

FUTURES ACADEMY, LLC

PARENT-STUDENT HANDBOOK 2022-2023

Futures Academy, LLC
2208 Leary Lane Ste 200
Victoria, Texas 77901

Stephanie Nalls, Director
Phone: (361) 433-0322
Fax: (361) 433-0334

Updated September 4, 2022

SCHOOL HOURS

Students should arrive by 8:00; class begins at 8:05. All students are dismissed at 2:30.

Attendance days

Grades 6, 9, and 10: Monday and Wednesday

Grades 7, 8, 11, and 12 Tuesday and Thursday

Daily Schedule – High School

Assembly	8:00 - 8:05
1 st period	8:05 - 9:05
2 nd period	9:10 - 10:00
3 rd period	10:05 - 11:00
4 th period	11:05 - 12:00
LUNCH	12:00 - 12:40
5 th period	12:45 - 1:35
6 th period	1:40 - 2:30

Junior High daily schedule may vary slightly, but all students have lunch at the same time.

THE FOCUS

MISSION STATEMENT

As a caring partner to home-schooling parents, Futures Academy provides a high-quality, faith-based education, customized for each child based on academic needs, declared interests, and personal goals.

MOTTOS

Bringing futures into focus.

Traditional education for non-traditional students.

GUIDING QUOTES

The Sovereign LORD has given me a well-instructed tongue, to know the word that sustains the weary. He wakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear to listen like one being instructed. *Isaiah 50:4 (NIV)*

“It is not what you do *for* your children, but what you have taught them to *do for themselves* that will make them successful human beings.” *Ann Landers*

THE STAFF

Stephanie Nalls
Jessica Taylor

Director
Office Manager

Laura Martin
Stephanie Nalls
James Shook
Jessica Taylor
Amy Thurlkill

HS Electives and Geography
English, all levels
JH Math and ELA, all History
Sign Language
HS Math, all Science

THE BUSINESS

GOVERNANCE

Founded on June 1, 2019, *Futures Academy, LLC* is a limited liability corporation. We are not non-profit and do not have a Board of Directors. The manager of the LLC is Stephanie Nalls, who serves as Principal and Director of the school. Ms. Nalls has a personal team of advisors for both business and academic support, but the final decision on all matters rests with her alone. She maintains an open-door policy where questions and concerns for the best interest of our students and staff are always welcome.

NON-DISCRIMINATION

Futures Academy does not discriminate on any basis, but not all students will be accepted into our program. We will only enroll students who we believe can benefit from the program and who will take advantage of the services and opportunities that are offered. Some points upon which acceptance is based are transcripts and previous credits, behavior history, personal interview, long- and short-term goals, expectations, and need for our program. We will not enroll any student who has needs that we are not able to meet or who we do not believe is an ideal candidate for our educational format.

THE EXPECTATIONS

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT OF STAFF

Teachers and staff will treat parents, students, guests, and each other with respect and dignity at all times. We will strive to provide the best education possible to our students, as well as support them socially, emotionally, and spiritually. No student will be intentionally shamed or intimidated, and any verbal assault against a student or parent will be dealt with quickly and privately. We will make every effort to ensure that your child *feels safe* while at school and at school-related events by behaving in a professional and trustworthy manner.

We will provide challenging lessons that are relevant, engaging, and effective to the best of our abilities based on training and experience. While most teachers and Ms. Nalls are currently or formerly certified by the State of Texas, *all* teaching staff are qualified to teach their content areas.

Futures Academy will voluntarily adhere to the same privacy laws that apply to public schools as closely as possible. We respect each student's right to privacy in academic areas and personal matters, except where breaking that confidentiality is required by law or ethical obligation.

Teachers and staff at all levels will seek to provide timely and effective communication about academics, behavior, concerns, and day-to-day business.

WHAT WE EXPECT OF PARENTS

When your child enrolls in Futures Academy, you become the *parent of a homeschooled child*. Dozens of studies have shown that when parents are involved in their child's education, the child has greater success in all areas, including attendance, test scores, social skills, and attendance in post-secondary education programs. (Learn more here: <https://www.waterford.org/education/how-parent-involvement-leads-to-student-success/>.) While your child is on campus, it is our job to make sure he or she is engaged in learning activities and allowing others to learn. At home, it is your job to support the educational goals of the school to create lifelong learners who are thoroughly prepared for life after graduation.

