

Mount Vernon
Alternative
Education
Student Handbook



Mount Vernon Alternative Education HANDBOOK

WHAT IS THE ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM?

Mount Vernon Alternative Education Center (MVAE) is the alternative high school program operated by the Mount Vernon School District, under the direction of the Board of Education. The classroom is located in the First Street Community Center, at 221 1st Street East, Mount Vernon, Iowa 52314. Students enrolled at Mount Vernon Alternative Education Center earn a high school diploma upon the successful completion of required credits earned in required and elective coursework. Mount Vernon residents earn a Mount Vernon High School diploma. Those from “sending schools” earn a high school diploma from their respective school districts.

ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS

Mount Vernon Alternative Education Center (MVAE) is designed to meet the needs of students who have struggled to be as successful as they are capable of in a traditional high school and/or who have specific needs a traditional high school cannot meet. Mount Vernon Alternative Education Center is not a general program for all students - that is the function of a public high school.

Students are accepted into the program through an evaluation process administered by the Mount Vernon Director of Alternative Education, the student’s current school counselor, the MVAE Principal (the MVHS Principal), and the student’s current principal, in collaboration with the student and his/her parents. The basic guidelines include but are not limited to:

1. Students who reside in the MVHS district and who have emotional/attitudinal problems which have prevented success in a traditional high school setting.
2. Students who reside in the district and are so far behind in credits that traditional high school graduation would be very difficult and/or unrealistic.
3. Students who have needs similar to #1 or #2 above and have dropped out of school.
4. Students whose needs are similar to those listed above but who reside outside of the MVHS District. These students must be referred by their home school district, who will pay tuition to the MVHS School District, and must have the approval of the MVHS/MVAE Principal.
5. Students who display potential in abiding by the procedures and handbook of MVAE, and who will contribute to a positive community climate in the classroom.

PRE-ENROLLMENT CONFERENCE

After initial acceptance into Mount Vernon Alternative Education Center, each student and his parent(s) or guardian(s) are required to attend a conference with the Director of Alternative Education and relevant other stakeholders (i.e. Special Education Instructor, School Nurse, etc.). During the course of this conference, goals will be established and guidelines will be reviewed. The new student will begin classes **only after this conference has occurred.**

WAITING LIST

Capacity at Mount Vernon Alternative Education Center is limited. The names of prospective students are occasionally placed on a waiting list until an opening occurs. Priority on the waiting list is based on eligibility criteria and individual circumstances. Mount Vernon students are always given priority regardless of their placement on the waiting list. It is the goal of this program to assist those students who are motivated to succeed. Students who are not making good use of the program by staying focused on their schoolwork and/or who are not making steady progress towards high school completion (for example, due to attendance issues) may be returned to the waiting list so that another student is given an opportunity to succeed.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Mount Vernon Alternative Education Center welcomes and encourages the involvement of parents in the program. Parents are welcome to visit the classroom at any time, and are encouraged to call and/or e-mail the teachers at any time. Parents are expected to attend a conference with the student and teacher prior to the student's acceptance into the program. This meeting will simply help establish goals and expectations for the student and will address any questions or concerns.

SCHOOL CALENDAR

The Mount Vernon Alternative Education Center calendar corresponds with the MVHS calendar. All students will adhere to Mount Vernon High School's schedule - - e.g. shortened classes, early dismissals, late starts, etc. Each new student will establish a personalized schedule with the Mount Vernon High School staff. Individual or extenuating circumstances that differ or vary from this expectation will be discussed and coordinated by the program director. (See "Procedures" for more information on make-up expectations.)

LIFE SKILLS

It is the intent of Mount Vernon Alternative Education Center to teach and foster not only the basic academic skills and competencies, but also life skills such as listening, teamwork, communication, locating information, and character development. Therefore, coursework in areas such as Life Skills, Adult Living, Keyboarding or Computer Applications, Service Learning, and Work Experience will be required for students.

All MVAE students are continually enrolled in a course called "Life Skills". This class meets Monday - Thursday. In order to earn credit in Life Skills, with a mark of "P" for "Pass" on their transcript, students must meet attendance guidelines as set forth in MVAE Procedures, participate in class, and complete assigned journal entries. Frequently, this coursework might involve independent or group activities that take place in the community rather than the classroom.

