

Student Rights, Responsibilities & Code of Conduct

2026-2027



WORCESTER
COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

www.worcesterk12.org

SCHOOL DELAYS, EARLY DISMISSALS & CLOSINGS INFORMATION

DECISION MAKING - Inclement Weather

The WCPS Transportation Department continuously evaluates the weather conditions to ensure that roads to and from school are safe for transporting students. Based on information provided by law enforcement, emergency services, on-road evaluations, and weather forecasts, a decision may be made to delay the opening of schools, to close schools early, or to keep schools closed for an entire day. (Note: Virtual learning may be utilized following the exhaustion of built-in inclement weather days. Visit our website for more.)

Every effort will be made to post delay and/or closing information to the notification channels below by 5:30 a.m. Please keep in mind that sometimes the decision must be made later, due to rapidly changing conditions. Delay and/or closing information should be posted no later than 6:30 a.m.

NOTIFICATION CHANNELS

Worcester County Public Schools has established the below means of distributing information in the event of a school delay, early dismissal or closing.

Thrillshare Notification

WCPS utilizes Thrillshare, an automated calling and text messaging system, to send registered parents notifications. If you are not registered for Thrillshare, or need to update your contact preferences, please contact the main office of your child's school.

Social Media

Follow WCPS on the following social media channels to receive notifications:

Facebook: fb.me/WorcesterSystem

Instagram: [@WorcesterSystem](https://www.instagram.com/WorcesterSystem)

Website

Notifications will be posted to the county website, www.worcesterk12.org, on the homepage.

Mobile App

Inclement weather notifications will be pushed to mobile app users in real time. To download the app, search "Worcester County Schools" in the Apple or Google Play in the app stores.

Local Television Stations

The following television stations will run WCPS notification announcements on the air and will post to their websites:

WBOC - 16, www.wboc.com

WMDT - 47, www.wmdt.com

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POLICIES, PROCEDURES & GUIDELINES

A policy is a statement that both reflects the Board of Education's vision for Worcester County Public Schools and creates a framework within which the Superintendent and staff can carry out their assigned duties. Policies are adopted by the Board of Education during general meetings.

Procedures are written by the Superintendent or designee. Procedures delineate the specifics about how policies are implemented on a day-to-day basis.

The online Policy & Procedure Manual is divided into seven main sections:

- I. Organization
- II. Instruction
- III. Personnel
- IV. Students
- V. Business and Transportation
- VI. Physical Facilities
- VII. General Administration

Some of the information in this handbook is a summary of, or excerpt from, policies and/or procedures. In any dispute, the official language of the policy in effect at the time of the incident will supersede the language in this document.

Worcester County Public Schools policies can be accessed through the website at www.worcesterk12.org. For more information, contact the Board of Education Office at 410-632-5000.

ATTENDANCE & ADMISSION

Compulsory Attendance - Policy IV-A-03

Each child who resides in the state of Maryland and is five years old on or before September 1 of the current school year and through age 18 shall attend a public school regularly during the entire school year unless the child is otherwise receiving regular, thorough instruction during the school year in the studies usually taught in the public schools to children of the same age or the child is exempted under Maryland State Board of Education regulations.

Early Admission – Policy IV-A-01

According to the Maryland State Department of Education policy and guidelines, students entering pre-kindergarten must be four years old by September 1, 2026, students entering kindergarten must be five years old by September 1, 2026, and students entering first grade must be six years old by September 1, 2026. Parents may request an exemption to this policy by submitting a written request for consideration to the Chief Academic Officer. For more information, you may contact the Board of Education office at 410-632-5000.

Kindergarten Waiver

All children in the state of Maryland who will be five years old by September 1, 2026, are required to attend kindergarten. This state mandate does, however, permit alternatives to attendance at a regular public or private school kindergarten. If you do not wish to have your child attend kindergarten during the next school year, you may request a waiver for one of the following reasons:

- You are providing home instruction (home schooling) for the child;
- You believe a delay in school attendance is in the best interest of the child (Send a letter requesting a level of maturity waiver to the Superintendent of Schools.); or
- You are enrolling your five year old in an alternative program such as licensed child care center, full-time registered family day care or part-time Head Start five-year-old program.

To request a kindergarten waiver, please send a written request to the Chief Academic Officer (grades prek-8) at the Board of Education office.

Residency Requirements/Registration - Policies IV-A-09 through IV-A-10

Any school-age child will be accepted for enrollment in the school of his/her attendance area if he/she:

- Resides with one or both parents or legal guardians and they maintain their residence in Worcester County.
 - Bona Fide Residence & Legal Guardian/Custodian
 - A bona fide residence is defined as the place in which an individual has a settled connection for legal purposes and the place where a person has a true, fixed, permanent home without any present intention of leaving. It is a child's physical place of residence, maintained in good faith, and does not include a temporary residence or superficial residence established for the convenience or the purpose of free school attendance or specific school district attendance.
 - A legal guardian is the person or persons who by court order have been granted and exercise actual, bona fide custody and control over the student. To be recognized as a child's legal custodian, an adult must have a court order signed by a judge. A notarized statement does not satisfy the legal custody requirement. For more information, contact the Office of Student, Family, and Community Connections at 410-632-5089.
- A student who resides with a person other than a parent or legal guardian providing informal kinship care and has been determined to be a bona fide resident of Worcester County by the Superintendent or designee
- A school age student who is emancipated or is 18 years of age or older who has not completed the requirements for high school graduation or a certificate of completion and maintains their residence in Worcester County.
- Disabled students under the standard set forth in the Annotated Code of Maryland, as from time to time amended.
- Students placed in Worcester County residences by a state agency, a licensed child placement agency as provided by the Family Law Article, or a court in a county other than where the child's parent or legal guardian resides as set forth in the Annotated Code of Maryland.
- Students who are determined to be homeless according to the McKinney-Vento Act of 2001.

At the time of enrollment, new residents to Worcester County will be asked to show proof of residency. Proof may include, but is not limited to:

- Home ownership papers (deed, mortgage coupon within the last three (3) months with the parent's/legal custodian's name and physical address);
- Incorporated lease (lease agreement from realty company); or
- Non-incorporated lease agreement (landlord provides a signed, notarized lease agreement verifying that the parent/legal custodian resides at that address); or
- Utility bill that clearly displays the residential address as the service address; a billing address is not sufficient proof of residency.

The burden of producing evidence establishing bona fide residence is on the student or individual acting on behalf of the student. Individual determinations of enrollment eligibility are subject to re-evaluation through the Office of Student, Family & Community Connections. A Pupil Personnel Worker (PPW) may request additional documentation of the physical address. Only a PPW may, after an investigation, accept other forms of proof of residency. If a student changes his/her residence, a new proof of residence is required.

Students whose parents do not reside in Worcester County will not be enrolled tuition-free. Parents/legal custodian of a nonresident student applicant may request a specific school; however, WCPS reserves the right to determine the school of enrollment.

Registration Requirements

At the time of registration, parents or legal custodians must provide immunization records, emergency information, residence information, and information from the previous school. The Maryland Transfer record (SR7 Card) is required for students transferring within the state. A birth certificate and social security card are required for all students entering school for the first time.

Homeless/Students in Transition - Policy IV-A-12

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (Section 725) defines “homeless children and youth” as individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. The term includes:

- Children and youth who are:
 - Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason (sometimes referred to as doubled-up);
 - Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations;
 - Living in emergency or transitional shelters;
 - Abandoned in hospitals; or
 - Awaiting foster care placement.
- Children and youth who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings;
- Children and youth who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and
- Migratory children who qualify as homeless because they are living in circumstances described above.

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act is Title X, Part C of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. This legislation ensures that children and youth experiencing homelessness have full and equal access to an appropriate public education and that they experience success in school. For more information and/or questions, please contact the Department of Student Services at 410-632-5089.

Student Attendance- Policy IV-A-04

The Worcester County Board of Education is committed to ensuring that a quality education is provided for each student enrolled in the school system. Students are required to be in school or be attending a school-related activity each day school is in session. There is a strong correlation among regular attendance, academic achievement, and the completion of school. Regular attendance leads to academic success, the completion of school and the development of students as productive members of society. For these reasons, the Worcester County Board of Education believes it is very important to insist on good attendance.

The following reasons are listed by the Maryland State Department of Education as “Lawful Cause of Absence”.

- Death in immediate family. The local school system shall determine what relationship constitutes the immediate family.
- Illness of a student. The principal shall require a physician’s certificate from the parent or guardians of a student reported continuously absent for illness.
- Court summons
- Hazardous weather conditions which would endanger the health or safety of the student when in transit to and from school.
- Work approved or sponsored by the school, the local school system or the State Department of Education, accepted by the local Superintendent of Schools or the school principal, or their designee as reason for excusing the students.
- Observance of a religious holiday
- State emergency
- Suspension

- Lack of authorized transportation. This shall not include students denied authorized transportation for disciplinary reasons.
- Other emergency or set of circumstances which, in the judgment of the Superintendent or designee, constitutes a good and sufficient cause for absence from school.

The principal or assistant principal will consult with the student and the student's parents or guardian when determining whether or not a student's absence shall be lawful or unlawful in view of the reasons listed.

Parents may certify up to ten (10) student absences due to illness. All absences for student illness beyond the ten (10) must be certified with a physician's certificate. All absences for illness, including those with physician's certificate, are included in the total lawful absences for the school year. Absences beyond the ten (10) that are not certified with a physician's certificate will be unlawful.

Classroom make-up work for lawful absences must be submitted to the teacher within five (5) school days following the student's return to class and receipt of assignments from the teacher. The principal or assistant principal may accept other make-up plans for long-term absence due to unusual circumstances.

Shopwork, laboratory exercises, and participation in class discussion or group work that cannot be made up should not be held against the student unless the student has been absent so often that a meaningful and effective learning experience has not occurred.

High school students, with authorization by the principal, may make up time missed from class. Make-up time for each class period is 90 minutes for semester-long classes and 45 minutes for year-long courses.

Students missing class due to school-sponsored trips authorized by the principal such as field trips, band, athletic, Career Technology Education (CTE), etc., shall be considered present. Students must assume the responsibility for making up missed work. If requested, teachers may require students to complete and/or submit assignments online.

Attendance & Grades- Policy IV-A-05

The Worcester County Board of Education recognizes its responsibility to educate the youth of this county. It also recognizes the responsibility for developing good work habits as well as academic skills. Inasmuch as there is a direct relationship between attendance and grades, the following policy is intended to instill in the secondary school youth of this county the importance of regular and punctual school attendance as a prelude to success in postschool pursuits. Regular school attendance is expected of each student.

1. Students must submit written verification for all lawful absences to the person in charge of attendance on the day the student returns to school. Absences that are not verified on the day the student returns to school will be recorded as unlawful. However, under unusual circumstances, the verification will be accepted later. It is the responsibility of the student and parent to submit verification for lawful absences.
2. The following will be used to determine full and one half day absences. If a student is present:
 - 51%-100%- Present All Day
 - 10%-50%- Present One-Half Day
 - Less than 10%- Absent All Day
3. The official record for daily school attendance shall be the PowerSchool Attendance Program.
4. For a given subject or course at the high school level, five (5) unlawful absences during any one course term shall result in a failing grade. *A semester long course will result in failure at the 5th unlawful absence. A yearlong course will result in failure at the 10th unlawful absence (Sentence provided for clarification).*
5. An "I" (incomplete) may be issued at the end of any marking period for students who have not completed necessary work. Students receiving an "I" must make up designated

assignments within five (5) school days (terms 1, 2, 3) following the last day of the marking period, unless extenuating circumstances exist as determined by the Principal.