You can help us by making sure your student completes assignments, monitor their homework, ask open-ended questions about their day and how they are doing in school, and demonstrate that education is a priority.

- **Homework is required. The two days your child spends at school are “school days.” The two days spent at home are not “days off.” They are “home days.” Your child will have some kind of assignment nearly every home day. It is your responsibility as a homeschooling parent to make sure this work is done well, in a timely manner, and returned to school.**

We have seen without exception that parents who are not involved in their child's work at home have children who struggle at Futures Academy. Students whose parents oversee and are involved in their work on non-school days will find the greatest success and get the most out of the Futures Academy program. The responsibility for holding them accountable at home lies with the parent.

Another key element of homeschooling is to provide enriching experiences and activities that supplement the education of the “whole child.” As Futures Academy provides minimal electives to enrich our core curriculum, you are strongly encouraged to seek out such learning opportunities for your child. Some examples include participation in community theater or fine arts program, regular hobbies, travel to museums and historic places, athletic competitions and classes, volunteering, private instruction in music or other hobbies, church attendance and activities, 4H, livestock and rodeo events, or through attachment to local homeschool organizations.

WHAT WE EXPECT OF STUDENTS

We expect students to behave in a manner that is conducive to learning by showing courtesy and respect to teachers, staff, fellow students, school property, personal property, and themselves. They should always display high moral standards, both on and off campus. They should also remember that their behavior is not only a reflection on the school, but also on their families, their community, and themselves. Students should understand that once a reputation is tarnished, it is difficult to restore. More specific guidelines are listed below.

THE RULES

The Rules given here are meant to serve as a guideline for expectations for student behavior both on and off campus. This document should not be construed as an exhaustive list of expectations, prohibitions, or possible actions taken for violations. No policy could cover every possible situation, so decisions regarding acceptable behavior and penalties for missing that mark lie with school staff and administrators. Ms. Nalls has the final say in all disciplinary matters.

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Late work. Students will turn in all work on time, as assigned. Because every classroom is as different, and because each teacher's requirements are different, there is not a single across-the-board policy regarding late work. These policies are left to individual teachers.

While each teacher may set his or her own rules regarding penalties for late work, students should expect a reduction in grade for late assignments. This may be progressive (more points lost as the assignment is later), and may vary by assignment. Habitual offenders will be referred to Ms. Nalls, who will likely request a parent-teacher conference.

Missing credits. When poor mastery or missing work result in a failing grade *for the entire semester*, course credit will not be awarded for that semester. Students are often granted the opportunity to make up missing work or redo failed assignments, even after the grading period ends, but these opportunities necessarily result in reduction of points. Summer school is also available for students who fail to complete all assignments, leaving them without essential credits for graduation.

Promotion to the next grade level or even graduation may be denied to students who do not have sufficient credits to attain these achievements.

BORROWED MATERIALS

Students are issued textbooks or novels for several classes. These are supplied without fee or deposit. However, if the items are not returned at the end of the year, or are returned in significantly poorer condition than when issued, you will be charged for the books. Prices for books vary in accordance with their replacement costs.

Other materials, such as microscopes, project supplies, or flash drives may be issued on an as-needed basis. If not returned in essentially the same condition as they were provided to the student, you will be charged in accordance with their replacement cost.

No records will be issued until these debts are satisfied. Documents include transcripts, report cards, diploma, and similar documents.

BULLYING and FIGHTING

Many students come to our school traumatized or simply feeling defeated by what they have endured in public or private schools. We teach students to build each other up and show love and compassion for those who are hurting rather than adding to their hurt. For this reason, Futures Academy has zero tolerance for bullying. Any overt attack against another student with the intent

of oppression, intimidation, or any form of persecution is considered bullying and will result in immediate removal from the program without refund. *This includes cyber bullying.*

Physical aggression is not automatically labeled as bullying, but fighting and all forms of violence are also strictly prohibited.

