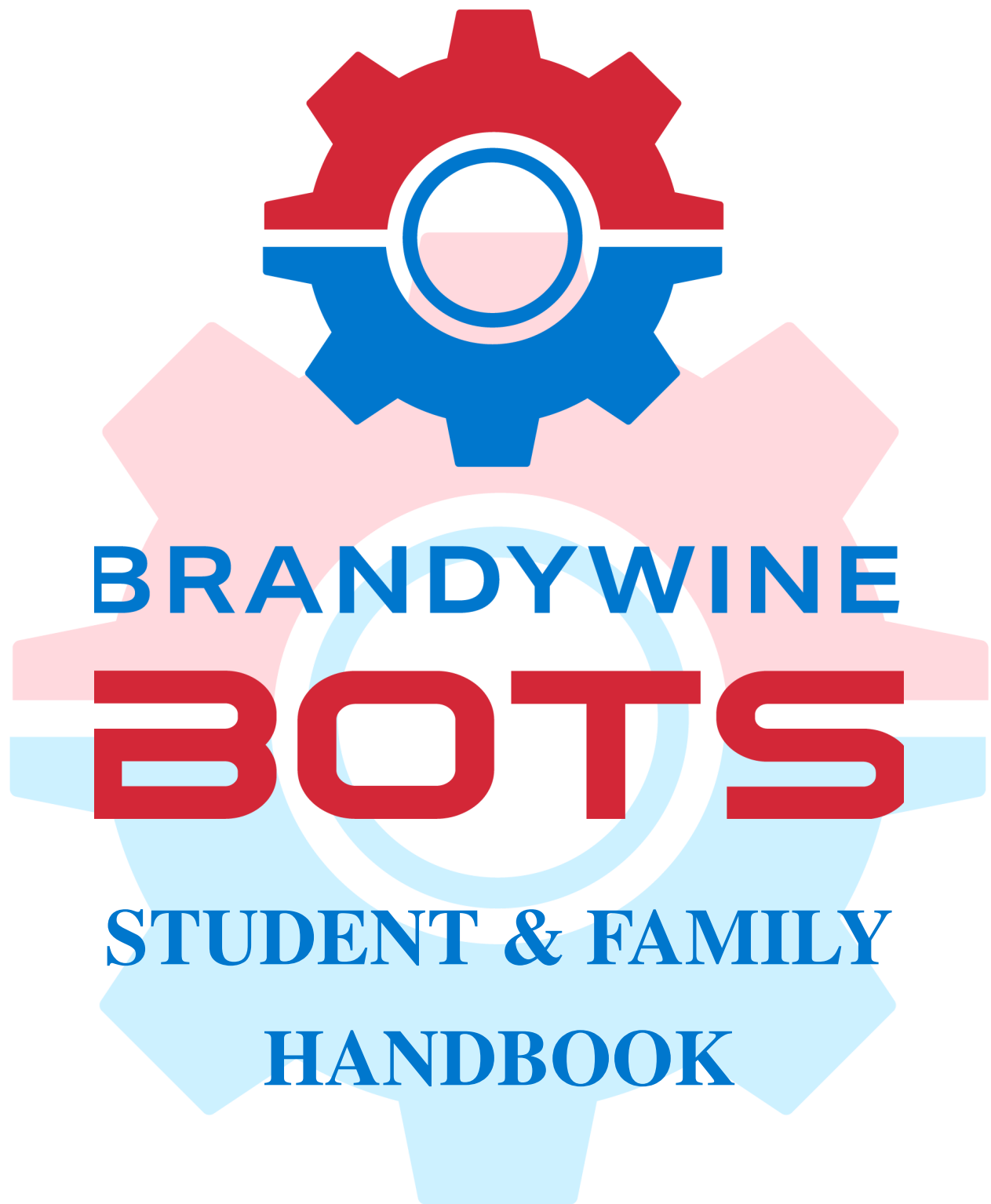




2026-2027 Season

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Welcome to BrandywineBOTS!

We're excited to welcome you to a new season of BrandywineBOTS and to the growing community of students, families, and volunteers who make this program possible.

Founded in 2020, BrandywineBOTS was built with a simple but powerful goal: to give students access to meaningful, hands-on STEM experiences that build confidence, problem-solving skills, and teamwork through competitive robotics. What began as a small group of families has grown into one of the largest VEX Robotics programs in the country, offering multiple pathways for students to learn, compete, and grow.

BrandywineBOTS is intentionally student-centered and community-driven. Our students do the work. Our volunteers guide and support. And our families play a critical role in making the program successful. Together, we create an environment where students are challenged, supported, and encouraged to believe in themselves — both on and off the competition field.