Students receiving an "I" in the fourth marking term must make up assigned work prior to June 30th.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM & SERVICES

Adult Education

Maryland LABOR Adult Education Program serves all eligible adult learners within our communities. Our two offerings, Adult Basic Education (ABE) and English As a Second Language (ESL), provide instructional opportunities to increase numeracy and literacy, workforce and career development, and Digital Literacy training. Learners can also prepare to earn their Maryland high school diploma through the successful completion of the four General Educational Development (GED®) Tests. Classes are held virtually and in-person throughout the county, with morning, afternoon, and evening availability to ensure equitable access.

Afterschool Programs

Through funding provided through state and federal program grants and local operating funding, expanded educational opportunities for students to participate in academic intervention and enrichment activities are provided in several Worcester County Public Schools. Through these opportunities, students experience remediation and enrichment using best practices of out-of-school time programs, tutoring models, hands-on project-based learning, arts integration, and more. These are experiences above and beyond regular classroom instruction that are exciting and beneficial for both students and parents. Other goals of the program include rigorous academic support, homework assistance, character education, service learning, and technology enhanced instruction. For more detailed program information, please contact the main office of your child's school.

Early Childhood Education

Early Childhood is defined as birth to age eight; these years are pivotal for setting children on a positive learning trajectory. All of our elementary schools provide Pre-kindergarten, early intervention, and a recipe of ingredients for success.

Judy Centers

The Worcester County Judy Center Early Learning Hub is a comprehensive early childhood and family support program serving children from birth through age five and their families within the catchment areas of Buckingham, Snow Hill, and Pocomoke Elementary Schools. As part of the Maryland State Department of Education's Judy Center initiative, the program works to ensure that every child enters kindergarten ready to learn and thrive.

The Judy Center is not a daycare or childcare program. Instead, it serves as a hub that connects families with early learning opportunities, school readiness programs, family support services, and community resources designed to strengthen children and families.

Services include playgroups, family engagement activities, developmental support, literacy experiences, community outreach, parent education, home visiting, and connections to essential resources such as food, diapers, hygiene items, and health and social services. All activities and learning experiences are intentionally aligned with the Maryland State Department of Education Early Learning Standards to support children's social-emotional, language, literacy, cognitive, and physical development.

Through strong school and community partnerships, the Worcester County Judy Center helps build a coordinated system of support that promotes healthy child development, strengthens families, and prepares young children for lifelong success.

Frog Street Early Childhood Program

Frog Street's Love & Learn Home-Based curriculum is specifically designed to capitalize on the learning opportunities in the home environment. It effectively guides Home Visitors to empower parents, so they can provide high-quality learning experiences to enhance their child's growth and development.

The Frog Street early childhood programs are built on four key cornerstones: early brain development research, intentional instruction, developmental learning domains, and social and emotional development emphasis. The Judy Center offers the Frog Street Program for six months through four year olds.

Final Grading - Policy II-B-08

Worcester County Public Schools recognizes and accepts any and all credits a student earned toward graduation in any other public school in Maryland. Worcester County's policy on grading and reporting is written to comply with the student record requirements as set forth in COMAR 13A.08.02.

Worcester County Public Schools Grade Scales

Elementary	
Grades K-1	Grades 2-5
* = Consistently Demonstrating	A = 90 - 100%
+ = Usually Demonstrates	B = 80 - 89%
/ = Developing	C = 70 - 79%
N = Not Yet Demonstrating	D = 60 - 69%
NA = Not Assessed at this time	F = Below 60%
Secondary	
Grades 6-8	Grades 9-12
A = 90 - 100%	A = 90 - 100%
B = 80 - 89%	B = 80 - 89%
C = 70 - 79%	C = 70 - 79%
D = 60 - 69%	D = 60 - 69%
F = Below 60%	F = Below 60%

Calculation of the final grade for a course

- Grades K-1: Worcester County provides quarterly progress reports and no final grade is recorded.
- Grades 2-5: Final grades are the average of all grades earned during the student's enrollment in the course.
- Grades 6-8: Final grades are the average of all grades earned during the student's enrollment in the course.
- Grades 9-12: According to WCPS Policy II-B-10 Final Exams must be completed in order to qualify for the awarding of high school course credit. All students will take a comprehensive final examination in all grade 9-12 subject areas. Final grades for high school courses consist of two parts;
 1. 90% based on the average of all grades earned during the student's enrollment in the course
 2. 10% from the score on the course final examination

Exceptions and exemptions

1. Students enrolled in high school courses who take state/college/national examinations at the immediate end of the course are exempt from final examinations. Their final course grade will be the cumulative grade in the

course.

2. Upon the recommendation of the teacher and approval of the principal other individual exemptions may occur.
3. Per state law, students taking Biology or Government at the high school level will have their final exam weighted to 20% of their final grade and their cumulative Q2 or Q4 grade weighted to 80%. For these courses, the final exam will be the state created MCAP LMSMIA and MCAP Government assessments.

Online Courses

1. The online teacher will be responsible for assigning grades for online courses. A printed copy of the final grade will be sent to the guidance counselor. The guidance counselor will then record the grade received from the online teacher in Worcester County Public School's student data system.
2. Grades, weighted according to Worcester County Public Schools policy, from an approved online course will be included in the grade point average of the student in accordance with Worcester County Public School's policy.

Dual enrollment

1. Dual enrollment courses that are awarded credit for Maryland high school graduation, are taught by Worcester County school staff, and included in the student's grade point average will follow the same grading policies as all other county courses.
2. Dual enrollment courses taught by faculty of an institution of higher education will follow the grading policies of that institution and will receive elective credit on their high school transcript. These courses will be included in grade point averaging.

Grade Weighting

Worcester County Public Schools Policy II-B-04 (Relevant Sections) establishes the course weighting for high school courses.

WCPS Policy II-B-04 Competency Certification

A. Grade and Course Level Value

The value of a course shall be determined by the grade received and level of difficulty of the course.

1. Grade Value - Grade values shall be:
 - A-4
 - B-3
 - C-2
 - D-1
 - F-0
2. Level of Difficulty
 - Level 1 Courses (College and Career Prep) receive no additional weighting.
 - Level 2 Courses (Advanced College Placement/Dual Enrollment) receive 1 point of additional point to grade value for difficulty.

Attendance factors in student grades

1. K-8- No direct connection between attendance and student final grade.
2. 9-12- Worcester County Public School Policy IV-A-05 establishes attendance requirements for high school courses. Please see Attendance and Grades (WCPS Policy IV-A-05) in this handbook.

Final Grade Appeal Process

1. All final grade changes must be made within 30 school days following the last day of the grading period. For a change of grade for the fourth marking period, the timeline would begin on the first day of school in the new school year.
2. The Coordinator of Digital Learning (Diane Stulz), is the authorized person at the

central office to make grade changes. No school-based personnel is authorized to make grade changes.

3. Documentation that authorized personnel are required to maintain to support the final grade changes must include:
 - Name and signature of teacher requesting grade change;
 - Reason for the grade change;
 - Signature of school principal approving the grade change;
 - Reason for the approval;
 - Date of the approval; and
 - Signature of The Coordinator of Research and Student Information Systems indicating grade was changed in the student information system; and
 - Date of grade change in student information system
4. An annual audit will be conducted by the Coordinator of Research and Student Information Systems to validate compliance with this policy.
5. Appeal procedures for Final Course Grade
 1. A final course grade calculation must be appealed to the teacher of record in writing within 5 working days.
 2. If the dispute is unresolved to the satisfaction of the appellant, it may be appealed to the school principal in writing within 5 days to determine compliance with the final grading policy.
 3. If the dispute is unresolved to the satisfaction of the appellant, it may be appealed to the Superintendent of Schools in writing within 5 days to determine compliance with the final grading policy. The Superintendent of Schools may delegate the inquiry to the Chief Academic Officer to determine compliance with the final grading policy and will issue the final decision within 10 working days.

Home and Hospital Instruction

Home and hospital instruction provides a continuity of instruction to students who are unable to participate in their enrollment due to a physical or emotional condition during the school year. A request for the application of these services shall be made to the student's counseling department at the child's home school. Completed applications and a verification form from a physician must meet all requirements. For more information, visit our Home and Hospital Instruction page on our website.

Pregnant and Parenting Youth - Policy IV-D-11

I. Policy Statement

A. Worcester County Public Schools is committed to providing equity and access for all students in a supportive school environment. Pregnant and parenting students must be allowed to participate in all aspects of the educational program, including all academic, physical, and social components. Pregnant and parenting students must have access to a range of specific activities and policies that govern activities both in and outside of the classroom. These activities include, but are not limited to, excused absences, make-up work, accommodations for instruction, lactation, and designated support staff in the school.

B. Purpose - This policy meets the following requirements:

1. The policy of the Maryland State Board of Education (MSDE) to prohibit gender discrimination of any type in educational programs and activities, including bias against pregnant and parenting students.
2. The United States Department of Education's Regulations implementing Title IX of the U.S. Education Amendments of 1972, Public Law 92-318, codified at 20 U.S.C. § 1681-1688, Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Sex in Education Programs or Activities Receiving Federal Financial Assistance, specifically address legal issues regarding pregnant and parenting students and prohibit disparate treatment of students based on pregnancy, childbirth, false pregnancy, termination of a pregnancy, or recovery from any of these conditions.

To view the full policy, please visit our website www.worcesterk12.org.

Scholastic Recognition

Each school offers recognition to students demonstrating excellence in academic achievement.

Honor Roll will be based on a student's grade point average (GPA) in all quarterly course work. To be eligible for honor roll, a student may not have a grade of "D" or "F" in any subject.

A *Three-Tiered Senior Recognition Program* will be based on the cumulative, weighted grade point average in English, Mathematics, Social Studies, Science, and World Language, including all Advanced Placement/college level courses in Worcester County Public Schools' academic programs. The tier for which a senior may qualify will be determined at the end of the third marking period.

The honor tiers are as follows:

- | | |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| • Summa Cum Laude | 4.05 GPA and above |
| • Magna Cum Laude | 3.90 to 4.04 GPA |
| • Cum Laude | 3.80 to 3.89 GPA |

GPA calculations will be carried out to three decimals (or thousandths) and rounded to two decimals (or hundredths). For example, a GPA of 4.045 will be rounded to 4.05. If a senior qualifies for one of the honor tiers, the designation will be noted on the student's transcript.

WeXL Scholastic Recognition Program

- Worcester County Public Schools recognizes scholastic achievement to:
- Recognize and reward students who excel in scholastic achievement.
- Instill pride in outstanding scholastic achievement.
- Focus attention on the academics and the worth and value of scholarship.
- Provide an incentive to stimulate students to excel in scholastic areas; and
- Promote school and community awareness and pride in outstanding scholastic achievement.

