

# **DR. JOE J. BERNAL MIDDLE SCHOOL SECTION A: CAMPUS HANDBOOK 2025-2026**

## **DR. JOE J. BERNAL MIDDLE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION**

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# **WELCOME TO THE KINGDOM OF LEARNING**

Welcome to Dr. Joe J. Bernal Middle School. This Student-Parent Handbook has been prepared for your information and guidance. Keep in mind at all times that you, the student, are the most important aspect of school life at Dr. Joe J. Bernal Middle School. Be proud of your school. Take good care of it. As a Black Knight, you are expected to conduct yourself with dignity, demonstrate courtesy and respect, and strive to do your best.

Dr. Joe J. Bernal Middle School is dedicated to the purpose of expanding minds and building skills that will be useful and required now and in the future. Therefore, it is necessary to have certain rules to ensure each individual has the opportunity to benefit from their educational opportunity. This handbook outlines some of the basic policies around which your school functions. Please use it as a reference to keep informed of the basic guidelines and to allow you to take full advantage of all school offerings.

Please feel free to confer with teachers, counselors, and the administration when you deem it necessary. Active parental involvement is encouraged and welcomed. The cooperation of the school patrons, based upon the knowledge of the school, will result in a more efficient and successful school program.

## **OUR NAMESAKE**

Dr. Joe J. Bernal, born and raised in San Antonio, devoted 35 years to public education. During his time in education, Dr. Bernal served as a teacher, a principal, an assistant superintendent, and an adjunct professor.

As a Texas State Senator, Dr. Bernal authored and passed legislation to provide elementary teachers statewide a 45 minute conference period, created free statewide kindergarten for five-year olds, established the University of Texas at San Antonio, and created a dental and nursing school at the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio. Dr. Bernal was appointed to the "Texas Advisory Committee on Bilingual Education from 1968 – 1973.

After leaving the senate, Dr. Bernal returned to his love of teaching as an adjunct professor in multicultural and bilingual education at the University of Texas at San Antonio, Trinity University, and Our Lady of the Lake.

## **SCHOOL COLORS**

**Vegas Gold and Black**

## **SCHOOL MASCOT**

**Black Knights**

## **Mission**

Bernal Middle School will foster meaningful relationships, while providing a safe and engaging learning experience.

## **Vision**

Bernal Middle School will cultivate successful, lifelong learners in an ever-changing world.

## **The Principal**

The principal is responsible to the superintendent of schools for proper administration of Bernal Middle School. It is his duty to organize, supervise, and administer all of the affairs of the school as they affect students, teachers, and patrons. He will be glad to help you with any of your concerns. Conferences can be scheduled by calling 210-398-1905.

## **The Associate Principal/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-to-day operations of the school and assume the responsibility of the Principal in his 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 210-398-1900 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. The Academic Dean is in charge of all campus testing, both at the district and state level. They handle the day-to-day operations of the school that address academics to include Section 504. The Academic Dean may assume the responsibility of the Principal in his absence. Conferences may be scheduled by calling 210-398-1906.

## **The Counselors**

All students are assigned a guidance counselor. Your counselor will be happy to assist you with problems concerning both school and your personal matters. 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. 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 your child 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 after school events and helps monitor traffic.

The SAFE Hotline number is 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. Formal attire and/or limousine transportation are not appropriate for these events. 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 Bernal Middle School (athletic events may be permitted.)

# ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES

## High School Credit

Students must be in class 90% of the time the class is in session. (Seat Time)

Students cannot have more than 17 absences in a full year course to receive credit.

If a student exceeds the 17 absences in a High School Credited course:

**Whether an absence is Excused or Unexcused does NOT waive the 90% seat time requirement with accordance to "The Minimum Attendance for Class Credit Law" (section 25.092).**

Attendance Recovery (A.R.), students may attend attendance recovery upon scheduling with the teacher of record. A.R. is offered at the discretion of the teacher of record or Academic Dean.

Students must attend A.R. for absences which exceed 17, the allotted amount. Please note: if a student does not complete the attendance recovery in its entirety, credit will be denied regardless of a passing grade for the course.

The student must make arrangements for transportation, (buses will not be available for these circumstances).

To assist in the monitoring of student attendance you may want to check your child's report card at the end of each grading period to view the total amount of absences in their HS Credit Courses. Also, HAC is a valuable online resource to review attendance and grades.

