled from The American Academy and wishes to be considered for entrance or readmission to TAA must appeal to the TAA principal or designee in writing via email.

### **Appeals Process**

A parent or student has a right to appeal disciplinary action. If an appeal is desired, the school office must receive an email to Student Services within 10 business days from the time of disciplinary notice with an official request for an appeal hearing. The hearing will be held within five business days of receipt of the appeal request by the principal or designee.