

T. W. Kelly Dirigo Middle School

Student Handbook 2026-2027



KEEP CLIMBING
TWKDMS 26-27

45 Middle School Drive, Dixfield, ME 04224
Phone (207) 562-7552
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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.
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.
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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Mission Statement of T. W. Kelly Dirigo Middle School

The mission of T.W. Kelly Dirigo Middle School is to foster the full development of each child's intellectual, emotional, cultural, creative, and physical capabilities and to educate each child to live and work effectively and cooperatively with others.

We believe that middle school is designed for educating students who are making the transition from childhood to adolescence. We further believe that the curriculum and other programs should be designed to bridge the gap between the elementary classroom and the specialized subject field of the high school and that the curriculum and programs should center on the developmental stages of the early adolescent.

T.W. Kelly Dirigo Middle School is dedicated to educating each child by providing a program that is relevant to the student's individual needs and to the demands of society in this world of constant change with a rapidly expanding body of knowledge. The instructional program of the middle school is designed to help students understand themselves as unique individuals with personal needs and shared social responsibilities.

We seek to provide a challenging curriculum with flexibility to meet the needs of each student. We believe that to be effective; education must be founded on secure mastery of basic skills, taught not only in isolation but also in integration with one another. We place a strong emphasis on reading, personal expression of ideas through speaking and writing, and the mastery of computational and problem-solving skills. We also encourage scientific exploration, artistic creativity, physical activity, career examination, technological investigation, and the exploration of practical life skills.

Our high expectations for academic achievement are balanced with fostering a growing awareness of others. We seek to develop in our students a broader sense of the world and to value not only their own beliefs but also those of others.

Our school atmosphere is informal and friendly. Although the styles of teaching vary, we recognize and respect different learning styles and are united in our commitment to reach each child. Our faculty is excited about education, and they are constantly learning and growing. They show children a caring community by working together and respecting one another.

Superintendent of RSU #56

Pam Doyen, Superintendent of Schools

Dirigo Middle School Administration

Jason Long
Lisa Sanborn
Sara Thurston

Principal
Administrative Assistant
Athletic Director

Note to Students and Parents/Guardians

Students and parents/guardians are responsible for reading and following the rules in this handbook. This handbook has been developed within the framework of RSU #56 policies. In case of a conflict between a board policy and the rules in this handbook, the board policy will prevail. RSU #56 reserves the unlimited right to make changes to the handbook at any time without prior notice. The handbook is provided solely for the convenience of staff, students, and parents, and RSU #56, to the extent permissible by law, expressly disclaims any liability which may otherwise be incurred.

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.

TWKDMS Bell Schedule 26-27

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday & Friday

8th Grade

Period 1	8:00-8:45
Period 2	8:45-9:30
Period 3	9:30-10:15
Period 4	10:15-11:00
Lunch	11:00-11:25
Period 5	11:25-12:10
Period 6	12:10-12:55
Period 7	12:55-1:40
Period 8	1:40-2:25

7th Grade

Period 1	8:00-8:45
Period 2	8:45-9:30
Period 3	9:30-10:15
Period 4	10:15-11:00
Period 5	11:00-11:45
Lunch	11:45-12:10
Period 6	12:10-12:55
Period 7	12:55-1:40
Period 8	1:40-2:25

6th Grade

Period 1	8:00-8:45
Period 2	8:45-9:30
Period 3	9:30-10:15
Period 4	10:15-11:00
Period 5	11:00-11:45
Period 6	11:45-12:30
Lunch	12:30-12:55
Period 7	12:55-1:40
Period 8	1:40-2:25

Wednesday

8th Grade

Period 1	9:00-9:40
Period 2	9:40-10:17
Period 3	10:17-10:54
Lunch	10:54-11:19
Period 4	11:19-11:57
Period 5	11:57-12:34
Period 6	12:34-1:11
Period 7	1:11-1:48
Period 8	1:48-2:25

7th Grade

Period 1	9:00-9:40
Period 2	9:40-10:17
Period 3	10:17-10:54
Period 4	10:54-11:32
Lunch	11:32-11:57
Period 5	11:57-12:34
Period 6	12:34-1:11
Period 7	1:11-1:48
Period 8	1:48-2:25

6th Grade

Period 1	9:00-9:40
Period 2	9:40-10:17
Period 3	10:17-10:54
Period 4	10:54-11:32
Period 5	11:32-12:09
Lunch	12:09-12:34
Period 6	12:34-1:11
Period 7	1:11-1:48
Period 8	1:48-2:25

2026-2027 TWKDMS Full Staff List

Blanche, Jordan	Grade 7 & 8 Math Teacher	jblanche@rsu56.org
Boucher-Ladd, Michelle	Special Education Teacher	mladd@rsu56.org
Boyle, Maryann	Kitchen	mboyle@rsu56.org
Bragdon, Sarah	Grade 7 & 8 Science Teacher, BARR Co, Dean of Students	sbragdon@rsu56.org
Carver, Rob	Custodian	rcarver@rsu56.org
Cookson, Grace	Special Education Educational Technician	gcookson@rsu56.org
Couture, Earl	Special Education Educational Technician	eacouture@rsu56.org
Couture, El	Special Education Educational Technician	ecouture@rsu56.org
Cyr, Tess	Grade 7 Social Studies & Grade 8 Capstone Teacher	tcyr@rsu56.org
Dority, Dianna	Grade 7 & 8 Art Teacher	ddority@rsu56.org
Drouin, Cassie	Special Education Educational Technician	cdrouin@rsu56.org
Estabrook, Denise	Special Education Educational Technician	destabrook@rsu56.org
Finnegan, Elaine	Grade 7 & 8 ELA Teacher	efinnegan@rsu56.org
Hamalainen, Jim	Chorus & Band Teacher	jhamalainen@rsu56.org
Hamalainen, Yamile	Grade 6 PE/Health/Art & Social Studies Teacher	yhamalainen@rsu56.org
Hebert, Lauren	Grade 7 & 8 PE/Health Teacher	lhebert@rsu56.org
Holman, Alexis	Grade 6 Math & Science Teacher	aholman@rsu56.org
Howe, Dana	Custodian	dhowe@rsu56.org
Kemeraitis, Pete	Technology	pkemeraitis@rsu56.org
Kimball, Ellen	Kitchen	ekimball@rsu56.org
Knight, Kathy	Special Education Teacher	kknight@rsu56.org
Long, Jason	Principal	jlong@rsu56.org
Merchant, Heather	Special Education Educational Technician	hmerchant@rsu56.org
O'Connor, Crystal	Kitchen	coconnor@rsu56.org
Ramu, Phillip	School Social Worker	pramu@rsu56.org
Robbins, Bob	Head Custodian	rrobbins@rsu56.org
Roberge, Scott	Custodian	sroberge@rsu56.org
Russell, Kate	Grade 6 ELA & Writing Teacher	krussell@rsu56.org
Sanborn, Lisa	Administrative Assistant	lsanborn@rsu56.org
Sayer, Shay	Special Education Educational Technician (sub)	ssayer@rsu56.org
Skillin, Kelley	Library Educational Technician	kskillin@rsu56.org
Smith, Fallon	STEM & Accelerated Math Teacher	fsmith@rsu56.org
Thurston, Sara	Athletic Director	sthurston@rsu56.org
Walsh, Myriah	Special Education Educational Technician	mw Walsh@rsu56.org
White, Jan (sub)	Special Education Educational Technician	jwhite@rsu56.org
Wilcox, Kathryn	School Nurse	kwilcox@rsu56.org
Wood, Abby	Social Studies and GT Teacher	awood@rsu56.org

Academics

Grading and Reporting

Report cards will be issued to all students three times each year following a trimester schedule, and the school conducts an eligibility check roughly once every two weeks for all students. There are three schoolwide categories for all assignments: Summative, Formative, and Habits of Work and Learning.