## What To Do When Absent

- **How can I get the absence coded other than Unexcused Absence?**
  - Send a parent or doctor note (or other approved documentation) upon a student returning to campus. Attendance notes can also be emailed to [bernal.attendance@nisd.net](mailto:bernal.attendance@nisd.net).
- **How do I contact the teacher if I believe the incorrect attendance code was used?**
  - You can email the teacher. The typical email format for NISD employees is [firstname.lastname@nisd.net](mailto:firstname.lastname@nisd.net) (John Smith's would be [john.smith@nisd.net](mailto:john.smith@nisd.net)). Contact the teacher to discuss the absence; the teacher has up to 5 days to edit attendance errors. The Attendance Office will not remove a teacher attendance code without the proper paperwork submitted by the teacher.
- **What if I was at a school event, but was marked absent?**
  - Contact the teacher sponsor or coach of the organization you were with on that day. They can verify your attendance and notify the Attendance Office.
- **Why is the school calling parents/guardians and saying that I'm absent when I'm with my organization or team at an event?**
  - Teachers are directed to mark a student absent if the student is not in the classroom. If a student is attending an event (field trip, athletic game, etc), the student will be marked absent by the teacher, which prompts an automatic call-out to the parent. Once the Attendance Office receives documentation of student attendance for the event, student attendance will be updated with a School Business, SB, code. This typically takes 1-2 school days.
- **What if I was marked absent on a testing day?**
  - You will be marked absent by your teacher, but the Attendance Office will update the attendance code to TST once testing

rosters are received (usually 1-2 days)

### **Tardy Policy**

The first bell rings at 8:35 a.m. Tardy bell rings at 8:40 a.m., all students should be in their classes by this time. Reporting to class late without an excused pass: If a student misses instruction due to an unexcused late arrival or early removal from campus, it may be considered a partial day absence and a violation of the compulsory attendance law. Arriving late to school. Continuous tardies After the 3rd tardy in any class, the appropriate disciplinary actions will be taken based on the Student Code of Conduct.

### **Tuancy**

A student absent from one or more classes without a valid excuse, as defined by Texas law; i.e. unexcused absence. An Attendance Warning Notice (AWN) can be issued as soon as a student has 3 unexcused absences in one or more classes (TEC Sec 25.087), within a four week period. Once a warning notice is issued, all absences must be accompanied by a doctor's note or excused by the campus school administrator (TEC Sec 25.086). Pursuant to TEC Sec. 21.0915, school officials will initiate the development of an individualized attendance plan or behavior improvement plan to address student conduct related to truancy or non-attendance. The continued absence of the student without a doctor's written excuse or an absence excused by the campus school administrator may result in a referral to truancy court for the student and/or the parent/guardian (TEC Sec 25.093 & TFC 65.003).

## **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.

Breakfast/Lunch Money - Go to [www.schoolcafe.com](http://www.schoolcafe.com) 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 child's purchases.

## **FOOD AND OTHER DELIVERIES**

We will no longer accept lunch deliveries for students. This includes lunch deliveries from parents and food delivery services. Please ensure your child brings their lunch to school with them, or has plans to eat lunch from our school cafeteria. Please call our front office in case of an emergency and we will make sure your child has access to a meal from the cafeteria.

Deliveries from outside postal companies (USPS, FedEx, UPS, etc.) to students will not be accepted or delivered to the student. We 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. If the item being dropped off by a listed parent/ guardian will cause a distraction to the learning environment, the item(s) will be held in the front office and can be retrieved after school.

## **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. The school bus is an extension of the campus and all behavioral expectations remain the same. Bus misconduct is something we take very seriously, as it may create an unsafe situation for our students. The NISD Transportation Department has protocols in place with an emphasis on student safety. If for whatever reason, a bus driver deems a situation unsafe, their protocol is to pull the bus over and assess the situation. If necessary, the bus driver will contact their supervisor for further guidance. While this is happening, the driver will not let students off the bus. Students are only allowed to get off the bus at their designated bus stop. It is important to remember that failure to comply with behavioral expectations on the school bus may result in bus privileges being suspended. Students may be assigned a specific seat on their bus. Only a family emergency would warrant assignment to a different bus. (Staying overnight with a friend is not an emergency.) 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 APO for administrative approval. This approval must be obtained prior to the end of the school day (these will not be approved after school in the bus loop). Students will be given a note from the Associate Principal's office that needs to be given to the bus driver. Please note that if there are not enough seats to accommodate an additional student, the student will be asked to ride their original bus assigned to them. The number of students assigned to buses and the systemized route is 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 Dr. Joe J. Bernal Middle School students at **8:40 a.m.** and end each afternoon at **3:55 p.m.** each day, Monday through Friday.
- The doors will be opened to all students at 7:30 a.m. Students who arrive at school before 8:40 a.m. are allowed to eat breakfast (if they choose) and/or report to the grade level designated areas.
  - Front Office Hours are from 7:45 AM - 4:30 PM.
- All doors will be locked, to include the front doors. Please utilize the doorbell located in front and a staff member will be with you.
  - Students will not be allowed to be checked out after 3:45 PM due to dismissal procedures.

