

Dirigo Elementary School Student & Parent/Guardian Handbook

Be Safe, Be Respectful, Be Responsible

Dirigo Elementary School

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Letter to Parents/Guardians

Dear Dirigo Elementary School Parents, & Guardians,

If you are new to our school, I want to take this opportunity to welcome you, and say that I am excited about the journey that your child is starting on here at our school. If you have been a part of the DES family, I want to again say thank you for continually supporting our school and more importantly our students and staff. Our school is a relatively big elementary school, with around 330 students, but we do our best to provide individual attention to our students, which often helps make our school feel a lot smaller than what it is. We love our students and work hard to meet their academic, physical, and social/emotional needs. We have a talented staff and I consider it a privilege to work with them in helping to support your children and their learning needs.

Parents & Guardians, we invite you to be active participants in your child's learning. Though we have formal meeting times, like Open House and Parent Teacher Conferences, please know that you can schedule a meeting with your child's teacher at any time. If you have concerns or questions our staff will provide you with contact information and times when they are available to talk to help answer those questions or relieve those concerns. Please understand that our practice at DES and in RSU #56 is to resolve questions and concerns at the lowest level. What we mean by that is if you have a concern about your child's education or classroom experience, please connect with your child's teacher first. We find that most issues can be successfully resolved through a conversation between a parent and the teacher.

Research clearly shows that successful students are ones who have both teachers and parents who are actively involved in their learning process. We ask that you help us by routinely checking your child's backpack for important information. Also helping with the occasional homework such as reading and spelling lists. The more we can work together, the more your child will be successful both academically and behaviorally.

This student handbook was created to provide you with important information about the on-goings of our school. If you have any questions about the information in this handbook, please do not hesitate to contact the school. Again we appreciate your support of our school and we continue to look forward to working with you to help make your child a successful learner.

Sincerely,

Dr. Charles C. Swan

Dirigo Elementary School Principal

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RSU 56



Mission	The mission of RSU 56 is to prepare our students to become purpose-filled, skilled members of the local, national, and global communities.
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Vision	In RSU 56, our vision is to be recognized as a district where students, staff, families, community members and supporters expect excellence and are excited to work, learn and grow together.
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Core Values	1. We make decisions based on the best interest of our students. 2. We seek to make our Cougar Community proud. 3. We strive for integrity and excellence.
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Directory of District Personnel

RSU # 56 Administrators & Directors

Dr. Pam Doyen - Superintendent of Schools
Mrs. Heidi Connelly - Director of Special Education
Mrs. Kaelyne Thompson- Dirigo High School Principal
Mr. Jason Long - T.W. Kelly Dirigo Middle School Principal & District Curriculum Coordinator
Dr. Charles C. Swan - Dirigo Elementary School Principal
Mrs. Mary Daily - Business Manager
Mr. Brian Keene - Technology Director
Mr. Kenny Robbins - Building & Grounds and Transportation Director
Mrs. Gena Cloutier - Food & Nutrition Director
Mrs. Sara Thurston - Athletic & Activities Director

RSU #56 School Board Members

Canton: Carl Lueders - Vice Chair & Natalie Sneller

Carthage: Rachel Boyd & Brad Dyer

Dixfield: Barbara Chow -School Board Chair, Elizabeth Kelly, Bruce Weld, Charity Webster, and Bruce Ross

Mission Statement of Dirigo Elementary School

Dirigo Elementary School's Mission Statement says **“Dirigo Elementary School prepares ALL of our students to be Safe, Respectful, and Responsible citizens who are motivated to be lifelong learners.”**

At the core of this mission statement is our belief that we are here to support all of our students and their individual academic and behavioral needs. We understand that students will learn in different ways and at different rates and our goal is always to push our students to be the best that they can be. Embedded into this mission statement are our three PBIS (Positive Behavior Intervention and Support) student expectations: Be Safe, Be Respectful, and Be Responsible. Safety, both physical and emotional, is critical for our students well-being and for their ability to learn and grow in a school setting. We want our students to be Respectful citizens of our school and their communities. Respect at DES is about treating others the way you want to be treated. Finally, we want our students to take Responsibility for their actions. We want students to do their best when working academically and we want them to learn how to be prepared for school and even life.

A copy of the Board's Policy Manual is available in the Superintendent's Office, and each school office and many policies are available on the district's website (www.rsu56.org).

Equal Educational Opportunities

RSU #56 is committed to the concept and implementation of equal educational opportunities as required by federal and state laws for all students, regardless of race, sex, color, national origin or ancestry, religion, disability, or sexual orientation. Students or parents/guardians should direct any questions or concerns to Sara Thurston, Affirmative Action Officer, 562-4300 extension 3103 or by email at sthurston@rsu56.org.

Staff Conduct with Students: See [GBEB - Staff Conduct with Students](#)

The RSU #56 Board of Directors expects all staff members, including teachers, coaches, counselors, administrators, school volunteers and others, to maintain the highest professional, moral and ethical standards in their conduct with students. Students and/or their parents/guardians are encouraged to notify the appropriate administrator if they believe a teacher or other staff member may be engaging in conduct that violates any items listed in the board policy.

Equal Educational Opportunities

RSU #56 is committed to the concept and implementation of equal educational opportunities as required by federal and state laws for all students, regardless of race, sex, color, national origin or ancestry, religion, disability, or sexual orientation. Students or parents/guardians should direct any questions or concerns to Sara Thurston, Affirmative Action Officer, 562-4300.

General Daily Schedule

7:35 - 7:55 - Bus & Parent Drop Off - **The building will remain locked until 7:35 and no student will be admitted until this time due to supervision and safety concerns.**

8:00 - Announcements & Pledge

10:55-1:10 - Lunch Blocks (Typically K/1 eats first, 2/3 eats second, and 4/5 has the last lunch block)

2:15 - the end of the school day

2:15-2:20 - First run bus dismissal

2:20-2:35 - Parent pick up dismissal

2:35-2:45 - Second run bus dismissal



During the school day, students have a 45 minute specials block (art, music, guidance, PE, or library) as well as a 25 minute recess and a 25 minute lunch period.

Late Arrival Wednesdays

Every Wednesday morning the school starts one hour later to allow time for professional development for school personnel. This means that buses will run an hour behind their normal schedule and school will start at 9:00 AM instead of 8:00 AM.

Student Conduct, Discipline & PBIS

We are a PBIS school!

PBIS stands for Positive Behavior, Intervention and Support. At DES we call it Positive Behavior In School, and it is the framework from which we support student behavior. PBIS rests upon the idea that a positive-focused approach to student behavior, where staff are recognizing and rewarding the expected behavior while continually teaching and redirecting the non-desired behavior, provides for a better overall school environment and therefore student experience. Below are the basic components of our PBIS system:

- PBIS is a data driven approach to addressing student behavior.
- PBIS focuses on explicitly teaching, modeling, practicing and recognizing appropriate behavior.
- PBIS is a proactive system of support that strives to acknowledge appropriate student behaviors.
- PBIS addresses classroom, school wide and district wide behavior issues.
- PBIS means that expectations are consistent and clearly defined in all settings.



Our school uses three common expectations with students in all settings (classrooms, buses, cafeteria, playground etc.). Our three expectations are:

1. Be Safe
2. Be Respectful
3. Be Responsible

We have expectations for behaviors in each of the settings in our school based on these three common expectations. We practice them often and continually focus our students on adopting behaviors that are safe, respectful and responsible.

Our school has a PBIS team, which continually monitors the discipline data and addresses problematic behaviors and/or locations in the school. This team also services as our PBIS ambassadors in providing information at school-wide assemblies and also hosting school-wide events like dances.

Acknowledgement System

A school store is available to our children which allows them to use the coins that they earn from showing safe, respectful and responsible behavior in the school. In addition to a school store, most classrooms also have classroom based reward systems that allow individual students and/or the entire class opportunities to earn rewards from demonstrating positive behaviors.

