Preface

The Louisiana School for Math, Science, and the Arts ("LSMSA" or "Louisiana School") and its Board of Directors, administration, faculty, and staff are committed to implementing the legislative mandate of R.S. 17:1961, which specifically states that LSMSA was established "with the express purpose of providing a more challenging educational experience for the gifted and talented children of this state and of developing such children to their full potential." This commitment extends to an institutional belief in the importance of education (both the cognitive domain and the socialization domain) in a democratic society and the responsibility for providing an environment conducive to life-long learning, responsive to the ever-changing needs of daily living.

In keeping with this institutional philosophy as well as the mission of the school, the academic and residential life programs seek to address the multi-faceted needs of students through a variety of course offerings and services, most especially, to develop breadth and depth of subject-matter knowledge and to foster in each student the personal refinement of socialization skills and codification of chosen ethical, philosophical, and moral premises in view of helping to perpetuate the values indigenous to a democratic society. Rather than just being a presenter of information, the faculty and staff at LSMSA seek to be, in part, consummate facilitators, managers of processes, and only one of many sources of information for the students.

To guide students in making wise choices as well as in understanding the academic and residential environment of LSMSA, we ask that this handbook be read carefully. We also ask that the spirit of the handbook be internalized, in addition to the specific contents. Some of its contents will be familiar information; some will be new. Much that is new concerns the demands that go along with living away from home in a residence hall and with taking rigorous classes that meet according to a college-style schedule. With this introduction, we are delighted to welcome you to a community of learners, and we solicit your active participation in all facets of the living and learning environment.

Overview

The Louisiana School for Math, Science, and the Arts is a public, residential high school designed to foster unparalleled opportunities for development in academic pursuits and socialization skills in a total living-learning environment. It is the only state-funded residential school in Louisiana designed specifically for Louisiana's academically and artistically talented students. Students are selected from a statewide pool of applicants based on test scores, courses taken, grades earned, essays, interviews, and auditions. Many of the state's public schools offer challenging programs for the gifted and talented, but LSMSA offers the kind of total-immersion learning experience possible only in a residential setting.

Students at LSMSA exhibit a wide spectrum of abilities and interests. LSMSA provides the kind of broad top-quality curriculum that high performing students need, including an accelerated college preparatory/college-level curriculum. The curriculum is designed to meet the requirements for high school graduation and to intensify preparation for advanced study, offering numerous elective courses. LSMSA's distinguished scholar-teachers and residential life staff offer much more than expertise: they offer energy, enthusiasm and a willingness to work with students both in and out of the classroom - they are mentors, facilitators, and nurturers.

LSMSA, with the approval of its Board of Directors or a committee designated by its Board, may make such changes and modifications in the *Academic and Residential Life Handbook* as necessary within an academic year to address unanticipated needs. In the event that such changes and modifications become necessary, concerned parties will be notified in a timely manner. Such changes shall not be retroactive.

The Living/Learning Environment at
The Louisiana School for Math, Science, and the Arts

Preamble to the School's Mission Statement: LSMSA is a preeminent state-funded residential high school with competitive admissions criteria for high ability students. The Mission of LSMSA necessarily focuses on serving students in ways appropriate to their talents and abilities in the cognitive and socialization areas, empowering these students to meet the high expectations set by themselves, the State, and LSMSA.

Mission Statement

The mission of the Louisiana School is to foster in its young scholars lifelong growth toward reaching individual potential and toward finding places of work and service in a global society through the examination and exchange of ideas in a community of learners.

A Perspective on the Louisiana School Student: An LSMSA student is one who demonstrates outstanding achievement in one or more areas of academic and/or artistic endeavor and the ability, discipline, and self-motivation necessary to perform at a consistent, high level in all areas of the educational and residential environment.

The phrase "all areas of the educational and residential environment" means an LSMSA student must demonstrate not only outstanding achievement in one or more areas of academic and artistic endeavor, but also must demonstrate the ability, discipline, and self-motivation necessary to perform at a consistent, high level in the socialization domain as well throughout the educational milieu, inclusive of the residential environment.

An LSMSA student must continue to demonstrate the ability and discipline necessary to perform at a consistent, high level in all areas of the educational and residential environment. Thus, LSMSA was founded to work with young scholars who are serious about fostering a life-long growth toward reaching individual potentials, and, for these scholars, this means demonstrating the ability and discipline necessary to perform at a consistently high level in both the cognitive and socialization domains.

Socialization at LSMSA means the process by which a student acquires the behavior, attitudes, and values needed to perpetuate our democratic society in a positive manner and seeks to meet the high expectations in this area as set by himself/herself, the state, and the school. Proper socialization requires delaying or inhibiting impulse gratifications, and to abide by the rule of law and the rule of custom. Proper socialization is critical for an LSMSA student to be able to live in LSMSA's close communal environment.