Students at TWKDMS will get second chances. But, like in life, it is easier to do things correctly the first time. Make up opportunities generally include additional requirements as an intervention to support learning.

Types of Assignments

Formative assessments at TWKDMS are mini-projects, quizzes, constructed response answers, and other assignments intended to determine student progress toward understanding within the progression of a unit of study. There should be 3-to-6 formative assessments leading to each summative assessment. All assessments within this category are collectively valued as 50% of a student's traditional grade. It is common that formative assessments start during class time and are completed as homework. Opportunity for corrections and improvement of formative assessments is permitted at teacher discretion until the conclusion of the unit of study. Make up work must be submitted no later than seven days after entry of the original grade into PowerSchool. Students with a failing grade in a course at the end of a trimester will have their next opportunity to improve formative assessment scores during summer school.

Summative assessments at TWKDMS are projects, tests, major papers, and other assignments intended to determine overall student understanding at the conclusion of a unit of study. All assessments within this category are collectively valued as 50% of a student's traditional grade. Opportunity for improvement of summative assessments is permitted at teacher discretion, but must be resubmitted no later than seven days after entry of the grade into PowerSchool. It is recommended that students are assigned pre-work prior to submitting a summative to help demonstrate that they are indeed ready to improve their summative grade. Students with a failing grade in a course at the end of a trimester will have their next opportunity to improve summative assessment scores during summer school.

The Habits of Work and Learning include informally assessed assignments (like practice work) and student performance regarding school-wide expectations for respect, responsibility, and cooperation. Performance in this category is reported by class once a trimester using a rubric separate from the traditional academic grade.

Types of Grade Reports

[TWKDMS uses the same dual-reporting approach used at Dirigo High School:](#) Traditional Report Cards and separate standards-based Benchmark Progress Reports.

Traditional Report Cards at TWKDMS include an overall grade on a 100-point scale for each course as well as teacher comments. **The lowest possible score is a 0 unless otherwise noted by the teacher.** The goal of this change is to make sure that there is a fair distinction between incomplete work and failed assignments; therefore, partial credit may be awarded at the discretion of the teacher.

Benchmark Progress Reports at TWKDMS include summative scores for Benchmark Standards on a 4-point scale (with .5s) for each course as well as Habits of Work and Learning scores. **The lowest score is a 1.**

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

All students with a failing trimester grade in any class are required to attend summer school. Students in summer school must complete all missing and failed assignments from the failed course (with allowance for alternative assignments at the discretion of the summer school teacher). Except for extreme circumstances, grades truly close at the end of each trimester, and students with work remaining will need to complete what is required to “pass” in the summer. Completing summer school work is mandatory; students may be retained or required to complete assignments the following year.

Grade Level Benchmark Standards

Although courses attempt to provide instruction on the full scope of the standards identified in the curriculum documents adopted by RSU 56, certain standards have been identified by instructional staff as most important for a successful progression through the grades and in life. These most important standards, called Grade Level Benchmark Standards, are assessed on a standards-based 4-point scale (with .5s).

At TWKDMS, a valid summative score for a Benchmark Standard is either the average of the three most recent assessments or the score of a single standards-based summative assessment. These summative scores in PowerTeacher Pro can be adjusted using professional judgment by the teacher prior to reporting.

Feedback and Grading

Staff are expected to complete and enter into PowerTeacher Pro formative assignment grades within 5 days from the published due date or student submission (whichever is later). Staff are granted 10 days for providing feedback on summative assignments in the same manner. It is best practice that assessments are created with a published due date in PowerTeacher Pro when they are first assigned.

“Late” Work (different from Makeup Work)

All students are expected to complete all work by the teacher's published due dates. Although circumstances may arise where a student is absent or struggling and thus falling behind on assignments, it is important for TWKDMS to have a policy that realistically manages late work so that students remain primarily focused on current assignments and not constantly “playing catchup.”

Due date extensions will be granted for excused absences and other valid reasons **up to 5 days after they return**. No matter the length of the absence, the 5-day window starts the day they return to school for all work missed during that time period. If a student is absent for an extended period of time, that student is encouraged to follow and complete assignments in the Google Classroom as they're able. Students unable to complete assignments within the allowable window will have an opportunity to complete the assignment and/or meet the standard during summer school if necessary. This is not meant as punishment, but rather to prevent creating unrealistic “mountains” of make up work. In extreme circumstances, teachers may reduce or excuse assignments at their discretion.

Exceptions to this school practice may be made for extenuating circumstances and/or to follow the specifications of an IEP or 504 plan. Teachers should consult with case managers. It is the student's responsibility to obtain all work from his/her teachers. Failure to obtain or check online for work is not an excuse for not doing work missed, including extra-curricular activities or planned trips.

Make Up Work

Make Up Work is offered at the discretion of the teacher for assignments originally attempted in good faith. There is no guarantee of make up work opportunities, and students with missing work are generally not eligible for make up opportunities until summer school. Students are encouraged to learn how to put their best efforts into their first opportunities to demonstrate learning. Life gives second chances, but it is easier the first time.

Academic Honesty

Academic cheating is any attempt to gain an unfair advantage in grades through dishonesty in the performance on an assignment or examination. Examples of cheating include copying (or allowing to copy) assignments, unauthorized use of notation aids or AI software, looking at another student's work during a test situation, procuring, previewing, or supplying examinations ahead of time, and plagiarism. **Plagiarism is the use of another's words without clearly giving credit to the original author or generative AI software.**

T.W. Kelly Dirigo Middle School expects students to maintain the highest academic integrity. Students found to be cheating will be dealt with by the teacher and/or principal in one or more of the following manners:

1. Redoing of assignment
2. An incomplete/no credit on the assignment requiring an additional alternative assignment
3. A parent/guardian conference
4. Detention or suspension from school

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.

Assignment Accessibility and Google Classroom

All classroom teachers at TWKDMS will support their classroom by hosting a Google Classroom. All assignments will be created as assignments and must be posted to the Google Classwork section of Google Classroom (then it will automatically appear in the Stream). Supporting materials required for completion must also be included in the assignment. Staff may simply direct absent students to the Google Classroom to collect assignments following or before an extended absence. TWKDMS does NOT offer “remote learning” unless the RSU 56 declares a remote learning day.

Homework

Homework is considered a necessary part of the student’s scholastic life. Therefore, students should develop effective study habits. Homework may be recorded or accounted for as Practice Work and will also influence the Habits of Work and Learning grade. When in doubt, all students have IXL that they can work on. Formative or Summative Assessments may be completed at home and counted for a grade, but simple “checkmark” practice assignments should not be included in the academic grade calculation. Generally speaking, teachers should plan for students to have no more than 20 minutes of homework per evening, and no less than an hour per week.