Consequence System

Being a PBIS school does not mean that there are no consequences for students who misbehave. We do believe in reteaching and redirecting students, but there are consequences such as: Office Detentions (that occur during the school day), Loss of Privileges (such as being unable to eat with friends in the cafeteria) or even in-school suspensions and bus suspensions. These consequences are meant to be both a learning opportunity for students, but also as a means to keep our school and its students safe and to protect the learning environment. Students who are not being safe, respectful and responsible are recorded on a digital office referral form which is stored in our SWIS (School-Wide-Information-System) so that we can track the number of offenses, the times and types of infractions, and the location. This data is reviewed by the principal and the PBIS team to address concerns and trends that are evident.

PBIS Common Area Matrix

The chart below highlights some of the Safe, Respectful and Responsible expectations that we have for some of our common areas here at Dirigo Elementary School:

	Hallway	Cafeteria	Playground	Bathroom
Be Safe	* Use quiet walking feet * Stay to the right * One step at a time on the stairs * Keep hands and feet to yourself	* Use walking feet * Use utensils appropriately * Wait patiently * Keep hands and feet to yourself	* Use equipment appropriately * Use walking feet on the path * Look out for others * Find an adult if you need help	* Be as quick as you can * Tell an adult if there is a problem * Keep hands and feet to yourself
Be Respectful	* Stop at intersections * Look ahead when walking	* Use your manners * Use inside voices * Keep to your personal	* Keep personal space * Respect others' play space	* Keep privacy * Flush toilets * Place paper in wastebaskets

		space	* Respect property of others * Take turns and share equipment	
Be Responsible	* Hold the door for those behind you * Walk in a line with your class	* Pay attention * Know your lunch and milk choice * Get utensils * Clean up after yourself	* Return borrowed equipment * Line up immediately and stay with your class * Agree to the rules before starting a game	* Use products appropriately * Dispose of waste properly * Wash hands
Voice Level	1	1	3	1

General Code of Conduct

RSU # 56 and Dirigo Elementary School expects students to conduct themselves in a safe, respectful and responsible manner:

Throughout the Dirigo campus, at all times, students are expected to:

1. Students are not to threaten, intimidate, or cause bodily harm to any students or school employees.
2. Students are not to throw dangerous or inappropriate objects.
3. Students should always have teacher permission to leave classrooms.
4. Students should walk in halls and classrooms, and noise should be kept to a minimum level.
5. Students will not use, possess, or distribute tobacco, alcohol, or drugs on school property.
6. Students are not to have in their possession matches, lighters, knives, or weapons of any type.
7. Students are not to leave the school grounds at any time without office permission.
8. Students are to refrain from using inappropriate language and gestures.
9. Students will refrain from damaging school or private property.
10. Students are to refrain from inappropriate displays of affection.
11. Students are expected to attend and be on time for all classes unless excused.
12. Students are to do their own work. Cheating will not be tolerated.
13. Students are to follow the dress code.
14. No inappropriate material is allowed on any medium.
15. Students must refrain from consuming sugary and/or highly caffeinated drinks during the school day unless directed otherwise by a school nurse.
16. Use technology appropriately. Electronics should only be used for educational purposes during class. "Playing on the laptop" is not acceptable during academic time.
17. Be responsible with food. During the school day, food and drinks may be consumed at the discretion of the teacher/staff. During passing times, students should not have food out.

In the classroom, Dirigo Elementary School students are expected to maintain a school environment that promotes respect and consideration for one another. Students are expected to abide by the classroom expectations set by individual teachers. [Staff must abide by all policies and laws regarding restraint and seclusion \(JKAA\).](#)

Bus Behavior

It is expected that all students will act in a safe, respectful and responsible manner when riding a bus to and from school or on a special trip such as a field trip or sporting event. Our bus drivers' top priority is keeping students safe and in order to do that they have to be focused on the road in front of them and not disruptive behavior behind them. Students must follow these bus rules when riding an RSU #56 bus or potentially be removed from the bus for a short or extended period of time.

1. Students must be ready in the morning at the usual time for the bus to arrive at their home or designated bus stop.
2. The bus driver is in full charge of the bus and the students.
3. Students must obey the driver promptly and cooperatively.
4. Students are not to stand in the roadway or be fooling around near the road when waiting for the bus.
5. The bus driver may assign seats and students are expected to remain in these seats until further directed by the driver.
6. When the bus is in motion students are not permitted to stand up, move around in their seats, crawl on the floor, extend their arms out the window or do other distracting and unsafe behavior.
7. Student conversation should be school appropriate and at a level 1 voice (quiet conversation voice).
8. Students must pay for any damages done to the bus.
9. Students must be respectful to other students and the driver at all times.
10. If you have to cross the street to get onto the bus, please make sure the bus has its red lights on, that there are no cars coming and that you cross in front of the bus. Younger students should be accompanied by their adults at this time.
11. No students will leave the bus without the driver's permission.
12. Students will refrain from talking with the driver while they are driving to avoid distracting them.
13. Throwing of objects on the bus is prohibited.
14. Students will help keep the bus clean by making sure all trash is put in the waste basket at the front of the bus.
15. There is no food or drink on the bus unless the driver has given permission.



See [JIC - System-Wide Student Code of Conduct](#) regarding policies around general student behavioral expectations at school, on the bus or other school events or locations.

Interviews and Searches: See [JIH - Questioning and Searches of Students](#) and [JIH-R - Questioning and Searches of Student Administrative Procedures](#)

Maine State Law grants police officials the right to meet with students at school. When police officials request to question or search RSU #56 students, the school administration will make every effort to be cooperative with them.

The following rules shall apply to the search of school property assigned to a specific student and the seizure of items in his/her possession:

1. There should be a reasonable cause for school authorities to believe that the possession constitutes a crime or rule violation.
2. General searches of school property may be conducted at any time. School property may be recovered during such searches.
3. Illegal items or other possessions reasonably determined to be a threat to the safety and security of others will be removed from a student's possession.

Bullying See [JICK - Bullying and Cyberbullying](#), [ACAA - Harassment and Sexual Harassment of Students](#), and [ACAA- R - Student Discrimination Harassment and Title IX Sexual Harassment Complaint Procedures](#)

Bullying is detrimental to student learning and achievement. It interferes with the mission of the school to educate our students and disrupts the operations of the school. Bullying not only affects students who are targets, but also those who participate and witness such behavior. We take bullying seriously and will investigate all bullying and harassment claims that are brought to our attention. We commonly find that people sometimes have a broad view of what bullying is. There are times when name calling and physical aggression are considered bullying and times when they are not. We do our best to sort through these cases and provide support, reteaching, and disciplinary steps. If you feel that your child is being bullied or is having a problem with another student at the school please contact their teacher.

Cyber bullying, which includes sending mean or hurtful messages, spreading rumors online, sharing embarrassing photos or videos, and any other form of online harassment, is also strictly prohibited.

Dress Code: See [JICA- Student Dress](#)

Dirigo Elementary School expects that all student will have appropriate and safe clothing while at school. Students are not allowed to wear items that promote drugs, alcohol, tobacco, sexual content or inappropriate language. Students cannot wear clothing that exposes their waist, buttocks, chest or stomach area. Students must also have proper clothing for PE and recess (this includes outdoor clothes during the winter time).

Hazing See [ACAD - Hazing](#)

Maine statute defines injurious hazing as "any action or situation, including harassing behavior, that recklessly or intentionally endangers the mental or physical health of any school personnel or a student enrolled in a public school."

Injurious hazing activities of any type, either on or off school property, by any student, staff member, group or organization affiliated with this District, are inconsistent with the educational process and shall be prohibited at all times.

School Safety

One of our top priorities is keeping our students safe while they are at our school. We have increased our playground, arrival and dismissal supervision as these are areas that have the most safety concern during the day. Dirigo Elementary School is an ALICE



trained school and RSU #56 is an ALICE trained district. ALICE stands for Alert-Lockdown-Information-Counter-Evacuate, and the training we received each year supports our staff in helping keep students safe during a critical emergency situation. In addition to our ALICE drills, we also conduct 8 fire drills each year as part of the requirements from the state of Maine. To increase our school safety we have installed a double key card locking system on our front door and we have three other key carded entrances to the school. All exterior doors to our school are locked at all times when students are in the building. In addition we have over 16 cameras both inside and outside of our school to help us maintain a safe environment.