HOMEWORK POLICY

Students may be expected to attend an event or take part in an outing or conduct some research outside the classroom, but traditional "homework" is not an expectation of this program. Therefore, **laptops may never be taken out of the classroom.** It is highly recommended and encouraged, however, that students work on coursework outside of the classroom (at home online, at the library, or somewhere else they can gain internet access). It will be difficult for students to graduate in a timely manner without working outside of the school day.

STUDENT EXPECTATIONS

Mount Vernon Alternative Education High School is a non-traditional school. It is not intended to be a "mini-Mount Vernon High School." We function as much as possible like a workplace:

1. Students will produce quality work. All students will be expected to achieve a minimum of 60% competency in all coursework.
2. Students will make steady progress toward the goal of high school graduation. Progress reports will be completed with students regularly. **Students will be expected to complete at least 6 semester long courses per semester.**
3. Students must call MVAE school staff (515) 460-2481 ***before*** their scheduled time if they are going to be late or absent for ***any*** reason that day. **Failure to call will result in an unexcused absence.** The consequences for three unexcused absences in one semester will normally be dropping him/her from a class(es) and/or the program.

STUDENT CONSEQUENCES

Students who choose to not adhere to the expectations listed above will be dropped from MVAE after a conference with the teachers and/or their school counselor, the principal, and/or the student's parents. **In some cases**, students may apply for re-admission at a later date and will be placed on the bottom of the waiting list.

RESPONSIBILITY AND BEHAVIOR

The MVAE staff believes that our students are young adults who have made a commitment to improve their lives through the acquisition of skills and knowledge. We will treat students as adults whenever possible. Students will be expected to show courtesy, cooperation, and respect for **everyone**. These skills will help students be

successful at school, on the job, and in life. If students are disrespectful, uncooperative or destructive, they will be asked to “punch out” and leave for the day. **Any missed time must be made up.** Repeated problems will result in the student being “laid off” temporarily or permanently.

The MVAE staff has high expectations for students, and will also work very hard. People who have good character generally have happy, successful lives.

REGISTRATION FEES

MVAE students must register and pay the appropriate fees through the MVAE staff and/or the Mount Vernon High School office. Students may purchase activity tickets, lunch tickets, etc. if they so desire. Free/Reduced Lunch applications are available at any time in the MVAE Center. Lunch must be pre-ordered by 9:20 a.m. daily, and is served at 11:00 at the MVAE Center.

CREDITS AND GRADES

The amount of time it takes for someone to complete a semester long course will vary from student to student depending on his/her ability, motivation, and mental determination. If hoping to maintain a similar “pace” to that of a traditional high school student, a student should plan to complete a semester long course every 13 school days, on average. Grades are based on the quality of written work, quiz scores, test scores, class participation, and in some cases attendance. Tests and quizzes are graded on the following percentage scale:

- A = 90 – 100%
- B = 80 – 90%
- C = 70- 80%
- D= 60-70%

Any score below 60% will require that the student re-study the material and/or re-do the assignment(s), and then re-test on the material until a score of 60% or better is achieved. A record of credits and grades earned by each student will be kept electronically by MVAE Center staff.

MOUNT VERNON ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

Mount Vernon students who attend the MVAE Center are required to earn the same number of credits as those enrolled in the traditional high school (including required courses and electives). Students from sending school are required to earn the same number of credits as those enrolled in the traditional high school that “sent” them to MVAE. Mount Vernon students need to earn 25.5 credits to earn their high school diploma. Sending schools vary in their requirements. These requirements will be clearly communicated and explained during the evaluation process when considering a student’s move to MVAE Center.

RESPECT FOR PROPERTY

MVAE Center is located in the First Street Community Center, at 221 1st Street East, Mount Vernon, Iowa 52314. We are their guests, and use their facilities at their invitation. While on their campus, we must always abide by their rules. These include but are not limited to:

1. The entire building is "TOBACCO-free" - - regardless of age. No one is to smoke or chew anywhere on the property at any time. In addition to this, MVAE students are expected to remain "TOBACCO-free" the entire time they are in/at school. If the student's schedule is from 9:00 am - 3:00 pm, then they are 100% TOBACCO-free throughout the entire 6 hours. We are happy to assist students in meeting this expectation in a variety of ways upon request.
2. Demonstrate respect for the property. Please do not litter.
3. Please use all equipment carefully and wisely.
4. We share the bathrooms with other merchants in the building. Please do your part to be neat and responsible.
5. In general, simply be a "Good Neighbor" to all in the First Street Community Center. They provide us with many "extras" that other programs wish they had. Demonstrate our gratitude by showing respect for their property!
6. Wash all eating utensils and dishes, and take out the garbage each day.