Accelerated Math and Advanced Math Placement

Placement in an Advanced Math course generally parallels identification for Gifted and Talented math students. These classes are taught by the GT teacher or by joining the appropriate high school math class. The middle school and high school collaborate to develop criteria and make these placement decisions. Placement in an Accelerated Math at TWKDMS course is based upon recommendation by the previous math teacher, consideration of Winter and Spring MTYA/NWEA math scores, and a special placement test administered in the spring. A student or guardian is allowed to request consideration, but the same criteria must be the primary factors in determining the appropriateness of the placement. Placement decisions may be appealed to administration. Students unsuccessful in these placements may be returned, with warning, to regular classes.

Eligibility Process for Extra and Co-Curricular Activities

A student’s primary responsibility in school is to be successful in schoolwork and related studies. TWKDMS monitors all students. In order to participate in co/extracurricular activities (including school dances), scrimmages, exhibition games, ungraded performances, or co-curricular competitions, students **must be passing all subjects** to be eligible.

The Main Office will run a “grade pull” every-other Monday (or the closest day), and print off an Eligibility Warning Notice for every student with a failing course grade. Students will receive Eligibility Warning Notices before the end of the same day. The Dean of Students will also contact the home via ReachMyTeach. Students have until 2:25 the day before the Clearance Deadline to submit any work they hope to have graded to influence their eligibility status. Teachers must prioritize grading assignments that will impact eligibility. The typical days of the week for the Eligibility Check process are below.

Academic probation’s consequence lasts the full period regardless of grade changes, until the next cycle.

Remote Day Procedures

A “remote” school day will start at 9:00 (like on a Late Arrival Wednesday). This way, our staff will have an hour to make adjustments for the remote day. We have learned through trial and error that it is better to simply have our staff available to help tutor students through assignments on remote days instead of holding full classes online. We understand that there will be situations where virtual attendance is impossible (just like for a regular school day), so please just do your best and communicate with the school.

Students are expected to email their homeroom teacher by 10:00 am for attendance purposes, and then start to work to complete remote day assignments posted in Google Classroom. We delay taking virtual attendance to provide a cushion for families where students will be expected to help with snow removal, etc. Students with questions or wanting help can join their teacher’s Google Meet at any time from 9:00 am until 1:00 pm. Each teacher’s Google Meet link will be posted in their Google Classroom’s Stream on the morning of the remote day. Students are already set up in their Google Classrooms and use this at school - this should be easy for them to follow at home. If we anticipate a remote day, the staff will make an effort to provide printed materials for students without access to the internet at home.

A remote day might be a comparatively “light” day, as we ask staff to design activities for each class that take about 20 minutes. Nevertheless, it is still a school day, and school assignment rules apply. *This could be a great chance to get help from teachers via Google Meet and get caught up on missing assignments once remote day assignments are completed.* There is no Google Classroom or Google Meet for Learning Labs. There are Google Classrooms and Google Meets for Chorus/Band. Students with special education services will be contacted directly. For legal reasons, online sessions will not and cannot be recorded. It is possible that multiple students with unique questions could log in for help at the same time.

We have arranged for the school number (562-7552) to ring to reach the Main Office personnel. If you or your student has questions or connectivity issues, please contact the school, and we will do whatever we can to help. We can also connect you to a social worker, nurse, or tech specialist.

Attendance

General Absence

Regular school attendance is essential to academic success. Please see [JEA - Compulsory Attendance](#).

1. Despite the fact that an absence is excusable by law, it still counts toward a student's total absences.
2. A student must be present for 3 or more hours in Maine to be counted as present, even if dismissed.
3. School administrators are responsible for determining whether an absence is excused or unexcused. Because Maine School Law is specific, parental permission for an absence does not guarantee that it will be an excused absence.
4. School Administration may request documentation for medical-related absences.

Excused Absence

Under Maine law, there are only five reasons why a school may excuse a student's absence:

1. Personal illness
2. An appointment with a health professional that must be made during the regular school day.
3. Observance of a recognized religious holiday when the observance is required during the school day.
4. A family emergency (approved by the school)
5. A planned absence for personal or educational purposes that has been approved by the school. (Approval must be secured in advance. Forms are available in the main office.)

Unexcused Absence from School

An unexcused absence is any absence that does not conform to the five excusable reasons for absences under [Maine Law](#). Grade 7 or 8 students with seven consecutive unexcused absences or ten total unexcused absences are considered truant. Grade 6 students with five consecutive or seven total unexcused absences are considered truant. TWK Dirigo Middle School will work with the home, attendance intervention personnel, outside agencies, and law enforcement to ensure truant students and parents re-engage with the school and improve attendance.

Tardiness

Arriving at school after 7:55 am is considered tardy in the morning. If you bring a note explaining the reason for being late, your tardiness will be "excused" based on the reasons listed below. Students with three unexcused tardies within a trimester will be issued a detention. On the day of an unexcused tardy, a student-athlete may not participate in practice and/or play in a game on that same day.

Excused absences:

1. Personal illness
2. An appointment with a health professional that must be made during the regular school day.
3. Observance of a recognized religious holiday when the observance is required during the school day.
4. A family emergency (approved by the school)
5. A planned absence for personal or educational purposes that has been approved by the school. (Approval must be secured in advance. Forms are available in the main office.)

TWKDMS Chronic Absenteeism Procedure

2026-2027

Chronic Absenteeism is defined as missing 10% or more of school days for any reason.

The Dean of Students will run an attendance report every Friday (or otherwise, the final day of the week) to update attendance figures that will be addressed starting on Monday.

Absent 5 days: Parents/Guardians will be contacted by the Dean of Students to identify the reason(s) for the absences and offer support if needed. The contact will be at least a Reach My Teach (RMT) message, and when appropriate, also a phone call. If the student has an IEP, the case manager will be notified/involved (at a minimum, via RMT). This communication will outline the consequences for reaching the absence checkpoints of 10, 15, and 18 days.

Absent for 10 days: The student is no longer eligible to attend the winter/spring dance unless they submit a written appeal to justify their absences. 10-day appeals are reviewed and decided upon by the Superintendent. The student & parent/guardian must attend an Attendance Hearing coordinated by the Dean of Students to discuss reasons for recurrent absences and develop a contract to limit future absences. Should the family fail to attend, the School Resource Officer will visit the home to deliver a contract designed by the Dean of Students for the family to sign. *The final “pull” date to attend the winter/spring dance is 02/12/26, allowing adequate time for any appeals processes. The deadline to submit a written request for an appeal is 02/26/26, and the student must attend the meeting scheduled by the Superintendent.*

Absent 15 days: The student is no longer eligible to attend the late spring dance (semi-formal) or spring reward days unless they appeal in writing to justify their absences. 15-day appeals are reviewed and decided upon by the Superintendent. The student & parent/guardian must attend a second Attendance Hearing coordinated by the administration. Next steps, future consequences, and contract adjustments are discussed. Should the family fail to attend, the School Resource Officer will visit the home to deliver the contract updated by the Principal for the family to sign. *The official “pull” date to attend the late spring dance is 04/16/26, allowing adequate time for any appeals processes. The deadline to submit a written request for an appeal is 04/30/26, and the student must attend the meeting scheduled by the Superintendent.*

Absent 18 days: The student is no longer eligible to attend end-of-year events (including the Middle School Promotion Ceremony and Mt. Blue Day field trip) unless they appeal in writing to justify their absences. 18-day appeals are reviewed and decided upon by the School Board. The principal notifies the Superintendent, who then sends an official letter explaining the appeals process to the family. *The official “pull” date to participate in end-of-year events is 05/21/26, allowing adequate time for any appeals process. The School Board Appeal Meeting is scheduled for 05/25/26, and the student must attend to appeal.*

*A student's appeal must be submitted in writing before the stated deadline to be considered. Documentation explaining absences is encouraged. If a student's appeal is approved, it does not eliminate the cumulative nature of their absences. In other words, if a student meets a future absence checkpoint, they will need to appeal again to avoid consequences.