A marking period refers to the end-of-quarter classroom grade, as printed on a student's report card under the quarter column. There are four marking periods in a school year, shown as Q1, Q2, Q3, or Q4 on report cards; students qualify for WeXL with a GPA of 3.0 during Q1, Q2, and Q3. A marking period grade does not include the final course exam or the end-of-course/semester grade. Marking period grades are used to calculate Quarter Weighted GPAs.

WeXL Scholastic Recognition Banquet

A Scholastic Recognition Banquet (also known as the WeXL Banquet) will be held in the late spring of every school year for all high school students who qualify. Each school will form a committee to verify which students have qualified. Above are explanations and requirements of recognition available to students. Letters, pins, and certificates will be presented at the banquet.

Scholastic School Letter

To earn a scholastic letter, a student must maintain a 3.0 Quarter Weighted GPA, with no Ds or Fs in any course, for a range of three consecutive marking periods (Q1, Q2, Q3). This achievement equates to an Honor Roll status or higher. To qualify, a student must be enrolled in at least two major courses (English, Mathematics, Social Studies, Science, World Language, Technology/Business, Computer Science, JROTC or are enrolled in core courses of programs at study at Worcester Technical High School.

Note: Students who transfer from one Worcester County Public School high school to another will "carry" their consecutive marking periods with them and will have the number of eligible-marking periods applied to their new school in our system.

Scholastic Bar Pin

The second time a student earns a 3.0 Quarter Weighted GPA, with no Ds or Fs in any course, for a range of three consecutive marking periods (Q1, Q2, Q3), the student will be presented with a bar pin to be added to the student's letter. A student will continue to earn bars for achieving this standard.

Scholastic Star Pin

To earn a scholastic star pin, a student must maintain a 3.5 Quarter Weighted GPA, with no grade below a B in any course, for a range of three consecutive marking periods (Q1, Q2, Q3). This achievement equates to a Distinguished Honor Roll status. A student will continue to earn stars for achieving this standard.

Consecutive A's Certificate

The same marking periods used to qualify for the Scholastic Recognition Banquet will be used to qualify a student for the Consecutive A's recognition. Consecutive marking period grades are used in this recognition, not end-of-course or semester grades.

School Counseling

Elementary School

Counseling services in the elementary school are available to every child. Each school has a certified counselor who has been trained to assist the elementary school-aged child in the areas of: personal, social/emotional, academic and career counseling. The duties of the counselor may include assisting a new student to adjust to new friends and instructional programs. The counselor is also available to parents wishing assistance or insights into the physical and social growth of their child. In addition, counselors are responsible for college and career readiness education in the early grades, permanent recordkeeping, 504 case management, and the registration of new students.

Middle School

Each middle school has two certified counselors who have been trained to assist the middle school-aged child. This assistance may vary from discussing issues about which the child may be concerned, to planning their ninth grade schedule and a career plan of study. Each spring, the counseling department also helps orient students who will be entering the middle school in September, as well as assisting the high school counselors with rising ninth graders. This is done to ensure a smoother transition from one school to the next. In addition, counselors are responsible for college and career readiness education, permanent recordkeeping, 504 case management, and the registration of new students.

High School

A variety of counseling services are provided in the high school. The need for assistance with the many issues and concerns of the high school student are met by the certified counselors at each Worcester County high school. The assistance may vary from discussing the selection of classes to providing assistance in the application process for work or college. In addition to sharing the same responsibilities as the middle school counselor including 504 case management, high school counselors help orient new ninth grade students.

Confidential Communications In Counseling Relationships

Employees of Worcester County Public Schools who work with students in counseling relationships encounter the areas of confidentiality and privileged communications. The student's welfare and rights are of primary importance and the integrity of the student shall be respected at all times. Professionals who work with students in counseling relationships shall inform students of the limits of confidential communications. When the student's right to confidentiality is outweighed by the need to reveal certain information, the employee will secure the student's consent to disclose whenever possible. Information which indicates any behavior or threat of behavior that is potentially harmful or dangerous to students, others, or the community shall be shared with the student's parents according to county guidelines.

School Psychologist

There is a certified psychologist available for each of the Worcester County Public Schools. The school psychologists are available to evaluate a student's needs on an individual basis. Following the evaluation, the school psychologist will meet with the parents and teachers to explain the results and offer recommendations for a program of instruction that will assist the student in improving academic performance. Counseling is also provided by the school psychologist as needed.

School Social Worker

Many of the Worcester County Public Schools have a School Social Worker available to them. School Social Workers are licensed social workers who have specialized training in mental health, behavioral concerns, positive behavioral support, academic, and classroom support, consultation with teachers, parents, and administrators. School Social Workers are instrumental in furthering the mission that every student achieves academic goals and realizes their own personal successes. School Social Workers emphasize home, school and community collaboration in order to meet student behavioral health needs.

Special Education

Worcester County Public Schools provides special education services for children ages birth through 21 who are identified as having a disability that adversely affects the child's educational performance and requires specialized instruction to address the unique needs of the child. The Individualized Education Program (IEP) Team determines the types of services that will be provided based on the needs of the child.

Students with disabilities are guaranteed a free, appropriate public education. Under certain circumstances, extended school year services are available for students with disabilities, who are found to be eligible for them. Parents of students or pre-school children whom they suspect may have an educational disability should contact the child's school or the Child Find Facilitator at the Board of Education office.

Children under the age of three who are experiencing a delay in development or who have a diagnosed condition that has a high probability of delay, may be eligible for early intervention services through the Worcester County Infants and Toddlers Program. Early intervention services are provided at no cost to families through a coordinated effort by Worcester County Public Schools, Worcester County's Health Department, the Department of Social Services, and other public and private agencies. For eligible children (from age three to the beginning of the school year following the child's fourth birthday), families may choose to receive services through the Individualized Family Services Plan (IFSP) or the IEP option with school enrollment. Referrals can be made by contacting the Child Find Facilitator at the Board of Education.

Title I Programs

Currently, Worcester County Public Schools has three school-wide Title I schools — Buckingham Elementary School, Pocomoke Elementary School, and Snow Hill Elementary School. Designation as a Title I school is based on the economics of the surrounding area. Title I schools receive financial assistance from the federal government to support high-quality instruction and the achievement of students in core academic subjects. Title I funds are used to provide professional development, highly qualified instructional staff, supplemental learning opportunities, instructional materials and activities that promote parent involvement.

FOOD SERVICE PROGRAM

Worcester County Public Schools (WCPS) participates in the National School Lunch, Breakfast, and Afterschool Programs and offers nutritious meals every school day. Both breakfast and lunch service are available at all school locations. School meals offer a variety of food choices and meet nutrition standards established by the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) Program Schools

In the 2026-2027 school year, eight WCPS schools will utilize the federal Community Eligibility Provision to provide all students with school meals at no cost. Current eligible CEP Schools are Pocomoke Elementary, Middle and High Schools; Snow Hill Elementary, Middle, and High Schools; Cedar Chapel Special School, and Buckingham Elementary School.

For schools not certified in the CEP Program, a review of eligibility criteria will be conducted annually throughout the four-year CEP cycle. More information on WCPS's participation in the CEP program can be found at <https://www.worcesterk12.org/o/wcps/page/cep-program>.

School Meal Pricing

2026-2027 school meal prices are as follows: Breakfast \$1.60; Elementary & Middle School Lunch \$2.85; High School Lunch \$3.00; Adult Lunch \$4.50; Student Milk \$0.75. Menus, nutrition information, meal prices and à la carte prices are also posted at www.worcesterk12.org.

*Student meals at CEP schools (above) are at no cost; however, a la carte options are still available for the above purchase price.

Free and/or Reduced Price Meal Eligibility

For the 2026-2027 school year, those students at non-CEP schools who qualify for reduced priced meals will receive meal benefits at no cost as a result of Maryland state funding. Eligibility is typically determined by household size and income. Household Meal Benefit Applications are sent home with each student at the beginning of the school year and are available on the school system website or at www.myschoolapps.com. Parents need to submit only one application per household, each year, if they believe their children qualify for free or reduced-price meals. If you need help completing a Household Meal Benefit Application, have a question about a menu item, or have any other questions regarding the school meal program, please contact the Food Services office at 410-632-5027.

Student Meal Accounts

Each school cafeteria has a computerized debit system which allows parents to deposit money on their child's very own cafeteria account. Students enter their assigned pin number at the cashier's station where meals and à la carte purchases are then subtracted from the student's account. Cash is always accepted, although parents may also make deposits online utilizing the www.myschoolbucks.com website. This site allows you to view your child's account balance, monitor purchases and set up low balance notifications free of charge. However, please note that there is a fee assessed when using this service to deposit funds on to an account.

HEALTH PROGRAM

The School Health Program provides services for students that promote optimum health for academic success. The program promotes the health and safety of students through identification, assessment, planning, implementation and evaluation of the health needs of the school community. Program emphasis is directed toward prevention of disease and promotion of health using health services, health counseling, and health identification.

School Nurses

School nurses provide for the upkeep of student health records, implementation of state-mandated immunization programs, periodic hearing and vision screening, and day-to-day services to students who experience health problems during the school day. The school nurses also perform a liaison service with the Health Department and consult with parents, teachers, and administrators regarding actual or potential student health problems.

Immunization: It's the Law

According to COMAR 10.06.04 and Maryland DHMH School Health Services Regulations, a

school administrator may not knowingly admit or retain a student without proper documentation of age-appropriate immunity against vaccine preventable diseases, or evidence of an appointment, within 20 calendar days, to obtain the required vaccines.

Students will not be allowed to attend schools effective (Day One) Monday, August 31, 2026, if the required documentation (vaccination record or proof of appointment) is not provided. Proof of upcoming appointment must be provided to the school nurse on or before the first day of school. All appointments for vaccines must occur within the first 20 days of the school year, and a completed vaccination record should be provided to the school nurse immediately following the appointment.

Please see Immunization Chart on the next page.

Medication for Student During School Day – Policy IV-D-01

When possible, medications should be given before or after school. We recognize, however, that there are some students who have medical needs that require prescribed medications during the school day. The administration of medication to students in school is a service offered to promote wellness and decrease absenteeism. When there is a need for this service, safe and proper administration is essential.

- The school must have complete written directions on the appropriate form from prescribing medical provider.
- All medication must be in the original prescription container, clearly labeled with student's name, time and amount of medication to be taken.
- All medications should be brought to the school nurse by the parent/guardian or responsible adult. Students should not bring in their own medication unless authorized to self-carry.

Please direct your inquiries regarding medication administration to your child's principal or school nurse.

Medical Authorization

Each year, schools ask parents to update the emergency information for their children. Please report changes or updates to your child's school at the beginning of the school year and as they occur throughout the year.

The emergency form that is distributed by schools includes a provision for parents to authorize schools to contact the child's physician when efforts to contact the parents are unsuccessful. Confidential information for health room personnel is also requested. Please be sure to list all medications and/or medical concerns or problems so that the school staff may be able to promptly and properly assist your child. Parents are encouraged to sign the authorization statement at the bottom of the form and return it to the child's school. In the event of an emergency, this form will be copied and sent to the hospital with your child.