CHEATING AND PLAGIARISM

Futures Academy has a zero-tolerance policy for cheating and plagiarism. Students will complete assignments on their own. All work submitted by a student must be his or her own intellectual property and no other's. Consequences for academic dishonesty may include receiving a zero on the work without the opportunity to correct it, redoing the same or alternate assignment, reduction in grade, or other reasonable actions as approved by Ms. Nalls.

When working in groups or with a partner, each participant bears equal responsibility for the quality of the finished product. Those who allow other team members to do an unfair share of the work will receive grades to reflect this behavior.

Students who are caught cheating in any manner, such as taking answers from the internet or other source, copying another student's answers, or otherwise turning in and taking credit for assignments not produced by the student, is a violation of this policy and will be subject to disciplinary action. Consequences may include repeating the assignment or an alternate assignment, receiving a zero without the opportunity to complete a replacement assignment, or removal from the class or project for which the cheating occurred. Repeat violators may be subject to expulsion.

In all cases of cheating or plagiarism, parents will be notified.

CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR

Because students only attend two days per week, an environment that is conducive to learning is essential. Behavior that fosters that environment is expected of all students while on campus.

Respect for property. Student will be held responsible for damage to any school property, including textbooks or the building itself, that occurs as a result of negligence or willful mistreatment by the student. Official transcripts, diploma, and similar records will be withheld until such debts are satisfied.

Before class. Come to class prepared for an instructional school day. This means homework was completed before arriving at school, and student has all materials needed for classroom participation. That may include regular supplies such as notebook, paper, pen and pencil, workbooks or textbooks, and so on; as well as completed projects or specific items for a class project. Also bring money for snacks if desired. Before arriving at school, students should also have lunch or arrangements for lunch and a plan for getting home. These are not problems a child should have to worry about during the school day.

Time on task. While in class, students will be engaged with the teacher, lesson, or activity and on task. They will not disturb others (including the teacher) or prevent them from working. *It is the teacher who determines whether a student is being disruptive.* Students will promptly and respectfully follow instructions and will follow all rules established in this book and by the adult in charge.

Expectations from individual teachers. Each classroom teacher or aide may create his or her own policies and procedures for the classroom and work areas. Those expectations will be clearly conveyed to all students and applied as uniformly as possible, while taking special needs into consideration. Such rules and guidelines have already been approved by Ms. Nalls will be enforced as any others described in this Student Handbook.

COMMON COURTESY

All students will always treat others with kindness and respect, regardless of differences or disagreements. At Futures Academy we seek to embrace such differences so we may learn more about the world from each other. These differences should not be points of contention that cause distress among students.

Foul language, off-color jokes, and other inappropriate remarks or gestures will not be tolerated.

DRESS CODE

Appropriate clothing is modest and without offensive language or images. Undergarments should be worn but not visible. Shirts should not be too revealing in any area (no midrifts with arms raised), and they should have sleeves. Shorts, skirts, and dresses should be natural fingertip length or longer. **A shirt of fingertip length must be worn over leggings – long enough to “cover your bottom” is not long enough.** Any shoes that are likely to fall off, such as flip flops, pose a safety hazard and should not be worn.

A good rule of thumb is that if you aren't sure or have to ask someone else, don't wear it.

Any staff member may determine whether a student is in violation of dress code. You may be called to bring appropriate clothing or pick your child up from school.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES - PROHIBITIONS

“Electronic device” includes but is not limited to phones, music players, ear buds, tablets, game systems, and laptops.

Electronic devices (high school). Use of electronic devices is allowed in the building before class, during lunch, break times, and during lessons where permission is specifically granted by the staff member in charge. All devices must be put on silent and put away during class. Ear buds must be removed and out of sight, not simply left around the neck or turned off while still in the ears.

Teachers occasionally ask students to use their devices during a lesson. During this time, they should be used for that purpose only.

Electronic devices (middle school). Phones will be taken up and stored securely by the classroom teacher. They will be returned and may be used in the building before class, during lunch, break times, and during lessons where permission is specifically granted by the staff member in charge. ***All other uses are prohibited.***

Other uses. In addition, taking and sharing photos of other students on social media is strictly prohibited due to privacy concerns for other students. The use of cell phones or any device capable of capturing images is strictly prohibited in restroom areas while at school or at a school-related events.