Please understand when you come to the school to pick up or drop off your child or to pick up or drop off materials for your child, we will ask that you wait in the entry area (through the first set of locked doors). If you have a meeting or other planned business in the school we will have you sign in and buzz you through our second set of locked doors.

Bomb Threats See [EBCC - Bomb Threats](#)

RSU #56 recognizes that bomb threats are a significant concern to the school unit. Whether real and carried out or intended as a prank or for some other purpose, a bomb threat represents a potential danger to the safety and welfare of students and staff and to the integrity of school property. Bomb threats disrupt the instructional program and learning environment and also place significant demands on school financial resources and public safety services. These effects occur even when such threats prove to be false.

Any bomb threat will be regarded as an extremely serious matter and treated accordingly. The Board directs the Superintendent to react promptly and appropriately to information concerning bomb threats and to initiate or recommend suitable disciplinary action.

No person shall make, or communicate by any means, whether verbal or non-verbal, a threat that a bomb has been, or will be, placed on school premises. Because of the potential for evacuation of the schools and other disruption of school operations, placement of a bomb or of a "look-alike" bomb on school premises will be considered a threat for the purpose of this policy.

It is also a violation of Board policy to communicate by any means that any toxic or hazardous substance or material has been placed, or will be placed, on school premises with the intent to endanger the safety and welfare of students or staff and/or to disrupt the operations of the schools. For the purpose of this policy, "toxic or hazardous substance or material" means any material or substance, including biomedical materials or organisms, that, when placed as threatened, could be harmful to humans.

A "bomb" means an explosive, incendiary, or poison gas bomb, grenade, rocket, missile, mine, "Molotov cocktail" or other destructive devices.

A "look-alike bomb" means any apparatus or object that conveys the appearance of a bomb or other destructive devices.

Weapons See [JICIA- Weapons, Violence and School Safety](#)

Students shall not possess or use weapons of any kind (examples include but are not limited to firearms, explosives, and knives). Students shall not use any object, although not necessarily designed to be a weapon, to inflict bodily harm and/or threaten, intimidate, coerce or harass another person (examples include but are not limited to bats, lighters, tools and toy weapons).

Students who violate this are subject to suspension and/or expulsion depending on the circumstances of the situation.

Tobacco Use and Possession: See [ADC-R - Use or Possession of Tobacco and Electronic Smoking Devices Administrative Procedure, Disciplinary Guidelines](#) and [ADC - Use and Possession of Tobacco and Electronic Smoking Devices](#)

Students shall not possess, distribute, use or be under the influence of any alcoholic beverage, drug, tobacco, or a look alike substance. All schools in RSU #56 are drug, alcohol and tobacco free.

Drug and Alcohol/Chemical Use Procedures: See [JICH - Drug and Alcohol Use by Students](#) and [JICH-R - Drug and Alcohol Use by Students Procedures](#)

The consumption, possession, distribution, and use of drugs or alcohol on school property is strictly prohibited. School staff will work to provide prevention education and interventions in order to support students but students who are found to have violated these school wide expectations will also be held liable for illegal behaviors that results in suspensions and referrals to local law enforcement.

Attendance

A regular and punctual attendance is essential to a child's educational success. Children are expected to attend school every day unless they have an excused absence. Excused absences as defined by [Maine Law](#) are as follows:

1. Personal Illness
2. A Medical Appointment
3. Religious Holiday
4. Family Emergency
5. A pre-approved planned absence. - Teachers need let office know asap when they hear.

Parents & Guardians must contact the school within 24 hours of an absence or it will be considered an unexcused absence.

Students who are dismissed from school for an illness or an injury must be dismissed through either the nurse's office or the main office. A student is NOT allowed to participate in an after-school activity or event on a day they are absent from school.

Change to Handbook:

Dirigo Elementary School has changed its eligibility for student participation on field trips and special events, such as Field Day, to better align with the RSU #56 School Board's expectations around attendance. Please read the information below carefully, as these changes will be fully implemented during the 2026/27 school year.

In order to be eligible to participate in special events such as field trips, field day, and school celebrations, a student must be in good standing regarding their attendance. This means that a student who is either chronically absent (missing 10% of the total days of school) or is truant will not be allowed to participate in these events. DES and the RSU 56 School Board believe that these special events are important for both extending learning and celebrating accomplishments, but at the same time we also believe that regular attendance is critical to support the academic and social development of our students.

In addition, students will not be eligible for our monthly Cubtastic awards if they are not in good standing regarding their attendance.

Please note:

There could be exceptions made based on documented medical or other family emergency situations. A parent can ask the school administrator to review their child's case.

Please see [JEA - Compulsory Attendance](#).

Truancy

According to Maine Law, an elementary student is truant if they are enrolled in a school and have had five (5) consecutive unexcused absences or if they have had a total of seven unexcused absences in a school year. When a student is considered truant the school takes specific steps to try and get the student to return to school on a more regular basis. These steps include: Notifying parents through a written letter and a phone conversation with the principal or school social worker, visit from the School Resource Officer, filing a case with the state, notifying the superintendent of the truancy case, setting up meetings to create an attendance plan, having local police do a well child check, notifying DHHS, and notifying the district attorney's office. Our number one priority is to have the students attend school on a regular basis.

Chronic absenteeism

The state of Maine defines Chronic Absenteeism as any student who misses 10% or more of the number of days of school. This accounts for both excused and unexcused absences. We begin to track Chronic Absenteeism at the end of our first Trimester of school and continue to report out to families who have chronically absent children throughout the school year. Students who are chronically absent have a greater risk of falling behind academically, disconnecting socially from their peers, and are at a greater risk of dropping out of school. Students who miss just 13 days of school each year will miss an entire year of school by the time they graduate high school. The number one factor in your child being successful at school is them being at school regularly.



Child Find: See [IHBAC - Child Find](#)

RSU 56 seeks to ensure that all children within its jurisdiction are identified, located and evaluated who are school-age 5 and under the age of 22 and who are in need of special education or supportive assistance. This includes homeless children, state wards, state agency clients, students who have been suspended or expelled, children attending private schools receiving home instruction, children incarcerated in county jails, children who have the equivalent of 10 full days of unexcused absences or 7 consecutive school days of unexcused absences during a school year, highly mobile children, and children suspected of being disabled and in need of special education and supportive assistance even though they are advancing from grade to grade.

If a Child Find process indicates that a student may require special education and supportive services in order to benefit from regular education, the student shall be referred to the IEP Team to determine the student's eligibility for special education services.

Tardy

A student at DES is considered tardy if they arrive at school past 8:00. We begin our academic day in our classrooms at 8 am and any student who arrives after this time needs to report to the office to be checked in and to order lunch. We understand that students will have to occasionally be tardy to school, but regular tardiness creates a disruption to the class and impacts the student's learning experience.

Early Dismissal

Any student who leaves school before 2:15 is considered an early dismissal. Again we run our academic time in our classrooms right up to our end of the day dismissal at 2:15. If a student has to leave early, we ask that a parent/guardian call before 1:00 PM or write a note to the office. You must come to the main office window to sign your child out. If picking your child up between 9:30 and 1:30 you can use our outer loop closest to the school, otherwise, please use the inner loop which is connected to our main parking lot.

Drop Off & Pick Up Procedures

When picking up and dropping off your child at the regular times, please follow these procedures.

Drop off: Drop off is between 7:35 and 7:55. Use the inner loop (not the bus loop which is closest to the building), and there will be 5-6 parking spots near the crosswalk designated for student drop off. Please pull into one of the spots and have your child exit your vehicle on the curbside. Please use extra caution and reduce speed when dropping off your child as there are a lot of moving vehicles and people during this time.

