

Live Oak 101: New Family Orientation

Module 5: Student Culture



GreatHearts[®]
Live Oak

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Athenian Owls: Our Mascot

The mascot of Great Hearts Live Oak is the venerable Athenian Owl. The cradle of western civilization and the birthplace of democracy, drama, and philosophy, Athens was home to a remarkable people during its Golden Age. In their works and actions our community will find inspiring examples of human intellect, action, and artistry. Our students will encounter in their art classes the ideals of Athenian sculpture and architecture, and their imaginations will be nourished by those same Greek myths which the ancient Athenians knew from childhood. They will learn about the doers and deeds of Ancient Greek history, events which have inspired and guided men and women for thousands of years. In time, our future high school students will be ready to encounter some of the greatest minds to have ever written: the philosophers *Socrates*, *Plato*, and *Aristotle*, the historians *Herodotus* and *Thucydides*, and the tragedians *Sophocles* and *Aeschylus*.

Goddess of wisdom and civilization, Athena zealously guarded the ancient city of Athens. Enchanted by its wise eyes, the beautiful bright-eyed, grey-eyed goddess chose the owl as her sacred animal. With its ability to see with extraordinary precision even in the darkest hours of night, the owl is a fitting symbol of wisdom.



Athenian Owls: Ephebic Oath

The high standards of citizenship in Ancient Athenian democracy serve as a fitting example for our own Academy. Consider the Ephebic Oath, sworn by the males of Classical Athens on the cusp of adulthood:

We will never bring disgrace on this our City by an act of dishonesty or cowardice. We will fight for the ideals and Sacred Things of the City both alone and with many. We will revere and obey the City's laws, and will do our best to incite a like reverence and respect in those above us who are prone to annul them or set them at naught. We will strive unceasingly to quicken the public's sense of civic duty. Thus, in all these ways, we will transmit this City not only, not less, but greater and more beautiful than it was transmitted to us.

May we, the citizens of Great Hearts Live Oak, similarly carry this oath in our hearts. May we all commit to transmit this Academy greater and more beautiful than it was transmitted to us. And may wisdom ever be our guide. Go Owls!



Philosophical Pillars

- Liberal education consists of cognitive, emotional and moral education—thinking deeply, loving noble things and living well together. We believe, with Plato, that the highest goal of education is to become good, intellectually and morally.
- The greatest number of our students benefit when the intellectual and moral bar is set high in the classroom. Lowering expectations is an act of misguided sympathy, not of love and mercy.
- Great Hearts academies do not deploy a “character curriculum.” Students are formed by the culture of the school, implied and explicit, and each student’s choices to lead within it.
- Teachers lead students through intelligence, charisma, humor, integrity and example—in short, through love and friendship, as modeled by Socrates.



Academic Expectations

As a key philosophical assumption, the Academy holds that every student can learn. Our curriculum is rigorous and expectations of students are high; however, we are not an exclusive school for the best and the brightest. Our goal is to provide an environment that allows every student who wants to learn the opportunity to achieve academically. As human beings, we are equal in that we all have the capacity to learn and grow. But this equality in capacity cannot be confused with equality of academic results. Just as individuals differ in their physical gifts and characteristics, we all have different gifts and challenges in the subjects of learning. A student's desire to learn is the key to success and fulfillment at the Academy. Every student who has passed the appropriate prerequisites, is genuinely curious, and applies him or herself diligently on a daily basis will succeed.

Academic Expectations: The Honor Code

The objective of the Great Hearts Live Oak Honor Code is to build trust among students and to maintain an academic community in which a code of values is shared.

