

**JOE STRAUS III MIDDLE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION**

Autumn Peralta	Principal
Araceli Farias	Associate Principal
Jennifer Myers	Academic Dean
Brandy Bergeron	Assistant Principal
Azucena Zepeda	Student Success Facilitator
Leigh Davis	Head Counselor
Heather Callihan	Counselor
Amber Haby	Counselor
Ivette Ortega	Counselor

Section A  
Campus Handbook  
2024-2025

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## **WELCOME**

Joe Straus III Middle School is a state-of-the-art facility where students will be offered many opportunities. One of the most important of which is setting the traditions and standards future students will continue to uphold and build upon. This Student-Parent Handbook has been prepared for your information and guidance.

Keep in mind that you, the student, are the most important aspect of school life at Joe Straus III Middle School. Be proud of your school. This is your home away from home. Respect your school campus and take care of the people within your school community. As a Maverick, you are expected to conduct yourself with dignity, doing your best and demonstrating respect and courtesy at all times. You will be challenged to excel in the classroom and given opportunities to grow as a young adult while enjoying a variety of experiences associated with middle school (e.g. dances, games, clubs and concerts). Your teachers, counselors and administrators will work together to monitor your progress and help you problem solve and learn to assume personal responsibility.

At Straus Middle School, we are dedicated to creating a positive academic environment and supporting the development of social-emotional skills for all students. Therefore, it is necessary to have expectations to ensure student success. This Student-Parent Handbook outlines some of the basic policies around which our school functions. Frequent reference will keep you informed of guidelines and allow you to take full advantage of all school offerings. The cooperation of the school community will result in a more positive and productive school experience. Our staff desires to work collaboratively to ensure the success of our Mavericks. Conferences may be scheduled by calling the school at 210-398-2550.

## **JOE STRAUS III**

Joe Straus III is one of the most respected public servants in modern Texas — a leader who stands out for his commitment to principled, collaborative governing.

The story of the Straus family is a San Antonio story. The family has had a business presence in San Antonio dating back to 1870. Under the original name of the L. Frank Saddlery company, they manufactured saddles and harnesses. In 1898, Teddy Roosevelt and his Rough Riders picked up Straus-made saddles, harnesses and whips in San Antonio on their way to the Spanish-American War. As transportation changed, so did the company: What would become the Straus-Frank Company became distributors for tires and other automobile parts, as well as Frigidaire appliances and Remington guns and ammunition.

Public service is as much a part of the family's story as commerce. In the second half of the 20th Century, Joci Straus was among a group of women who volunteered their time and energy to build the dormant Texas Republican Party into a competitive force. When meeting with her friends for political organizing, she would be accompanied by her very young son: Joe Straus III. It was through these experiences that young Joe started to develop an appreciation for volunteerism and civic engagement, and as he grew into young adulthood, Joe had the opportunity to work in small roles on Capitol Hill, in federal and state campaigns, and in the administrations of Presidents Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush.

While he was managing a congressional campaign in San Antonio, Joe met Julie Brink, herself a young politico and aide to then-U.S. Treasury Secretary James A. Baker III. They met at a campaign event at the Barn Door restaurant and would later marry. After living and working in Washington, D.C. for a few years, Joe and Julie (and eventually their two daughters, Robyn and Sara) settled in San Antonio. He shifted his focus to business but never left public service behind; instead, just like his mother before him, Joe made his impact as a volunteer and party-builder. Then, in 2005, the local seat in the Texas House of Representatives became open. Then 45 years old, Joe ran and won, joining the Texas House of Representatives to represent the place he had always known as home.

Just a few years later, the House was besieged with distrust and acrimony. Although he was relatively inexperienced, Joe had already distinguished himself as an inclusive consensus-builder, and his House colleagues elevated him to serve as their presiding officer. On January 13, 2009, he became the Speaker of the House, telling his colleagues upon taking the oath of office, "The Texas House of Representatives cannot conduct the people's business if it is divided."

For the next 10 years, Speaker Straus sought to lead the Texas House with that same spirit of collaboration and civility. While legislators often aired passionate disagreements over public policy, Speaker Straus always worked to maintain a respectful environment and build consensus whenever possible. Rather than chasing headlines or inflaming controversy, he remained a calm and steady force. As Texas Monthly once wrote when calling him one of the best legislators in the state, "Straus' greatest assets are his intelligence and his temperament. Time after time, when a crisis arose, he remained unflappable."