Telehealth Appointments During School Day – Policy IV-D-13

Worcester County Public middle and high schools will provide appropriate space and internet connectivity during the school day to parents/guardians and their students in grades 6 -12 to access telehealth services in accordance with Md. Code Ann., Educ. Art. §4-143:Telehealth on a space available basis.

Parents/guardians and students are responsible for:

- Making appointments,
- Attending the telehealth sessions,
- Paying for telehealth services,
- Providing their own internet capable device and,
- Reserving space at the school in accordance with established procedures at each school.



**Vaccination Requirements for Children
Enrolled in Maryland Preschool Programs and in Schools (Grades K-12) (Rev 4/9/2026)**
— Per [COMAR 10.06.04.03](https://comar.leg.state.md.us/10.06.04.03)

Instructions: To determine the required number of vaccinations for a student, first locate the student's age or grade on the chart. Then, read across the chart from left to right. **Please refer to page 2 for the footnotes and compliance rules.** For more information, visit the Maryland Department of Health [Back-to-School website](https://mdh.maryland.gov).

Required cumulative number of doses for each vaccine for PRE-SCHOOL aged children enrolled in educational programs							
Vaccine	DTaP/DTaP/DT ^{1,6}	Polio ²	Hib ³	Measles, ^{2,4} Mumps, Rubella	Varicella ^{2,4,5} (Chickenpox)	Hepatitis B ²	PCV ³ (Pneum ^{1,7})
Child's Current Age							
Less than 2 months	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
2 - 3 months	1	1	1	0	0	1	1
4 - 5 months	2	2	2	0	0	2	2
6 - 11 months	3	3	2	0	0	3	2
12 - 14 months	3	3	At least 1 dose given after 12 months of age ³	1	1	3	2
15 - 23 months	4	3	At least 1 dose given after 12 months of age	1	1	3	2
24—59 months	4	3	At least 1 dose given after 12 months of age	1	1	3	1
60 - 71 months	4	3	0	2	1	3	0

Required cumulative number of doses for each vaccine for children enrolled in KINDERGARTEN - 12th grade							
Grade Level (Ungraded)	DTaP/DTaP/DT ^{1,6}	Tdap ⁶	Polio ²	Measles, ^{2,4} Mumps, Rubella	Varicella ^{2,4,5} (Chickenpox)	Hepatitis B ²	Meningococcal (MCV4)
Kindergarten & Grades 1, 2, 3, 4 5, & 6	3 or 4	0	3	2	2	3	0
Grades 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, & 12	3 or 4	1	3	2	2	3	1

**Vaccination Requirements for Children
Enrolled in Maryland Preschool Programs and in Schools (Grades K-12) (Rev. 4/9/2026)**

FOOTNOTES

1. If DT vaccine is given in place of DTP or DTaP, a physician documented medical contraindication to the pertussis-component is required.
2. Proof of immunity by positive blood test is acceptable in lieu of vaccine history for hepatitis B, polio, and measles, mumps, rubella, and varicella, **but revaccination may be more expedient.**
3. Due to the widespread use of combination products for the primary series of childhood vaccines, the 12–15-month dose-of Hib containing vaccine should be assessed after the 15-month doctor's visit. Hib and PCV (Prenar™) are not required for children older than 59 months (5 years) of age.
4. All doses of measles, mumps, rubella, and varicella vaccines should be given on or after the first birthday. However, upon record review for students in preschool through 12th grade, a preschool or school may count as valid vaccine doses administered less than or equal to four (4) days before the first birthday.
5. Two (2) doses of varicella vaccine are required for students entering Kindergarten, 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th grades and for previously unvaccinated students 13 years of age or older. Medical diagnosis of varicella disease is acceptable in lieu of vaccination. Medical diagnosis is a documented history of disease provided by a healthcare provider. Documentation must include month and year.
6. Four (4) doses of DTP/DTaP are required for children less than 7 years old. Three (3) doses of tetanus and diphtheria containing vaccine (any combination of the following — Tdap, DT or Td) are required for children 7 years of age and older.
7. Polio vaccine is not required for persons 18 years of age and older.

Students attending telehealth appointments in the school will continue to be counted as present for attendance purposes. Students will be provided the opportunity to make up worked missed during telehealth appointments as an excused absence from class.

Worcester County Public Schools is not responsible for missed or interrupted appointments due to technical failures, school emergencies, or school closures.

Definitions

- Telehealth - A mode of delivering health care services through the use of telecommunications technologies by a health care practitioner to a patient at a different physical location than the health care practitioner.
- Parent/Student Initiated Telehealth - Telehealth services between a student or parent and a health care practitioner external to a school when the LEA has no formal agreement with the health care practitioner to provide services to its students.

Implementation Guidelines

A. Each Worcester County middle and high school principal will identify at least one space for use for telehealth in the school that:

- Is private and safe
- Allows for confidential conversation between a health care provider and parent/guardian and their student
- Has internet access
- Includes at least one seating option
- A flat surface and a nearby electrical outlet to accommodate placement of a laptop device
- Is not a bathroom or closet

B. Each Worcester County school with students in grades 6-12 will have a designated contact who will be responsible for coordinating the use of the designated telehealth space in each school on a first come first served basis when it is available.

C. Parents/guardians must attend all telehealth appointments of their students unless the student is emancipated or 18 years old.

D. Telehealth space must be reserved by the parent/guardian at least 10 days in advance of the desired telehealth appointment date. Telehealth space in the school is not guaranteed even if the student has already made a telehealth appointment with their health care provider.

STUDENT DRESS CODE

A student's dress and grooming are the responsibility of the student and his/her parents. It is hoped that students and their parents will exercise discretion and good taste in selecting school apparel. School personnel may counsel with those who display extreme styles of dress or grooming.

The school reserves the right to exclude items of apparel or accessories which prove to be harmful or detrimental to the health, safety, or physical well-being of students, damaging to physical facilities, or disruptive to normal school activities.

Statements on clothing not appropriate for school wear are listed below. This list is not intended to be all-inclusive but should provide an understanding of appropriate school dress.

- Student clothing should be clean, neat, and fit properly.
- Clothing should be worn appropriately and not reveal undergarments.
- Clothing and personal adornments that are prohibited include those that contain profanity, or offensive content, promote the use of alcohol, cigarettes, drugs or illegal activities and clothing that creates a distraction or interferes with normal school activities.
- Clothing and personal adornments that cause damage to floors, furnishings and school property are prohibited.

- Flip flops, slippers, or shoes worn with laces untied and other clothes that are a safety hazard are prohibited.
- Inappropriate clothing includes halter, tube or tank tops, excessively tight clothing, clothing that exposes the midriff, and shorts and skirts which do not cover the leg to the mid thigh.
- Hats, visors, caps, or sunglasses must be removed when in the building.

STUDENT RECORDS

Student Records/Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

Student records may be sent to other schools or institutions without parental permission if/and/ or when students transfer into or out of our school system. The student records regulations set forth in COMAR (Code of Maryland Regulations) states that local school systems or educational institutions may disclose personally identifiable information from student records without the written consent of the parent or legal custodian of the student or the eligible student if the disclosure is to other school officials who have been determined by the system or institution to have legitimate educational interests.

The primary rights of a parent under FERPA are:

- The right to inspect and review education records;
- The right to seek to amend education records;
- The right to have some control over the disclosure of information from the education records. If a parent wishes to inspect, review or amend a student's record(s), the parent must make an appointment to meet with the school principal and/or his/her designee.

Parents/Legal Custodian Rights Under FERPA

Parents/legal custodians have a right to file a complaint with the Family Policy Compliance Office (FPCO) in the U.S. Department of Education at www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpcor or 400 Maryland Avenue, SW Washington, DC 20202 regarding non-compliance with the above requirements.

STUDENT TRANSPORTATION

School Vehicle Transportation

The Board of Education provides safe transportation for all elementary, middle, and high school students who live more than one mile from their school or for those students who face hazardous walking conditions. School vehicle drivers undergo a thorough initial training program and continue with in-service training each school year. In addition, vehicle drivers are required to meet health and driving record standards. Each vehicle is thoroughly safety tested and inspected according to guidelines set by Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration.

Digital Video Recorders on School Buses

All school vehicles have been equipped with state-of-the-art digital video recorders (DVRs). The DVRs provide our drivers and school administrators with monitoring enhancements to ensure the safe transportation of all students. The digital monitoring system is able to record at night, provides expanded visibility, is temperature resistant, and records in color.

The DVR equipment is not intended to circumvent the responsibility of the bus driver to manage student behavior and maintain a safe atmosphere on the bus. The digital recordings will provide additional information to school administrators:

1. to resolve situations that the bus driver does not witness;
2. to resolve accusations against a bus driver made by a student or parent;
3. to clarify events that the bus driver did not witness in their entirety; or
4. to provide information to support the investigation of an accident involving a school bus.

The conditions regarding the persons who may view the taped information, the specific segments of a tape that may be viewed, and procedures for viewing taped information are determined by the Superintendent of Schools.

Parent/Guardian Guidelines

To contribute to making school transportation a positive, safe, and welcoming place for all, parents/guardians will:

1. Be responsible for the actions and safety of their children prior to the school vehicle arriving at the stop in the morning and after the school vehicle leaves the stop in the afternoon. The Board of Education authority to control behavior of students begins when students are on the school vehicle.
2. Have children at the assigned stop or crossing point five (5) minutes before the scheduled arrival time of the bus in the morning and prior to the approximate drop off time. Walk with or take very young children to the stop in the morning and meet the school vehicle in the afternoon. If this cannot be done, it is recommended that arrangements be made with an older student sibling or family friend to escort younger children to and from the stop.
3. Help their children establish good citizenship habits in respecting the property and the rights of persons who live near the stop or on the walking route to the stop. Also, please discuss good habits in respecting the property of other students on the school vehicle and school vehicle equipment. Parents/guardians may be held responsible for reimbursement for damage to school vehicle and personal property.
4. Examine the route from home to the stop to ensure the safety of children. The route should be as direct and uninterrupted as possible, taking into consideration the flow of vehicular traffic in the area. Children should be instructed to go directly to and from the stop, without crossing dangerous obstacles or passing through isolated areas. Students should be expected to walk the same distance to the bus stop as students who are not eligible for transportation – one (1) mile. Train children to be aware of potential dangers in current society from strangers who may offer things to children and who have bad motives for associating with children.
5. Dress children according to the weather conditions and visibility conditions to be comfortable and safe while going to and from the stop and while waiting for the school vehicle in the morning. In all conditions, the children must be able to see clearly and must be clearly seen by vehicular traffic.
6. Check local radio and television broadcasts on days when weather conditions are questionable. The WCPS hotline and or WCPS web site for announcements of the delayed opening or closing of schools. The announcements begin as early as 5:30 a.m. and no later than 6:30 a.m.
7. May request a change of school vehicle assignment for their children by contacting the Manager of Transportation. The circumstances will be evaluated, and approval will be granted if all the following conditions are met:
 - a. A compelling reason exists for the change in assignment that will be in the best interest of the student.
 - b. Adequate seating is available on the requested school vehicle or on the vehicle that is routed nearest the current stop.
 - c. The student will use an existing stop. The route will not be extended to provide this service.
8. May request transportation to or from a site other than the assigned stop nearest the student's legal residence. Service will be provided if all the following conditions are met:
 - a. A note signed by the parent that states the student's name date and requested destination must be approved by the signature of an administrator of the school the student attends.
 - b. Adequate seating is available on the requested vehicle.
 - c. The student is let off the bus at the regularly assigned stop nearest the requested destination. The route will not be extended, or extra stops made to provide this service.