USE OF THE FIRST STREET CENTER FACILITIES

The First Street Community Center owners and vendors have graciously opened their facility to the MVAE Center staff and students, and "welcomed us with opened arms". Respect for others in the building, and the property in general, is expected *at all times*.

Students are allowed to use any of the fitness facilities during breaks, and/or before/after school. When using fitness facilities, students must sign in and sign out of the classroom, AND in the cardio room. In the cardio room, students should write "AE" next to their names.

Students are only allowed in the parking lot upon arrival and dismissal, or with prior explicit permission.

During breaks, students are allowed to walk to Shepley's Pharmacy for snacks and beverages, but, again, must sign out of the classroom first and sign in upon their return. If students do not follow this procedure this privilege will be revoked for a time period that reflects the circumstance.

If students would like to spend their break outside, they may go to the stairs and sidewalk on the north side of the building.

MOUNT VERNON ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Students at MVAE are expected to abide by all the rules and policies established by the Mount Vernon High School as explained in the Student Handbook. Procedures are an explanation of the way we do things around here so that nothing gets lost, misplaced, forgotten, overlooked or ignored. Please familiarize yourself with these procedures and use them daily. Thanks!

Entering the building

- Please silence your cell phone
- Go directly to the classroom

Entering the classroom

- Please greet the entire staff and other students

Attendance

- Students are required to attend 5 days a week. That is 6 hours per day Monday through Friday.
- In some cases, schedules may be developed with individual students based on their needs.

Absences

- Any student who is not in attendance at school must call Mount Vernon Alternative Education **prior** to the dismissal of their scheduled time.
- If a student scheduled from 9:00 to 3:00 calls in at 3:30, they will be given an unexcused absence.
- If a student calls in prior to their scheduled dismissal time, he/she will not be given an unexcused absence, but will be expected to make that time.
- If a student accumulates three unexcused absences throughout a semester, a formal attendance meeting will take place, the student will be dropped from a class, and the student could be dismissed from Mount Vernon Alternative Education.

Make-up Time

- Excessive absences or extenuating circumstances will be addressed by the program director and a formal contract may be put in place.
- The contract will set a specific deadline for when the make-up hours will be completed. Any student who does not complete their make-up hours by that day will be dropped from a class(es), and/or be dismissed from Mount Vernon Alternative Education.

Social Web Sites and Games

- The use of these web sites are prohibited during school hours except during lunch and break times.

Mobile Phones

- Our intent is to treat MVAE students like adults whenever possible, in an effort to help them learn and refine skills related to success in the workplace. Mobile phones are allowed for use by students until and unless they become a distraction to themselves or others in the room. If the use of a student's mobile phone becomes a problem, a contract will be devised to monitor and modify these behaviors.
- All calls should be taken and made outside of the classroom.

Planner

- A planner is provided by Mount Vernon Alternative Education for you to use in whatever way will keep you organized.
- We encourage students to track their accomplishments at the end of each day so they can track their progress in school

Journals

- All Life Skills journal entries should be written in the journal provided by and stored at the Alt Ed Center.
- In order to earn credit for Life Skills (.5/semester), students are required to complete journal entries as assigned.

Binder

- The front section of the binder contains the Mount Vernon Alternative Education handbook and procedures. Refer to this section whenever you have questions about policies and/or procedures.
- Create a section in your binder for every class that you are involved in. Use each section to track your progress in each class.

Pop/Snacks/Candy

- Feel free to bring snacks and beverages, including pop, into the classroom.
- Please clean up after yourself.

Kitchen

- The kitchen is located in the Library and will be used to wash the dishes.
- Please dump any left over food in the garbage and take the garbage out EVERY day.

Character Counts

- Team, Respect, and Responsibility are the three main tenets of our classroom community.
- Everyone at Mount Vernon Alternative Education Center is expected to practice good character as described by the 6 Pillars of Character:
 - Trustworthiness
 - Honesty
 - Respect

- Caring
- Responsibility
- Citizenship
- Everyone at Mount Vernon Alternative Education will practice using good manners. Using words like “please”, “thank you”, “excuse me”, and “I’m sorry” will make Mount Vernon Alternative Education Center a pleasant place for everyone. Foul language will not be tolerated as it is not acceptable in society.

