

# AMERICAN ENGLISH ACADEMY

## STUDENT HANDBOOK

### Welcome

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Welcome to the American English Academy!

AEA is an international school which offers a US educational program from pre-kindergarten (age 3) through Grade 12. Based on international best practices and accreditation requirements, the school's curriculum follows the US Common Core Educational Standards. AEA was established in 1992 in Sofia, Bulgaria, by Frank and Ruth Munsey as one of the first international schools in Bulgaria to serve the needs of the international community seeking English-language education. The Academy continually researches and updates its academic program to reflect the needs and desires of the local and international communities. Today AEA is proud to serve children and families from more than 30 nationalities.

The school is fully accredited by Accreditation International (Ai), US National Council for Private School Accreditation (NCPA), and US Middle States Association – Commission on Elementary and Secondary Schools (MSA-CES). Ai is a recognized member of NCPA and a member in good standing with The Alliance and the participating Regional accrediting associations. AEA is a member in good standing with the American Chamber of Commerce in Bulgaria. The American English Academy is an independent, secular, private school without affiliation to any religious, political, or interest group.

### AEA Mission Statement

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AEA's mission statement reads as follows: *"Believing ~ Achieving ~ Succeeding" - "To train and educate global citizens who are passionate about life and learning"*. Our goal is to educate students to transform their world by being well prepared in all academic disciplines, having an understanding of people, events, and movements in history, embracing and practicing justice, mercy, and peacemaking in family and society, being taught high values and life-transforming principles, having a critical appreciation of languages and cultures of other peoples, and dispelling prejudice. We are committed to help our students believe they are smart and capable, which will enable them to achieve their potential on a daily basis and succeed in life and learning as a result of their in-built habits to make wise choices and continuous effort.

### AEA Philosophy

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At the American English Academy we are dedicated to provide an environment that is safe, supports critical thinking, and invites an exchange of ideas. We believe that each child is a unique individual who needs a secure, caring, and stimulating atmosphere in which they can grow and

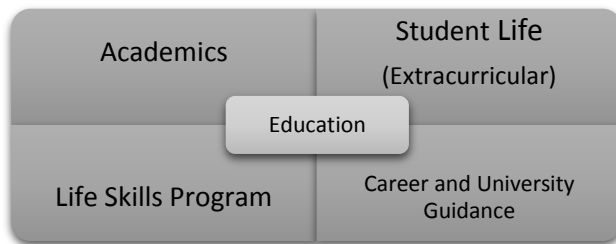
mature emotionally, intellectually, physically, and socially. Our focus is to help students meet their fullest potential in these areas by creating opportunities for individual discovery and accumulation of knowledge and experience.

### **Well-Rounded Education**

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Well-rounded education at AEA is achieved by utilizing the model below. We ensure that a student's experience incorporates all of the following components:

- a rigorous academic program and curriculum aiming at equipping students with critical thinking, creative problem-solving, and reasoning skills;
- children-friendly Life-skills and Logic programs which helps students maintain a positive self-image and develop decision-making skills through emotional intelligence;
- extracurricular activities where students find their gifts and talents as well as learn to set goals and work to achieve them;
- career guidance where students acquire competencies and develop habits and attitudes crucial for success in further education or working environment;



### **Core Values**

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- **Respect** - *We understand that people's nationality, race, gender, religion, or social status does not determine their worth.*
- **Honesty** - *We appreciate truth and stand for it, therefore, we are open and honest in all we do.*
- **Compassion** – *We are compassionate about others in their need, regardless of their cultural, social, or religious background.*
- **Perseverance** - *We do not give up when facing hardships. We look for a different approach to reach our goals. We work diligently, since we believe we are smart and capable.*
- **Responsibility** - *We learn to make wise choices and take responsibility for our words and actions.*

## Section A - General Information

### Facility

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The American English Academy opened a new modern facility in the Lozen area for the 2014-2015 academic year. The facility is 8,000 square meters. Over 90 percent of the building provides a high degree of natural lighting through cathedral style windows and classroom windows. All classrooms are equipped with the latest smart technology (Promethean boards), as well as whiteboards.

- **Classroom wing** - includes two levels (ground floor and first floor) with a total of 20 regular classrooms, 4 smaller classrooms, a chemistry/biology/physics lab, two art rooms, and the school counselor's office.
- **Kindergarten wing** - includes 3 classrooms.
- **Lobby and reception areas** – includes the information desk area, a conference room, the financial assistant's desk and a faculty/staff room. An intercom system is used by the information desk staff and administration throughout the entire building.
- **Gymnasium/ auditorium** - consists of an indoor gym, changing rooms, separate shower and locker areas for boys and girls behind the gymnasium, a ballet/dance/hip-hop room, a large stage with backdrop lighting and sound, retractable seating, a media/lighting booth for performances, and two storage rooms. The gymnasium holds lots of sports events and when necessary it is easily converted to an auditorium to hold performances, school programs, and other community events.
- **Library** – located on the second floor, contains a computer lab, and opens out on to a large “green-roof” area which is used for events, outdoor classes, and other activities.
- **Administration offices** - located on the second floor, contains the management team and administrative assistants offices.
- **Cafeteria** – situated on the first floor, includes space for lunch and breakfast/ snack hours as well as a fully equipped kitchen and a health corner.
- **Outdoor Facilities** - there is 1 playground for Kindergarten students, 1 soccer field for Elementary/Secondary students, a terrace-like space in front of the cafeteria for an outside lunch, and a parking lot for faculty and staff.