Futures Academy DOES Take Photos Of Students, Which May Be Posted Online Or Used For Commercial Purposes. Enrollment In Futures Academy Indicates Consent To Use Student Photos In This Manner Unless We Are Otherwise Notified In Writing By Legal Guardians Of Legal Or Safety Reasons To Avoid Doing So.

At times students may be allowed or even asked to bring electronic devices such as laptops, tablets, or other portable computers for school use. Please note that students bring these items to school at their own discretion and are responsible for the security of those items. Futures Academy is not responsible for them if they should become damaged or lost.

- **Consequences.** If a student uses an electronic device without permission or outside the permitted times, especially after being reminded to put it away, the device will be confiscated and kept securely until the end of the day. Repeat offenders will be handled in conjunction with parents on a case-by-case basis.

FOOD AND DRINKS

Lunch is not provided by the school. Students are not allowed to order lunch from any restaurant or service, nor may a parent order food to be delivered at school. These deliveries disrupt the learning environment. Students do not leave campus for lunch. A parent/guardian or someone designated by the parent/guardian may bring food to school before lunch begins. Snacks are available for sale in the office and may be brought from home. Please do not send any brightly colored drinks that will stain our carpet if spilled.

Please take care that fast food or convenience store food and drinks are in secure packaging to avoid spills and messes. Insulated tumblers are welcome.

Energy drinks are not healthy for growing bodies and tend to cause behavior problems in class. Therefore, students are not allowed to consume them on campus, and drinking them before school is strongly discouraged.

ILLEGAL SUBSTANCES

Tobacco products of any kind (including smokeless forms), vapes, alcohol, marijuana products, and improperly used prescription drugs have no place in a school. Students will come to campus clean, sober, and with their minds prepared to learn.

Medications, both prescription and over-the-counter medications for common ailments such as headache or upset stomach, may be kept in the office. A parent should bring these items to school in their original containers with instructions for when, how, and how much should be given.

- **If your child needs an epi-pen, is diabetic, or has any other serious ongoing medical condition, a parent must meet with Ms. Nalls and any staff with a need to know before he or she will be allowed on campus.**

INTERNET ACCESS

Students will not have access to the internet while at school. If such permission is granted, it will be for a specific purpose. The student will only use the access for that purpose and no other.

LEAVING CAMPUS

Parents must contact the school if their child needs to leave campus before the end of the school day. Even those who drive or are 18 years old must be checked out by a parent or another adult designated by the parent on the enrollment paperwork. They will not be given permission to leave until a guardian **calls or emails** the school office. DO NOT contact a teacher or Ms. Nalls directly to dismiss your child. Students who leave without express permission are guilty of insubordination.

If you need to make alternative arrangements for a non-driving child to get home, and the arrangement is not listed in the student file, please notify the school of the change. For example, if your child is riding home with a friend they do not normally ride with, we need to know before releasing them to the friend's parent.

OFF-CAMPUS BEHAVIOR

In most cases, Futures Academy students are welcome guests at homeschool events such as dances and sports competitions. For school- or homeschool-related events, exemplary behavior is expected in order to maintain a healthy relationship with our local homeschool and other community organizations. Students whose choices do not reflect this intention are subject to removal from Futures Academy so the actions of a few do not affect the public reputation of the entire group.

Staff will not actively seek information regarding students' off-campus behavior, including social media activity, except when the student attends school- or homeschool-related events, but if we become aware of illegal or other inappropriate activity in any off-campus or online situation, action may be taken as though the activity occurred at a school event.

PARKING LOT AND DRIVING

In addition to following all applicable laws, students who drive will exercise an abundance of caution with their vehicles on school property. Other people who may be in the driving areas, especially younger students who are naturally less aware of their surroundings, are of utmost concern. Students who "hot rod" and otherwise behave in any manner that might be considered unsafe will receive one warning. Subsequent violations could result in the loss of driving privileges.

SEARCHING STUDENTS' PROPERTY

When a student is on campus, his or her personal property is subject to search by school officials whether the student is present with or in possession of their property or not. This includes but is not limited to a backpack, purse, the student's outer clothing (they may be asked to empty pockets or remove a jacket or hat), or storage areas held by the student. No student will ever, under any circumstance, be subjected to a "strip search." Vehicles may only be searched from the outside, such as the truck bed or what is visible through a window. If further investigation in this area is required, the school will contact parents or law enforcement as appropriate.