Residential Life: The primary goal of the school's residential life staff is to complement the mission statement. Therefore, the staff attempts to create and maintain a living/learning environment for LSMSA students in the residential facilities that will empower the school's young scholars to meet the high expectations set by themselves, the state, and LSMSA.

The Unique Statutory Mission of LSMSA (*R.S. 17:1961, et seq.)*

The Louisiana Constitution, Article 8, Preamble dealing with education, states: "The goal of the public educational system is to provide learning environments and experiences, at all stages of human development that are humane, just, and designed to promote excellence in order that every individual may be afforded an equal opportunity to develop to his full potential."

Thus, the goal of the public educational system in Louisiana is to provide learning environments and experiences in order that every individual may be afforded an equal opportunity to develop his/her full potential. In other words, the goal is for the public schools to provide positive learning environments and experiences so that every individual student is given an equal opportunity to use that environment and those experiences to develop his/her full potential. The state provides the opportunity; the individual decides to what degree that opportunity will be utilized to help develop his/her full potential.

The statute creating LSMSA, *R.S. 17:1961***,** states: "It is the intent of the legislature to establish an independent, residential school for certain high school students with the express purpose of providing a more challenging educational experience for the gifted and talented children of this state and of developing such children to their full potential." The key phrases of legislative intent that differentiates LSMSA from any and all other public schools in the state are:

". . . **For certain high school students**," implies a **screening** process and thereby indicates that it is a **privilege** and not a **right** for a student to attend LSMSA. Life may afford one a privilege and to accept this privilege, one may lose other rights.

". . . A more challenging educational experience for the gifted and talented children of this state." Thus, LSMSA's mission is to educate **only** that insular and discrete group of high performing children.

"… developing such children to their full potential." Thus, the standard for LSMSA is not the standard of the Louisiana Constitution for public schools in general. The Constitution requires that public school students be **". . . afforded an equal opportunity [for the individual] to develop to his full potential;"** but the statute creating Louisiana School states that the **<u>school</u> is to develop "such children to their full potential."** Therefore, LSMSA, through the Office of the Director of Academic Services, must reserve unto itself the right to determine the academic schedule each student will follow while attending the school.

The "express purpose" of Legislative intent is to hold LSMSA to a different and higher standard than other public schools in the state when educating that insular and discrete group of gifted and talented children the school was founded to serve.

In partial fulfillment of its ethical and fiduciary responsibilities to achieve its unique mission, the Board of Directors has approved this 2011 - 2012 *Academic and Residential Life Handbook* for the Louisiana School for Math, Science, and the Arts. In approving the handbook, the Board has considered the special legislative mandate for LSMSA, the definition of gifted/talented as applied to LSMSA, the school's preamble and mission statement, and, the definition of socialization as defined herein for the insular and discrete group that LSMSA is commissioned to serve.

Special Note:

Given the school's mission, the school continually evaluates students' progress toward students' achieving their full potential by utilizing the strengths of LSMSA's unique living/learning environment. Exemplary and not exclusive examples are: Guided Study, Required Study Hall, Student Evaluation Forms, personal conferences with a student's guidance counselor, teacher, faculty advisor, and residential life staff.

Acceptance into LSMSA is for not more than a one-year academic period. A student must remain in good standing, academically and socially, throughout a given academic year to be invited to return in a subsequent year.

Special Note:

The nature of a violation does not change depending on whether or not the offender is a sophomore**,** junior**,** or senior, does not change because the infraction takes place a few weeks before graduation or just before the end of the academic year, does not change because the home school of the violator cannot offer the same challenging educational program as LSMSA, or because of other similar reasons. The degree to which these and similar reasons are used to try to lessen the enforceability of the rules and regulations is the degree to which they lose their effectiveness. The value of applying the rules equally to all students is to keep them focused on preserving the privilege of being educated at LSMSA and maintaining the integrity of the educational milieu**.**

Special Note:

A student's privilege of attending LSMSA is integrally tied to a student's adherence to the policies, procedures, and standards of the Academic and Residential Life Handbook, as these policies, procedures, and standards are administered by the school.

Because intelligent people can differ on any given issue, the school has in place professionally accepted ways of dealing with differing perceptions regarding how the school interprets a given rule in the Handbook. These professionally accepted ways are to ensure and assure that a rational basis exists for administrative actions and not necessarily to ensure and assure that everyone will agree with the actions taken by the administration.

Although members of LSMSA's extended family have a right to express their opinion concerning any action taken by the school regarding the interpretation of the Handbook, protocol dictates that the exercise of that right must never fall below professionally accepted standards. In other words, the use of obscenities or speaking in a demanding, loud, insulting, and/or demanding manner to members of the school's Board of Directors, administration, faculty/staff and/or members of the student body, is so violative of the mutual respect, civility, and orderly conduct needed to preserve the school's positive living/learning environment that such conduct is never acceptable.

The Louisiana School for Math, Science, and the Arts does not discriminate based on race, color, national origin, disability, gender, religion, or veteran status in its programs, activities, and employment. See General Policies and Procedures regarding non-discrimination policies.