The AEA campus is designed to meet the needs of physically **handicapped** individuals. Ramps, elevators, assistance bars, restrooms, and ease of access to classrooms is available for such individuals.

### School Day Hours

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The AEA regular school day begins at 8:30 a.m. and ends at 3:00 p.m. After school activities are held between 3:15 p.m. and 5:25 p.m. The Bulgarian Program begins at 12:30 p.m. and ends in accordance to weekly schedules no later than 5:30 p.m. The Information Desk is available from 8:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Teachers are available in their classrooms from 8:15 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. or the respective dismissal times for the Bulgarian Program. To ensure the safety of all AEA students teachers are responsible for the dismissal of their students.

### ***Dismissal***

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All Kindergarten and Elementary teachers are responsible for the dismissal of their assigned class. All Middle and High School Students will be dismissed by **their teacher from the last period**. At no time is a student to walk off the school premises without the knowledge of their assigned teacher.

Faculty will not release a student until:

- their school bus monitor takes them under their supervision;
- their parent, driver, or designated adult signs them out;
- their after school activity instructor signs them out;
- a note/ an email from the parent giving the AEA teacher permission to dismiss the student is on file with the Information Desk staff;

No students are allowed to stay at AEA after their school day is over (including tutoring and afterschool activities), unless the parents have notified the Information Desk staff of a special arrangement they have made.

### **Security, Safety, Illness/ Accidents, and Emergency Procedures**

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AEA considers school security and safety a top priority. Therefore, all students are required to adhere to the pertaining procedures.

#### ***Security***

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AEA uses the services of a reputable company for security services. The security guards are present 24/7. There is one central station for video monitoring the school campus and numerous cameras spread throughout the building to be able to track students' location at all times. In addition a guard will accompany classes during outside recess.

Students must be attended at all times.

Elementary students are attended by their teachers at all times. When they go to the bathroom or library they have a respective bathroom or library pass. In case a child feels sick, the school nurse is called by the teacher to come and take the student to her office.

Middle and High school students are also attended and monitored by the Secondary teachers during breaks, lunch periods, and outside/inside recess.

During the school day the campus is open only to members of the school community. All visitors must provide an identification card and a valid reason for access. During official school events additional security presence is provided and a special admittance procedure confirming the guest list beforehand is enforced. During dismissal times for both programs cars are not permitted in front of the main entrance of the building. All school community is requested to be in cooperation with security guards when/if necessary.

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### ***Safety Instructions***

AEA students are required to keep all legal Health and Safety Instructions on the use of the Computer Lab, the Science Lab, the School Gymnasium, and the premises in general. Home room teachers will inform their students about them and ensure these are followed.

Once a year a First Aid & CPR training session will be organized for Grades 6-12 by the school.

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### ***Illness/ Accidents***

In cases of illness or accidents parents will be notified immediately or when out of reach through the emergency contact person they have listed in the Application Form. If a child's condition requires rest and/or medical care at home, parents/emergency contact person will be asked to come and pick up their child before the end of the school day. If medication needs to be administered by the school nurse, parents will be asked for permission. If a child's condition requires immediate hospitalization, all details will be arranged with parents during notification. In cases of child's absence due to a contagious disease, written doctor's note is to be submitted to the Information Desk upon return to confirm the student is no longer contagious. The school nurse keeps a health record of each student.

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### ***Insurance***

AEA uses the services of a state Insurance company to insure its students against harm arisen in specified contingencies, as accident, disablement, or the like, under the terms of the contract.

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### ***Emergency Procedures***

AEA implements an Emergency Procedures Policy which includes Evacuation Plans in cases of fire, earthquake, or other emergencies due to bad weather. Evacuation plans are posted around the school. There are Exit signs in every classroom and every room in the building. A Public Announcement system is in place to signal an immediate evacuation when/if necessary. Twice a year AEA will conduct a fire drill and once a year an earthquake drill. In the event of a real emergency, staff and students are required to follow the procedures and make every attempt to remain calm and maintain order.

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## **School and Personal Property**

Students are required to show respect to the school facility and people's personal belongings, as well as to take a good care of their own.

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### ***Lockers***

In order to be provided with storage space for personal belongings each AEA student is assigned a locker and is required to keep it in a clean and orderly fashion. No food or drinks are allowed to be stored overnight. Periodic check-ups and clean-up times will be enforced by faculty. In cases of lost keys or damage, replacement or damage fees will be imposed. Secondary students are required to keep their lockers locked at all times. AEA is not responsible for stolen locker contents.

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### ***Lost and Found***

Parents of Kindergarten and Elementary students are requested to label their child's clothes with their name. In cases of a lost item, please check your child's belongings, locker, and classroom first. Some lost items are submitted to the Information Desk and kept in the Lost and Found cabinet. AEA will not be held responsible for lost items. Items need to be claimed by the end of the school year or else will be donated to a local charity.