Student Guidelines

To contribute to making school transportation a positive, safe, and welcoming place for all, students will:

1. Follow rules and regulations approved by the Board of Education. Riding in a school vehicle is a privilege that may be withdrawn for misconduct or behavior which jeopardizes the

safe operation of the vehicle, or which infringes on the rights of other students.

- a. Always follow directions given by the driver who is responsible for your safety. If a street must be crossed, stand 10 feet in front of the bus, and wait until the driver indicates by P.A. System that it is safe to cross! Students must not cross divided highways!
- b. Student safety is the top priority. Do not stand or play in the roadway while waiting for the vehicle.
- c. Be on time at the stop. Plan to be at your assigned stop five minutes early for pick up and drop off. The school vehicle cannot wait for late students.
- d. All student riders will be assigned an appropriate vehicle and stop.
- e. Student riders must get on and off at their assigned stop. If a student rider wishes to get on or off at any other stop, a written request must be approved by a school administrator.
- f. All student riders will be assigned a seat by the school vehicle driver. Students will be responsible for maintaining the assigned seat and will be held accountable for damages to the seat. Students who intentionally damage the vehicle will also be subject to disciplinary action and parents may be responsible for damages.
- g. Passengers should remain seated at all times. Do not extend arms and/or heads from the windows. No objects should be thrown out of the windows.
- h. Help us keep the vehicle clean by refraining from eating or drinking onboard. Food and drinks should be kept in a lunchbox and/or brown bag. Pencils, crayons, and any other pointed objects needed for school must be kept in book bags or notebooks.
- i. Large items, such as band instruments, must be held and cannot be put in aisles or under seats.
- j. During bus evacuation drills or emergency evacuations, follow directions given by the driver and student monitors.
- k. Safety of the school vehicle and the students and staff on the vehicle are of highest importance, and any behavior that threatens either may result in the denial of the privilege to ride.

Student Drivers

The Board of Education of Worcester County recognizes that there are some students in the high schools who may need to drive or ride in an automobile to school on a full-time or part-time basis. In the interest of conservation and safety, the Board strongly discourages students driving to school; however, they will be permitted to drive if a Student Driver Application is completed by the student, parent, and principal.

Student Driver Applications, listing procedures and rules for student drivers, may be obtained at any Worcester County high school. It should be understood that the privilege to drive to school may be denied if the procedures and rules are violated.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Use of Buildings - Policy VII-B-01

The public school facilities in Worcester County shall be devoted primarily to curricular, co-curricular and extracurricular programs. However, the use of public school facilities for community purposes shall be encouraged provided they are open to the public and when such use will not interfere with regular school sessions or bona fide school activities.

The following groups may apply for use of school facilities:

- Nonprofit organizations recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as 501(c)(3) organizations or similar organizations, or
- Profit-making organizations

The Worcester County Board of Education reserves the right to determine what constitutes a profit-making organization and a nonprofit organization.

A reasonable fee for the use of WCPS facilities may be charged. The person who applies for the use of the facility will be held responsible for all damage to the property, other than normal wear and tear. Once approved, commitments will not be canceled for an activity of higher priority except as determined by the principal or the Superintendent of Schools.

Application forms are available in each school's main office.

ASBESTOS ACT OF 1986

The Asbestos Hazard and Emergency Response Act of 1986 requires a notification of "Asbestos Management Plans" in all schools (whether they contain asbestos or not). Our Asbestos Management Plans for each school comply with all federal and state regulations. The plan for each school includes re-inspections every three years, as well as the surveillance of all schools every six months in order to monitor the conditions of known or assumed asbestos-containing building materials.

The inspections continue to show that all our facilities are in compliance with all regulations. As schools are renovated, asbestos-containing building materials are removed completely and no asbestos is used in the construction of new schools. Ensuring a healthy and safe learning and working environment continues to be a top priority for our school system.

A copy of any school's Asbestos Management Plan is available to individuals by writing to Sam Slacum, Worcester County Board of Education, 6270 Worcester Highway; Newark, MD 21841.

Integrated Pest Management

Worcester County Public Schools is committed to providing young people with a safe school environment. In an effort to protect the health and safety of all students, an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program is used to control insects and other pests in and around school buildings. The goal of the IPM program is to eliminate the use of chemical pesticides by conducting frequent inspections to identify conditions conducive to pest invasion, to ensure early detection of pest presence and to monitor infestation levels. As a first step in pest control, the IPM approach employs a number of preventative strategies and alternatives to pesticide application, such as: employee education, source reduction, inspection and identification of potential problem areas, and improved sanitation. Chemical pesticides are used only as a last resort.

Plant growth in cracks and along edge areas in sidewalks and driveways around schools are controlled by manual or mechanical weeding and filling cracks to prevent future growth. When these efforts are not successful, areas are sprayed by a licensed pesticide applicator using Roundup Pro at times when students and staff are not in the school.

In the event it is necessary to use a chemical pesticide, all students, parents and staff in the school where an application is made will be notified in writing at least twenty-four hours before the pesticide is applied. If a chemical pesticide must be applied in an emergency situation as defined by Maryland law to be "... a sudden need to mitigate or eliminate a pest which threatens the health or safety of a student or staff member," written notification will be sent to all students, parents and staff of the school within 24 hours of the emergency application.

The following pesticides and bait stations, by common name, may be used by the IPM contractor whenever it becomes necessary to chemically control pests inside of and around school buildings: deltamethrin, abamectin, pyrethrins, fipronil, polybutylenes, and cypermethrin.

Any questions regarding the Worcester County Public Schools' Integrated Pest Management program should be directed to Sam Slacum, Maintenance and Operations Manager at the Worcester County Board of Education, 6270 Worcester Highway; Newark, MD 21841. You may also call 410-632-5010.

A description of the Integrated Pest Management program is maintained in each school and includes a pest inspection schedule, results of past inspections and actions taken to control pests. Material Safety Data Sheets and product labels for each pesticide and bait station used in or around any school will be maintained in the Maintenance Manager's office at the Board of Education complex. Persons wishing to review this information should contact Sam Slacum, at 410-632-5010, to arrange an appointment.

STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT: GUIDELINES FOR A SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

The Worcester County Board of Education strives to establish and maintain a safe environment conducive to learning and to keeping students enrolled and attending school so that they may graduate. These guidelines apply to students, school staff, administrators, parents/guardians, and community partners. All stakeholders will contribute toward making school a positive, supportive, safe, and welcoming place for all students and staff. These expectations apply while on school property, on a school bus or when involved in or attending school-related activities, including school-sponsored events, field trips, athletic functions, or any other activity.

Guidelines contribute to making school a positive, supportive, safe, and welcoming place for all, the below are committed to the following:

Students

1. Be respectful and courteous to all people and property.
2. Actively participate in classes, conferences, activities, interventions, and programs.
3. Contribute to positive, trusting relationships with peers and adults.
4. Acknowledge when behaviors impact others and engage in a restorative process.
5. Immediately report known threats or concerns to a trusted adult.

School Staff

1. Be respectful and courteous to all people and property.
2. Communicate and model behavior expectations routinely and equitably.
3. Acknowledge and reinforce positive and appropriate conduct by students.
4. Contribute to positive, trusting relationships with students, families, colleagues, administrators, and community stakeholders.
5. Actively participate in training and professional development.
6. Immediately report known threats or concerns to building principal or designee.

Parents/ Guardians

1. Be respectful and courteous to all people and property.
2. Communicate and support behavioral expectations for a productive learning environment.
3. Partner to form positive, trusting relationships with school staff, administrators, and community stakeholders.
4. Prioritize regular school attendance.
5. Support active participation in classes, conferences, activities, interventions, and programs for your child.
6. Immediately report known threats or concerns to building principal or designee.

Administrators

1. Be respectful and courteous to all people and property.
2. Communicate and model behavior expectations routinely and equitably.
3. Acknowledge and reinforce positive and appropriate conduct by students and staff.
4. Contribute to positive, trusting relationships with students, families, staff, colleagues, and community stakeholders.
5. Actively participate in training and professional development.
6. Research, plan, and implement training and professional development for self and staff.

7. Address student behavior in a way that promotes academic and social success.
8. Ensure that WCPS Policies and Procedures are followed by staff and community stakeholders.
9. Immediately respond to reported threats or concerns as defined in WCPS Policy VII-D-07 and Procedures.

Community Partners & Contractors

1. Be respectful and courteous to all people and property.
2. Partner to form positive, trusting relationships with students, school staff, administrators, families, and community partners.
3. Implement best practices in your field when supporting students, families, and school staff.
4. Adhere to WCPS's policies and procedures.
5. Immediately report known threats or concerns to building principal or designee.

Supports and Interventions for Student Behaviors

Worcester County Public Schools (WCPS) is committed to ensuring a safe and supportive environment for all students. This begins with fostering an environment with systems that aim to prevent behaviors that violate the code of conduct. When a student's actions interfere with the environment, students are provided supports and interventions related to the behavior.

Supports and Interventions include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Classroom-based supports
- Restorative Practices (Classroom-based, Specialist-based, etc.)
- Peer Mediation
- Conflict Resolution
- Conferencing
- Parent Outreach
- Referral to Appropriate Substance Abuse Education and/or Counseling as appropriate
- Referral to Office of Student, Family and Community Connections
- Referral to Health/Mental Health Services
- Check-in with School Counselor/Designated Staff Member
- Behavioral Contract
- Community Service
- Referral to Community-based Organization
- Detention
- Removal from Extra-Curricular Activities
- Temporary Removal from Class
- Mentoring
- Functional Behavior Assessment/Behavior Intervention Plan
- Referral to Proactive Intervention Process
- Active Alternative to Recess

Response to Student Violation of Behavior and Discipline Policies

This section of the handbook outlines behaviors requiring disciplinary action and the range of consequences for such behaviors. Violations could result in suspension or expulsion depending upon the seriousness of the behavior or potential harm. A principal may suspend a student for less than 11 days and determine whether the suspension may be served in school. The Superintendent or designee may expel a student or suspend a student for more than 10 days if the Superintendent/designee has determined that the student poses an imminent threat of serious harm to others. A student who is expelled, or receives an out-of-school suspension, is not permitted to be on any school property or to attend any activity on school property. A student who violates this policy may be charged with trespassing.

The professional staff at a school has the responsibility for taking appropriate actions when a student is involved in a situation which disrupts the safe and supportive learning environment. When determining the consequences, the administrators should take the following into consid-

eration:

- The severity of the incident
- A student's previous violations and/or consequences for the same or a related offense
- If the offense interfered with the responsibility, rights, or property of others
- If the offense posed a threat to the health or safety of others
- If the student has an Individualized Education Plan or a 504 Plan
- The logical relationship between the offense and the consequence
- The age-appropriateness of the consequence
- Any specific consequences articulated in the Board of Education Policy

BEHAVIOR PROMPTING REFERRAL AND RANGE OF CONSEQUENCE(S)

Note: Consequences will be applied in a graduating fashion when appropriate.