Understand that such a search is an extremely rare occurrence, but because the building is leased to Futures Academy, we alone are responsible for what is brought into it or onto the property. This rule is for the safety of all students and staff, as well as the building itself. We will NEVER search anything without significant cause.

VIOLATIONS

Newly enrolled students begin with a clean record at Futures Academy. Those who violate the rules will be subject to penalties ranging from verbal correction to expulsion, depending on the severity of the violation and the student's behavior history *at Futures*. In all situations, staff and administrators will seek to be fair in the application of rules and disciplinary action; this does not always mean "equal." A student's personality, demeanor, disabilities, medical conditions, and other factors will be taken into consideration regarding such decisions.

Disciplinary actions may include:

- a) Verbal warning
- b) Written notification to parents
- c) Temporary or long-term removal from the classroom
- d) Suspension for one or more days
- e) Permanent expulsion

WEAPONS

common sense should prevail. Weapons such as guns, knives, tazers, or clubs are neither necessary nor allowed on school campus. Any weapons found on a student's person, in their belongings, or anywhere other than the student's locked vehicle will be confiscated, a parent will be contacted, and the student will be disciplined accordingly. "All weapons" includes any weapons not specifically named here as well as any instrument used as a weapon.

THE PROGRAM

TUITION AND FEES

Application Fee. There is no Application Fee.

Enrollment Fee. An Enrollment Fee of \$500 for each student is due at the time of enrollment. This fee covers all learning texts and materials, and most other classroom supplies. Students will need a binder with dividers or folders for organization. General classroom supplies such as pens, paper, art supplies, etc. are provided, but students may bring their own.

For select courses, a small lab or supply fee may be required. These include advanced sciences or elective courses such as Dave Ramsey's *Foundations in Personal Finance*, which may or may not be offered by an adjunct teacher, on your child's 'home' day, or at a different location.

We understand that especially for families with more than one child enrolled, the initial investment of Enrollment Fee, plus Tuition, plus additional fees, plus the purchase of supplies can be quite a burden. Futures Academy is happy to work with families to find a payment plan that suits their needs and still meets our requirements.

Tuition. Annual tuition for a full-time, regularly enrolled student is \$4,000. For families with more than one child enrolled in the regular program, we offer a Sibling Discount of 5% off annual tuition for the second child, and another 5% for every child after that.

Tuition is payable in one lump sum or up to twelve monthly payments, depending on enrollment date; all accounts must be paid in full by the last day of class in May. Tuition will be prorated for students who enroll after the school year begins. Payments are due on the 1st of each month (unless otherwise arranged) and may be made in the office by cash, check, money order, or debit or credit card. We also accept CashApp and Venmo; our handle is @futuresacademyvic.

Late Fees.

- **For all payments not received by the end of the month in which they are due, a \$25 late charge will apply. Another \$25 late charge will be applied at the end of each week thereafter until payment is received.**
- **The student is not allowed to attend school while late fees are accruing.**
- **If the balance remains unpaid after one calendar month, the student will be unenrolled and collection efforts will begin.**
- **Documents such as transcripts, diploma, and other school records will be withheld until all debts are satisfied, including those for damages to or failure to return school-owned items.**

Referral Incentive. If your family refers another student who is accepted for enrollment and pays the enrollment fee, you will receive \$100 credit on your next month's tuition. To receive the referral incentive, *the enrolling family must name you as their reference upon their first visit to the school.* Additional referrals will receive a \$50 credit for the next month's tuition. Up to three credits are allowed for each family, each school year.

SCHOOL HOURS

School hours are 8:00 – 2:30, Monday through Thursday. Class begins at 8:05. The school and school office are closed on Friday.

Pick your student up at 2:30 unless other arrangements have been made. Students may arrive or be dropped off as early as 7:30 when at least one staff member is present. They will remain in the designated waiting area and not linger in their personal vehicles. **DO NOT** leave your child unattended on the premises.