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### ***School Property***

In compliance with the AEA Mission Statement and Core Values students are expected as a sign of respect, good manners, and responsibility to keep school's property in a reasonable condition. In cases of unintended damage replacement or damage fees will be assessed. If damages are a direct result of vandalism, the action will be additionally followed by a one-day out-of-school suspension. AEA will not tolerate any forms of vandalism.

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### ***Personal Property***

All personal items should be labeled with the student's name on it. Students are not allowed to bring to school items deemed as harmful or dangerous to another person. AEA reserves the right to confiscate any such items immediately. Parents will be contacted to come to collect these from school. Students are not allowed to bring pets/animals to school, large amounts of money, or valuables. AEA will not be held responsible for lost or stolen items.

AEA has zero tolerance for weapon, cigarettes, drugs, or any illegal substance possession. In cases of violation, students will be expelled immediately and reported to the respective authorities.

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## **Food**

AEA cares about all aspects of students' development and growth. Providing balanced school meals ensures that students stay healthy, active, and strong. Developed by the leading nutrition expert, Dr. Maria Nikolova, M.D., AEA school nutrition program was initially implemented in 2015-2016 school year. AEA daily menus are designed by one of the most renowned top chefs in Bulgaria, Mr. George Ermenkov, and are seasonal, healthy (steam-cooked), and adapted to different age groups.

Knowing that good dietary habits established in childhood often carry into adulthood, AEA students are taught how to build good nutrition habits from an early age. Healthy school meals are carefully prepared at AEA kitchen on a daily basis with only fresh products and ingredients.

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### ***Breakfast & Lunch***

Students are welcome to pre-order lunch and/or breakfast on a monthly basis. Monthly menus are sent to the parents via email.

Elementary students may buy food from the Health corner or eat a snack from home during recess or breaks. Secondary students may do so during homeroom. All food is to be consumed in the cafeteria and **not** in the hallways or classrooms.

### ***Birthday Celebrations***

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In order to celebrate their child's birthday parents may organize a small treat to his/her classmates during lunch time. Parents are requested to make arrangements with their child's home room teacher at least a week in advance. The home room teacher will send a "Birthday Celebration Announcement" email to notify his class's parents of the upcoming event. The birthday treat may include a cake and/or juice. In compliance with Health Department Regulations it is required that all cakes should be store-bought and provided with a quality certificate. A sample will be kept in the AEA kitchen refrigerators for 72 hours. In cases when parents would like to order pizza for their child's class, they may arrange it personally or through the Information Desk. AEA kindly advises parents to consider in advance pizza places working hours and delivery restrictions. AEA is not responsible for pizza places conditions. AEA students' safety and security is viewed as a top priority, therefore, no outside entertaining company will be permitted on school premises.

### **Transportation**

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AEA uses the services of a reputable bus company. Transportation service is optional and for an additional fee. Bus routes are set at the beginning of each school year to and from the school. Door to door transportation is attempted as close as possible but may not be guaranteed. Students are required to be punctual for pick up times and, while riding the bus, to adhere to AEA student's code of conduct applied during the school day.

In case a student is not riding the bus home as scheduled, parents are required to notify the Information Desk in advance via phone or email as well to provide information who will pick up the child. AEA staff will not release a student unless there is a parent's ID confirmation for the person picking up their child.

In case a student requests riding a different bus, this can be done only if the bus route allows it and there is available seating. Parents will also need to have confirmed they have been informed drop off time might be different due to different routes.

## **Section B – School Communication**

### **Building Communication for Success**

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In compliance with its mission AEA is committed to provide a strong foundation for the future endeavors, positive academic experience, and the overall development of its students in a healthy, friendly, safe, and conducive to learning environment. AEA faculty and staff strongly believe this can be achieved through positive, constructive, detailed, and timely communication, information, and cooperation between the school and the families represented. Together, we make every effort to build relationships in which every member of the school community feels connected and proud.

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### ***Information Desk***

Regular letters and emails are sent home with regards to upcoming events and activities. Telephone calls are also made in separate cases of illness, accidents, or emergency. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that the school is notified immediately at [office@aeasofia.com](mailto:office@aeasofia.com), if changes of address, telephone numbers (mobile, home, office), and/or email addresses occur during the school year. In case a child will be picked up by someone other than the listed individuals in the Application Form, a written parent permission or confirmation is required to be sent by email or in writing, containing the person's identification. AEA faculty and staff will not release a child, if the verification information is not provided.

School telephones are available for school-related purposes and students may call their parents with permission. Parents are welcome to leave a message with the Information Desk staff or contact their child through the school phones when there is important information to be communicated.

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### ***Web Site***

AEA web site provides detailed information about the school's programs, application procedures, school life, and publications by the press. There is a rich school life gallery as well as a virtual tour throughout the building. Parents of current students can access information about the school year organization, calendar, staff, curriculum, weekly schedules, and afterschool activities through the password-protected Parent Portal on AEA web site.

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### ***Parent/Teacher Communication***

Communication is encouraged through school phones, email, scheduled parent-teacher meetings, parent-teacher conferences, or in writing, concerning all aspects of academic work or conduct-related issues. Parents will be notified via email, if their child has not submitted three homework assignments in a row or has received a grade below 70%. In order to avoid unexpected low quarter grades, in the middle of each quarter parents will be notified through a Progress Report letter, if their child experiences difficulties and does not make the expected progress, if his grades are either low, or are dropping dramatically. Constructive ways leading to improvement, which may include parental assistance, will be sought by both sides. Parents are welcome to check the school management system "Sycamore" regularly, where teachers are required to post assignments, quiz, or test grades no later than a week after an assignment due date or a quiz/test date.