## CAMPUS VISITORS

All parents and visitors are required to sign-in at the Front Office and must indicate the reason for visiting the campus, with staff, regardless of how long they plan to stay on campus. They are also required to sign-out prior to leaving the campus. Upon sign-in, all Parents and Visitors should receive a Visitor's Pass, and must wear this pass where it can be visible to staff. These precautions are taken to ensure a safe environment for our students and staff. All volunteers and mentors are also 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. Please call the front office prior to volunteering to ensure the background check has cleared.

## DRESS FOR SUCCESS

The district's dress code is enforced (Section D); therefore, students will be expected to follow the guidelines set forth by the district. Dress code standards are extended to extra-curricular activities held on the campus. In an effort to promote a safe and positive school environment that 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 will 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 Bernal Middle School. 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.**

## VAPING/E-CIG

The Texas Legislature recently enacted HB 114 requiring all school districts to implement mandatory disciplinary alternative education program (DAEP) placement for students found in possession of, using, selling, giving, or delivering e-cigarettes or vaping devices on school grounds or at a school-related event.

This alternative school placement, required by law, is made regardless of whether the substance being vaped is nicotine or a controlled substance.

## NISD TECHNOLOGY / PERSONAL COMMUNICATION DEVICE POLICY

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. At the beginning of each school year there are two forms that must be signed and returned to the school before your child will be able to use a networked or school issued device inside the classroom at Bernal Middle School or have their work published on the Bernal website.

To function effectively in this environment, students must assume personal responsibility to behave ethically, even when technology provides them the freedom to do otherwise. The use of the Northside network and the Internet is a privilege, not a right, which may be revoked at any time for inappropriate behavior. Users assume responsibility for understanding the Acceptable Use Policy and guidelines as a condition of using the Northside network and the Internet. Use of the Northside network or the Internet that is inconsistent with this policy may result in loss of access as well as other disciplinary or legal action.

In compliance with state law, the use of personal communication devices by students is not allowed at any NISD campus during the school day, from the first official bell to the last official bell. Usage of these items will also not be allowed during passing periods or lunch periods. Personal communication devices include cell phones, smart watches, earbuds, tablets, or any other similar items. Devices of this nature should be powered off and placed into student backpacks and kept in a designated location in each classroom. Students without a backpack will be required to place their device(s) into an identified storage container in the classroom. Students in violation of this State law and district policy will be subject to progressive disciplinary consequences, to include possible confiscation of the device. Confiscated items will be released to the student's parent/guardian. Cell phones and other personal technology will only be allowed before school and after school.

# GRADE REPORTING THROUGH HOME ACCESS CENTER (HAC)

Parents are encouraged to regularly monitor their student's progress throughout the year by utilizing NISD's on-line Parent Portal. Students will receive a progress report the third and sixth week of the marking period. The progress reports are designed to inform parents and students of current classroom performance and grades. If you do not receive a progress report, please contact the counselor's office for assistance. (210-398-1932)

Report cards will be issued at the end of each marking period. They provide the student's academic grades and other pertinent information. We encourage you to make sure that you receive a report card every marking period. If a parent does not receive their child's report card, please contact the counselor's office for assistance. If a parent/guardian has any questions or concerns regarding their child's education, please start by contacting the teacher, then if the question or concern is not answered/solved, then contact the counselors' office and/or administration.

## PE / DANCE / ATHLETICS LOCKERS

Lockers will be issued individually. Lockers should be kept locked; a student should not divulge the combination to another student. Direct all locker problems to the coach or teacher. Sharing lockers is not permitted. Students found sharing lockers will be subject to disciplinary action.

Students should observe the following practices:

1. Valuable items should be left at home, not kept in a locker.
2. Do not share lockers - Sharing lockers can lead to the loss of school and personal items.
3. Do not give your locker combination to anyone.
4. Locker problems should be reported to the PE/Athletic Coaches or Dance Director.
5. Lockers should be locked at all times.

## LOST AND FOUND

IF YOU FIND ANY ARTICLE OF VALUE, PLEASE TURN IT IN TO THE FRONT OFFICE/APO 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 marking period will be donated.

## 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. These items include but are not limited to: AirPods, Headphones, Handheld Video Game Consoles, etc. Confiscated items will be returned to the parent only. Irresponsible usage of these items may result in disciplinary action for the student. Again, the campus is not responsible for any lost or stolen items.

## REGISTRATION / WITHDRAWAL FROM SCHOOL

Registrations - To register your student, please go to <https://www.nisd.net/schools/registration> and complete the pre-registration. A counselor will contact you and 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, library books, and any fines owed to the school need to be paid before records may be released. Technology devices should be returned to the Technology Support Specialist. NO records will be released until all obligations (textbooks, fines, release forms, etc.) have been fulfilled. A parent signature will be required for final clearance to be given.

## TECHNOLOGY ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY

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

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