Some special courses or labs may be offered on Fridays. The school will be open on Friday only for students who attend those events or other previously agreed-upon circumstances (special tutoring, workshop, field trip, etc.).

ATTENDANCE

Attendance is required and absences should be rare. Your child's first priority at this age is education, so please schedule appointments on days when your child is not in school. Work hours should not interfere with school hours.

In a two-day program, absences have a significant impact on learning. For students who miss class, making up assignments is only a small part of the consequence. They also miss direct teacher instruction, learning activities, test reviews, and the opportunity to ask questions and hear questions and answers from others. Students may also miss group projects or hands-on labs.

Absenteeism also creates a great inconvenience for teachers who must reteach or rewrite assignments, host make-up labs, or stay after school to help a child with work they missed. We gladly do these things for unavoidable absences, but it is a burden for those that could be avoided by proper scheduling or setting an alarm.

Students with jobs. Students who have jobs should not be scheduled to work during school hours. Absences due to avoidable work hours will not be excused, and teachers will not give up their personal time to help students make up assignments in these cases. It is your responsibility to make sure their jobs do not interfere with their schooling.

Alternate attendance. Students must attend on their regularly scheduled days as some of their classes may not be available on the other days. When necessary, a student may occasionally attend additional or alternative days with express permission from Ms. Nalls.

ATTENDANCE RECORDS

Students enrolled at Futures Academy, whether full time, part time, or drop ins, are homeschooled students. The state of Texas does not have attendance requirements for homeschooled students, but Futures Academy does. In addition to making sure you know when your child misses school, we keep a record of attendance for your protection.

If the State should question the validity of your homeschooling, the attendance record and schoolwork may be combined to validate the education you are providing to your child. (That isn't legal advice; it is only a hypothetical explanation of why we provide that service. For more information on laws regarding homeschooling in Texas, visit the Homeschool Legal Defense Association www.hsllda.org or Texas Homeschool Coalition www.thsc.org, or contact an attorney.)

Attendance records also help teachers keep students on track when a student has been absent so they can make up lessons as needed.

Penalties. There is no penalty for an unexcused absence or tardy, but in the interest of clear communication, **please contact the school if your child must be absent or late to school.** Any absence with your permission may be excused, but if you do not contact us, we will assume you are unaware of it.

- **Penalty Exception:** Students who are habitually tardy for classes after arriving at school will need to make up missed time after school. A student who is ten minutes late to class will spend ten minutes after class making up instruction time or doing other tasks at the teacher's discretion.

Extra-Curricular absences. Absences due to extracurricular activities such as sports or rodeo events are not considered "absent" at all. Rather they are days your child attends school elsewhere. Please notify us of these events in advance when possible. If your child is ill, please do not send them to school. A doctor's note is welcome but not usually required for medical appointments or illness.

COURSES AND PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Course offerings. Futures Academy provides all the courses necessary for graduation and to comply with Texas homeschool requirements. These courses are not necessarily in compliance with local school districts' guidelines. We accept all credited courses from area public and private schools, but we make no guarantee that those schools will reciprocate. Please contact the school in question if you are considering a transfer and have concerns.

We offer courses in the four core subjects as well as Bible/Theology, Adulting 101, Sign Language, and Business. More courses may be offered later in accordance with student need. The minimum graduation requirements (detailed below) are indeed **minimum** requirements. In most cases, a student's graduation plan will include more credits than the mere minimum. For example, all students will take Bible/Theology class during their first year at Futures Academy, regardless of how many Theology credits have been earned at another school. Such expectations will be set forth in the student's IDEA Plan.

Accreditation. Futures Academy is not an accredited school and never will be because adherence to accreditation guidelines deprives the school of its autonomy. Our freedom to meet students where they are, teach what matters, and use a wide variety of methods are what make Futures great, and we will not sacrifice that. NO program can do what we do if it is accredited. *Note: Some curricula ARE accredited, but read the fine print carefully if you choose to later implement one of these programs.* To Ms. Nalls knowledge, no homeschool program in our area is accredited.

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

Futures Academy provides faith-based instruction that is ideal for students who plan to enter the workforce immediately after graduation, seek a continuing education certificate or license, learn an industrial trade, or attend a college or university. We work with college-bound students by preparing them for college entrance tests such as the TSI, SAT, and ACT; accepting dual credit classes; and serving as tutors for those courses.