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### ***Planners***

Students Grades 3-12 are provided with Student Planner Books in which they are required to record homework assignments, projects due dates, and quiz/test dates. AEA faculty closely monitors the duly keeping of the Planners, which assists students in organizing their daily assignments. Parents support on supervising the use of Planners is kindly requested, since it is a crucial means of communication between the teachers and the families.



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### ***Report Cards***

AEA issues Report cards with grades quarterly for students Grades 1-12. Kindergarten students' Report cards with teachers' comments are issued four times a year as well. Grading periods are determined by the calendar and are a part of this document. Report cards are submitted to parents by Home Room teachers during Parent/Teacher Conferences. In case a parent will not attend a PTC, students are not to receive their own report cards, unless their parents confirm their permission via email to [office@aeasofia.com](mailto:office@aeasofia.com) or through a phone call to the Information desk in advance.

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### ***Permission Slips***

Permission slips are sent home to be signed by parents and returned to the school, when students will participate in field trips or activities outside of the school campus. In case a permission slip is not returned, the student will remain at school.

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### ***Parent/Teacher Conferences***

Individual parent-teacher conferences are scheduled three times a year a week after the completion of a quarter. Students' progress is discussed and report cards are submitted to the parents. If parents are unable to attend, they are requested to notify the Information Desk if they permit the report card to be sent home with their child. No afterschool activities, tutoring, or AEA Club is held on the day of a PTC. Unless students ride the bus home, parents are responsible to attend their child during PTC. These conferences are essential in establishing cooperation between parents and teachers and in setting goals for student's progress. Parents are encouraged to schedule separate meetings with their child's teacher at any mutually convenient time via email or school phones.

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### ***Parents Support***

In order to provide a nurturing school experience for the students, AEA recommends and kindly requests parents support in the following areas:

- Please provide your child with at least 8 hours of sleep each night and a healthy balanced diet during the day.
- Please ensure your child arrives at school no later than 8:20 a.m. if private transportation is used.
- Please regularly supervise your child's Planner Book and provide them with a quiet place and time for study. Homework for Elementary students is carefully designed to take up to maximum 40-50 minutes per day, unless your child has been absent and needs to catch up gradually.
- Please encourage your child to seek teachers' help in any subject area they might need it.
- Please supervise and set reasonable time limits to your child's use of electronic devices. Please consider that visual overstimulation of your child's brain has a detrimental effect on their level of motivation, natural curiosity, healthy habits and routine, imagination development, and overall excitement about life and learning.

## Section C – School Climate

Providing a healthy, friendly, safe, and conducive to learning environment is a top priority at AEA. Our goal is to equip students with skills enabling them to maintain a positive self-image, make wise choices, develop their creativity, be active learners, improve self-control, manage negative emotions, take responsibility for their words and actions, set goals and pursue them, as well as to respect others regardless of their age, position, status, or background.

Therefore, school policies and procedures will be systematically and impartially applied. Staff is expected to deal with misconduct kindly, quickly, and fairly. In cases of repeating transgressions, parents will be contacted and students will be referred to school administration for administrative action.

### Student's Code of Conduct

1. Students are to respect those in authority over them. Appropriate behavior towards teachers, administrators, and all AEA staff, as well as visitors and guests to AEA, is expected at all times.

AEA highly appreciates and strongly encourages a respectful tone of voice, a respectful choice of words, a respectful attitude, a respectful body language, and respectful actions.

AEA staff considers as disrespect and will not tolerate any of the following examples of misconduct: raising of voice, threats, sneers, sarcastic hints or comments, inappropriate language, rolling of eyes, defiant, arrogant, lewd, or aggressive behavior.

In case a student misbehaves in any of these ways, it will be reported, investigated, and addressed. Official apology and change of behavior will be required. In case of continued transgressions (3 submitted Incident Reports), students will serve a 60-minute afterschool detention with AEA Administration. (*See Detention Procedure*)

2. Students are to respect their classmates and all other students. Appropriate behavior towards all students regardless of their age is expected at all times.

AEA highly appreciates and strongly encourages acts of friendliness and politeness in the tone of voice, choice of words, attitude, body language, and actions, such as care, willingness to help, showing appreciation, support, consideration, good manners, and working towards unity.

AEA staff will not tolerate any form of disrespect and verbal, emotional, physical, or cyber bullying. Bullying consists of persistent, willful, conscious harming or threatening of another person. It includes:

- Verbal: calling names, sneering, sarcasm, teasing, making fun of one's physical appearance, intimidation, threats, offensive or insulting remarks of any nature;
- Emotional: spreading rumors, talking behind one's back, writing derogatory notes;
- Physical: kicking, punching, biting, tripping, aggressive behavior;
- Cyber-bullying via internet and social media networks is also a form of bullying.

AEA will not tolerate any form of inappropriate spoken or written language, direct/indirect instigation, sexual harassment, arrogant behavior, and public displays of affection on or near school grounds. AEA students must speak in English at all times when on school grounds.