**Truancy reports and procedures will be followed and are embedded within this process.

Procedure for Absences: See [JEA - Compulsory Attendance](#)

The school is responsible for determining the whereabouts of all of its students on a daily basis. Parents are expected to report all student absences. Parents can report absences by calling the school on the morning of the absence. Dirigo Middle School will call the parents of all students reported absent from their first class of the day unless the student has already been reported absent by a parent. If the school is unable to reach a parent by phone, the school will leave a message (if able to do so). The parent may return the call to the school or send a note with the student when the student returns from the absence. Because Dirigo Middle School is required to track and record student absences according to state statutes, we will ask parents for the reason why a student is tardy, absent, or dismissed. Students are expected and allowed to make up work for excused absences.

Planned Absences

Students who will miss school for a multi-day planned absence for personal and/or educational purposes and wish for the absence to be excused must secure permission in advance. This is done by completing and submitting the Planned Absence form to the main office. Completion of the form does not guarantee that absences will be considered excused by the school administration. This form is not required for school-sponsored events and field trips.

Closed Campus

T. W. Kelly Dirigo Middle School operates on the closed campus policy, which means that all students will remain at the school for the entire school day, including lunchtime. No students will be allowed to leave the school grounds unless dismissed for a valid reason, such as a doctor's appointment, etc. No one will be allowed to go home or to the store for lunch.

Bicycles, Snow Machines, and Skateboards

Students who ride bicycles, snow machines or skateboards to school should know the rules of the road or trails for safe riding. Please note that the bicycle rack is at the end of the practice field. All bicycles should be placed there and should not be ridden beyond that point during school hours. Snow machines can be parked where the bicycle rack would be. Skateboards should be placed in a locker or classroom. For your own protection, you are not to ride around the school, as many cars and buses bring students to and from school.

Bicycles, snow machines, and skateboards are personal property. Do not use anyone else's bike, snow machine, or skateboard unless the owner has given you permission. This is stealing and will be dealt with as such.

Students transporting themselves by foot or other means must respect the private and personal property of residents surrounding the school. Students waiting for transportation must remain respectful and follow school rules while still on school property.

Student Conduct and Discipline

All school and district policies are in effect throughout the school day and at any and all school-sponsored functions and events. The school maintains major behavioral records using a School-Wide Information System.

Behavioral Expectations

Dirigo Middle School expects all students to be Respectful, Responsible, Compassionate, and Cooperative.

The students at Dirigo Middle School are expected to conduct themselves in such a way as to reflect pride and respect in their school, community, and themselves. Students are expected to display good sportsmanship and courtesy at assemblies, field trips, and extracurricular functions.

In the classroom, Dirigo Middle 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 \(JKAA\).](#)

Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS)

Our school is always working to find successful ways to encourage children to be respectful, responsible, compassionate, and cooperative across all school settings. Dirigo Middle School is one of the many schools implementing a Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS) system.

The basic components of PBIS are: 1) a data-driven approach to addressing student behavior, 2) focuses on explicitly teaching, modeling, practicing, and recognizing appropriate behavior, 3) a proactive system of supports that strives to acknowledge appropriate student behaviors, 4) addresses classroom, school-wide, and district-wide behavior issues, and 5) consistent and clearly defined in all settings.

Students will help to define what these expectations look like in various settings and then practice in each area the appropriate procedures with staff. We will then be able to support students as they make connections to the common expectations, learn to model appropriate behaviors and take responsibility for their choices in meaningful ways.

This year, the TWKDMS staff will continue extensive training in Building Assets, Reducing Risks (BARR). The BARR program was developed over twenty years ago, and research shows that students in BARR schools meet projected math and reading growth targets at rates higher than non-BARR students. We are excited to receive this training and see how BARR's approach can help us support our students in the pursuit of better outcomes. You can learn more about the BARR program at <https://www.maine.gov/doe/BARRschools>.

Faculty Council:

Jason Long, Principal
Lisa Sanborn, Administrative Assistant
Sarah Bragdon, Teacher and BARR Coordinator
Abby Wood, Grades 7 & 8 and GT Teacher
Yami Hamalainen, Grade 6 Teacher
Michelle Boucher-Ladd, Special Education Teacher
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Acknowledgment for Positive Behavior

Students receive recognition throughout the year for making good choices and upholding the values of TWKDMS. Staff complete “Good News Postcards” and/or “Cougar Paw” cards when they observe students demonstrating behavior deserving recognition. Behavioral Expectations must be visible in every classroom.

School-wide Points System

All students have the opportunity to earn “points” towards rewards as part of our school-wide tier one PBIS program. Students earn 1 point for every day of perfect attendance, 10 points for avoiding the ineligibility list once every two weeks, 5 points for every “Cougar Paw” they receive, 1 point for each point of growth on the NWEA/MTYA each trimester, and additional points awarded at the discretion of the principal. Students with an Office Check-In and Check-Out (CICO) plan also earn 1 point for each day they meet their CICO goal. Points may be redeemed at the PBIS prize drawers or by participating in “Reward Wednesdays.” A student must be current with their assignments to the satisfaction of their teachers in order to attend a “Reward Wednesday” activity. Reward Wednesday activities may include Reward Gym, Game Room, or a Region 9 Experience.

Cougar Paw Bulletin Board

Throughout the school year, students are eligible to receive “Cougar Paws” from staff for demonstrating Respect, Responsibility, Cooperation, and/or Compassion. Students then turn these “Cougar Paws” into the Main Office. All of the submitted “Cougar Paws” are then added to the lunch bulletin board(s) for cumulative school-wide celebrations.

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

Students are expected to focus on positive school-related activities during the school day. 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 (such as the final 15 minutes of the learning lab, at teacher discretion). Violent and weapons-based games are strictly prohibited. The use of music is at the teacher’s discretion. In these cases, students may use allowable streaming services or personal libraries like iTunes. YouTube and other video services are not allowed for this purpose. Headphones must be “wired” and connected to a school device. In other words, no airpods. Streaming services that violate the district’s privacy policies will be blocked.

Fidget Expectations:

The following will be provided for posting in every classroom.

- A fidget is a single item; students are allowed to have one.
- A fidget is a tool, not a toy, and should not be shared.
- A fidget is something that fits and stays in your hands.
- A fidget makes no noise and is not a distraction.
- A fidget allows you to look and listen.
- A fidget allows you to focus on your work.
- If a fidget becomes a distraction, a staff member may take it away.

General Campus Conduct: See [JIC - System-Wide Student Code of Conduct](#)

Throughout the Dirigo campus, at all times, students are expected (but not limited) 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 the teacher's 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. Misrepresenting AI generated work as original is prohibited.
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 iPad" is not acceptable during the school day.
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.