This handbook outlines the expectations, policies, and responsibilities that apply to all students and families participating in BrandywineBOTS. Families are expected to review it together before the season begins. A shared understanding of these expectations helps ensure a safe, positive, and rewarding experience for everyone involved. Participation in BrandywineBOTS indicates agreement with the expectations outlined here.

We're looking forward to another great season of learning, teamwork, and innovation.

Looking forward to a successful season -



Jason Heller

Founder/Executive Director

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BrandywineBOTS Board of Directors

Jason Heller, *President*

Joan Bartelt, PhD, *Vice President*

Jared Schultheis, *Secretary*

Chris Smith, CPA, *Treasurer*

Orlando Asuncion, *Board Member*

Marco Ciccone, *Board Member*

Elaine McDonald, *Board Member*

Christina Pross, Esq., *Board Member*

Board Members Emeritus

J. Heather Handler, EdD

Chris Lake

BrandywineBOTS Mission

To empower every student, regardless of background or circumstance, to unlock their full potential through STEM and robotics.

BrandywineBOTS Vision

Every student has the opportunity to:

**Believe,
Overcome,
Transform, and
Succeed.**

Nondiscrimination Policy

BrandywineBOTS is committed to equal membership, employment and volunteer opportunity without regard to age, ancestry, disability, national or ethnic origin, race, religious belief, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, veteran status, or political service or affiliation.

BrandywineBOTS Code of Conduct

BrandywineBOTS is committed to providing a safe, respectful, and student-centered environment for everyone involved in our program. This Code of Conduct applies to all participants, including students, parents, guardians, mentors, volunteers, and spectators, at all BrandywineBOTS meetings, events, competitions, and activities.

Expected Behavior: All individuals affiliated with BrandywineBOTS are expected to:

- Prioritize safety at all times.
- Act with integrity, honesty, and reliability.
- Treat teammates, opponents, mentors, volunteers, event staff and guests with respect and professionalism.
- Handle disagreements, stress and competition outcomes maturely and respectfully.
- Respect and embrace individual differences.
- Follow all BrandywineBOTS policies and expectations
- Comply with all VEX/REC Foundation rules, including the Student-Centered Policy
- Demonstrate good sportsmanship, regardless of competition outcomes

BrandywineBOTS is a student-centered program. Adults are expected to guide and support students; and should not direct strategy, design or build robots, or interfere with competition play or officiating.

Applicability Beyond Events: Behavior outside of official BrandywineBOTS activities may be subject to review is it:

- Involved program participants, or
- Negatively impacts the reputation, safety or functioning of BrandywineBOTS

Responsibility to Know the Rules: All participants are responsible for understanding and complying with:

- All policies and procedures outlined in this *BrandywineBOTS Handbook*.
- Official RECF/VEX documentation, including the Code of Conduct, Student-Centered Policy, Participation Release Form, Team Guides, Game Manuals, Appendices, Awards Criteria, and event-specific guides.

Violations of this Code of Conduct or related policies may result in disciplinary action, up to and including removal from BrandywineBOTS. Tuition and fees are non-refundable in cases of dismissal related to conduct violations.

Tuition, Volunteering & Family Obligations

BrandywineBOTS is a volunteer-run organization. The success and sustainability of the program depends on a shared commitment from students, families, and volunteers.

Tuition: Each student is required to pay annual tuition, either in full or through approved installment plans selected during registration.

Tuition covers:

- BrandywineBOTS competition uniform shirt
- RECF team registration fees
- Annual parts, fields, kits and basic tools
- Sample game/scoring elements (when available)
- Competition entry fees for:
 - Two BrandywineBOTS-hosted events
 - Two outside qualifying events
 - Regional Championship (if qualified)
- Facility use, insurance, training, maintenance and operating expenses

Tuition does not cover:

- Optional BrandywineBOTS gear (hats, hoodies, etc.)
- Advanced or specialty tools
- Registration, travel, lodging or meals for:
 - Signature events, US Open, TSA events
 - VEX Robotics World Championship (if qualified)

If funding allows, BrandywineBOTS may allocate funds to partially offset VEX Worlds registration fees only. Travel and lodging are never included.

Adult Sponsor & Mentor Requirement: Each student must have an active adult sponsor, typically a parent or guardian.

- Each team must have at least two registered, trained adult mentors
- At least one approved mentor must be present at all meetings, events and competitions
- All mentors must complete required training and background checks annually
- An adult sponsor may support more than one student; volunteer expectations increase proportionally for each additional student sponsored

Family Volunteer Requirements: Families are required to volunteer at least one full day at a BrandywineBOTS-hosted tournament PLUS contribute a minimum of 10 volunteer service hours per student per season in support of BrandywineBOTS organizational needs.