Speaker Straus' approach to public policy has always been guided by the belief that elected officials should spend more time focused on the core priorities of

governing — the issues that demand bold and innovative thinking rather than partisanship. This focus enabled him to lead the successful push for a historic plan to fund water infrastructure in Texas. It also led him to create the first-ever House Committee on Mental Health. And, certainly, it is why he became the state's most high-profile champion for investing in public education.

Speaker Straus sees great public schools not only as the path to a bright future for millions of young Texans, but also as the state's greatest economic development tool. He has championed muscular investments in education from pre-kindergarten through higher education, and he has repeatedly stood up for the power of locally elected school boards to make their own decisions about how to best serve their communities. Under his leadership, the Legislature began to reform the state's use of standardized testing and created more pathways to career and college readiness for all students.

Speaker Straus also used his time in the Texas House to advocate for diversity and inclusiveness — values that he continues to champion. In fact, shortly after he announced 2017 that he would not seek re-election the following year, the Dallas Morning News named him "Texan of the Year," saying he had "protected Texas from some of its worst political impulses."

Although he does not currently hold elected office, Joe Straus III remains one of the most acclaimed voices in this country for principled, inclusive governance and bipartisan problem-solving. He continues using that voice to champion our public schools, to advance forward-looking leadership for Texas, and to contribute to the civic life of his native San Antonio.

## **SCHOOL COLORS**

ROYAL BLUE, GRAY and BLACK

## **SCHOOL MASCOT**

MAVERICKS

## **Mission, Vision and Core Belief**

Our Mission: Transform the Learning Experience for Students.

Our Vision: Every day, every student grows in confidence, curiosity, and capability.

### **Our Belief:**

WE believe KIDS come first, and we make all decisions with that in mind!

WE will establish a culture that supports Maverick Pride.

WE will prioritize building character and integrity in our students.

WE will acknowledge and celebrate the differences among us.

WE will work collaboratively with one another to support our students.

WE will uphold excellence in all we do!

## **PEOPLE WHO CAN HELP YOU**

### **The Principal:**

The Principal is responsible to the Superintendent of schools for proper administration of Joe Straus III Middle School. It is her duty to organize, supervise, and administer all of the affairs of the school as they affect students, teachers, and patrons. She will be glad to help you with any of your concerns. Conferences can be scheduled by calling 398-2555.

### **The Associate Principal and Assistant Principal:**

The Associate Principal and Assistant Principal work directly with the Principal in the management and organization of the school. They handle the day-by-day operations of the school and assume the responsibility of the Principal in her absence.

Due to morning duties and responsibilities on campus, administrators are not available for conferences prior to 8:40 a.m. We strongly suggest that if you wish to speak to an administrator, or have a conference with them, that you call 210-398-2574 to schedule an appointment. If you are unable to reach an administrator directly by phone, please leave a message and a campus administrator will return your call within 24 hours.

**The Academic Dean:**

The Academic Dean works directly with the Principal in the instructional processes of the school to improve student performance at Joe Straus Middle School. She is in charge of all campus testing at the district and state level. She handles the day to day operations of the school that address academics and may assume the responsibility of the Principal in her absence. Conferences may be scheduled by calling 210-398-2574.

**The Counselors:**

All students are assigned a guidance counselor. Your counselor will be happy to assist you with situations concerning both school and your personal life. If you want an appointment with your counselor this can be arranged with the secretary in the guidance office before and after school. Parents can refer their child by contacting the counseling office and students can refer themselves through the online referral system posted in every classroom, hallway, and restroom. If your counselor cannot see you that same day, he/she will make an appointment with you for the next day. Conferences with students receive first consideration of the counselor's time. The function of the counselor is advisory, not disciplinary, and all information is confidential.

**The Nurse:**

The school nurse is available to help you at school with medical emergencies and will work closely with your parents and physician in administering prescribed medication. The clinic is located in the main office. Please notify the school nurse of any medical conditions that may be of concern. The school nurse is unable to administer over-the-counter medication to children and can only administer prescriptions in their original container.

**The Police Officer:**

The Police Officer assists students when needed and helps maintain a safe environment. He/she helps supervise school events and helps monitor traffic. The SAFE hotline number is 210-397-7233 or text [safe@nisd.net](mailto:safe@nisd.net).