Pick Up: Student pick up is between 2:20 and 2:35. You will use the outer loop (closest to the school and the one the buses use). Please do NOT enter this loop until after our first run buses have left. When you pull up into the loop a staff member with a walkie talkie will ask you who you are picking up, please give them your child's name and pull up in the circle as far as you can. Your child will come out shortly after they have been called and have been checked off by a staff member inside the school. Please have your child enter your car on the curb side. Again please use extra caution and reduce speed during this time as there are many moving vehicles and people. If someone other than you is picking up your child, please call the school before 1:00 PM to let us know who they are and what their relationship to the child is.



Grading

Dirigo Elementary School uses a standards-based grading system when reporting grades out to parents & guardians. We report grades three times a year at the end of each of our Trimesters (Roughly the beginning of December, March, and the end of the year). A standards-based grading system is a system that uses a set of standards (skills that we teach students, such as counting, or spelling, or writing paragraphs etc), in order to be proficient or on grade level for these skills a student must demonstrate a minimum of three times that they know or can do the standard independently. We use the following 1-4 scale when determining student proficiency.

4 - The student has demonstrated complete mastery of the standard and understands it at a deeper level or is able to apply it to different situations or tasks.

3 - The student is independent, no longer needs assistance to perform the standard.

2 - The student is becoming independent, but still needs some adult guidance when performing the standard.

1 - The student is just beginning or still needs a lot of adult support when performing the standard.



We do use .5 increments, and they simply indicate that a student is moving away from one number and getting closer to the next number. For instance if a student has a 2.5, it means that they are close to being proficient or independent, but might need some reminders from their teacher so they are not quite fully independent.

Students will receive grades in the following subjects: Reading, Writing, Math, Science, Social Studies, Music, Art and Physical education. All grades are determined by the classroom teacher or specials teacher and any questions regarding scores on students' report cards should be directed towards them.

Retention: See [IKE - Promotion of Students](#)

In general, Dirigo Elementary School trust the research that shows that in most cases retaining a student causes more long-term harm than it does good. Retention, however, will be considered and discussed as a team at the request of either the teacher or the parent. Several factors from the student's age to their attendance to their social connection to peers will be considered and the ultimate decision will be made by the school administrator.

Controversial Topics and High-Quality Education: See [IMB - Teaching Controversial Issues](#)

As stated in RSU 56 Policy IMB, Teaching About Controversial/Sensitive Topics, "American academic tradition stresses the free contest of ideas as a vital element both in the development of curriculum and in classroom teaching." Staff are strongly encouraged to review Policy IMB for the direction and principles therein.

The following expectations are provided by RSU 56 Policy IMB:

1. The teacher, in selecting both the content and the method of instruction, is mindful of the maturity level of the students.

2. The teacher has assured him/herself that the controversial subject to be discussed belongs within the framework of the curriculum to be covered, that the subject is significant as well as meaningful for the students, and that through the discussion, students will have the opportunity to grow.
3. The teacher handles the classroom presentation in ways that will ensure a wide range of information and interpretation for the students' consideration and strives to present a balance among many points of view.
4. The teacher does not use the classroom as a personal forum. He/she does not employ the techniques of the demagogue or the propagandist for attention, for control, or simply for color. The teacher has the right to identify and express his/her own point of view in the classroom as long as he/she indicates clearly that it is his/her own.
5. The teacher emphasizes keeping an open mind, basing one's judgment on known facts, looking closely at facts to evaluate them in terms of the subject under discussion, and being ready to change one's opinion should new facts come into light.
6. The emphasis always is on the method of forming an opinion as much as on the opinion formed.

Food Service at Dirigo Elementary School

We believe that students must have proper nutrition in order to be successful in school. All students have access to a free breakfast and a free lunch while at school. Students can bring an outside lunch, but if they require a milk, they will be charged the price of a milk.

Dirigo Elementary School offers first and second choices for lunches. Students will order lunches in their classrooms. Students who arrive to school late will need to order lunch in the main office when they pick up their tardy slip.



Free & Reduced Lunch

We no longer have a free and reduced lunch program as the state of Maine has made all lunches free in public schools. It is still extremely important that you complete the economic status form that is sent home at the start of each year. Our school's funding is greatly impacted by the number of families who qualify for this status. We received important money that goes towards intervention and also toward teacher and ed tech salaries.

Fresh Fruit & Veggie

RSU # 56 and Dirigo Elementary School has had a Fresh Fruit and Veggie grant for the past several years. This grant provides a fresh fruit or veggie snack four days a week at our school. The goal of this program is to encourage students to eat healthier snacks and to introduce students to fruits and vegetables that they might not have tried in the past. Students are not required to take the fruit or veggie.

School Breakfast

School breakfast is provided each morning. This usually consists of a muffin, a fruit and a drink of some kind. Students can pick up the breakfast bags when they enter the school building each morning. Students are allowed to eat breakfast in their classrooms at the designated time for their class (set by the classroom teacher).



RSU # 56 Health Services

Communicable Disease See [JLCA - Examination of Students](#) and [JLCC - Communicable Disease](#)

Students with a diagnosed communicable disease or illness will be temporarily excused from school. Students with a fever of 100.4 degrees or higher and/or are experiencing vomiting or have diarrhea deemed to be caused by illness, will be sent home. Students may return to school when they are symptom free for at least 24 hours without the aid of medication unless the primary care provider provides written documentation approving school attendance before symptoms have abated.

Immunizations: See [JLCB - Immunization of Students](#)

All students who enroll in the school unit schools are required by Maine law to present a certificate of immunization or evidence of immunization, as outlined in Maine state law (Chapter 126). Non-immunized students shall not be permitted to enroll in school, or to attend school or school activities unless one of the conditions listed in the Board policy are met.

Head Lice

If a student is found to have a live infestation of head lice, the parent/guardian will be notified and information on head lice will be sent home with the child at the end of the day. The student is not permitted to return to school until they have used a medicated lice shampoo treatment. Only in certain cases is it appropriate to have the student's head checked for lice upon returning to school. Such a decision is based on the clinical judgment of the school registered nurse(s) and would be made on a case-by-case basis. It is ultimately the parent/guardian's responsibility to manage head lice by checking for live lice daily and before returning to school, as well as checking and combing out nits daily for 14 days following the first treatment.

RSU 56 follows the recommendations of the Maine Department of Education, Maine Academy of Pediatrics, and Maine CDC regarding head lice in schools.

Medication See [JLCD - Administration of Medication to Students](#)

Dispensing of medication on school premises is discouraged. Whenever possible, the schedule of medication administration should be altered to allow a student to receive all prescribed doses at home. The first dose of a newly prescribed medication should be given at home, not at school. School personnel will not dispense medication unless written permission has been granted by the child's parent/guardian. An annual written request for prescription medication to be administered throughout the school year is to be submitted by the parent/guardian AND health care provider. All medications must be delivered to and picked up from the school in its original container by the student's parent/guardian. Students shall not be permitted to carry and self-administer prescription or OTC medicine in school except under very special circumstances i.e. students with asthma, diabetes, and severe allergic reactions. The physician and the school nurse will coordinate this.

Cough Drops

Cough drops in school pose a concern with choking, allergic reactions, and overuse. The school nurse may administer cough drops/throat lozenges for students if the following are in place:



1. Written request from the parent/guardian for the school nurse to administer the cough drops/throat lozenge to their child.
2. Cough drops/throat lozenges are brought in by the parent/guardian the original bag labeled with their child's name on it.
3. Cough drops will be kept in the Health Office.

The school nurse can provide warm salt water gargles and encourage sipping water throughout the day to help ease a sore throat and cough. Studies have shown that sipping water throughout the day is just as effective with the added bonus of increased hydration.

Hygiene

Poor hygiene can be a distraction to the learning environment for both the student and their peers. It is expected that students will come to school bathed and free from distracting odors. Parents may be called to pick up their student if hygiene is deemed to be a distraction. All students are encouraged to have a change of clothes to be kept at school.

Physical Examination

All students participating in interscholastic athletics must have a physical examination once every two years prior to the start of the athletic season and complete the Parent Approval Form. A statement from the physician indicating the child can participate in athletics will be at the parents expense. RSU #56 specifies the following, and only the following, as acceptable physical examiners -MD (medical doctor), D.O. (doctor of osteopathy), and PA-C. (physician assistant - certified), Chiropractic doctor, or a C.N.P. (certified nurse practitioner).