Hallway Use and Transition Expectations

Bells ring to signify the end of each period. Students then have 2 minutes to travel, enter and get settled into their next classroom. This is generally not enough time for a bathroom break, so students are expected to first report to their next classroom and then wait until after the first five minutes of the new period before using the facilities. Students must have a written pass to see staff other than their scheduled personnel, and these passes must be arranged in advance unless in the case of emergency. Students are prohibited from entering a classroom other than the room on their schedule during transitions. Being late to class is a punishable offense as it disrupts the start of the period and the learning environment for others. Sign-in and sign-out sheets will be maintained in all classrooms and used by students. Three classroom tardies will result in a teacher detention.

Visitors

Students are not to have visitors other than parents or guardians in school. Parents are always welcome to visit the school and classes, though we ask that they make prior arrangements with the school administration and classroom teacher. A yearly RSU #56 Volunteer Registration Form must be completed and approved prior to a visit unless it is a guest speaker arrangement approved by the principal. Visitors must check into the office, secure approval, and sign the visitor record upon arrival and departure from the school building.

Leaving the Classroom

Students may not leave the classroom without teacher permission, or will receive at minimum an automatic detention. There are exceptions for IEP, 504, or special behavioral plan interventions. Students should not expect to receive a "break" because they want one. Students are expected to learn to cope while in the class.

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.

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

At TWK Dirigo Middle School and Dirigo High School, the following guidelines will be used:

Cell phones, smart watches and other personal electronics—including wireless Bluetooth headphones—may **not** be used and will be powered down and stored in magnetic cases provided by the district during school hours.

- Students will power down phones/personal electronic devices and place them in secure magnetic cases provided by RSU 56 or place the phone in the main office upon entering the building.
- Students who are dismissed early will need to stop in the main office to use the unlocking device.
- Students may keep their phones in their lockers or the main office at TWKDMS.
- Students may, with permission, use the classroom or office phone to contact their families if there is an emergency or serious, specific reason to make a phone call.
- If families need to communicate with their child during the school day, they may call the office or email school office personnel.
- Phones can be removed from magnetic cases at the end of the school day by using the swipe devices outside the main office and/or at identified exit points.

A. The use of cameras, including camera phones, is strictly prohibited in locker rooms, bathrooms, and other places where privacy is generally expected. In all other school locations, permission must be granted before photographing or recording another person.

B. The use of a cell phone or other electronic device in any manner that violates Board policy or school rules is prohibited. This includes but is not limited to harassment, cheating and violations of the student code of conduct. If a Board policy or school rule is violated, the teacher or school administrator may confiscate the device for the remainder of the school day. Student cell phones and other electronic devices may be subject to search if there is reasonable suspicion of a violation.

Throughout the school year the Yondr Pouches will be checked to make sure that the locking device still works. Students are expected to let the main office staff know immediately if their pouch is damaged or the locking device is no longer working. Students are responsible for the cost of lost or damaged pouches.

RSU56 Cell Phone/ Smartwatch & Personal Device Ladder of Consequences

Offense Examples: Misuse of pouch Forgetting to lock a pouch Seen using phone or watch Not truthful about location of devices Use of other devices not in pouch/ multiple devices Use of personal laptop - texting, social media, etc. Etc.	1st Offense	• Student sent to the office and receives a 1-hour detention • Document in student record • Yondr pouch with smart devices locked inside stays in the office for the day and picked up by student at dismissal including Juniors and Seniors with Open Campus privileges.
	2nd Offense	• Student sent to the office and receives two (2) 1-hour detentions • Document in student record • Yondr pouch with smart devices locked inside stays in the office for the day and picked up by student at dismissal including Juniors and Seniors with Open Campus privileges.
	3rd Offense	• Student issued In-School Suspension • Document in student record • Yondr pouch checked into the office daily for two weeks - pouch will not be with student during school hours • Parent/Guardian reentry meeting required. (Yondr pouch checked into the office daily until the parent/guardian meeting occurs even if it is beyond the two weeks)
	4th Offense	• Student issued Out-of-School Suspension • Document in student record • Yondr pouch checked into the office daily for the next 30 school days - pouch will not be with student during school hours • Parent/Guardian meeting required. (Yondr pouch checked into the office daily until the parent/guardian meeting occurs even if it is beyond the 30 school days)
	Refusal to use Yondr pouch or Additional Offenses	• Parent/Guardian meeting required • May result in an expulsion hearing

Please note: Students are expected to comply with the consequence(s) issued. The consequence(s) issued must be followed as issued or will be reassigned for the next school day the student is present. Failure to turn a Yondr pouch with devices into the office when requested will result in an automatic in-school suspension. Failure to comply with consequences issued could result in an expulsion hearing.

Detention

Teachers and administrators have the authority to detain students after school hours for infractions of classroom or school rules. Before assigning students to detention, the student will be informed of the reason for the detention, and the student will be given an opportunity to explain his/her version of the incident. A 24-hour notice is required before the detention is served, unless agreed upon by the parent/guardian.

The detention will not begin until the parents/guardians have been notified. All students detained for disciplinary purposes will be under the direct supervision of a member of the professional staff or a person designated by the building administrator. Students in detention are expected to use the time constructively. Students who fail to serve a scheduled detention may be subject to additional disciplinary measures, such as additional detentions or suspensions. Students may not use the late bus for transportation after a detention.

In-School Suspension (ISS)

In some cases, the principal may assign ISS. ISS is meant as a serious consequence to refocus the student and protect the learning environment without sending the student home (which often feels like a reward for the student). To help ensure compliance during an ISS, students may earn the opportunity to rejoin school activities at the end of the day if they have met expectations during the ISS (including an ISS assignment). Staff will attempt to submit work to the office for students in ISS, and the office will handle delivery.

Out of School Suspension (OSS)

Out of School suspension is administered for serious school offenses. Also, repeated violations of lesser offenses may result in this form of suspension. The length of suspension will be determined by the school administration and will reflect the offense committed. Parents or guardians will be notified in writing of the action taken. It is the student's responsibility to make arrangements with individual teachers to make up all work and tests missed during the suspension. While on OSS, students are ineligible to attend any school functions or be on school grounds, home, or away.

Emergency Forms

A personal record form is to be filled in at the beginning of each school year by the parent or guardian and returned to the office. This form provides necessary information for emergency use. The information is vital to the personal welfare of each student. Changes in employers' telephone numbers, email addresses, addresses, etc., must be kept current to safeguard the personal welfare of each student in an emergency.

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](#)

In order to promote the health and safety of all students and staff and to promote the cleanliness of all facilities, the Board prohibits smoking and the use of all other tobacco products, including smokeless tobacco products and products resembling tobacco products such as the e-cigarette, in school buildings, facilities and on school buses during school-sponsored events and at all other times on school grounds by all persons, including students and employees. This means no tobacco use at any time, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, by anyone on school property or at any school-sponsored functions.

In addition, students are further prohibited from possessing, selling, distributing, or dispensing tobacco products in school buildings, facilities, and on school grounds and buses during school-sponsored events and at all other times. Offenses are tracked throughout the student's career in RSU 56.

First Offense - Student will be suspended for up to 3 days and/or receive 6 weeks of drug cessation program.

1. Parents will be called and notified in writing of the offense.
2. Parents will receive a letter regarding cessation programs available for their child and will receive information as to how they may provide additional support for their child to quit smoking.
3. The student will be referred to the school social worker and other school personnel as deemed necessary.