**GENERAL INFORMATION**

**AFTER SCHOOL ACTIVITIES**

All school and U.I.L. rules apply to conduct and dress code for students who attend after-school activities. Written permission and/or an admission fee may be required for many events. Transportation to and from school is the responsibility of the parents for these activities; parents are expected to pick up their child immediately at the conclusion of each activity. Children should not have to wait longer than 15 minutes for parents to pick them up after a school event. If a parent or guardian does not pick up their child in a timely manner, the protocol and procedure set forth by NISD in the Crisis Handbook could be followed by the administrator or staff member if they deem it necessary. Students who are not picked up in a timely manner after a school event or school function could be denied the right to attend future after school functions for the remainder of the year. Students who exhibit inappropriate behaviors will be removed from the activity. Any clothing deemed inappropriate or suggestive is not permitted.

Circumstances that restrict students from attending after-school events are the following:

- out of school suspension/in school suspension assigned for the day of the event
- other disciplinary actions that may warrant non-attendance of the event
- absence from school the day of the event
- repeated misconduct at after-school events
- assignment to an alternative educational campus
- withdrawal from Straus Middle School (athletic events may be permitted)
- unserved attendance recovery/course protection
- unserved consequences

**ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES**

Following any absence, students should bring a dated note signed by their parents explaining the reason for the absence. If a doctor saw the student, a note should be obtained from the doctor explaining the absence. All doctors' notes should be sent to the school to substantiate absences. All notes should be turned into the attendance office within 5 days of the student's absence. Please be advised in regards to high school credit courses, absences are subject to credit recovery. Students should bring all notes to the attendance office between 7:55 and 8:40 a.m. A note for a student's absence may also be faxed to the attention of the Attendance Secretary to 210.398.2649 or can be emailed through the CONTACT SCHOOL link on the Straus website. Please add your child's ID number on the note to ensure that the absence is appropriately processed. We encourage students to be on time for class in order for them to engage in the learning process. When there is a pattern of tardies, parents will be contacted and intervention will be set in place, to include progressive discipline.

## **BACKPACKS / BOOK BAGS**

Backpacks and/or book bags may be used to carry books and supplies to and from school, and may be taken to classes during the school day. Rolling backpacks are only allowed if there is a documented medical need.

## **BREAKFAST AND LUNCH PROCEDURES**

All students will enter the cafeteria in an orderly manner. There are specific rules on how students sit in the cafeteria and the majority of the time students will be allowed to sit with their friends, as long as cafeteria rules are followed. Students must raise their hand for permission to leave their seat. Duty teachers will dismiss students and students may not leave the cafeteria before permission is granted. Students are required to keep their area clean. While in the cafeteria line, students are to only touch the food items they intend to buy.

Food delivery of any kind to our front office is not allowed. Parents can access their child's lunch account online through [School Payments](#). Limiting the number of visitors to our campus will allow our front office staff to maintain the focus on campus safety.

Breakfast/Lunch Money – Go to <https://www.nisd.net/schools/menus> to access your student's cafeteria account and add money as needed. We encourage parents to monitor their student's lunch account online to prevent any problems that deal with your cafeteria purchases.

## **BUS ASSIGNMENTS AND TRANSPORTATION**

Students are required to ride the designated bus assigned to them by transportation. Riding a bus is a privilege, not a right. Students may be assigned a specific seat on their bus. Only a family emergency would warrant assignment to a different bus. In order to ride a different bus home, and receive an official bus change form, a note must be sent by a parent/guardian the day prior to or the morning of and be brought to the Associate Principal's office for administrative approval. This approval must be obtained prior to 6th Period of the school day (these will not be approved after school in the bus loop) for a student to ride a different bus. Students will be given a note from the Associate Principal's office that needs to be given to the bus driver. The number of students assigned to buses and the systemized routes are disrupted when ineligible students ride on alternate routes. All bus routes and assignments of students are done through the district's transportation offices.

## **CAMPUS OPERATING HOURS**

Classes begin for Joe Straus Middle School students at 8:40 a.m. and end at 3:55 p.m. each day, Monday through Friday.

The doors will be opened to all students at 7:45 a.m. and students will report directly to the cafeteria.

Students who arrive at school before 8:30 a.m. are allowed to eat breakfast at designated tables and then report to the grade level areas beginning at 7:55 a.m.