Illness/Accidents

Every accident in the school building, on school grounds, or at a school-sponsored activity should be reported to the office or person in charge immediately. In the event of illness or injury, every effort will be made to contact the parent/guardian. We will utilize non-school services for emergency treatment only if we feel it is necessary. We will then utilize services such as health clinic physicians, local emergency medical services, area hospitals, and emergency room services. Since parents/guardians are financially responsible for these services, we will initiate them only if we feel it is necessary to do so.

Vision and Hearing Screening

Vision and hearing screenings are done annually in accordance with State guidelines for students in grades pre-k, kindergarten, 1, 3 and 5. A teacher or a parent may make a screening request at any grade level. Parents/guardians will receive a notice from the nurse if the results of their child's screening indicate a need for further follow up. It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to follow up with their doctor as recommended.

General Information

Bus Notes

RSU #56's practice is that students will be picked up and dropped off at the same location each day. The district no longer uses bus notes as students are not allowed to take the bus to locations other than their predetermined pick up and drop off spots. A parent must get permission from the transportation department in order for a child to be dropped off or picked up at a location other than their regular bus stop.

School Cancellations/Delays

At times, due to inclement weather or other emergencies, school may have to be canceled, dismissed early, or postponed. If school is going to be canceled, delayed or dismissed early and call/text will go out on our Power Announcement system. It is critical that you keep your contact information up to date or you will not be notified of these changes. This information is also posted on our school website and Facebook pages.



Traditional Vs Remote Learning Days

RSU #56 will often do a mixture of traditional snow days and remote learning days. Traditional snow days are days that will be made up at the end of the year and are days in which students are not required to attend school related academic tasks. Remote learning days are days in which students will be asked to complete remote learning packets or snow day packets and then turn them back into their teacher on the next school day. Remote learning days will not be added to the end of the school calendar year.

Birthdays

We recognize that birthdays are a special day for elementary students. We ask that you not send balloons to school as they can be very distracting and pose a risk for people with allergies. Our staff members celebrate birthdays in different ways in the school. If you would like to send in a treat for the class please coordinate this with your child's teacher. We also do not allow the mass distribution of party invitations in our classrooms.



Outdoor Recess

All students are expected to go outside for recess unless weather conditions are poor which will require recess to be inside. Only students who have medical notes stating that they are not to participate in recess will be allowed to remain inside and will report to the office during their scheduled recess time. Students must dress appropriately for recess. This includes shoes that cover their entire feet (not sandals or crocs). During the winter students must have ski pants, boots and coats in order to play in the snow areas of the playground. There are designated sliding areas during the winter months, and students must follow sliding rules in order to participate in this activity. If students need help during recess there are 2-4 adults on duty during each of our recess times.



Personal Belongings

The school is not responsible for personal belongings that are brought to school and lost, stolen or damaged. Students are not allowed to bring any outside electronic devices to school. If a student has a cell phone it needs to be off and stored in their locker or backpack at all times during the school day. Trading cards such as Pokemon are not permitted as they often create conflict and are disruptive to the school environment.



Clothing

All students are expected to dress and groom themselves neatly and in clothes that are appropriate for school. Clothing should be clear, safe, and should be conducive to the learning environment. The following are examples of inappropriate dress:

1. Shirts that show the midriff or stomach area
2. Short shorts or skirts
3. Excessively ripped clothing
4. Clothing that has inappropriate messages
5. Hats, caps, hoods and other headgear - unless for rewards, special events, or given permission by a staff member
6. Sandals, clogs, high heels, slippers



Students should have comfortable clothing and sneakers for PE class.

We have a lost and found areas just outside of our gym. Students are frequently reminded to check this area for missing items. If a student finds an item that does not belong to them they should turn it into the office. **It helps tremendously if student items are labeled with their first and last name.**



Bathroom Use

All Pre-K to grade 2 classrooms are equipped with a bathroom, a faucet and a drinking fountain. All 3-5 classrooms have a faucet and drinking fountain. Grades 3-5 have public restroom facilities and are encouraged to use the bathroom during transition times or during scheduled times provided by the classroom teacher. We realize that there will be times when it will be necessary to use the restrooms outside of scheduled times, but these should be the exceptions. We want to limit the number of classroom interruptions as possible.



Books, School Electronic Devices & School Property

Throughout the school year students will be given textbooks and other school materials and furniture. Students are expected to respect school materials in the following ways:

1. Never write in a book unless directed to do so by a teacher or staff member.
2. Never cram a book into a desk, locker or bookbag in a way that will damage the book.
3. Never drink or eat while using a book or other school material.
4. Never mark on school desks, chairs, walls or other parts of the school.
5. Do not litter.



Students are expected to keep their assigned desk, cubby and/or locker areas cleaned at all times.

Technology: See [IJNDE - Internet Safety](#) and [IJNDB-E - Student Computer/Internet Acceptable Use Form](#)

The RSU #56 School Board believes that the use of the Internet and computer technology in instructional programs facilitates communication, innovation, resource sharing, and access to information.

RSU #56 has a Web Filtering Service to “block” information and materials that are not in keeping with these beliefs. However, skilled individuals can occasionally circumvent this system. Therefore, RSU #56 makes no assurances of any kind, whether expressed or implied, regarding any Internet services provided. RSU #56 will not be responsible for any damages the student/user suffers. Use of any information obtained via the Internet is at the student’s own risk. RSU #56 denies any responsibility for the accuracy or quality of information or software obtained through its services.

In order for a student to gain access to the Internet, the student and the student’s parent(s)/guardian(s) must sign a Student Computer/Internet Acceptable Use Form.

RSU #56 maintains an official website to provide general information about the school system and educational programs, extracurricular activities, school events, and student and staff achievements.

The school will assign each student either an ipad or laptop to be used during the school day. Students are only allowed to use these devices when given permission from a staff member and only for educational purposes. Students and their parents/guardians are required to complete a Technology User Agreement Form prior to being allowed to use a device at school. Once given an RSU #56 device, students must:

1. Understand that this is a school issued device and it should be used for school assigned academic purposes.
2. Understand that devices will be monitored by staff and when needed devices will be checked for inappropriate material.
3. Students are responsible for intentional or careless damages done to their electronic device.
4. Students are NOT allowed to take their devices home, unless given permission by the school principal.
5. Students are expected to act in a safe, respectful, and responsible manner when using a school issued technology device.

See policies: [IJNDB - Student Use of School-Issued Computers/Devices and the Internet](#) and [IJNDB-R - Student Computer/Internet Acceptable Use Rules](#)



Personal electronic Devices

Students are expected to focus on positive school-related activities during the school day. Cellular devices may NOT be used during the school day. Students who MUST use a personal device to contact home must have permission to do so. Students must honor the appropriate use agreement they agreed to when receiving a school laptop. A school device can be subject to random searches by the administration. Students MAY NOT use electronic devices for recreation (games, social media, etc.) during the school day unless there is a special exception made by the administration. Violent and weapons-based games are strictly prohibited. The use of music is at the teacher’s discretion, although students must use streaming services such as

Spotify or personal libraries like iTunes. Using YouTube or other video services for this purpose is not allowed.

The following is directly from School Board Policy JICJ: “Students are prohibited from using privately-owned electronic devices including but not limited to cell phones, “smartphones,” iPods, MP3 players, handheld computers/PDAs, and electronic games at school or during school activities except when the teacher or building principal authorizes use for a specific educational, health or safety purpose.”

See [JICJ - Student Cell Phone Use and Other Electronic Devices](#).

Directory Information: See [JRA - Student Records](#)

During the year, RSU #56 may release information related to students and their activities. Such information will be in the category of Directory Information as determined by the RSU and permitted in the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974. Parents of students may refuse to permit the designation of any or all of the categories of personally identifiable information with respect to that student as directory information. Such refusal must be stated in writing to the Principal of the school within two weeks of the distribution of each handbook.