At the initial appointment the student will be provided with the following:

- Information regarding tobacco use;
- A list of agencies and/or clinics where assistance can be found or referrals to appropriate outside agencies;
- Information regarding an age-appropriate cessation program.

Second Offense - Students will be suspended for up to 5 days.

1. Parents will be called and notified in writing of the offense.
2. The social worker will meet with the student and provide the following:
 - Referrals to appropriate outside agencies;
 - Attendance at a cessation program and/or a referral for further medical assistance regarding addiction.

Subsequent Offenses - Students will be suspended for ten days and referred to the Superintendent and/or the School Board for possible expulsion.

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.

First Offense for alcohol or drug possession/use shall result in out-of school suspension up to ten days. Drug infractions will require a re-entry meeting with the parent, building administrator, and the Superintendent.

Second Offense of alcohol or drug possession/use shall result in an out-of-school suspension and a disciplinary hearing with the School Board. Offenses are tracked throughout the student's career in RSU 56.

School Emergency Evacuation Procedures/Fire Drills/Lockdown

Dirigo Middle School has a prescribed set of procedures for emergency evacuations and lock-downs. Students will be made aware of these procedures, and the procedures will be practiced throughout the school year. During any evacuation or lockdown, students are expected to obey all commands and requests of staff while following the ALICE protocols.

Lockers and Backpacks

Lockers are school-owned property and will be assigned to students at the beginning of the year. Students will be expected to use only the lockers assigned to them. As these are school-owned lockers, students should have no reason to expect privacy rights from school officials. Backpacks are not to be brought into classrooms unless permission is given by the Main Office. Backpacks should remain in lockers throughout the day. Students may use their own locks as long as the combination or an extra key is given to the office.

Activity Bus

The RSU #56 The Board of Directors has a policy regarding activity runs. By operating on a strict schedule, activity bus runs allow parents/guardians to pick up their child(ren) at a designated location at an approximate time each day. Students who reside along activity bus routes will be dropped off at their homes; otherwise, they will be dropped off at the stops communicated annually. Students must sign up for Activity Bus spots in advance.

Appropriate Bathroom Use

Students are expected to use the bathroom appropriately, maintaining a clean and safe environment at all times. No more than one student should be in an individual stall at a time. Students are expected to respect the privacy of others while using the restroom. Phones and electronic devices are supposed to be locked in a Yondr pouch throughout the school day. Taking pictures or videos of any kind are prohibited while using the restroom. Students are responsible for throwing trash in the appropriate receptacles and should report any problems or vandalism directly to the main office. Students should not be spending time in the bathroom to socialize. Students who are found to be misusing the bathroom are subject to consequences that follow Board policies stated in this handbook.

Learning Lab Expectations:

The purpose of a Learning Labs is to provide a quiet work environment so students can complete school work with the support of available staff during the school day. It also provides an opportunity for students to participate in activities such as Band, Chorus, etc., without missing “regular” courses.

6th Grade Learning Labs are managed by the 6th grade team and special education case manager.

7th and 8th Grade Learning Labs are primarily managed by support staff with the help of the Principal and Dean of Students. All 7th and 8th grade students will be assigned a location for the Learning Lab by the Main Office. These assignments will be reviewed and updated for each Academic Probation Period. Students who are ineligible will be assigned to an Extra Support Learning Lab. Students who are eligible will be assigned to a Regular Learning Lab. Students may also be scheduled to attend a Special Education Learning Lab or Music class, and these assignments take priority over all others.

Once a student arrives at the Learning Lab, they are to stay in the room. Students have previously used the excuse of being unprepared to gain access to the hallways and avoid responsibility. Teachers may attempt to assist students to get the material they need, however, the students are to stay in the room. Just as with any other class, students are expected to use the classroom sign-out sheet to use the restroom.

Students on task are more likely to contribute positively to a quiet work environment. A student rarely is completely caught up, but if that is the case, they can work on IXL, read a book, or draw. Recreational use of the iPad is NOT PERMITTED. iPad screens should be visible to staff or monitored with Apple Classroom. Regular Learning Labs are permitted to allow their students to enjoy 15 minutes of recreation at the end of the period if behavioral expectations were met during the first 25 minutes. Extra Support Learning Labs may not.

Regular Learning Lab Incentives:

Regular Learning Lab teachers may reward their students with 15 minutes of in-door and calm recreational time. Learning Lab teachers will not have “all fun” days or take students outside. The following recreational options are allowed (so long as students do not need special accounts): online Chess (without chat features), online Sudoku (without chat features), or online Wordle (without chat features).

Bus Rules

The safe transportation of students is a top priority in RSU 56. As such, a student's privilege to use district transportation services is conditional upon his/her behavior and observance of all bus rules. The bus driver and other accompanying adults are in charge and must be shown proper respect at all times. The following rules are to be followed, or students will be subject to the consequences outlined below:

Meeting the Bus:

1. Whether at home or at school, students should be visible and on time when waiting for the bus. The driver will stop for waiting passengers but is not required to wait for students who are running late.
2. Students should not run alongside or around the bus at any time and should wait until the bus has completely stopped before entering or exiting.
3. Students who must cross the road to meet or exit the bus must go in front of the bus and wait until the driver directs them to cross the road.

On the Bus:

1. Nothing is to be hung outside of the bus windows, including hands, heads, and other objects.
2. There is no pushing, shoving, or fighting (verbal or physical) allowed on the bus at any time.
3. Students will not touch the emergency door or roof exits unless directed to by the driver in an emergency situation.
4. Students who vandalize the bus in any way will be responsible for the cost of the damage and may be removed permanently from the bus.
5. Windows can only be opened with permission from the driver.
6. Students are not to shout out the windows or throw anything out of the windows.
7. Students must remain seated at all times and not exit the bus until it has come to a complete stop.
8. Students are not allowed to eat or drink on the bus unless given permission by the driver.
9. Students cannot possess drugs, alcohol, tobacco, or weapons of any kind on the bus.
10. DMS student use of personal electronic devices such as cell phones must not be a distraction to the driver. Students may use the devices only while in their seat and facing forward so that the light emitted from the device does not reflect in the driver's rearview mirror. Students who fail to comply with this expectation will be required to stop using and put away their device.

Arrival at School:

1. Students are to report directly to the school or student waiting area.
2. Students are NOT allowed to leave school grounds once they have arrived unless a school staff member grants permission.

Students violating these rules will face consequences from written warnings to a suspension from school and removal from the bus. Incidents such as fighting, insubordination, drug & alcohol offense, or multiple minor offenses will result in the student being removed from the bus for a minimum of three days and face potential additional disciplinary actions such as detention or suspension. Any student removed from the bus is responsible for finding their own transportation to/from school. Bus passes for social reasons are prohibited.