In case a student misbehaves in any of these ways, it will be reported, investigated, and addressed. Official apology and change of behavior will be required. In case of continued transgressions (3 submitted Incident Reports), students will serve a 60-minute afterschool detention with AEA Administration. (*See Detention Procedure*)

3. Students are to respect the AEA facility, which must be kept clean and orderly. Appropriate behavior is expected at all times.

AEA highly appreciates and strongly encourages excellent desk and locker management, appropriate use of school furniture and school devices, good table manners, keeping safety instructions.

AEA staff will not tolerate littering, neglected personal belongings throughout the building, vandalism (intended damaging), possession and use of lighters or matches, tampering with Promethean interactive boards, consuming food outside of the cafeteria, chewing gum, and inappropriate use of bathrooms.

In case a student misbehaves in any of these ways, it will be reported, investigated, and addressed. Official apology and change of behavior will be required. In case of continued transgressions (3 submitted Incident Reports), students will serve a 60-minute afterschool detention with AEA Administration. (*See Detention Procedure*)

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#### ***Violations Leading to Immediate Suspension***

AEA has zero tolerance toward stealing, fighting, vandalism (an intended damage of school property), severe forms of bullying, unacceptable computer and Internet use, possession, use, exchange, or sale of tobacco products and alcohol. (*See Suspension Procedure*)

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#### ***Violations Leading to Immediate Expulsion***

AEA has zero tolerance toward substance abuse, weapon or drug possession, or other illegal acts. Students caught in these will be expelled and the case will be reported to the respective authorities.

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#### **Use of Electronic Devices**

Use of personal electronic devices is not permitted during the school day. Students are required to leave their cell phone, tablet, iPad, iPod, headphones, etc. at the Information Desk until 3:00 pm or the end of the Bulgarian Program. If used by students, these will be confiscated, left at the Information Desk, and retrieved only by parents. Students and parents can be contacted through the school phones anytime of the day in cases of emergency. Cameras are permitted on special occasions only.

### ***Computer Lab Use***

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The American English Academy provides computers and Internet access to support and enhance curriculum learning for its students. The rules listed here are intended to provide students with general guidelines when using the computers. Failure to comply with these guidelines may result in loss of computer and Internet privileges and/or disciplinary action.

### ***Acceptable Use***

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Student access to the school's computers, networks, and Internet services is provided for educational purposes and research consistent with the school's educational philosophy, mission, curriculum, and instructional goals.

### ***Prohibited Use***

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Unacceptable use/activity may result in suspension or cancellation of privileges as well as additional disciplinary action. The computers may not be used at any time during the day unless in a scheduled class. No student should be in the computer lab without teacher supervision. Examples of unacceptable use include but are not limited to:

- **Inappropriate materials:** accessing, submitting, transmitting, posting, publishing, forwarding, downloading, scanning, or displaying materials that are defamatory, abusive, obscene, vulgar, sexually explicit, sexually suggestive, threatening, discriminatory, harassing, bullying;
- **Illegal activities:** Using the school's computers, networks, and Internet services for any illegal activity or activity that violates school policies;
- **Violating Copyrights:** Copying or downloading copyrighted materials;
- **Plagiarism:** Representing as one's own work any materials obtained on the Internet, such as term papers, articles, essays, etc.;
- **Copying Software:** Copying, downloading, or installing software without the express authorization of the student's teacher or school administrator;
- **Non-school-Related Uses:** Using the school's computers, networks, and Internet services for non-school-related purposes;
- **Malicious Use/Vandalism:** Any malicious use, disruption, or harm to the school's computers, networks, and Internet services;
- **Unauthorized Access:** Accessing unauthorized communication methods and the faculty wireless network or AEA server including chat rooms, social networks, instant messaging, or e-mail.

## Dress Code

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AEA provides a new school uniform designed for AEA with the AEA logo. Students must wear a new AEA long or short sleeve polo shirt and when the weather is cold a new AEA vest, hoodie, or jacket at all times. All lower garments are of students' choice but must be of acceptable and suitable condition. Tight, short or low-cut pants or skirts are not permitted. Acceptable skirt and pants length is 2 inches/5 cm above the knee length or longer. Pants must be secured at waistline. Hats may not be worn in the school building or during the school day. Tattoos must be covered at all times. Facial piercing is unacceptable for any student. Personal outdoor clothing may not be worn in the classrooms, hallways, or cafeteria unless temperature conditions are below 18 degrees Celsius. Footwear should be suitable to that of a school environment.

### *PE Classes*

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For PE classes all students need to bring a spare pair of clean sports shoes and suitable sportswear for Gym use only. For Grades 6-12:

- top sportswear may not be tight, short (bare mid-ribs), low-cut, or see-through; students are welcome to wear their previous V-shape or round-neck AEA uniform t-shirts if they prefer to do so;
- acceptable sports pants would be of 2 inches/5 cm above the knee length or longer;
- leggings of the same length will be acceptable only if covered by mid-thigh long t-shirts.