Infractions Resulting in a Recommendation of Expulsion

Range of Consequences: Confiscation, Law Enforcement Notification, Out-of-School Suspension, Expulsion

1. Attack on school employee or any adult on school property
2. Use of weapon, or an instrument used as such, on any person
3. Sale or distribution, or attempts to sell or distribute, alcohol or illegal drugs
4. Possession of a firearm
5. Threats of violence

Infractions Against Another Person

Range of Consequences: Student Warning/Conference, Parent Notification/Conference, Exclusion from Class (Time-Out), Detention, In-School Suspension, Saturday/Night School, Out-of-School Suspension, Law Enforcement Notification, Program Modification, Expulsion

1. Attack on others
2. Disrespect, profanity, or abusive language directed at another person
3. Defamation
4. Fighting
5. Indecent exposure
6. Sexual harassment
7. Continuous disruptive behavior
8. Extortion
9. Bullying, harassment, or intimidation to include but not limited to sexual, racial, religious, bullying, hazing, teasing, and cyberbullying
10. Persistent or disruptive defiance/disrespect of a teacher or administrator
11. Verbal or physical threat to students, teachers, staff, or others
12. Gang-related activities
13. Sexual harassment or sexual attack
14. Creating or participating in a disturbance by creating audio or video recordings without consent

Infractions Against Property

Range of Consequences: Range of Consequences: Student Warning/Conference, Parent Notification/Conference, Exclusion from Class (Time-Out), Detention, In-School Suspension, Saturday/Night School, Out-of-School Suspension, Law Enforcement Notification, Program Modification, Restitution

1. Theft
2. Trespassing on school property
3. Maliciously cutting, defacing, or otherwise damaging school or personal property

Infractions With Weapons

Range of Consequences: Confiscation, Law Enforcement Notification, Out-of-School Suspension,

Program Modification, Expulsion

1. Possession of dangerous weapons or any object intended as such, including any object which is a look-alike

Infractions Involving Drugs, Alcohol, Tobacco

Range of Consequences*: Confiscation, Parent Notification/Conference, Law Enforcement Notification, Saturday School (Health Department), Out-of-School Suspension, Program Modification, Exclusion from Extracurricular Participation for 90 days, Expulsion

1. Use or possession of alcoholic beverages, products containing cannabis**, illegal drugs, look-alike substances, paraphernalia (including electronic smoking devices/vapes), or misuse of prescription and over the counter medications
2. Possession and/or use of tobacco products
3. Use, possession, sale or distribution of alcoholic beverages, products containing cannabis, illegal drugs, look-alike substances, paraphernalia, or misuse of prescription and over the counter medications

*If the violation occurs during a student's senior year, the student shall be excluded from graduation exercises.

**WCPS policy on Administration of Medical Cannabis in School states "when circumstances do not allow medical cannabis to be given at home to maintain therapeutic levels, the administration of medical cannabis to qualifying students in schools, at school-sponsored activities, or on a school bus, must be facilitated in accordance with school health guidelines based on standards established in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Education Article, §7-446... Medical cannabis may not under any circumstances be administered by means of smoking or vaping." IV-D Health, Wellness, and Nutrition Administration of Medical Cannabis In School IV-D-12

Infractions Concerning Public Safety

Range of Consequences: Fire Marshal or Law Enforcement Notification, Out-of-School Suspension, Program Modification, Expulsion

1. Arson
2. Possession, sale, distribution, or detonation of explosive devices
3. False alarms/Bomb threats
4. Possession or use of mace or pepper spray
5. Threats that impact public safety

Infractions That Disrupt Operation of School

Range of Consequences: Confiscation, Student Warning/Conference, Law Enforcement Notification, Parent Notification/Conference, Exclusion from Class (Time-Out), Detention, In-School Suspension, Saturday School (Health Department), Out-of-School Suspension, Program Modification

1. Inciting other students to create a disturbance
2. Gambling
3. Pornographic materials
4. Conduct which is determined to be detrimental or disruptive to the efficient operation of the school
5. Dress code violation
6. Unauthorized sale, possession or distribution of items not otherwise specified
7. Inappropriate use of electronic devices
8. Sexual activity

Infractions of Academic Dishonesty

Range of Consequences: Exclusion from Class (Time-Out), Detention, In-School Suspension, Saturday/Night School, Out-of-School Suspension, Program Modification, No Credit on Assignment

1. Forgery
2. Cheating
3. Plagiarism

Infractions That Violate the Communication Device Policy

Range of Consequences: Confiscation, In-School Suspension, Out-of-School Suspension, Police Notification, Program Modification, Student Warning/Conference, Parent Notification/ Conference, Detention, Exclusion from Class (Time-Out)

1. Unauthorized or inappropriate use of a cell phone, electronic device, or other communications device during the school day or school activity, including use of devices on school transportation vehicles (Inappropriate use includes, but is not limited to, the creation of audio or video recordings without consent.)
2. Unauthorized or inappropriate use of social media, which includes the various online technology applications that enable people to communicate easily over the Internet to share information and resources (Social media can include text, audio, video, images, podcasts, and other multimedia communications)

BULLYING, HARASSMENT & INTIMIDATION POLICY - IV-C-09

I. Policy Statement

A. Worcester County Public Schools are committed to providing a safe, productive, and inclusive learning environment. Schools should be places where students are surrounded by caring adults who encourage students to treat others with kindness and empathy, while helping to build a relationship-focused, welcoming, supportive school environment fostering academic and personal growth for every student.

B. Bullying problems are symptomatic of relationship problems best addressed holistically by students, schools, parents/caregivers, and the entire community.

1. Bullying, harassment, or intimidation of any person on school property or at school-sponsored functions or by the use of electronic technology at a public school is prohibited in all Worcester County Public Schools.

2. Reprisal or retaliation against individuals who report acts of bullying, harassment, or intimidation or who are victims, witnesses, bystanders, or others with reliable information about an act of bullying, harassment, or intimidation is prohibited in all Worcester County Public Schools.

C. Purpose

1. This policy is to ensure the right of all students to be free from bullying, harassment, or intimidation.

2. This policy meets the requirements of the Annotated Code of Maryland ED §7-424.1 and Maryland State Department of Education policy guidance.

D. Application to Students

1. Harassment committed by students against students constitutes inappropriate behavior.

2. All allegations will be investigated by the principal or designee.

3. Any student who is found to have violated this policy will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action depending on the severity of the offense.

E. Application to Employees

1. This policy also applies to harassment of students by Board of Education employees. Any employee who is found to be responsible for harassment of a student will be subject to disciplinary action.

2. Any employee having knowledge of harassment of a student who fails to report it will be subject to disciplinary action.

II. Definitions

A. Bullying – is unwanted, demeaning behavior among students that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or is highly likely to be repeated, over time. To be considered bullying, the behavior must be intentional and include: 1) an imbalance of power (students who bully use their physical, emotional, social, or academic power to control, exclude, or harm others), and 2) repetition (bullying behaviors happen more than once or are highly likely to be repeated based on evidence gathered).

B. Cyberbullying – is bullying that takes place over digital devices like cell phones, com-

puters, and tablets. Cyberbullying can occur through texting, apps, or online via social media, forums, or gaming where people can view, participate in, or share content. Cyberbullying includes sending, posting, or sharing negative, harmful, false, or hurtful content about another student. It can include sharing personal or private information about someone else causing embarrassment or humiliation.

C. Harassment – includes actual or perceived negative actions that offend, ridicule, or demean another student with regard to race, ethnicity, national origin, immigration status, family/parental or marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, religion, ancestry, physical attributes, socioeconomic status, physical or mental ability, or disability.

D. Intimidation – is any communication or action directed against another student that threatens or induces a sense of fear and/or inferiority. Retaliation may be considered a form of intimidation.

III. Implementation Guidelines

A. Reporting Acts of Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation

1. Students who believe they have been subject to bullying, harassment, intimidation that occurred during the current school year on school property, at a school-sponsored activity or event off school property, on a school bus, on the way to and/or from school, or through electronic communication on or off school property or who have knowledge of employees or students who may be engaging in harassment, shall report such conduct promptly to the principal or designee or office of the Superintendent.

a. All complaints/reports must be written using the MSDE based (2021) Bullying, Harassment or Intimidation Reporting Form. Copies of this form will be available at the Worcester County Website and in the main office and guidance offices in each school.

b. Students employed by the Board of Education shall report harassment to their immediate supervisor or office of the Superintendent.

c. Retaliation against a student making a complaint in good faith is prohibited.

2. The school should take prompt action to provide notice to parents.

a. The parent or guardian of the alleged targeted student must be notified, within three business days after the date the act is reported.

b. The parent or guardian of the alleged perpetrator must be notified within five business days after the date the act is reported.

3. Grievances that students are not able to resolve informally should be presented in accordance with the provisions of policy I-E-03, Title IX Grievance Procedure Policy.

4. Information obtained from the Bullying, Harassment or Intimidation Reporting and Investigation forms shall be recorded for data collection, stored and submitted as required by Education Article §7-424.1 by Office of Student Family and Community Connection. Summary information will be provided to each school annually.

B. Investigation of Acts of Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation

1. School administration will address incidents that occur at school or have a connection or nexus back to the school setting, that create a risk of harm to other students while they are at school or interfere with the educational environment. The principal or designee shall:

a. Conduct an investigation of an alleged incident using the MSDE Bullying, Harassment or Intimidation Reporting Form, with full consideration of student due process rights.

b. Notify parent/guardian of the victim and offender of the incident. The identity of the complainant, the subject, and witnesses will be protected to the extent possible; though it is recognized that confidentiality can not always be assured.

c. Determine whether the allegations of bullying, harassment or intimidation have been substantiated, alleged perpetrator(s) identified, possible related complaints, and the complainant informed of the finding.

d. The investigation shall be completed within two school days or as appropriate.

ate after receipt of a reporting form.

2. Discussions with all parties should be documented as soon as possible after the event. Any material records or evidence will not be discarded while a criminal investigation or prosecution resulting from the incident is ongoing.

3. Complaints of harassment of a student by an employee will be forwarded to the Superintendent or designee for investigation. The Superintendent or designee shall determine whether the allegations have been substantiated and the complainant informed of the finding.

C. Standard consequences and remedial actions

1. Consequences such as suspensions, expulsions, or protective orders should not be viewed as punishments designed to prevent bullying. Instead, these are means of protecting the victims by providing community containment, while positive behavioral discipline is implemented.

2. Information obtained from the Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation Reporting Form is confidential and may not be redisclosed except as otherwise provided under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and may not be made a part of a student's permanent educational record.

3. Consequences should also include recognition for positive behavior exhibited by the student who has previously exhibited bullying behavior the bullied student who is implementing strategies to offset past problems, and the bystander who has taken an active role in addressing bullying behaviors.

4. Consequences and remedial actions for persons committing acts of bullying, harassment, or intimidation and for persons engaged in reprisal or retaliation and for persons found to have intentionally made false accusations should be consistently and fairly applied after appropriate investigation has determined that such an offense has occurred.