Important clarifications:

- Service hours must benefit the broader organization
- Hours spent exclusively supporting your own student or team (including service as a team mentor) do not count towards the service hour requirement
- Additional service hours may be required or requested based on program needs

Eligibility for Championship Events: Students may be deemed ineligible to participate in championship events, including Regional/State Championships and the VEX Robotics World Championship, if any of the following remain incomplete by the final qualifying event:

- Outstanding tuition payments
- Incomplete volunteer service hours
- Other program obligations

This applies even if the team qualified for the championship competitively.

Financial Hardship: BrandywineBOTS is committed to access and inclusion. In cases of genuine financial hardship, scholarships may be provided to adjust or waive tuition. In addition, volunteer, or fundraising requirements may be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

Families are encouraged to contact program leadership confidentially if support is needed.

Competition Expectations & Behavior

BrandywineBOTS students and families represent not only themselves, but their teams, program leadership, and the BrandywineBOTS organization at all competitions and events. All participants are expected to demonstrate respectful, professional, and sportsmanlike behavior at all times.

These expectations apply to students, parents, guardians, mentors, volunteers, and spectators at BrandywineBOTS-hosted events and outside competitions.

Behavior & Representation:

- All participants must adhere to the BrandywineBOTS Code of Conduct at competitions.
- Disrespectful, aggressive, or unsportsmanlike behavior toward students, parents, mentors, event staff, referees, judges, or volunteers is not permitted.
- Students and adults are expected to model positive behavior, regardless of match outcomes, rankings, or awards.

Student-Centered Competition Philosophy: BrandywineBOTS follows the REC Foundation Student-Centered Policy

- Students are responsible for robot design,, coding, operation, strategy decisions, and interaction with referees and judges.
- Adults must not direct match play, argue rulings, or interfere with competition operations.
- Only student drive team members may appropriately question scores or rulings, in accordance with official competition procedures.

Adult violations of the Student-Centered Policy are taken seriously and may result in consequences for both the individual and the team.

Uniform Requirements:

- Students must wear the official BrandywineBOTS competition uniform shirt at all competitions and designated events.
- BrandywineBOTS apparel (hoodies, jackets, etc.) may be worn; however, the official competition shirt must be the outermost layer in driver areas.
- Team-specific uniforms or apparel must receive prior approval from program leadership and must prominently display the official BrandywineBOTS logo.

Tournament Arrival & Participation:

- Teams are expected to arrive on time, allowing sufficient time for check-in, pit setup, robot inspection, and the driver/event meeting.
- Attendance at scheduled competitions is mandatory. Teams that fail to attend a registered event will be required to reimburse BrandywineBOTS for lost registration fees.

Interaction with Officials:

- Students and adults must never argue with referees, judges, scorekeepers, or event staff.
- Concerns regarding scoring or rulings must be handled respectfully - and only by student drive team members, following official event procedures.
- Adults who confront, challenge, or interfere with officials may be subject to disciplinary action, including ejection from the current event and a ban on attendance at future events

Supporting Other Teams:

- BrandywineBOTS teams are expected to support one another throughout competitions.
- Teams eliminated from a competition are expected to remain at the event to encourage and support BrandywineBOTS teams still competing

Post-Event Responsibilities:

- At BrandywineBOTS-hosted events, students are required to remain at the event to assist with event teardown and cleanup until dismissed by program leadership
- Events are not considered complete until all teardown and cleanup responsibilities are finished

Competition Expectations & Behavior Violations:

Failure to comply with competition expectations or behavior standards may result in consequences, including loss of competition privileges or removal from the program, as outlined in the Code of Conduct and handbook policies

Safety & Supervision Expectations

The safety of our students, families, volunteers, and guests is a top priority at BrandywineBOTS. All participants are expected to follow these safety and supervision requirements at all meetings, events, competitions, and program activities.

General Safety Requirements:

- Closed-toe shoes are required at all times.
- Safety glasses must be worn when cutting, drilling, grinding, filing, or during competition matches.
- Fabrication activities (cutting, drilling, grinding, etc.) may only occur in designated work areas.
- Unsafe behavior such as running, horseplay, roughhousing, or throwing objects is strictly prohibited.

Tool Use & Supervision: Tool use is permitted only under appropriate supervision and in accordance with student age and training.

- Elementary students may not operate power tools.
- Middle school students may operate power tools only with explicit permission and direct supervision from an approved mentor.
- High school students may operate power tools only after receiving approval from program leadership or under direct supervision from an approved mentor.
- All students must complete required tool safety instruction before using tools.