## Cheating

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AEA has a zero tolerance policy regarding cheating. The student will be disciplined as follows:

- **First offence** – the quiz/test will be immediately marked as zero, a Cheating Report will be submitted to the administration, and parents will be called for a meeting with the teacher. No retake will be given.
- **Second offence** – the quiz/test will be immediately marked as zero, a Cheating Report will be submitted to the administration, and parents will be called for a second meeting with the teacher and the Academic Director. The student will receive an in-school suspension for one day. No retake will be given.
- **Third offence** - the student will immediately receive an out-of-school suspension, the quiz/test will be immediately marked as zero, a Cheating Report will be submitted to the administration, and parents will be called for a meeting with the teacher and the Academic Director and the Principal. The student will not return to classes until a "Strategy for Conduct improvement" is signed. No retake will be given. Unexcused absences will be recorded for every day in suspension.

## **Discipline Procedures**

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Providing an environment conducive to learning with no distractions is a top priority at AEA. All students' misconduct will be reported, investigated, and addressed. Staff is expected to deal with transgressions kindly, quickly, and fairly.

### ***Elementary School***

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Elementary students need to abide by the AEA Values and AEA Student's Code of Conduct. Elementary classroom disciplinary measures will consist primarily of rewarding systems to enforce good behavior and "Think twice!" systems of losing privileges to help students learn to make better choices. Continued disciplinary infractions will be reported to the Academic Director through "Incident Reports", a Lunch Detention will be served (lunch will be eaten separately from the class at a separate assigned table) and parents will be contacted.

### ***Middle and High School***

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Middle School and High School students need to abide by the AEA Values and AEA Student's Code of Conduct. In case of 3 Incident Reports students will serve an afterschool detention with the administration. Continued disciplinary infractions (3 afterschool detentions) will result in a suspension. Failure to meet conduct expectations after 2 suspensions may result in an expulsion.

### ***Detention***

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In case of 3 disciplinary infractions reported by the staff through an "Incident Report" a student receives a 60-minute afterschool detention. An informing letter to the parents is sent home. It needs to be signed and returned to the school. Detentions are served on Wednesday. Transportation home is the responsibility of the parent. The student is required to be on time for serving the detention.

### ***Suspension***

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In case of 3 served afterschool detentions, a student receives an automatic in-school suspension for 1 day. Parents will be contacted and invited to meet with the Academic Director to determine further action. During suspension the student will receive his class assignments and will work on his own. The student will receive zeros for all assignments, quizzes, and tests for the day.

Second suspension during the current academic year will be served for 3 days out of school. Parents will be contacted and invited to meet with the Academic Director and the Principal to determine further action. The student will receive zeros for all assignments, quizzes and tests for these days.

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***Violations which Lead to Immediate Suspension***

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AEA has zero tolerance toward stealing, fighting, vandalism (an intended damage of school property), severe forms of bullying, unacceptable computer and Internet use, possession, use, exchange, or sale of tobacco products and alcohol.

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***Violations which Lead to Immediate Expulsion***

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AEA has zero tolerance toward substance abuse, weapon or drug possession, or other illegal acts. Students caught in these will be expelled and the case will be reported to the respective authorities.

**SECTION D – ACADEMIC INFORMATION**

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**School Year**

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The school year consists of up to 180 school days. It is divided into 2 Semesters. Each Semester consists of 2 Quarters. Each Quarter is a separate grading period. First and Second Quarter final grades are averaged to make the First Semester final grades. Third and Fourth Quarter final grades are averaged to make the Second Semester final grades. First and Second Semester final grades are averaged to make the Year final grades.

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***Holidays***

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AEA provides a reasonable time for rest during the school year through the Fall Break, Christmas Break, Winter Break, and Spring Break. Additional days for celebrating National Holidays are also good opportunities for students to rest. Vacations should be taken during the scheduled dates listed on the calendar. Please be advised that dates are not always finalized until late August due to the need of coordination with the Ministry of Education school year calendar for the Bulgarian Program. Please be reminded that the maximum number of days a student may miss school is 18.

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**Curriculum**

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Curriculum is designed in accordance with the philosophy and mission of the school. AEA uses a blended curriculum and has developed a rigorous academic program which includes textbooks and learning materials from publishing houses such as Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, Holt McDougal, McGraw Hill, Saxon Mathematics, Pearson, Collins, and Zoo Phonics (Kindergarten).

In addition AEA offers a dual-language program to Grade 9 whereby students have the option to enroll both in the Bulgarian program, which is approved by the Ministry of Education in Bulgaria, and in the American program. Students who choose to do so follow a special schedule that allows them to attend both Bulgarian program classes and American program classes. Generally students that are also enrolled in the Bulgarian program must remain at AEA for a longer school day in order to fulfill the certificate requirements of both programs.

The dual-language program has shown evidence that students learning in both programs have a greater ability to understand concepts and adapt a stronger sense of critical skills as learning becomes comparative due to instruction in both languages.

## **Instruction**

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AEA students are provided with instruction which is academically challenging, creative, and interactive, conformed to their age group development. Lecture type of teaching is limited to a small proportion of classroom time. Lesson objectives correspond with included both controlled and free practice in the form of hands-on activities, role plays, experiments, games, projects, study cases, etc. Students are taught skills, based on content. Skills aimed at are critical thinking, problem-solving, reasoning, learning strategies, etc. Approaches to all three types of student learning (visual, auditory, and kinesthetic) is involved. Smart technology in the form of Promethean Boards is provided in each classroom and teachers and students make extensive use of it. Students study in a different group setting – as a class, divided into larger groups/teams, paired up, or individually.