- *I will not lie, cheat, or steal in any of my academic endeavors.*
- *I will forthrightly oppose each and every instance of academic dishonesty.*
- *I will not request, receive, or give aid in examinations/tests/quizzes.*
- *I will not give or receive unpermitted aid in class work, homework, in the preparation of reports, or in any other work that is to be used by the teacher as the basis of grading. I will understand the difference between studying and reviewing with others (which often is acceptable) and producing written documents that are submitted under my name for credit (which can only be done alone).*



Academic Expectations: The Honor Code, continued

- *I will not copy from or collaborate with others in completing homework. When I put my name on a homework assignment, I attest that all of the work on the assignment is my own in origin and content. In addition, I will not misrepresent work done in class on the due date as having been done before the beginning of the school day.*
- *In the case of all essays and research papers, I will carefully cite all external sources. I will not represent someone else's work as my own. I will do my very best to learn from my teachers the clear distinctions between appropriate research and plagiarism, intentional or unintentional.*
- *I will never use any "study aids" such as Cliff's Notes, Sparks Notes, or other materials, nor will I watch a movie/video version of a work of literature before or during study of it in school. I will do the reading for myself and strive to understand it for myself.*
- *I will never attempt to pass off work completed in class as if it had been completed the night before as homework.*



Moral Formation

We believe that habits of behavior play a significant part in forming habits of mind. Our approach to moral formation is grounded in the wisdom of the Ancients. Both Plato and Aristotle believed that our happiness depends largely on our capacity for forming meaningful human partnerships. The school and classroom are important opportunities to grow as friends and citizens.

Aristotle believed that virtue is cultivated through habituation: “We become just by doing things that are just, temperate by doing things that are temperate, and courageous by doing things that are courageous.” The school structures and procedures properly create a joyful, ordered, and safe environment in which students may encounter daily examples of virtue and become habituated to its exercise. Although the formation of virtue begins with habituation, the goal is to create the conditions in which students know and choose to do what is good for themselves and others.

It does not take long for our students to recognize the benefits of mutual encouragement, respect, courtesy, and helpfulness. As many students and parents will gratefully attest, the Academy is a very good place to be.



Building Goodness by Building Character



Moral Formation: Our Nine Core Virtues

At Great Hearts Live Oak, we strive to promote each student's development in character and the virtues, and to foster the common good of the school community.

- **Responsibility: Own your actions.** *We accept obligations related to our own good and the good of others, and we act on those obligations in a timely and satisfactory manner.*
- **Perseverance: Never give up.** *We maintain a steadfast purpose in our work despite difficulty, obstacles, or discouragement. We respond creatively to overcome obstacles and ask for help when necessary.*
- **Integrity: Walk a straight and steady path.** *We are individuals of strong ethical values, who make consistently good choices in keeping with our knowledge of right and wrong. We seek the wisdom of others in cases of moral uncertainty.*
- **Honesty: Always speak the truth.** *We seek to have the quality of being truthful, sincere, and upright. We never knowingly induce another to believe what is false.*

Moral Formation: Our Nine Core Virtues, continued

- **Courage: Overcome adversity with heart.** *We always do what we know to be right despite fear, hardship, and opposition. We resist negative peer pressure, defend our rights and the rights of others, and encourage others to do the same.*
- **Citizenship: Live to serve.** *We value our membership in a larger society, and show our fidelity by honoring its rules and culture. We give of our time and abilities to others. We uphold liberty and social equality through respect for individual differences and knowledge of our democratic system.*
- **Humility: See the good in others.** *We are not proud or arrogant, but have a modest sense of our own importance. We always strive to do our best whether we are recognized or not.*
- **Friendship: Be the best for others.** *We regard others and ourselves as deserving of kind and just treatment. Our attitudes toward others and their property reflect the way we wish to be treated.*
- **Wisdom: Know, then act.** *We understand that justice requires action in accordance with what is true and right. We learn from our mistakes and think before we act.*



Moral Formation: Our Five Commitments

At Great Hearts Live Oak, students, faculty, and staff commit to the actions that promote an environment wherein our students can learn and grow in their pursuit of Truth, Goodness, and Beauty.