Program leadership reserves the right to restrict tool access at any time for safety reasons.

Adult Supervision Requirements: BrandywineBOTS is not a babysitting or childcare service.

- Each team must have at least one trained, approved adult mentor present at all meetings, events, and competitions.
- Only adults who have completed required background checks and mentor training may fulfill this role.
- Adults who do not meet these requirements may not supervise students or teams.

Attendance & Pick Up:

- Parents and guardians are responsible for ensuring students arrive on time and are picked up promptly at the conclusion of meetings and events.
- Team mentors may not leave a location until all students have been picked up.
- Elementary and middle school students may not leave without a parent or authorized adult. Curbside pickup is not permitted.
- Students who are able to drive may not transport other students without written permission from both families and program leadership.

At-Home Robot Work:

- Teams must receive approval from the Program Director before working on robots outside of scheduled BrandywineBOTS sessions.
- At-home work is typically approved only after a team has demonstrated sufficient progress during regular build sessions.
- Additional student-centered training may be required prior to approval.

Unauthorized at-home work may result in loss of competition privileges.

Safety & Supervision Violations: Failure to comply with safety or supervision requirements may result in:

- Temporary or permanent loss of tool privileges
- Removal from specific activities or events
- Additional disciplinary action, as outlined in the Code of Conduct

Program Structure & Attendance Expectations

Participation in BrandywineBOTS requires a meaningful commitment of time, effort, and teamwork. Students and families are expected to understand and plan for the time and attendance requirements associated with competitive robotics.

Program Structure:

- Students participate as members of an engineering build team, typically consisting of 3–5 students.
- Each student may only be a member of one build team per season.
- Teams may be formed in a variety of ways, including by student request or with assistance from program leadership.
- Each team must designate:
 - A student team captain, and
 - A primary adult mentor (with a suggested backup mentor)

Captains and mentors are generally selected at the beginning of the season and serve for the duration of the season unless changed by team consensus or program leadership.

Meeting Schedule:

- Teams typically meet for a minimum of two hours per week during the build season.
- Additional meetings, practice sessions, or extended build time may be required as competitions approach.
- The official BrandywineBOTS schedule is maintained in BAND and is the only authoritative source for meeting times, events, and updates.

Families are responsible for monitoring the official schedule and planning accordingly.

Attendance Expectations:

- Regular attendance is expected. Robotics is a collaborative activity, and absences impact the entire team.
- Planned absences should be communicated to team mentors in advance whenever possible.
- Students who repeatedly miss meetings or fail to participate may be subject to reduced competition privileges.

Competition Attendance: Teams are expected to attend all competitions for which they are registered. Competitions often:

- Begin early in the morning
- Last 6-8 hours (or more)
- Require some travel

Failure to attend a registered competition will require reimbursement of registration fees

V5 Program-Specific Expectations: Students participating in the VEX V5 program should expect a higher level of commitment.

- Students are expected to conduct research, watch game analysis videos, and contribute to strategy development outside of scheduled meetings.
- Additional build and practice time should be anticipated throughout the season.
- Teams typically participate in at least one competition per month from November through April.
- Design, build, and documentation deadlines established by program leadership are required to be met.

If a team qualifies for the VEX Robotics World Championship, participation is strongly encouraged and expected when feasible.

Team Commitment Alignment: All team members are expected to be aligned on their level of commitment. Teams function best when expectations regarding effort, attendance, and goals are shared and understood by all participants.

Participation Concerns: Program leadership reserves the right to address attendance or participation concerns if a student's level of involvement significantly impacts team function, safety, or fairness.

Communication & Official Channels

Clear, consistent communication is essential for a program of this size. Families and students are expected to regularly review official BrandywineBOTS communications and use the appropriate channels when questions arise.

Primary Communication Platform: The BAND App is the official and primary communication platform for BrandywineBOTS.

- All official schedules, meeting times, competition information, and updates are posted in the BAND App
- Both students and parents/guardians are expected to be members of the appropriate BAND groups.
- Program leadership and mentors will communicate with students only through BAND, with parents/guardians included.
- Students may not communicate directly with adult leaders through private text messages, social media, or personal email.

Families are responsible for monitoring BAND regularly. Missed information due to failure to check BAND is not an acceptable excuse for missed meetings or deadlines.

Email Communication: Email is used primarily for parent/guardian communication, including program-wide updates and administrative matters.

- Families are responsible for ensuring their contact information is accurate and up to date.
- General questions should be directed to info@brandywinebots.org, or to the appropriate program leader when applicable.