Front Office Hours are from 7:45 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Students will not be allowed to be checked out after 3:30 p.m. due to dismissal procedures.

## **CAMPUS VISITORS**

For the safety and security of our students and staff, our campus protocol requires that all visitors check in at the security lobby. We do not allow anyone beyond our security lobby without following our campus safety protocol, therefore all visitors will be escorted to and from the security lobby. Parents and Visitors are required to register in the Front Office with a state issued ID, utilizing our Raptor system and given a Visitor's Pass to be worn throughout the campus. We require each guest to sign-out and return their Visitor's pass prior to leaving the campus. All volunteers and mentors are required to do a criminal background check before volunteering on campus or field trips. The background check may be done on-line through the NISD website.

When visiting the campus, please know that it is our desire to immediately meet the needs of our community. However, the safety of our students comes first and we may not be immediately available to you. As best practice, we suggest scheduling an appointment to minimize your wait time. Teacher availability during the school day is limited and scheduling an appointment with them is required.

## **DELIVERY OF ITEMS/ OUTSIDE FOOD ITEMS**

In an effort to minimize interruptions and maximize instructional time, we do not deliver items directly to students. However, we also recognize that students will sometimes forget an item at home. We will deliver glasses, school items (books, assignments, etc), house keys, and lunch money. For all other items, the student is expected to come by the office BETWEEN classes to retrieve their belongings. Food delivery of any kind to our front office is not allowed. Parents can access their child's lunch account online through School Payments. Limiting the number of visitors to our campus will allow our front office staff to maintain the focus on campus safety. Students are not permitted to share food due to food allergies. Flowers, balloons, birthday presents etc. will not be delivered and will be held in the office until the end of the day when students can pick them up to be taken home.

## **DRESS CODE**

The district's dress code is implemented (Section D); therefore, students will be expected to follow the guidelines set forth by the district.

1. Shorts of mid-thigh length may be worn at all school levels. Suggestive and/or indecent shorts will be prohibited.
2. Mid-thigh length skirts, skorts, and dresses may be worn at all levels. There should not be a cut or slit in the clothing that extends

above the mid-thigh. Suggestive and/or indecent styles will be prohibited. These requirements also apply to school uniforms.

3. Appropriate footwear must be worn; footwear which has toes reinforced with steel, hard plastics or similar materials are specifically prohibited.

4. Hair must be neat and clean. Unconventional hairstyles that distract from teaching and learning will be prohibited.

5. Any clothes that are suggestive or indecent or which cause a distraction will be prohibited. Specifically, oversized clothing, tank tops, muscle shirts, halter/crop tops, spaghetti straps, exposed backs or midribs, and see-through garments are prohibited.

6. Indecent/inappropriate patches, writings, or drawings on clothing are prohibited. Undergarments must not be visible.

7. All pants are to be worn at the waist (no "sagging") Tight fitting pants (e.g. tights, spandex, bicycle pants, etc.) are also prohibited. Frays or holes above the knees are prohibited.

8. Body piercing jewelry is prohibited except for rings, studs or other traditional jewelry. Any piercing that distracts the teaching and learning environment will be prohibited.

Dress code standards are extended to extra-curricular activities held on the campus. In an effort to promote a safe and positive school environment which is conducive to learning, students should wear appropriate clothing that will not cause disruptions in learning or safety. Inappropriate, indecent, suggestive or distracting clothing will not be allowed. Changes in dress code, deemed appropriate and necessary by the school principal, may be announced, implemented and enforced during the course of the academic school year.

Students out of compliance with dress code may be removed from the regular school setting until the parent is able to provide appropriate attire. Students will be asked to change into school issued clothing if parents cannot be reached. Book covers, folders, book bags, school property, body parts, and/or personal property or clothing displaying obscenities, alcoholic beverages, narcotics, controlled substances, weapons, gang related materials or any design or inscription that administration determines to be unacceptable are not permitted at Joe Straus MS. These items will be confiscated and documented, if necessary, in the student's discipline record.