All teachers are present in class at 8:15 am and available to students before the beginning of the first period at 8:30 am. If a student needs to discuss an assignment or is in need of further instruction, this time should be used for that purpose.

## ***Homework***

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Homework is carefully planned and designed to drill, review, and enrich classroom instruction. An Elementary student's homework should not take more than 40-50 minutes quiet time. A Secondary student's homework cumulatively should not take more than 1 hour quiet time. Exceptions for a longer homework time for both Elementary and Secondary students are essay writing assignments, book reports, presentations, and projects. These are planned ahead and allowed a reasonable amount of preparation time taking also into consideration that students attending the Bulgarian Program are home later than their classmates. Teachers discuss with their students successful strategies of working on these projects over a time period rather than in the last minute.

Homework is required in all classes and is a portion of the student's final grade. Assignments must be turned in on time. If a student is absent on the due date, homework is due when he/she returns to school. Copying another student's homework is cheating. Both students involved will receive a zero on that assignment and are subject to disciplinary action.

## ***Homework Standard***

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Elementary students are taught notebook organization skills and required neatness when submitting homework.



Middle and High School students have to use A4 size paper, unless specified else by the teacher. Teachers may require papers to be typed, double spaced, with 1 inch (2.5 cm) left and right margins. Hand-written homework has to be turned in in a presentable condition, on lined paper, written legibly and neatly, double spaced, and fitting in the expected length. Homework written assignments must be submitted in the following standard:

Subject:	Student's Name:
Teacher:	Due date:

Title
Paragraph 1, 2, 3, etc.

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### ***Field Trips***

Field trips may be organized to enrich and enhance curriculum. These are planned for additional learning of a subject matter or to create a different learning environment. AEA organizes transportation and will notify the parents prior to a field trip through email and permission slips sent home. Permission slips need to be signed by the parents and returned to school. No child will be permitted to attend a field trip without written permission from the parent. AEA will also notify the parent if there is an additional fee for activities.

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### ***Library***

Elementary students have a Library Class once a week. They are required to borrow a book, read it within an assigned period by the teacher, write a book report following an approved Book Report Guideline by the teacher, and return the book within the allowed time in a good and reasonable condition. Secondary students are either assigned books by their teachers or are encouraged to borrow books in order to expand their reading experience. Teachers assist the Librarian in the retrieval of overdue books from students. Please note that AEA will not issue Certificates of Promotion and Report Cards unless an overdue book is returned in a reasonable condition or replacement/ damage fees are paid if a book is lost/damaged. Please be advised of the Library policies at the end of this Handbook.

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### ***Tutoring***

Tutoring may be requested by a parent. It may also be recommended by a teacher after all other means for an underachieving student's progress are exhausted. A suitable and qualified tutor for the student and subject will be offered to the parents.

Tutors main objective is to help the children improve their skills in specific areas. Appropriate activities are organized to help the students understand the instructions and the basic concepts. Assignments are given to the students to reinforce the material taught in the lessons. Tutors will not "teach to" the Test or Quiz materials. Continuous assessment and shown improvement should be relayed in written Progress Reports to the parents and the Academic Director, either by way of assessment or test results, on a monthly basis. Tutoring needs should be reviewed on a monthly basis by the Academic Director.

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### ***Tutoring Financial Arrangements***

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When tutoring is agreed upon both by the school and the parent, the teacher who will tutor a student will submit a Tutoring plan for the current month to the financial assistant, who in turn will notify the parents of the amount which needs to be paid in advance. Once payment has been made, the financial assistant will notify the tutor to begin tutoring sessions with the student.

Please note that if parents need to cancel a tutoring lesson, this must be done at least a day ahead – in this case teachers subtract this date from their Tutoring Report. If a student’s parents do not inform the teacher in advance or the student simply does not report to pre-scheduled tutoring lesson, this lesson is still paid to the teacher, who has been on time, prepared, and available. A tutoring lesson can only be canceled by a parent through a phone call or an email to the Information Desk. Students cannot cancel a tutoring lesson. Emergency situations or cases of unforeseen illness are exempt.

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### ***Failing Students***

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If the last Mid-Quarter Progress Report indicates that a student will most likely fail a subject in the regular school year after all means of active assistance are exhausted, he/she is required to make up the class in the Summer School session. The teacher is required to:

1. Fill in a “Summer School Recommendation Form” and submit it to the Academic Director by three days after the Mid-Quarter Progress Report has been sent home;
2. Prepare an “Individual Educational Plan” (IEP), discussed with and approved by the Academic Director, for the student’s successful completion of the course. The IEP includes a timeline and the study material necessary to be covered.
3. Additional tuition and fees will be assessed by the Administrative Director.
4. Email it to the parents in order to establish a productive communication for the implementation of the IEP.

The student must complete all course materials assigned by the teacher with a passing grade of 60% or higher. The student is subject to AEA school rules, including attendance and uniform. Once a subject has been completed, a grade change will be submitted to the Academic Director, and the student will receive his/her Certificate of Promotion and Report Card.