5. The following list of consequences and remedial actions is presented in no particular order and is provided as a guide that by no means limits the school system from implementing other additional consequences and remedial actions.

a. Standard Consequences:

- Time out
- Loss of a privilege
- Verbal reprimand
- Parental notification
- Detention
- Reassignment of seats in class, cafeteria, or bus
- Reassignment of classes
- Reassignment to another mode of transportation
- Reassignment to another school
- Completion of letter of acknowledgment of actions, with apology, to victim. (after review by staff and not in a case of sexual harassment or intimidation)
- Reparation to victim in the form of payment for or repair of damage to possession
- In-school suspension
- Out-of-school suspension
- Extended suspension
- Transfer to an appropriate alternative program
- Expulsion

b. Remedial Actions

- Parent/Student conference
- Counseling with school counselor or school psychologist
- Education about the effects of bullying, harassment, or intimidation
- Behavioral contract
- Positive behavioral supports e.g. functional behavioral assessment; behavioral intervention plan; remediation or problem behaviors that takes into account the nature of the offense, the developmental level

- of the student, and the student's behavioral history
 - Referral to an external agency
 - Participation in counseling (delivered by a school or community mental health provider)
 - Cooperation with a behavioral management program developed in consultation with a mental health professional
 - Satisfactory completion of community service
 - 6. Some acts of bullying, harassment, or intimidation could also be delinquent acts. If the acts are delinquent acts, the acts shall be reported promptly to the responsible law enforcement agency in accordance with the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) 13A.08.01.15.
- D. Interventions and Supports for Students
1. Professional development for school staff on how to respond appropriately to students who bully, are bullied, or are bystanders who report bullying.
 2. Education/intervention for the students exhibiting bullying behaviors will include teaching replacement behaviors, empathy, tolerance and sensitivity to diversity.
 3. Remedial measures designed to correct the bullying behavior, prevent another occurrence, and protect the victim.
 4. Support Counseling
 - a. Conduct separate conferences with the targeted student and offender within two weeks after the investigation to determine whether the bullying, harassment, or intimidation has continued and whether there is a need for further additional interventions or supports. These conferences may occur as part of a counseling intervention.
 - b. A second follow-up conference or conversation will be held with the targeted student four weeks after the initial follow-up conference to determine if the bullying, harassment, or intimidation has ceased. Local school systems will determine which school system staff will conduct the conference.
 5. A continuum of interventions developed to prevent bullying by addressing the social-emotional, behavioral, and academic needs of students who bully in order to prevent further incidents, while taking great care to ensure the safety of the victim.
 6. Utilizing community health and mental health resources for those students who are unable to stop bullying behaviors in spite of school intervention and for those students involved in bullying behaviors as perpetrators, victims, or witnesses whose mental or physical health, safety, or academic performance has been impacted.
 7. Schools will maintain a list of support services for students who have been targets of bullying, harassment, or intimidation. These services should be consistent with the policies and procedures of the Board of Education should be available to students, parents, guardians and staff members.
- E. Prevention and Educational Programs
- This policy recognizes that the prohibition of bullying and reprisal and retaliation against individuals who report acts of bullying, cannot be effective as prevention and intervention methods unless they are included as a part of a whole-school prevention /intervention program. That includes the following:
- a. School-wide evidence-based anti-bullying programs in each school.
 - b. A school climate that promotes student involvement in the anti-bullying efforts, peer support, mutual respect, and a culture which encourages students to report incidents of bullying to adults.
 - c. Collaboration activities with families and the community to inform parents about the prevalence, causes, and consequences of bullying, including its central role as a public health hazard, and the means of preventing it.
 - d. Annual training for students, staff, volunteers, parents, and caregivers on anti-bullying strategies.
- F. Professional Learning
1. At least annual professional development for administrators and all staff to increase awareness of the prevalence, causes, and consequences of bullying and

to increase the use of evidence-based strategies for preventing bullying. Additional professional development may be provided for new employees who are hired after the start of school during the school year.

2. Biennial school/building-specific data collection on the prevalence and characteristics of bullying which shall be used to guide local decision-making related to surveillance, prevention, intervention, and professional development.

G. Communication regarding the availability of the Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation Reporting Form

1. Notice of the policy prohibiting bullying, harassment or intimidation of students will be included in student handbooks, school agendas and reviewed annually with all students.

2. Staff will be informed about the availability of the Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation Reporting Form for use during opening-of-school meetings and then periodically throughout the school year.

3. Students will be assisted upon request in completing the Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation Reporting Form at school.

4. WCPS will publish a description of the use and availability of the Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation Reporting Form in the school's student/parent handbook and in its Code of Conduct. Information may also be included in the beginning of the year packets/handbooks for students and parents/caregivers.

5. The Bullying, Harassment or Intimidation Reporting Form and instructions on its use are available on Worcester County Public School's main website for downloading and in the main (front) office, counselor's office, and other locations

6. WCPS will develop a user-friendly, online platform for students, staff, parents/caregivers, or close adult relative to be able to complete and submit the Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation Reporting Form online.

STUDENT RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES - POLICY IV-C-07

Student Expression

Students have the right to express opinion, to take stands, and to support causes either publicly or privately in an orderly manner that do not harass, threaten, intimidate, or infringe upon the rights of others in accordance with state and federal laws. Students have the right to seek changes in school policies and regulations in an orderly manner by utilizing those acceptable channels provided for this purpose.

Each student must upon request, identify themselves to proper school authorities in school buildings, on school grounds, or at school-sponsored events. Students at school-sponsored, off-campus events shall be governed by school rules and regulations and are subject to the authority of school officials. Students attending school-sponsored activities shall be governed by rules and regulations of the sponsoring school. Students attending school-sponsored events which are partially supervised by law enforcement officers or school deputies are subject to the authority and directions of those officers.

Speech

A student's right to free speech, verbal or symbolic, shall not infringe upon the rights of others. As an intellectual being, every student has a right to search vigorously for truth by examining opposing ideas and to espouse and express in any orderly manner whatever views commend the assent of their mind. Where soundness of their position can neither be proved nor disproved with documentation, they shall in no way be penalized academically for holding those views.

A student's responsibility must include personal concern for the effect of the spoken word or symbolic expression on the personal reputation of others, and a student has the right to have their own personal reputation protected accordingly. Consequently, personal attacks and obscenities are prohibited. *Note:* Conduct by a student in class or out of it, which materially disrupts classwork or involves substantial disorder or invasion of the rights of others is not protected by the constitutional guarantee of freedom of speech.

Petition

Students have the right to present petitions utilizing those channels provided for this purpose. However, the collecting of signatures on petitions shall not disrupt classroom procedures nor interfere with the educational process. Students shall not be subjected to disciplinary measures for initiating or signing a petition providing that the petition is free from obscenities, libelous statements, and personal attack.

Press

School-Sponsored Publications

In a school community, students involved in student publications shall convey information with accuracy and insight in such a manner that truth shall remain predominant. Such publication shall have qualified faculty advisors and shall strive to meet high publication standards. Only materials alleged to contain the following should be withheld from the press:

- Libelous materials as defined below
- Obscenity as defined below
- Materials which should reasonably lead the principal to forecast substantial disruption of a material interference with school activities

The responsibility and authority for decisions based on the standards mentioned above are vested with the principal.

Non-School-Sponsored Publications

Literature may be distributed and posted by students of the school in designated areas on school property with prior approval of the principal and are subject to the same standards as school-sponsored publications.

Definitions

Libel or Libelous Materials

The First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States protects the right of free expression by an individual, either in writing or in speech, on all matters of public or general concern about a person, without regard to whether such person is famous or anonymous, in whom the community and press have a legitimate and substantial interest because of who they are or what they have done. However, a written or oral statement about such a person which is made with "actual malice," that is, with knowledge that it was false, or with reckless disregard of whether it was false, or which was made with a high degree of awareness of its probable falsity, is subject to sanction and is not protected by the First Amendment of the Constitution.

A statement is libelous and not protected by the First Amendment if it is made with "actual malice" and if it tends to expose one to public hatred, shame, obloquy, contumely, odium, contempt, ridicule, aversion, ostracism, degradation, or disgrace, or if it induces an evil opinion of one in the minds of right thinking persons, or if it causes one to be shunned and avoided in society.

Obscene or Obscenity

The average person, applying contemporary community standards would find that it, taken as a whole, appeals to prurient interest. It depicts or describes in a patently offensive way, sexual conduct currently defined by Maryland law. Taken as a whole, it lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value.

Distribution

This means dissemination of literature in any form which is made generally available to students. This includes the posting of literature in areas of a school which are generally frequented by students. The principal will require submission of literature for prior review when there is to be a substantial distribution of literature: 1) so that it can be reasonably anticipated that in a significant number of instances there would be a likelihood that the distribution would disrupt school operations, or 2) in order to determine whether such material is libelous or obscene as

defined in this policy.

Assemblage

Students have the right to assemble peacefully. This right must not be abridged unless it can be viewed as a violation of the rights of others, or a clear violation of statute and legal policies. There is an appropriate time and place for the expression of opinions and beliefs. Conducting and/or participating in demonstrations which interfere with the operation of the school, classroom or basic rights of others is inappropriate and prohibited.

All student meetings in school buildings or on school grounds may function only as a part of the formal education process or as cooperatively established and approved by the principal of the school.

Permission

Participation in events or publications intended to facilitate student expression that occur on school-controlled property, during school events, use school resources, or occur during the instructional school day that is not part of instruction or school sponsored activity must meet the requirements of this document and requires prior permission be requested in writing and be granted by the school Principal or designee.

Dress

Student dress and grooming are the responsibility of the student and their parents, unless some standard of dress and grooming is a reasonable requirement of the school to carry out the educational function. The school has the responsibility to counsel with those who affect extreme styles of dress and grooming.

Privacy

Student Records

Individual student records are to be confidential in nature and access to those records may be granted by the Board of Education or its duly appointed representative only for the purpose of serving legitimate and recognized ends. Records of a student shall be available to that student's parents or legal guardian in conference with appropriate (professional) school personnel.

Access to records by colleges, prospective employers, and other legitimate and recognized agencies shall be made available upon written permission by the parents of the student provided he/she is of legal age (the Board of Education will comply with court orders relative to student records). The transfer of information from one school to another or from one department to another within the same school system without permission does not violate the principle of confidentiality.

Counseling

When a student shall seek information for the purpose of overcoming any form of drug abuse from a teacher, counselor, principal, or other professional educator employed by an approved educational institution, no statement, whether oral or written, made by the student and no observation or conclusion derived shall be admissible against the student in any proceeding.

Search and Seizures

Police officers, upon the authority of a search warrant, may make a search of that part of the school premises described in the search warrant, and school officials should cooperate in performing such services. Investigative searches of school premises by police officers shall only be permitted upon the authority of a search warrant or in any case where the search is essential to prevent imminent danger to the safety or welfare of the student or other persons or school property. Such search shall not include a student's assigned locker unless specified in the search warrant.