Emergencies

- Emergency phone calls may be made or received at anytime.
- Periodically there will be fire and tornado drills conducted by the MVAE staff. Your complete cooperation is expected.
 - Fire Drill –As a group go out the door, down the stairs and out the building toward Shepley’s or the front of the building. We are to gather there as a group and remain together as a group until the “all clear” has been given.
 - Tornado Drill – go to the basement, sit on floor, and cover your head. Everyone is to sit on the floor and place their head down on their knees and use their hands and forearms to protect their heads and necks. Until the “all clear” is given, we should remain in this position.

Dismissal

- Please remain seated until one minute before your scheduled departure time.
- Clean up around your desk area.
- Please say “good-bye” to any staff members or students present on your way out.

Teacher/Associates

- If you need help with anything please let a teacher or associate know.
- You may ask any staff member questions about policies and or procedures.
- Please honor requests issued by staff.
- Follow the procedures, guidelines, and Mount Vernon Alternative Education rules regardless of whether a staff member is present or not.

Dress Code

- These include, but are certainly not limited to, being neat and clean, wearing shoes, removing sunglasses at the door, not wearing torn or immodest clothing, no wallet chains and not wearing clothing that advertises alcohol, illegal drugs, tobacco, violence or sexual obscenities. In addition, students will be covered from shoulder to mid-thigh. All visible shirts, blouses or tops must have straps at least one inch in width, covering both shoulders. No revealing, torn or overly tight clothing such as midriff-baring tops, tube tops, halter tops, see-through clothing, spaghetti straps, short-shorts or skirts, exposed undergarments, cleavage, or back side.

Harassment

- Harassment of students will not be tolerated at MVAE Center or within the Mount Vernon Community School District.

- The school district includes school district facilities, school district premises, and non school property if the student is at any school sponsored, school approved, or school related activity or function, such as field trips or athletic events where students are under the control of the school district.
- The board prohibits harassment, bullying, hazing, or any other victimization, of students, based on any of the following actual or perceived traits or characteristics, including but not limited to, age, color, creed, national origin, race, religion, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, physical attributes, physical or mental ability or disability, ancestry, political party preference, political belief, socioeconomic status, or familial status.
 - “Harassment, bullying or hazing or any other victimization shall be construed to mean any electronic, written, verbal, or physical act or conduct toward a student which is based on any actual or perceived trait or characteristic of the student and which creates an objectively hostile school environment that meets one or more of the following conditions:
 - Places the student in reasonable fear of harm to the student’s person or property
 - Has a substantially detrimental effect on the student’s physical or mental health
 - Has the effect of substantially interfering with a student’s academic performance
 - Has the effect of substantially interfering with the student’s ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by the school.”
- Students who believe they have suffered harassment shall report such matters to the Director of Alternative Education, Principal, or another designated individual (assistant principal), who shall be the investigator for harassment complaints.

Illegal Substances

- Any use, possession, sale, or transfer of controlled and/or illegal substances on the property will result in an immediate referral to the police department and a recommendation to the Mount Vernon High School Board of Education for expulsion, or referral back to a student’s “sending school”.

OUR PLEDGE TO YOU

We are glad that you have made the **choice** to become a student at Mount Vernon Alternative Education Center. We welcome you, and promise to do our best to help you achieve your educational goals. By working together, we can help you reach your potential, but the **choice** is ultimately yours! Again, we welcome you and are glad you made the **choice** to attend MVAE!

The Mount Vernon Community School District will not discriminate on the basis of race, color, age, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status (for programs), socioeconomic status (for programs), disability, religion, and creed. Students, parents, employees and others doing business with or performing services with the district who feel that they have experienced discrimination are encouraged to contact Joe Wallace, Equity Coordinator, Mount Vernon Community High School, 731 Palisades Road SW, Mount Vernon, IA 52314, telephone: [319-895-8843](tel:319-895-8843) x4005, where our district has a grievance procedure for processing complaints of discrimination. Inquiries may also be directed in writing to the Director of Civil Rights – Region VII, US Department of Education,; 310 W. Wisconsin Ave., Suite 800; Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53203-2292 (phone: [414-291-1111](tel:414-291-1111)) or to the Iowa Department of Education; Grimes State Office Building; Des Moines, Iowa, 50319-0146 (phone: [515-281-5294](tel:515-281-5294)).