The following 1* credits are required for graduation from our program.

English	4 credits
Math	4 credits. May include Algebra 1-2, Geometry, Business or Consumer Math, Math Models, and others as needed. Those wishing to take math courses above Algebra II are encouraged to do so through a college or other homeschool programs.
Science	3 credits. We offer Physical Science, Biology, and General Sciences to include studies in Geology, Ecology, Meteorology, the Ocean, and others. (Four credits are strongly encouraged.)
Social Studies	3 credits. Must include US History and Government/Economics. (Four credits are strongly encouraged.)
Bible/Theology	at least 2 formal credits, plus on-topic lessons throughout the curriculum
Adulting 101	Our own half-credit portfolio course
Sign Language	2 credits or more; or foreign language credits earned elsewhere

There are no requirements for fine arts, a specific foreign language, or technology, but you are strongly encouraged to seek out such lessons as a homeschool parent, whether formally or informally.

Grades. The school year is divided into six, six-week grading periods. We do not send progress report, but you do have access to grades at all times. Credits are awarded on a semester basis, so a student must complete a full semester of a course to receive a half credit, and a full year to receive a full credit. Students all work at the same pace.

Futures Academy uses a traditional numeric grading scale to indicate academic mastery for progress reports and report cards.

90+	A	Excellent
80-99	B	Good
70-79	C	Fair
Below 70	F	Failed to meet standard

Transcripts will show the grade equivalent on a 4.0 scale as shown here:

<https://pages.collegeboard.org/how-to-convert-gpa-4.0-scale>

DUAL CREDIT

Students who enroll in college classes will receive both college and high school credit for any course they successfully complete. A junior taking English at a college will not have to take English that year at Futures. Upon presentation of a final report card or transcript, the course and grade will be entered into the student's transcript as a dual credit course. These courses are weighted 10%

heavier than regular high school courses. For example, if a student who makes a 90 in a college course, a grade of 99 will be entered as the grade on his or her transcript. This can make a significant difference in a child's grade point average. Dual credit courses are counted in averages that determine graduation honors.

Other outside courses. Many students are involved in activities such as 4H, theater, sports, music, or they take classes from other homeschool instructors in addition to their regular courses at Futures. Students may also receive credit for these courses (and in some cases, for job training or work) by having the instructor provide a letter explaining what the student learned in the class and what grade should be assigned. These courses are weighted the same as any taken at Futures Academy.

Accepting any outside course for credit is at the discretion of the school Director. Please contact her for more information.

DIPLOMA AND GRADUATION

A state-recognized homeschool diploma will be presented by Futures Academy to students who satisfactorily complete all required coursework. It is a real diploma just like those issued by any public school. A graduation ceremony is held each year in celebration of the year's graduates.

Participation in the graduation ceremony and other 'senior' events is optional but encouraged because the honor has been hard-earned, and the memories last a lifetime. Expenses for these events, such as cap and gown or the cost of dinner, will be the responsibility of the students' families.

Exceptions. A student may be denied participation in these events if he/she:

- 1) has exhibited habitual or severe misbehavior.
 - 2) fails to complete all course work by the due date.
 - 3) has not paid tuition in full by the date of the graduation ceremony.
 - 4) Any student who arrives at graduation or any 'senior' event intoxicated or altered in any way will not be allowed to participate and may be subject to further disciplinary action.
- **Honors and Ranking.** Seniors will be ranked at the end of the third six weeks. Rank is determined by averaging all high school and college credits earned from beginning of the student's freshman year through the midterm of their final year; this system also applies to third-year graduates. Grades from the fourth six weeks will only be used if a tie breaker is needed. Honors will be awarded based on calculations at this time.

In rare cases, the rank changes after all work, including the final semester, has been completed and calculated. This will be reflected on the transcript, but the honors of Valedictorian and Salutatorian remain with the student to whom they were awarded, regardless of final ranking. Only students who attend at least one full year at Futures Academy are eligible for the top two honors. All fully credited students with a high school average of 90 or higher, regardless of the length of enrollment at Futures, will be named Honor Graduates.