The following categories are permitted as Directory Information: the student’s name, address, telephone number, date and place of birth, participation in officially recognized activities and sports, weight, and height of members of athletic teams, dates of attendance, degrees, and awards received, most recent previous educational institution attended by the student, and other similar information, including pictures and photographs of news releases, sports programs, etc

Field Trips

Throughout the school year each grade typically participates in one or two field trips. These trips are designed to help enhance the learning experience by providing students with real-life experiences that coincide with lessons and skills that they are learning in the classroom. In order to participate in a planned field trip, students must return their field trip permission form and it must be signed by their parent/guardian. Students must also be in good standing in regards to their behavior and attendance to participate. If parents/guardians are interested in participating the field trip as a chaperone you must:

1. Complete a background check - a form must be completed a copy of your license provided at least 4 days prior to the trip.
2. Must be approved by the superintendent and/or the building principal.
3. Must be selected by the classroom teacher as one of the participating adult chaperones.
4. Will be asked to ride the bus with the class.
5. Must not bring other children (such as younger siblings).
6. Must role model good behavior at all times and be willing to support students on the trip.



After School Program & Activities

Dirigo Elementary currently has a grant for an after-school program. This program is designed to help students who are struggling academically to close the academic gap with their peers. The program has limited spots (based on staffing and the design of the grant) and students are invited to participate based on their



eligibility. This program runs from 2:30 to 4:40 four days a week (typically Monday through Thursday).

Dirigo Elementary school also has a Civil Rights Team which meets monthly and is open to any student in grades 3-5. This club is designed to promote acceptance and quality of all students and to share messages of cooperation and love.

Dirigo Grade 5 students are also at times allowed to participate in certain sports at the middle school level (participation numbers dictate which sports). In order to participate the student must meet the three requirements below and also have completed all paperwork and have documentation of insurance and an up to date physical.

In order to participate in a school-based after-school program students must:

1. Be in good standing both behaviorally and attendance wise.
2. Must be safe, respectful and responsible at all times while participating in the activity.
3. If the activity ends prior to the activity bus students must be picked up by a parent/guardian.

See [JJ1 - Eligibility for Participation in Co/Extra Curricular Activities](#) which is the district policy that covers middle and high school students.

Parent/Guardian Visits to School

Dirigo Elementary school believes that it is essential to have parents/guardians actively involved in their child's education. We offer a number of activities where we invite parents to come to our school and to see the awesome work that their children are doing. Some of these activities include:

Open House - Each fall we have an open house. This night is reserved to allow students and parents to come into the school to see their child's new classroom and meet their teacher. This is NOT a parent/teacher conference, but a simple drop in an explore type event.

Community Fair - During our Open House we have a community fair set up in our gymnasium. We have community and school-based organizations set up to provide parents/guardians with information and to help them get connected to the many different organizations that are present in our area. These organizations often include, but are not limited to: local recreation departments, local libraries, food pantries, scouting programs, community advocacy programs and many more.

Parent-Teacher Conferences - Near the end of our first trimester we will host our annual Parent-Teacher Conferences. These conferences are designed to allow the parents/guardians to meet with their classroom teachers as well as other school staff to see how their child is doing academically and behaviorally. Prior to the conferences a signup form will be sent home and parents will be asked to select dates and times for their conference. The conferences are generally 15-20 minutes long and the teacher will provide information related to academic progress, behavioral concerns, and any recent testing data. If more time is needed the parent/guardian can request this of the teacher when signing up for the conference or additional meetings with the teacher can be scheduled throughout the school year.

Concerts - We have two designated special concert events during the school year. The first is our Holiday concert, which will take place prior to Winter Break. The second is our Arts Alive concert & Art viewing which happens in the spring. Both are tremendous ways to support your child's work in both the visual and performing arts.



Teacher Availability

Teachers will be available at the end of each school day to meet with parents and to provide extra help sessions for students. Students should take advantage of this time if they are having difficulty in an area of study rather than getting behind. There are times when a teacher may request that a student stay after school for extra academic help or for a classroom detention. These sessions will take priority over other after school activities that the child might participate in at school. Parents who would like to meet with a teacher should arrange this in advance with the teacher or staff member. Parents/guardians should not come to the school in the morning expecting to meet with a teacher if they have not made prior-arrangements to do so.



Visitors

All visitors who come to Dirigo Elementary School should have a pre-arranged purpose for their visit and they must sign in with the main office.

Volunteers

Dirigo Elementary School welcomes volunteers and we are fortunate to have this support from our community and parents/guardians. If you would like to volunteer with the school you will need the following:

1. Completed a background check (there is a form to be completed and a copy of your driver's license). This must be completed at least 4 days prior to your approval.
2. Must be approved by the superintendent and/or building principal.
3. Must be approved by the classroom teacher if working directly in the classroom.
4. Must be a positive role model at all times.
5. Must wear a volunteer badge at all times (this should be picked up from and returned to the main office).



If when volunteering in the building you see or hear anything of concern, please report it to the classroom teacher or the building principal.

PTO

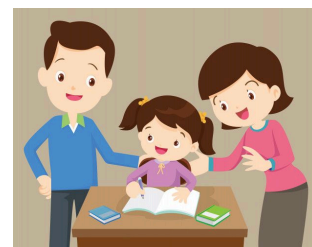
Dirigo Elementary School has a Parent-Teacher-Organization. This organization is made up of both parent volunteers and school staff and their goals are to support the learning environment of the school. They do this in a number of ways, from sponsoring special school events to providing funding assistance for classroom or school-based projects or activities. Our PTO usually does one main fundraiser in the fall and assists with a second classroom-based fundraiser in the winter. If you are interested in joining the PTO, please contact the school office.



Ways Parents can Help

Parents/Guardians can be a tremendous help in ensuring that your child reaches grade level benchmarks and beyond by working together with teachers and by supporting the expectations that teachers have for classroom behavior and for academics. The best way parents/guardians can help:

1. Check your child's backpack, take-home folders, and papers on a regular basis.
2. Provide time and space for your child to complete homework assignments.
3. Check daily that your child has completed assigned homework.



4. Assists with drill work such as (math facts, spelling, site words etc.).
5. Provide positive encouragement.
6. Connect with your child's teacher if you have questions about work or learning.

Public Complaint

Complaints and grievances shall be handled and resolved, whenever possible, as close to their origin as possible. All written and verbal complaints will be investigated according to approved procedure. After the preliminary investigation, the complainant will be informed that the school district will pursue the complaint only if it is put in writing. Although no member of the community shall be denied the right to petition the Board for redress of a complaint, the complaint shall be referred back through proper administrative channels for investigation and solutions before actions by the Board. Exceptions are complaints that concern Board action or Board operations only. The Board advises the public that the proper handling of complaints involving personnel, instruction, and discipline or learning materials as follows:

Teacher/Staff
Principal/Supervisor
Superintendent
Board

Any complaint about school personnel will be investigated by the administration before consideration and action by the board.

Parents' Right to Know

We at RSU #56 are sending you this information as one way to fulfill our obligations under the "Parent's Right to Know" requirements of the federal *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB). Under these requirements, teachers must meet general qualifications as well as the specific requirements of the subject they are teaching. This means we will be informing parents whenever a child is taught for four consecutive weeks by a teacher who does not meet the federal definition of "Highly Qualified".

Maine has some of the most qualified teachers in the country, and we are extremely proud of our teaching staff. We work hard to ensure that every class has a teacher with the appropriate background, experience, and credentials for this or her current teaching assignment.

We believe that a caring, competent, and qualified teacher for every child is the most important ingredient in education reform, and we want to assure you that we consider all our teachers to be fully qualified for their positions. All of our teachers are currently entitled to teach under Maine's strict certification requirements. All of our teachers have college degrees and many have advanced degrees. In addition, every teacher continues his or her own learning through professional development activities and our teachers go through an evaluation process to make sure that their teaching skills remain at the highest possible level.

Most teachers already meet the federal definition of "Highly Qualified". Those teachers who do not meet this federal standard are presently on "action plans" to accomplish meeting the standard by the current school year.

Additional information on the NCLB Act, as well as on the qualifications of your child's teacher is available on request. Please contact the Central Office at 562-4300 if you have questions or would like further information.