Communication Expectations:

- Families are expected to read all communications sent by BrandywineBOTS leadership.
- Many questions that arise during the season are already answered in prior communications or this handbook.
- Communication with program leadership should be respectful, appropriate, and aligned with the BrandywineBOTS Code of Conduct.

Code of Conduct / Policy Violation Consequences

BrandywineBOTS takes conduct, safety, and program expectations seriously. Violations of the Code of Conduct or any section of this handbook may result in disciplinary action.

Consequences are determined based on the nature, severity, and frequency of the violation, as well as the impact on students, teams, volunteers, and the organization. In most cases, BrandywineBOTS will follow a progressive approach:

1. Conversation / Warning:

- a. Minor or first-time violations typically result in a conversation with the student and/or adult involved.
- b. Parents or guardians may be included as appropriate.

2. Loss of Privileges:

- a. Repeated, or more serious violations - as well as failure to meet program obligations - may result in loss of privileges, including removal from specific activities, suspension from competitions, and/or restrictions placed on individual students or entire teams.

3. Dismissal From The Program:

- a. Any student or adult may be dismissed from BrandywineBOTS for conduct that is inconsistent with the program's mission, expectations, or safety standards

Examples of Egregious Violations: The following behaviors may result in immediate dismissal without prior warning:

- Tampering with or intentionally damaging another team's robot, equipment, or property
- Abusive/threatening/hostile conduct toward students, referees, judges, volunteers, or staff
- Adult confrontation of referees, judges, or event officials
- Serious violations of youth protection or student-centered expectations

Board Review & Reinstatement:

- Suspensions or involuntary dismissal requires approval by a two-thirds ($\frac{2}{3}$) vote of the Board of Directors.
- Tuition and fees are non-refundable for dismissals related to conduct violations.
- Dismissed individuals are generally ineligible for reinstatement until sitting out one full season.
- Reinstatement, when considered, requires a separate two-thirds ($\frac{2}{3}$) Board vote.
- BrandywineBOTS shall report dismissals to VEX Robotics and the REC Foundation when required or appropriate.

Appeal of Disciplinary Action:

A student, parent, family or team subject to suspension or dismissal from BrandywineBOTS may request an appeal of the Board's decision.

- 1. Request for Appeal:** A written request for appeal must be submitted to the Executive Director within seven (7) calendar days of delivery of the disciplinary decision. Failure to submit a written request within this timeframe constitutes a waiver of the right to appeal.
- 2. Status During Appeal:** All sanctions, suspensions, or restrictions remain fully in effect during the appeal process unless otherwise authorized by the Board.
- 3. Appeal Hearing:** The appeal hearing will be scheduled at the discretion of the Board and may be conducted in person or virtually.
 - a.** The appealing party will be provided a reasonable opportunity to:
 - i.** Present their version of events
 - ii.** Submit relevant evidence or exhibits
 - iii.** Present witnesses, if applicable
 - b.** Members of the Board may ask questions, including clarifying or challenging questions, and may seek clarification regarding any evidence presented.
 - c.** The appeal hearing is a review of the appropriateness of the decision made and not a retrial of the incident.
- 4. Board Deliberation & Final Decision:** The board will deliberate in private session following the hearing. A final decision may be rendered at the conclusion of the hearing or at a later date, as communicated by the Board. The board may:
 - a.** Uphold the original decision
 - b.** Modify the sanctions
 - c.** Overturn the sanctions

If additional material information emerges during the appeal process, the Board reserves the authority to increase or decrease disciplinary measures as warranted. The decision of the Board following appeal is final and not subject to further review.

If the original sanctions are modified or overturned, no compensation, reinstatement of lost opportunities, or other remedies shall be owed by BrandywineBOTS.

Acknowledgement of Authority: BrandywineBOTS leadership reserves the authority to take immediate and interim action, including suspension or restriction of participation, when necessary to protect student safety, program integrity, or organizational operations. Such actions may be implemented without prior Board approval and shall remain in effect pending formal review and final decision by the Board of Directors.

Acknowledgement

As a requirement of participation in BrandywineBOTS Robotics, I acknowledge receipt of the 2026-2027 BrandywineBOTS Student + Family Handbook, which includes the Code of Conduct, BrandywineBOTS program policies & operating guidelines. I have reviewed this Handbook together with my student and I acknowledge the responsibilities contained within on behalf of my student and myself.

I acknowledge my understanding that these policies apply to all individuals who are affiliated with the program - including students, parents, families, coaches, mentors, volunteers, and others.

I understand that violations of the expectations of these policies may result in consequences up to the removal from the program with no refund.

Student(s) Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____