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

The following dress code expectations will be observed and enforced at Dirigo Middle School:

- A. Articles of clothing that promote the use of tobacco, marijuana, alcohol, other drugs or paraphernalia may not be worn on school grounds (when school is in session) or at school functions.
- B. Clothing, footwear, insignia, or accessories that are intended to identify the wearer as a member of a particular gang are prohibited.
- C. Articles of clothing with displays that are sexual, vulgar, lewd, or indecent or include insulting words, graphics or symbols (e.g., racial/ethnic slurs) are impermissible.
- D. Clothing that inappropriately exposes one's body parts, or inappropriately exposes one's cleavage, chest, belly, buttocks, or undergarments for both males and females:
 - 1. The lowest part of the neckline of shirts must meet the top of the armpit.
 - 2. Sides of shirts must meet the armpit.
 - 3. Shorts and/or skirts must always fully cover the butt.
 - 4. Strapless garments are prohibited.
 - 5. Torn clothing must not expose skin above the short/skirt level.
- E. Clothing that is destructive of school property (e.g., cleats, spiked or studded clothing, pants with metal inserts that scratch furniture, etc.) are prohibited.
- F. Bare feet or stocking feet are prohibited.
- G. Hoods and other similar types of head or face coverings may not be worn in any school building when school is in session, except for religious/other reasons as approved by the principal.
- H. Clothing with confederate flags is prohibited at all times.
- I. The wearing of hats and caps shall be determined by individual teachers within their classrooms.

Staff may require special clothing for health and safety reasons for students participating in physical education, certain extracurricular activities, work with or around machines or other activities. No brand may be required.

Consequences for not complying with the dress code shall be administered as determined by the building Principal, using guidelines including but not limited to: An opportunity to remedy the violation by changing clothes or adding a garment if possible, a warning to not wear a particular article of clothing to school again, contacting the parent, time spent in the office, and in instances of repeat offenses or rude behavior, detentions, suspensions and other serious consequences may be administered.

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." Hazing shall be prohibited at all times. The full RSU #56 policy regarding Hazing is available online.

Harassment, Sexual Harassment, Bullying, and Cyberbullying: 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](#)

Harassment of students because of race, color, sexual orientation, religion, ancestry or national origin, or disability is prohibited. Such conduct is a violation of board policy and may constitute illegal discrimination under state and federal laws. The following behaviors are prohibited:

1. Bullying;
2. Cyberbullying;
3. Harassment and Sexual Harassment (as defined in board policy ACAA);
4. Retaliation against those reporting such defined behaviors; and
5. Knowing and false accusations of bullying behavior.

Any person who engages in any of these prohibited behaviors that constitute bullying shall be subject to consequences. The full RSU 56 policies and definitions regarding these topics can be found on the RSU 56 website. The full policy is distributed in paper copies to all students at the start of the year.

Dance Expectations

Dances have always been well attended with good student behavior. However, if the need arises, students who cannot behave will be asked to leave. In order to hold a dance, the following guidelines must be followed:

1. Dances are from 6:30 PM-9:00 PM.
2. Dates for dances are to be cleared with the building principal and a Fundraising Request Form.
3. School dress code and rules will be followed. If the dress code is not followed, the student will change his/her clothes if possible. If no clothes are available, a chaperone will call an emergency contact and stay with the student until a ride home is available.
4. If other rules are broken, a chaperone will call an emergency contact and have the student leave the dance.
5. A student must attend school and not have an unexcused tardy on the day of the dance, or he/she will not be admitted.
6. No one will be admitted after 7:00 PM.
7. Once a student leaves the building, he or she will not be allowed to re-enter or attend the next dance, and the parent/guardian will be called.
8. All students must be picked up by 9:15 PM, or they will not be allowed to attend the next dance.
9. The semi-formal dance held in the spring may have different restrictions and rules as determined by the administrator.
10. Unless exceptions are made by the building principal, students must be academically eligible to attend dances at TWKDMS.

In order to bring a guest, TWKDMS students must submit a written request to the building principal. Forms are available in the office, and they must be turned in by the Wednesday before the dance. Guests must be in grades 6, 7, or 8.

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.

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 disruptions of school operations, the placement of a bomb or of a "look-alike" bomb on school premises will be considered a threat for the purpose of this policy. The full policy is available in the appendix of this document.

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

The School Board believes that students and staff are entitled to learn and work in a school environment free of violence, threats and other disruptive behavior. Students, school staff, volunteers, and visitors are expected to conduct themselves with respect for others and in accordance with Board policies, school rules, and reasonable unwritten behavior expectations, and applicable state and federal laws.

Students are prohibited from engaging in behaviors that make the school environment unsafe and are required to abide by the policy linked below. A student who accidentally brings a dangerous or prohibited item to school must immediately notify the office and surrender the item to avoid serious consequences.

Outdoor Guidelines

While outside the building before school, at lunch, or while waiting for a bus at the end of the day, students must remain visible within the designated supervised area. Teachers and students planning to hold class activities outside of the school building and/or off school grounds need prior approval from administrators. Students must also respect the property of the area residents.

Emergency Procedures

TWKDMS is a certified ALICE school. ALICE is a protocol and acronym for Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, and Evacuate as an emergency response. TWKDMS trains staff and students following the ALICE guidelines, and conducts drills (including drills in conjunction with the Oxford County Sheriff's Office, Oxford County Emergency Management, and other local agencies and district departments). The TWKDMS Comprehensive Emergency Plan is reviewed annually and approved by the School Board, as well as shared with law enforcement and other appropriate agencies. ALICE training and drills NEVER "pretend" in a manner that would make students believe there is a threat. We use age-appropriate and well communicated protocols to prepare our school without intimidating our students. Additional information is available upon request by contacting the office, as well as available on the district website www.rsu56.org.

All exterior doors are locked during school hours and we request that community members refrain from walking in the immediate vicinity of the school building during school hours.

School Services

Food Service

TWKDMS offers a choice of healthy meals each school day. All students will have free breakfast and lunch available to them this school year. All meals are served to meet nutrition standards established by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

TWKDMS will participate in the USDA FFVP program during the 2025-2026 school year. Fresh fruits and vegetables will be offered throughout the school year. These may be offered mid-morning at no charge to your child. DMS also maintains a modest “food closet” with the support of local food banks. If you are in need, please simply call the office for more information.

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

Students with a diagnosed communicable disease or with symptoms of a communicable disease or an undiagnosed skin rash will be temporarily excused from school. The parent/guardian or emergency contact will be notified and asked to take the student from school whenever possible. While the student is waiting at school, the student will be isolated from other students.

Students who have a fever of 100 degrees or higher, are experiencing vomiting, or have diarrhea, will be sent home. Students returning to school after a diagnosed communicable disease should be symptom-free for at least 24 hours unless the primary care provider provides written documentation approving school attendance before symptoms have abated.

TWKDMS will support efforts to provide outside healthcare services only with parental permission. For example, we often host a traveling dental clinic and parental consent is required before services are given.

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 must be given at home, not at school. School personnel will dispense no 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 their original container by the student's parent/guardian. Students shall not be permitted to carry and self-administer prescription 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.

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.

Social Work Services

The school social worker provides in-building social work services to assist students in getting through the day, improving social skills when appropriate, and providing informal recommendations upon request. The school social worker will not venture into providing “therapy,” although assistance with referrals is available upon request. Students must have a pass to visit the social worker during school hours.

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.

Dirigo Middle School hosts an annual “pre-use informational meeting” for parents and guardians during Open House prior to devices being available for home use. Students also receive an annual “pre-use” presentation regarding internet safety and technology expectations during the school day prior to device distribution for in-building use. Devices are only distributed to students for in-building use after all of the necessary paperwork has been completed and submitted to the Main Office. Parents and Guardians may request students to have limited or zero access to devices by contacting the Principal.