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### **Assessment**

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All grades earned by the students are entered into the “Sycamore Education” electronic school management system.

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### ***Sycamore Education System***

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All parents will have a login and password available for access to the online grading platform. Teachers are required to post grades within 5 working days after an assignment deadline or a quiz/test is given.

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### ***Grade Percentage Weigh***

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Teachers use the following guideline for the grading of the students.

- 40% Tests
- 30% Quizzes
- 20% Homework
- 10% Classroom Participation

If a teacher will do it differently due to specific organization of their class/ subject, students and parents will be informed through a syllabus provided on the First Day of School.

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### ***Grading Scale***

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<b>A+</b>	100%
<b>A</b>	99%-94%
<b>A-</b>	93%-90%
<b>B+</b>	89%-87%
<b>B</b>	86%-83%
<b>B-</b>	82%-80%
<b>C+</b>	79%-77%
<b>C</b>	76%-73%
<b>C-</b>	72%-70%
<b>D+</b>	69%-67%
<b>D</b>	66%-63%
<b>D-</b>	62%-60%
<b>F</b>	Anything below 60%

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### ***MAP Standardized Testing***

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AEA implements the world-wide recognized assessment system MAP (Measure of Academic Progress) to provide essential information about a student's continuum of learning and growth trajectory. It is a computer adaptive assessment for Grades 1-12 in English, Reading, and Math. MAP in Science is administered in Grades 4-9. MAP is used three times a year – in the fall, winter, and spring. It provides measurement of students who perform on, above, and below grade level. AEA teachers will use its real-time data to create targeted instructional plans and track each student's individual progress.

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### ***Cambridge ESL Testing***

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Recognizing international students' need of English language skills improvement in order to enhance classroom experience, AEA in partnership with *Cambridge English* organizes a structured program to serve its students' ESL needs. Appropriate age level content and courses

as well as standardized testing ensure children's development in this area. Students' achievement is awarded with internationally recognized certificates at the end of the course.

### **Achieving Your Potential Program**

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The Pacific Institute reputable programs in the fields of cognitive psychology and high-achiever research "Achieving Your Potential" and "PX2" are based on 10 major concepts which help to develop inter- and intrapersonal skills. Students are taught the thinking skills that build their self-efficacy, warranted self-esteem and self-belief, enabling them to achieve far more of their potential. As students appreciate their own worth, they can begin to treat others around them with more respect, tolerance and understanding.

The guiding principle of The Pacific Institute is that individuals have a virtually unlimited capacity for growth, change, and creativity. Central to this is that individuals are responsible for their own actions, and can regulate their behavior through a simple, structured process that includes goal-setting, self-reflection and self-evaluation, among other things.

### **Afterschool Activities**

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In partnership with different sports clubs as well as visual and performing arts teachers AEA offers a selected choice of afterschool activities aiming at developing children in extracurricular areas they are interested and gifted.

### **Careers and Guidance Service Statement**

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AEA will provide secondary students with extensive and high standard of careers counseling, advice and guidance. The purpose of the service is to provide quality, timely and impartial careers information, advice and guidance, in order to improve the higher education access and employability of all students.

#### ***Aims of the Careers and Guidance Service***

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To fulfill the standards of the AEA student and graduate progression, the Careers and Guidance Counseling Service aims to:

- deliver in partnership with academic staff, higher education institutions and employers, opportunities for students to develop the necessary skills and attributes needed to secure entrance to higher education and employment;
- deliver high quality careers guidance and counseling service which supports our students and graduates to achieve their career aspirations and goals;
- present reliable and clear information about the services we can provide to staff, students, graduates and employers;
- offer our students and graduates the support and advice needed to make an effective transition from the AEA to university or to employment;
- engage with higher education providers and employers on a local, national and international basis in order to increase opportunities for access to higher education and employment;

- support staff in developing strategies to improve student accessibility to higher education and employability within the curriculum and the student learner experience;

### Graduation Requirements

The American English Academy has established a set of requirements for graduation in compliance with the school’s mission and philosophy as well as admission requirements to higher education institutions. All required courses must be completed in order to graduate. Each course credit below represents 5 block-period classes per 2 weeks studied for one full school year. Please note that this is the minimum set of requirements. Students graduate with more than the required minimum.

	ELA	Math	Social Studies	Science	Physical Education	Language Other than English	General Credits	Total
Middle School	6	3	3	3	3	-	2	20
High School	8	4	4	4	2	2	4	28

\*General Credits include Information Technologies, Fine Arts, Sociology, and Psychology.

### School Events

AEA holds three major events during the school year to which all school community is invited – the School Year Opening Ceremony, the Christmas Musical, and the Graduation Ceremony. All students and staff are required to participate in them. AEA is proud of its students’ participation in the annual Christmas Musical where each student and member of staff has an assigned part. Students attend an audition for the acting parts, all Elementary students sing in the AEA Choir, students are involved as spotlights operators, stage crew, stage props design, or make-up artists. Professional lighting and sound is provided.

The Graduation Ceremony is organized to honor the achievements of the seniors and all students. Speeches are delivered by the Principal and/or an outside guest speaker. The Valedictorian address is an exciting and moving moment of appreciation.

All school events are a joyful celebration of school’s life recognizing the combined effort, involvement, and support of all members of the school community.