Educational Research: See [Policy ILD - Student Submission to Surveys, Analyses or Evaluation](#)

Parents shall have the opportunity to opt their children out of participation in any survey, analysis, or evaluation. In many cases, students may opt out of such surveys, analyses, or evaluations.

IDEA Part B: Written Notification Regarding Use of Public Benefits or Insurance

Introduction

You are receiving this written notification to give you information about your rights and protections under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), so that you can make an informed decision about whether you should give your written consent to allow your school district to use your or your child's public benefits or insurance to pay for special education and related services that your school district is required to provide at no cost to you and your child under IDEA. First, we will provide some basic information about IDEA.

Part B of IDEA is the Federal law that provides for assistance to States and school districts in making a free, appropriate public education (FAPE), which includes special education and related services, available to children with disabilities in the least restrictive environment. If your child has been evaluated and found eligible for services under IDEA because he or she has a disability and needs special education and related services, your school district must develop an individualized education program (IEP) for your child. Your school district must provide the special education and related services included in your child's IEP at no charge to you or your child.

IDEA funds pay a portion of your child's special education and related services. Funds from a public benefits or insurance program (for example, Medicaid funds) also may be used by your school district to help pay for special education and related services, but only if you choose to provide your consent, as explained below. Also, your school district cannot access your or your child's public benefits or insurance if it would result in a cost to you, such as a decrease in your benefits or an increase in your premiums. These "no-cost" provisions are explained below as well.

Before your school district can ask you to provide your consent to access your or your child's public benefits or insurance for the first time, it must provide you with this notification of rights and protections available to you under IDEA. This notification is intended to help you understand these rights and protections, including the type of consent your school district will ask you to provide. If you choose not to provide your consent, or later decide to withdraw your consent, your school district has a continuing responsibility to ensure that your child is provided all required special education and related services under IDEA at no charge to you or your child.

Notification Requirements- 34 CFR §300.154(d)(2)(v)

You are receiving this notification because IDEA requires that you be informed of your rights and protections when your school district seeks to use your or your child's public benefits or insurance to pay for special education and related services. The following sections explain when you must receive this notification and what information must be included in the notification.

When Notification Must Be Provided

You must receive this notification:

Before your school district seeks to use you or your child's public benefits or insurance for the first time and before it obtains your consent to use those benefits or insurance for the first time (the consent requirement is described below) and annually thereafter.

Format of Notification

This notification must be:

- written;
- in language understandable to the general public; and
- in your native language or in another mode of communication you use, unless it is clearly not feasible to do so.

Contents of Notification- 34 CFR §300.154(d)(2)(v)(A)-(D)

This notification will explain: 1) the consent that your school district must obtain from you before it can use your or your child's public benefits or insurance for the first time; 2) IDEA's "no cost" provisions that apply to your school district if it seeks to use your or your child's public benefits or insurance; 3) your right to withdraw your consent to the disclosure of your child's personally identifiable information to your State's public benefits or insurance program agency at any time; and 4) your school district's continuing responsibility to ensure that your child is provided all required special education and related services at no charge to you or your child, even if you withdraw your consent or refuse to provide consent.

Parental Consent- 34 CFR §300.154(d)(2)(iv)(A)-(B)

*If your school district has not accessed your public benefits or insurance in the past to pay for services that it was required to provide your child under IDEA at no charge to you or your child, all of the parental consent requirements described below apply.

Before your school district can use your or your child's public benefits or insurance for the first time to pay for special education and related services under IDEA, it must obtain your signed and dated written consent. Generally, your school district will provide you with a consent form for you to sign and date. Note that your school district is only required to obtain your consent one time.

This consent requirement has two parts.

1. *Consent for Disclosure of your Child's Personally Identifiable Information to the State agency responsible for administering your State's Public Benefits or Insurance Program*

Under Federal law—the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the confidentiality of information provisions in IDEA—your school district is required to obtain your written consent before disclosing personally identifiable information (such as your child’s name, address, social security number, student number, IEP, or evaluation results) from your child’s education records to a party other than your school district, with some exceptions. In this situation, your school district is required to obtain your consent before disclosing personally identifiable information for billing purposes to the agency in your State that administers the public benefits or insurance program. Your consent must specify the personally identifiable information that your school district may disclose (for example, records or information about the services that may be provided to your child), the purpose of the disclosure (for example, billing for special education and related services), and the agency to which your school district may disclose the information (for example, the Medicaid or other agency in your State that administers the public benefits or insurance program).

2. *Statement to Access Public Benefits or Insurance* Your consent must include a statement specifying that you understand and agree that your school district may use your or your child’s public benefits or insurance to pay for services under 34 CFR part 300, which are special education and related services under IDEA. Our consent form includes language that indicates that by giving us permission to bill Medicaid, you are allowing us to use your child’s public benefits or insurance to pay for special education and related services.

Both parts of this consent requirement apply to the school district that is responsible for serving your child under IDEA. If your child moves to a new school within the same school district, you would not be required to provide a new consent because the same school district is still responsible for serving your child under IDEA. But if you enroll your child in a new school in a new school district, the new school district that is responsible for serving your child under IDEA must obtain a new consent from you before it can bill your child’s public benefits or insurance program for the first time. The consent you would provide to your child’s new school district must include both parts of the consent as described above.

Electronic consent, if applicable (34 CFR §99.30(d))

As noted above, your consent must be written, signed, and dated. While there generally will be a paper form for you to fill out, you may provide your written consent in an electronic form if your submission identifies and authenticates you as the individual providing the consent, includes an electronic signature and date, and your submission indicates that you approve the information contained in the consent.

Previous consent

If you gave your consent in the past for your school district to access your or your child’s public benefits or insurance to pay for special education and related services under IDEA, your school district is not required to obtain a new consent from you if the following two conditions are present:

1. There is no change in any of the following: the type of services to be provided to your child (for example, physical therapy or speech therapy); the amount of services to be provided to your child (for example, hours per week lasting for the school year); or the

cost of the services (that is, the amount charged to the public benefits or insurance program); and

2. Your school district has on file the consent you previously provided. This previous consent must meet the requirements that were in effect under the prior IDEA regulations, and your school district will know what requirements applied under those prior regulations. An example of a previous consent your school district may have on file is a parental consent form you gave directly to another agency, such as the ME Medicaid agency.

Even if your school district is not required to obtain a new consent from you, your school district still must provide you with this notification before it may continue to bill your or your child's public benefits or insurance program to pay for special education and related services under IDEA.

If your school district already has on file your consent to use your or your child's public benefits or insurance to pay for special education and related services under IDEA, your school district must request that you provide a new consent when there is a change in any of the following: the type (for example, physical therapy or speech therapy), amount (for example, hours per week lasting for the school year); or cost of services (that is, the amount charged to the public benefits or insurance program).

An example of a change in the type of services would be that your child would receive speech therapy in addition to physical therapy, and therefore, the services billed to your public benefits or insurance program would be different. An example of a change in the amount of services would be if your child was previously receiving 3 hours per week of physical therapy and will now be receiving 2 hours per week. An example of a change in the cost of your child's services would occur if the amount billed to the public benefits or insurance program for a particular service increases or decreases.

If any of these changes occur, your school district must obtain from you a one-time consent, specifying that you understand and agree that your school district may access your or your child's public benefits or insurance to pay for special education and related services under IDEA. Before you provide your school district with the new, one-time consent, your school district must provide you with this notification. Once you provide this one-time consent, you will not be required to provide your school district with any additional consent in order for it to access your or your child's public benefits or insurance if your child's services change in the future. However, your school district must continue to provide you with this notification annually.