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

Extra and Co-Curricular Activities

Athletics

Students may participate in extra-curricular activities while abiding by all RSU 56 policies, including [JJIF - Management of Concussions](#). The following sports programs will be held during the school year: soccer, girls' basketball, boys' basketball, Unified basketball, wrestling, softball, baseball, field hockey, cross country, Nordic skiing, and track & field.

Eligibility: See [JJJ - Eligibility for Participation in Co/Extra Curricular Activities](#)

A student's primary responsibility in school is to be successful in schoolwork and related studies. TWKDMS monitors all students. In order to participate in co/extracurricular activities (including school dances), scrimmages, exhibition games, ungraded performances, or co-curricular competitions, students **must be passing all subjects** to be eligible.

First Trimester Eligibility Schedule		
Check & Warning Notices	Deadline for Clearance	Ineligible Academic Probation Period **
Monday, September 14, 2026	Friday, September 18, 2026	2:25 pm 09/18/26 thru 2:25 pm 10/02/26
Monday, September 28, 2026	Friday, October 2, 2026	2:25 pm 10/02/26 thru 2:25 pm 10/16/26
Tuesday, October 13, 2026	Friday, October 16, 2026	2:25 pm 10/16/26 thru 2:25 pm 10/30/26
Monday, October 26, 2026	Friday, October 30, 2026	2:25 pm 10/30/26 thru 2:25 pm 11/13/26
Monday, November 9, 2026	Friday, November 13, 2026	2:25 pm 11/13/26 thru 2:25 pm 11/24/26
Second Trimester Eligibility Schedule		
Check & Warning Notices	Deadline for Clearance	Ineligible Academic Probation Period **
Monday, December 14, 2026	Tuesday, December 22, 2026	11:45 am 12/22/26 thru 2:25 pm 1/15/27
Monday, January 11, 2027	Friday, January 15, 2027	2:25 pm 01/15/27 thru 2:25 pm 1/29/27
Monday, January 25, 2027	Friday, January 29, 2027	2:25 pm 01/29/27 thru 2:25 pm 02/12/27
Monday, February 8, 2027	Friday, February 12, 2027	2:25 pm 02/12/27 thru 2:25 pm 03/05/27
Monday, March 1, 2027	Friday, March 5, 2027	2:25 pm 03/05/27 thru 2:25 pm 03/12/27
Third Trimester Eligibility Schedule		
Check & Warning Notices	Deadline for Clearance	Ineligible Academic Probation Period **
Monday, March 29, 2027	Friday, April 2, 2027	2:25 pm 04/2/27 thru 2:25 pm 04/16/27
Monday, April 12, 2027	Friday, April 16, 2027	2:25 pm 04/16/27 thru 2:25 pm 05/07/27
Monday, May 3, 2027	Friday, May 7, 2027	2:25 pm 05/07/27 thru 2:25 pm 05/21/27
Monday, May 17, 2027	Friday, May 21, 2027	2:25 pm 05/21/27 thru 2:25 pm 06/04/27
*Tuesday, June 1, 2027	*Friday, June 4, 2027	2:25 pm 06/04/27 thru 2:25 pm final day
<i>* Depends upon the number of snow days. ** Probation Periods are designed to be the closest possible equivalent to two full school weeks, therefore some the Probation Periods include more calendar days due to a school vacation not counting as part of that period. Once a student has failed to meet a clearance date they are on probation for two weeks as a consequence and may not travel with their team or compete - But they can practice in middle school. Ineligible students may not participate in Reward Wednesday activities unless special permission is granted by the principal.</i>		

Eligibility Process

The Main Office will run a “grade pull” every-other Monday (or the closest day), and print off an Eligibility Warning Notice for every student with a failing course grade. Students will receive Eligibility Warning Notices before the end of the same day. The Dean of Students will also contact the home via ReachMyTeach. Students have until 2:25 the day before the Clearance Deadline to submit any work they hope to have graded to influence their eligibility status. Teachers must prioritize grading assignments that will impact eligibility.

The typical days of the week for the Eligibility Check process are below.

- Monday morning 8:00 am: Grade Check
- Monday afternoon: Eligibility Warning Notices delivered, contact home by Dean of Students using RMT
- Thursday: 2:25 pm Deadline for students to submit work for teacher grading
- Friday: Clearance Deadline
 - Students must return signed Eligibility Warning Notices for Clearance by 12:00
 - Ineligible students are then on academic probation

Academic probation’s consequence lasts the full period regardless of grade changes, until the next cycle.

Co-Curricular Activities

- **8th Grade Class:** The 8th-grade class fundraises and plans class events as the start of the class activities that will continue throughout high school. Interested students should speak with Mrs. Hutchinson.
- **Band and Chorus:** This is open to anyone who would like to join during period 7 or 8 every day on a rotating basis. Interested students should speak with Mr. Hamalainen.
- **Civil Rights Team:** Interested students should speak with Mrs. Cyr and/or Mrs. Finnegan.
- **Drama Club:** Drama is open to anyone who wants to join. There is an application. Interested students should speak with Mrs. Sara Thurston until advisors have been hired.
- **Craft Club:** An arts and craft club that will also involve community members willing to share their talents. Interested students should speak with Mrs. Sara Thurston until an advisor has been hired.
- **Strategy Club:** This is a club that meets twice a month to play chess, strategic role-playing games (RPG), practice debate skills, and just have fun. Interested students should speak with Ms. Skillin.
- **Student Council:** Student Council focuses on putting on school dances and other fundraising events throughout the school year. These funds are used to support events such as Mt. Blue Day and Field Day. Students must run and be elected to participate in Student Council. Interested students should speak with Mrs. Cyr.
- **Technology/Robotics Club:** Technology is open to anyone who wants to join. Interested students should speak with the advisor Mrs. Boucher-Ladd.
- **Yearbook Club:** Assist with the production of the school yearbook. Please see Ms. Dority.

Fundraising: See [JJE- Student Fundraising Activities](#)

All student fundraising activities must be pre-approved in advance by the building administrator and the athletic director. There shall be sufficient benefits to the school and/or students to justify the fundraising activity. All fundraising activities must provide a service, product, experience, or opportunity.

Library

TWKDMS's library is the research center for the school. The following rules ensure its efficiency.

1. The library is a quiet place for reading, browsing, studying, and research.
2. Food, drink, or gum is not allowed in the library.
3. Most books may be signed out for a two-week period.
4. Some books may circulate overnight only.
 - a. These should be returned before the first period of the next day.
5. Overdue books should be returned or renewed.
 - a. Overdue books are checked on a monthly basis. Students will be billed for lost books.
6. Using the library is a privilege that may be revoked at any time a student behaves irresponsibly.
7. Parents with questions may contact the Principal.

Pest Management of School Grounds

Pests can pose significant problems to people, property, and the environment. Pesticides pose similar risks. Children spend a great deal of time in schools and face a greater potential for health effects resulting from pest and pesticide exposure. By reducing reliance on pesticides and incorporating low-risk control options, Integrated Pest Management (IPM) reduces both pests and pesticide risks. It is, therefore, the policy of this school to apply IPM techniques for controlling pests in school buildings and on school grounds.

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.

Third-Party Complaints Concerning RSU 56 Personnel

RSU #56 welcomes and encourages your interest and participation in education matters. The RSU #56 Board and Teacher Association have outlined procedures to follow to ensure that all complaints and criticisms are handled in a timely and satisfactory manner. For further information, please contact Mr. Long.

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 or are serving in a substitute role for an open position.

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

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