Every effort shall be made to conduct searches in a manner which will minimize a disruption of the normal school routine and minimize embarrassment to students affected. In no case may

a police officer search the person of a pupil not under arrest, unless the police officer has a reasonable suspicion that such pupil is concealing a weapon which poses a danger to others, but under no circumstances shall a school official conduct such a search of the person at the request of a police officer. Authorized school officials may at any time conduct such searches as are essential to the security, discipline, and sound administration of the particular school, but are limited as stated above whenever the search is in connection with a police investigation.

Arrests

When possible and appropriate, arrest by police should be made during non-school hours and away from the school premises. When an arrest on school premises during the school hours is necessary, the responsible school official shall ascertain such facts from the arresting officer as will enable him to fully advise the parent or guardian and other school officials of the nature of the charge, the identity of the arresting officer, and location of the student.

When an arrest has taken place on school premises or during school hours, every effort shall be made by the school officials to inform the parent or guardian immediately and thereafter promptly to advise the Superintendent's office. Arrest on school premises during school hours shall be effectuated in such a manner as to avoid both embarrassment to the student being arrested and jeopardizing the safety and welfare of other pupils.

Questioning on School Premises

School officials shall not permit the questioning of a student under arrest on the school premises and shall request the arresting officer to remove the student from the premises as soon as practical after the arrest is made. Police investigations involving the questioning of students shall not be permitted on school premises unless in connection with a crime committed on the premises or in connection with an investigation which if not immediately permitted would compromise the success of that investigation or endanger the lives or safety of the students or other persons, provided however, that a school official should be present throughout that questioning.

Whenever investigative questioning of students is permitted on the premises, the school official should promptly advise the parent or guardian and the Superintendent's office of the nature of the investigation and such other details as may be required. In the absence of an arrest, school officials shall not authorize the removal of a student from school for the purpose of investigative questioning without the consent of the parent or guardian.

Non-Discriminating Practices

Membership and participation in school-sponsored activities must be open to all students. In no instances may there be any restrictions based on race, creed, color, sex or economic condition. No student may be denied participation in any activity for any reason other than those established by State and/or County eligibility requirements and those requirements legitimately related to the purpose of the activity.

Student Grievances / Appeal of Denials

Each student has the right to appeal in writing any decision which impinges upon any right outlined in this document, to the school principal or designee. School principal decisions may be appealed in writing to the superintendent of schools or designee, and superintendent decisions may be appealed to the Board of Education. In the event that further appeal is necessary, said appeal may be directed to the State Board of Education.

Patriotic and Religious Exercises

It is the responsibility of the school to protect the students' religious and political freedoms.

Patriotic

The school shall provide opportunities for the student to demonstrate his patriotism by such expressions as the flag salute and other patriotic exercises. Students who can demonstrate that

participation in patriotic exercises is objectable to the religious order to which they subscribe, shall stand, but not be required to actively participate in the patriotic exercises. Students who do not actively participate in patriotic exercises shall not, by word or symbolic gesture violate the rights of those participating in these exercises.

Religious

Each student has the right to practice their own religious belief so long as they do not violate either the constitutional rights of others or the Supreme Court's prohibition of a school's extending the mantle of public sanction or support to any particular religion. Each student shall have the right to investigate, study, discuss, and analyze religious ideas, beliefs, and customs in the same manner as any other subject in the curriculum.

A moment of silence is observed each morning for meditation in all schools.

The previously stated rights in no way should be construed as approving acts of disrespect or interfering with participation by others.

Student Governance & Extra-Curricular Activities

Each student has the responsibility and the right to participate in student government organizations in order to provide all students with a voice in school affairs and an open channel of communication with the faculty and the school administration. Recommendations made to the administration by the student government shall receive a response within a reasonable period, giving specific reasons in case the recommendations are not adopted or are substantially modified.

Qualifications for holding office shall be determined by the student government in accordance with prescribed eligibility requirements.

Students shall be encouraged to form and participate in a variety of extra class organizations as a means of broadening their educational experiences. Pupil organizations that conduct activities on school premises must be authorized to do so by the principal and must have approved adult supervision.

School clubs and/or organizations shall not be permitted to use the school name or participate in activities outside the normal realm of the school community unless prior permission has been granted by the appropriate school authorities.

SCHOOL, FAMILY & COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

A child's education is a responsibility shared by the school, family, and the community. In Worcester County, parents, community persons, businesses, and civic organizations are encouraged to become involved in the schools. Our schools will only reach educational excellence when there is a joint effort of citizens, organizations, parents, and businesses working together. The following are some of the many ways our schools, families, and communities work together to educate our children.

Parent-Teacher Association

Parent-Teacher Associations (PTA) are a vital part of the schools in Worcester County. This group meets in each school to discuss progress and the needs of their individual school. The PTA provides more than a dialogue between school and community. It is a support group for staff and students. Members work hard to raise funds which provide many of the "extras" Worcester County students enjoy. Teachers, too, reap the benefits of this group on such occasions as "Teacher Appreciation Day." Following business meetings of the PTA, parents may meet with teachers to discuss the progress of their child.

School Improvement Advisory Committee

Each year, a group of parents and community members are selected to serve on a School Improvement Advisory Committee (SIAC) for the school. Together, this committee and the school staff work to develop school goals, promote the school and its educational activities, and develop community participation within the school. The committee will place special emphasis on multi-cultural activities and promote the school and its educational activities within the community. The committee listens to parents and teachers in order to make recommendations for equipment, materials of instruction, and other concerns that will further develop the educational quality of that school.

School Improvement Team

Each school has School Improvement Teams (SITs) for Safety, Literacy, and Mathematics. Members of the teams include school administrators, teachers, and a Central Office liaison. The role of each SIT is to develop a cohesive School Improvement Plan (SIP) by:

1. Reviewing data, including attendance, behavior, school survey results, literacy, and mathematics data, to conduct comprehensive root cause analyses and needs assessments.
2. Developing annual and cyclical goals to drive improvement initiatives.
3. Crafting action steps that include staff development activities and school-based procedures aligned with industry best practices.
4. Collaborating with stakeholders to ensure that a diverse array of voices is heard and represented in the SIP. This inclusive approach involves soliciting input from parents and families during the school's School Improvement Advisory Committee (SIAC) meetings. During these meetings, the team reviews data, conducts root cause analyses, and presents action steps to gather feedback aimed at strengthening the plan.
5. Monitoring, evaluating, and revising the SIP throughout the academic year to ensure its relevance and effectiveness in addressing evolving needs and challenges.

Volunteer Program

The schools of Worcester County believe that community members offer a valuable resource to students. Therefore, each year these schools are reaching out into the community to find those persons dedicated to volunteering their time and talents to help. At times, this help is in the classroom, providing additional reinforcement of a skill. Some volunteers bring unique experiences and/or artifacts to share with the students. Whatever the volunteer brings, however, it enriches the lives of Worcester County students. For more information on volunteering in our schools, please contact the main office of the school in which you would like to volunteer.

Other School - Community Organizations

Each school in the county also has various organizations and committees which help to meet the unique needs of the school. Some of these include: Classroom Parents, Athletic Boosters, Band Boosters, Prom Committee, After Prom Committee, Craft Committees, and Art Committee. The schools and school system have partnerships with Worcester County businesses and civic/community organizations.

RESOURCES AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

***211 Maryland**

Need help? Get Connected. Get Answers. *2-1-1 Maryland connects you to health and human service resources in your community 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, in over 180 languages.

Worcester County Health Department

6040 Public Landing Road | Snow Hill, MD 21863
p: 410-632-1100 | f: 410-632-0080
w: www.worcesterhealth.org

Worcester County Department of Social Services

P. O. Box 39 | 299 Commerce Street
Snow Hill, MD 21863 | p: 410-677-6800
f: 410-677-6810 | w: www.dhs.maryland.gov

Department of Juvenile Services

203 River Street | Snow Hill, MD 21863
p: 410-632-0206 | f: 410-632-1527
w: www.djs.maryland.gov

Local Management Board and Local Care Team

P. O. Box 129 | Snow Hill, MD 21863
p: 410-632-3648

Crisis Hotlines

Life Crisis Center - 410-749-HELP (4357)
Maryland 211 - 2-1-1 press 1
Maryland Crisis Hotline - 800-422-0009
National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 9-8-8
Crisis Text Line - Text HOME to 741741

SCHOOL DIRECTORY

Buckingham Elementary	100 Buckingham Road Berlin, MD 21811	Dr. Danielle Jackson	410-632-5300
Ocean City Elementary	12828 Center Drive Ocean City, MD 21842	Ms. Julie Smith	410-632-5370
Pocomoke Elementary	2119 Pocomoke Beltway Pocomoke, MD 21851	Ms. Melissa Freistat	410-632-5130
Showell Elementary	11318 Showell School Road Berlin, MD 21811	Mr. Ryan Cowder	410-632-5350
Snow Hill Elementary	515 Coulbourne Lane Snow Hill, MD 21863	Dr. Erica Matlock	410-632-5210
Cedar Chapel Special	510 Coulbourne Lane Snow Hill, MD 21863	Ms. Belinda Gulyas	410-632-5230
Berlin Intermediate	309 Franklin Avenue Berlin, MD 21811	Dr. Amy Gallagher	410-632-5320
Pocomoke Middle	800 Eighth Street Pocomoke, MD 21851	Dr. Joseph Stigler	410-632-5150
Snow Hill Middle	522 Coulbourne Lane Snow Hill, MD 21863	Mr. Joshua Hamborsky	410-632-5240
Stephen Decatur Middle	9815 Seahawk Road Berlin, MD 21811	Ms. Theresa Torpey	410-632-3400
Pocomoke High	1817 Old Virginia Road Pocomoke, MD 21851	Dr. Jenifer Rayne	410-632-5180
Snow Hill High	305 S. Church Street Snow Hill, MD 21863	Mr. Leland Green	410-632-5270
Stephen Decatur High	9913 Seahawk Road Berlin, MD 21811	Mr. Thomas Sites	410-632-2880
Worcester Technical High	6290 Worcester Highway Newark, MD 21841	Mr. Tony Bevilacqua	410-632-5050
Worcester County Public Schools	6270 Worcester Highway Newark, MD 21841	Dr. Annette Wallace Superintendent of Schools	410-632-5000

Title IX Coordinator

Any person may report sex discrimination, including sexual harassment (whether or not the person reporting is the person alleged to be the victim of conduct that could constitute sex discrimination or sexual harassment), to the Title IX coordinator. Please make a verbal or written report using the following contact information: Chief Safety Officer, Worcester County Board of Education, 6270 Worcester Highway, Newark, MD 21841, 410-632-5000, TitleX@worcesterk12.org

Non-Discrimination Statement

Worcester County Public Schools does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, ancestry or national origin, familial status, marital status, physical or mental disability, sexual orientation or gender identity and expression, or genetic information or age in its programs and activities and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups. The following person has been designated to handle inquiries regarding the non-discrimination policies: Ms. Jennifer Sills, Chief Academic Officer PK3-8, 410-632-5000. For further information on notice of non-discrimination, visit the Office of Civil Rights Complaint Assessment System at: <http://ocrcas.ed.gov> or call 1-800-421-3481.



WORCESTER COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

6270 Worcester Highway | Newark, MD 21841

(410) 632-5000

www.worcesterk12.org