No Cost Provision- 34 CFR §300.154(d)(2)(i)-(iii)

The IDEA "no cost" protections regarding the use of public benefits or insurance are as follows:

1. Your school district may not require you to sign up for, or enroll in, a public benefits or insurance program in order for your child to receive FAPE. This means that your school district may not make your enrollment in a public benefits or insurance program a condition of providing your child the services it is required to provide your child under IDEA at no charge to you or your child.
2. Your school district may not require you to pay an out-of-pocket expense, such as the payment of a deductible or co-pay amount for filing a claim for services that your school district is otherwise required to provide your child without charge. For example, if your

child's IEP includes speech therapy and your insurance requires a \$25 co-pay or deductible payment for a session, you could not be charged the \$25. Your school district would need to pay the cost of your co-pay or deductible in order to bill your or your child's public benefits or insurance program for the particular service.

3. Your school district may not use your or your child's public benefits or insurance if using those benefits or insurance would:
 - a. Decrease your available lifetime coverage or any other insured benefit, such as a decrease in your plan's allowable number of physical therapy sessions available to your child or a decrease in your plan's allowable number of sessions for mental health services;
 - b. Cause you to pay for services that would otherwise be covered by your public benefits or insurance program because your child also requires those services outside of the time your child is in school;
 - c. Increase your premiums or lead to the cancellation of your public benefits or insurance; or
 - d. Cause you to risk the loss of your or your child's eligibility for home and community-based waivers that are based on your total health-related expenditures.

Withdrawal of Consent- 34 CFR §300.154(d)(2)(v)(C)

If you provided your consent for your school district to disclose your child's personally identifiable information to the State agency that is responsible for administering your public benefits or insurance program, you have the right under 34 CFR part 99 (FERPA regulations) and 34 CFR part 300 (IDEA regulations) to withdraw that consent at any time.

If you do not want your school district to continue to bill your or your child's public benefits or insurance program for special education and related services under IDEA, you would need to withdraw your consent to your school district's disclosure of your child's personally identifiable information to the agency in your State that is responsible for administering that program. The FERPA and IDEA regulations, however, do not contain procedures for withdrawal of consent to disclosure of your child's personally identifiable information. If you wish to withdraw your consent, you should ask your school district what procedures you would need to follow. For example, your school district may ask you to submit your withdrawal request in writing.

To withdraw your consent, please submit a written request, including the full name of the child and parent(s), to the following:

Heidi Connelly, LCSW
145 Weld Street, Dixfield, ME 04224

What Your School District Must Do if You Withdraw Your Consent or Refuse to Provide Your Consent- 34 CFR §300.154(d)(2)(v)(D)

Finally, without your consent, your school district cannot bill your or your child's public benefits or insurance program to pay for special education and related services that it is required to provide your child under IDEA at no charge to you or your child. If you withdraw your consent or refuse to provide consent under the FERPA and IDEA regulations, your school district may not use your withdrawal of consent or refusal to provide consent to disclose personally identifiable information to a public benefits or insurance program to deny your child the special education

and related services he or she is otherwise entitled to receive under IDEA. Therefore, if you refuse to provide consent or withdraw consent, your school district has a continuing responsibility to ensure that your child is provided all required services necessary to receive an appropriate education at no charge to you or your child.

We hope this information is helpful to you in making an informed decision regarding whether to allow your school district to use your or your child's public benefits or insurance to pay for special education and related services under IDEA.

Contact information: For additional information and guidance on the requirements governing the use of public benefits or insurance to pay for special education and related services, see: <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/reg/idea/part-b/part-b-parental-consent.html>.

RSU #56
145 Weld St., Dixfield, ME 04224

Appendices

Non-Discrimination: See [AC - Non-Discrimination - Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action](#)

The school unit does not discriminate on the basis of sex or other protected categories in its education programs and activities, as required by federal and state laws/regulations.

Discrimination against and harassment of school employees because of actual or perceived race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, ancestry or national origin, age, familial status, disability or genetic information are prohibited.

Discrimination against and harassment of students because of actual or perceived race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, ancestry or national origin, or disability are prohibited.

For the purpose of this policy, “race” includes traits associated with race, including hair texture, Afro hairstyles, and protective hairstyles, including braids, twists, and locs.

The Board directs the school administration to implement a continuing program designed to prevent discrimination against all applicants, employees, students, and other individuals having access rights to school premises and activities.

The school unit has designated and authorized an Affirmative Action Officer/Title IX Coordinator who is responsible for ensuring compliance with all federal and state requirements relating to nondiscrimination, including sexual harassment. The Affirmative Action Officer/Title IX Coordinator is a person with direct access to the Superintendent.

The school unit has implemented complaint procedures for resolving complaints of discrimination/harassment and sexual harassment under this policy. The school unit provides required notices of these complaint procedures and how they can be accessed, as well as the school unit’s compliance with federal and state civil rights laws and regulations to all applicants for employment, employees, students, parents, and other interested parties.

Annual Notice of Student Education Records and Information Rights: See [JRA-E Records](#)

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (“FERPA”) provides certain rights to parents and eligible students (18 years of age or older) with respect to the student’s education records.

A. Inspection of Records

Parents/eligible students may inspect and review the student’s education records within 45 days of making a request. Such requests must be submitted to the Superintendent or building administrator in writing and must identify the record(s) to be inspected. The Superintendent or building administrator will notify the parent/eligible student of the time and place where the record(s) may be inspected in the presence of school staff. Parents/eligible students may obtain copies of education records at a cost of \$.15 per page.

B. Amendment of Records

Parents/eligible students may ask the RSU #56 to amend education records they believe are inaccurate, misleading or in violation of the student's right to privacy. Such requests must be submitted to the Superintendent or building administrator in writing, clearly identify the part of the record they want changed, and specify why it is inaccurate or misleading. If the Superintendent or building administrator decides not to amend the record as requested, the parent/eligible student will be notified of the decision, their right to request a hearing and information about the hearing process.

C. Disclosure of Records

The RSU #56 must obtain a parent/eligible student's written consent prior to disclosure of personally identifiable information in education records, except in circumstances permitted by law or regulations as summarized below.

1. Directory Information

The RSU #56 designates the following student information as directory information that may be made public at its discretion: name, participation and grade level of students in officially recognized activities and sports, height and weight of student athletes, dates of attendance in the school unit, honors and awards received, and photographs and videos relating to student participation in school activities open to the public (except photographs and videos on the Internet). Parents/eligible students who do not want the RSU #56 to disclose directory information must notify the Superintendent in writing by November 18th or within thirty (30) days of enrollment, whichever is later. This opt-out request will remain in effect unless and until it is rescinded.

2. Military Recruiters/Institutions of Higher Education

Military recruiters and institutions of higher education are entitled to receive the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of secondary students, and the RSU #56 must comply with any such request, provided that parents have been notified of their right to request that this information not be released without their prior written consent. Parents/eligible students who do not want the RSU #56 to disclose this information without their prior written consent must notify the Superintendent in writing by November 18th or within thirty (30) days of enrollment, whichever is later.

3. School Officials with Legitimate Educational Interests

Education records may be disclosed to school officials with a "legitimate educational interest." A school official has a legitimate educational interest if he/she needs to review an education record in order to fulfill his/her professional responsibility. School officials include persons employed by the RSU #56 as an administrator, supervisor, instructor or support staff member (including health or medical staff and law enforcement unit personnel); members of the Board of Education; persons or companies with whom the RSU #56 has contracted to provide specific services (such as attorneys, auditors, medical consultants, evaluators or therapists); and volunteers who are under the direct control of the RSU #56 with regard to education records.

4. Health or Safety Emergencies

In accordance with federal regulations, the RSU #56 may disclose education records in a health or safety emergency to any person whose knowledge of the information is necessary to protect the health or safety of the student or other individuals without prior written consent.

5. Other School Units

As required by Maine law, the RSU #56 sends student education records to a school unit to which a student applies for transfer, including disciplinary records, attendance records, special education records, and health records (except for confidential health records for which consent for dissemination has not been obtained).

6. Other Entities/Individuals

Education records may be disclosed to other entities and individuals as specifically permitted by law. Parents/eligible students may obtain information about other exceptions to the written consent requirement by request to the Superintendent or building administrator.

D. Complaints Regarding RSU #56 Compliance with FERPA

Parents/eligible students who believe that the RSU #56 has not complied with the requirements of FERPA have the right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education. The office that administers FERPA is:

Family Policy Compliance Office
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202