Early completion. Some students will complete coursework at the mid-term or some other time during the year, or even a year early. Upon completion of the prescribed IDEA Plan or Graduation Plan, transcripts may be made available to the student, parent, or higher education facility if tuition payments are current and no other debts or fines are owed. However, the diploma will be issued in May, regardless of when coursework is completed.

THE PARENTS AND COMMUNITY

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Campus Guests Parents and other guests must sign in with the Office Manager before entering student areas of the campus. When picking your child up early or dropping them off late, the parent must sign the child in or out. The only people allowed to take a student from campus are those listed in the student's file.

Class visits. As previously stated, students perform better in school when parents are involved. For this reason, we encourage parents to make occasional visits to the classroom. When practical, please make an appointment to visit classrooms. It's not much fun to watch kids sit and take a test; planning ahead ensures you can see them actively involved in learning activities.

Conferences. Futures Academy staff will do our best to contact parents regarding concerns about behavior or academic progress, but parents are always welcome to initiate that conversation. Please call the office to set up a conference with teachers or administrations about your child or any other issue you would like to discuss. Ms. Nalls's open door policy is exactly that – she is always open to hearing your suggestions, compliments, or complaints.

Volunteering. *Every* parent, guardian, or grandparent is invited to come speak to our students about their careers, hobbies, lessons they've learned, or share their testimonies. We wish to expose our students to the broadest array of information possible while they are in our care. No matter what you do for a living, your career path is an option for our students as well. Come share what you know! Or perhaps you make the best strawberry shortcake this side of the Mississippi River; we'd love to learn your secret!

Any event or trip hosted by the school is made possible through parent volunteers. If you are available, please help when possible. Note that some events will require your participation while others are optional.

COMMUNICATION

Email is our primary form of communication with parents. Report cards, billing notices, academic concerns, event notifications, and other notices are sent via email from the Gradelink system. Teachers often text parents or students about missing work, upcoming assignments, and other matters. We will use all methods available to notify parents of emergency closings, deviations from our regular schedule, reminders about special events, and the like.

Weather closures. Decisions regarding school ***closures*** due to weather will be the same as those made by Victoria ISD. If they cancel school, we will cancel school. However, we do not always follow their decisions for delayed start, and sometimes we close when they don't. Such notices will be sent to the local TV station, posted on Facebook, and emailed to you. Please check these areas before contacting a staff member.

Please note: *Following VISD's lead only applies to closures due to weather.* Our school calendar does not match theirs exactly and cannot be used to determine whether you have a holiday off. We do not have 'bad weather make-up days.'

STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

As a private company that does not receive funds from any state or federal education agency, we are not legally obligated to provide 504 or Special Education services. However, to the fullest extent possible, Futures Academy will make every effort to abide by IEP's or similar agreements set forth by the public school or requested by the parents. Many needs can be met in the classroom, but students with more severe challenges may not be well accommodated in our program. We encourage you to speak with teachers and administrators about your child's needs before enrolling at Futures Academy.

Ms. Nalls or other appropriate staff members will join you in ARD and similar meetings in support of you and your child. Please contact the office as soon as possible when a meeting is scheduled so we can ensure availability and be adequately prepared.

COUNSELING

Futures Academy does not have a school counselor or psychologist on staff, but we do have access to non-denominational ministers and other mentors who can speak to your child about some matters such as relationships, decision making, and questions of faith. You or the child may ask Ms. Nalls to contact a minister or mentor if such counseling is desired.

Academic counseling is available on campus and will be provided to all students and parents as part of the IDEA Plan and at the request of students or parents.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Independent community service hours are not required for attendance at Futures Academy. However, we do occasionally participate in charity events as a group; students are required to participate in these events. When volunteerism or charitable service events are part of a class for which your child is enrolled, his or her participation will likely be part of the grade for that course, and participation is required. For other events like bake sales or other fund raisers, participation is optional.

Outside school, parents should encourage children's involvement in their communities and foster awareness of local needs. The sense of community that many of us grew up with is all but lost in today's society, and meeting the needs of those who can do nothing for us is one wonderful way to build a sense of belonging, which young people so desperately need. If you need ideas for how to get involved, please call our school office.