**Final determination of acceptable dress code and grooming rests with the Principal or his/her designees.**

### **ELECTRONIC DEVICES/ TECHNOLOGY**

Our mission is to transform the learning experience for all students and we continue to place our focus on academic success. Cell phones, gaming devices, and earbuds will not be permitted during the school day. Students will be able to use them until 8:35 am each morning, then they will be put away for the remainder of the school day. Teachers will have the option of allowing use in class for instructional purposes only. We want to keep students free of distractions in the hallways and classrooms, focused on instruction, and fostering positive social interactions among one another. However, campus incentives may occasionally include technology use during lunch. Telephones are available in every classroom and in all campus offices in the event that a student needs to contact a parent.

One of our most valuable instructional resources is the provision of a Chromebook for every student. In an effort to preserve this resource, we ask that Chromebooks only be used for instructional purposes and be kept in backpacks when not in use. Students must use the Northside network and the Internet in a responsible, efficient, ethical, and legal manner in accordance with the Northside ISD Acceptable Use Policy. District provided devices should not be utilized for playing games or messaging other students. At the beginning of each school year there are two forms that must be signed and returned to the school before a student will be able to use a network computer at Straus Middle School or have their work published on the Straus website.

### **GRADE REPORTING THROUGH HOME ACCESS CENTER (HAC)**

Parents are encouraged to monitor their student's progress weekly throughout the year by utilizing NISD's on-line Parent Portal. We also suggest that parents set up alerts in HAC for grade and attendance notifications.

Students will receive two progress reports in the middle of each grading period. The progress reports are designed to inform parents and students of current classroom performance and grades. Teachers may require students to have parents sign and return each progress report sent home to verify receipt. If deemed necessary, teachers may also contact parents by phone for confirmation. This is especially true in cases where grades, progress, and/or conduct are unacceptable. This is especially true if the progress of your child is not acceptable or if the grades or conduct are below average. Report cards will be issued at the end of each grading period through HAC. Report cards provide the student's academic grades, citizenship comments, and other pertinent information. Please contact the counselor's office for assistance with report cards. Parents/guardians are encouraged to first contact the teacher with any questions or concerns regarding their child's education, and if the questions or concerns are not answered or resolved, contact the counselors' office or Academic Dean.

### **LOCKERS**

Lockers should be kept locked; a student should not divulge the combination to another student. Direct all locker problems to the associate principal's office. Sharing lockers is not permitted. Students found sharing lockers will be subject to disciplinary action.

Students should observe the following practices:

Valuable items should be left at home, not kept in a locker.

Do not share lockers - Sharing lockers can lead to the loss of expensive textbooks and personal items.

Do not give your locker combination to anyone.

Locker problems should be reported to the associate principal's secretary.

## **LOST AND FOUND**

IF YOU FIND ANY ARTICLE OF VALUE, PLEASE TURN IT IN TO THE OFFICE IMMEDIATELY.

As the school assumes no responsibility for lost articles, students are encouraged to take every precaution to protect their possessions. Students should not bring expensive or valuable items to school. Students should carefully label each article, such as clothing, books, and supplies for easy identification. If you are in possession of an item that does not belong to you, you will be subject to disciplinary measures. Lost and found items collected and not claimed by the end of each grading period will be donated to charity.

## **NUISANCE ITEMS**

Items that cause a distraction from the school's academic atmosphere are not permitted. The school cannot be held responsible for any of these lost or stolen items. Confiscated items will be returned to the parent only. Students who bring these items to school are subject to disciplinary action.

## **REGISTRATION/WITHDRAWAL FROM SCHOOL**

Registrations – Parents can register students by going to <https://www.nisd.net/schools/registration> and completing the pre-registration process. A counselor will contact parents to schedule an appointment to complete the registration process.

**Withdrawal of Student** - When it is known that a student is going to withdraw, the parents or guardians should notify the Counseling Office at least one day in advance, if possible. All textbooks and library books must be returned. Any fines owed the school need to be paid before records may be released. Textbooks must be returned to the Textbook Administrator. A parent signature will be required for final clearance to be given.

## **TECHNOLOGY ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY**

Please refer to Section E of Northside's Student and Parent Agreement for the Acceptable Use of the District's Electronic Communication System policy.

## **STRAUS BEHAVIOR EXPECTATIONS:**

Straus has a Behavior Support Team that encourages and rewards positive student behavior and clearly defines student expectations. Every area of the campus has a posted matrix with the Straus acronym and student expectations.

## **MAVERICK P.R.I.D.E**

Prepared  
Respectful  
Integrity  
Disciplined  
Excellence

**\*\*Note: As policies and procedures change, administration reserves the right to update the campus handbook**