- *We will be respectful.*
- *We will be prepared.*
- *We will be attentive.*
- *We will follow directions.*
- *We will strive for excellence.*



Moral Formation: The Role of the Teacher

As a skilled guide on the student's journey to virtuous living, the classroom teacher is the primary agent of moral formation within the school setting. Teachers build on a foundation of trust, respect, and love as they shape an ordered and joyful environment that leads their young charges first to *perform* virtuous actions, and eventually to *know* and to *choose* virtuous action. By helping their students recognize and negotiate between the needs of the self and the needs of others, teachers help their students to become friends and citizens.



Academy Discipline

Our students are young and human, and they will make mistakes in speech or behavior. When a student's behavior falls short of the classroom or Academy expectations, they should expect to receive a simple and straightforward correction. Most students will respond quickly and positively to correction, and no further action will be needed. However, when a behavior is not immediately corrected, additional discipline may be required.

Disciplinary action will draw on the professional judgment of teachers and administrators and on a range of disciplinary techniques. Disciplinary action correlates to the seriousness of the offense, the student's age and grade level, the frequency of misbehavior, the student's attitude, and the effect of the misconduct on the school environment. The Academy's guiding policy is to be fair, firm, and consistent in the application of discipline; however, the Academy reserves the right to exercise reasonable judgment as an individual circumstance might dictate.

Academy Discipline: Behavioral Zones

Below is a chart that students can expect to see in every classroom in order to help them identify how they are responding to the instruction and requests of the Academy's faculty and staff.

ZONE 1: READY TO LEARN
Ready to learn without prompting
Immediately responds to directions
Immediately responds to redirection
ZONE 2: OFF-TASK
Requires 2-3 redirections
Requires recovery time
Requires support outside of the classroom

Academy Discipline: Behavioral Zones, continued

Green Zones: All students will start the day in the green Ready to Learn zone, and most students will stay there throughout the day.

Yellow and Blue Zones: All students experience difficult days, and most will experience a few days where they struggle to respond to directions. Students whose behavior *regularly* falls into the yellow and blue zones can expect communication between the family and Academy staff. There may also be additional interventions such as behavioral agreements, seat changes, community service duties, loss of privileges, and the like.

Purple Zone: Any student who falls into the purple zone can expect that the family will be contacted and that additional consequences will be meted out, such as loss of privileges, suspension, and expulsion. Students whose behavior repeatedly falls into the purple zone can expect close partnership between the family and the Academy.

Why I Love My Teacher



Academy Discipline: Maintaining a Safe and Humane Environment

Great Hearts Live Oak is committed to maintaining a safe and humane environment for its students, faculty, and staff. While our focus is on the prevention of violence, bullying, and other threats to the health and safety of our community, the Academy is supported by strong reporting and response structures in partnership with our regional and national Great Hearts leadership and local law enforcement and emergency response teams.

Out of love and respect for one another, members of the Academy not only have a duty to refrain from harmful and dangerous behaviors, but also bear the responsibility of immediately reporting dangerous activity and conditions to the administration. Should a situation arise that compromises the safety of any member of our community, the Academy administration will carefully coordinate with our partners and thoughtfully and transparently communicate with our community.

Celebrations

We delight in our intellectual and artistic pursuits, and we see celebrations of those things we have in common as an essential way of participating in a life well-lived. Celebrations, then, are not a distraction from our work; rather, they are the culmination of our rigorous pursuit of truth, beauty, and goodness.

Each grade level plans special celebrations centered around their curriculum, such as a second grade Egyptian Museum Day. Special content areas may also have events, such as Roman hair day for Latin scholars.

At important moments, the entire Academy may celebrate together, such as when faculty and students alike don costumes for Literary and Historical Figures Day. Concerts and plays provide special opportunities for the community to celebrate art and music, and field days such as the Greek Olympiad provide opportunities for exuberant play and camaraderie.

Celebrations: What the Future Holds



Questions?

Thank you for taking the time to learn more about Great Hearts Live Oak! While we have endeavored to provide meaningful information about our **student culture**, we recognize that there may be unanswered questions. If there is something you would like us to address, please submit your question through this [survey link](#). Go Owls!

In partnership,

The Great Hearts Live Oak Launch Team

