

Hillcrest Student Handbook 2026-2027



Leanna McKinney, Principal

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Hillcrest Elementary School Welcome Letter

Principal's Welcome

Dear Hillcrest Cougars,

Welcome back for the 2026-2027 school year! I'm excited to serve alongside the Hillcrest community this year. Please review each section of the Student Handbook as it outlines important policies and information regarding your attending Hillcrest Elementary School

On behalf of the Hillcrest school faculty, we look forward to meeting students and families new to our school and welcoming back those families returning for another year. I anticipate great things from our students this year and look forward to your academic, social-emotional, and physical growth.

If we can help you this year, please feel free to call the school office for assistance at 828-437-4258. Welcome to the Cougar family!

Sincerely,

Leanna McKinney
Hillcrest Elementary School
Principal

HILLCREST ELEMENTARY SCHOOL'S VISION STATEMENT

Hillcrest Elementary School will be a safe environment where students become critical thinkers and lifelong learners filled with self-confidence and the ability to work cooperatively towards a productive life.

HILLCREST ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS MISSION STATEMENT

We are committed to excellence through high expectations, critical 21st Century thinking, and continual school improvement.



BCPS MISSION STATEMENT

Burke County Public Schools will educate all learners, nurture their potential and empower them to be contributing members of our community.

BCPS VISION STATEMENT

Burke County Public Schools will be a model of exemplary education by inspiring all students to be life-long learners who will contribute to our community.

HILLCREST BELL SCHEDULES FOR 2026-2027

This document is subject to updates during the school year as necessity arises

TRADITIONAL BELL SCHEDULE

7:30 a.m.	Front Doors unlocked/bell rings to go to classrooms
7:30-7:50	Breakfast is served in the cafeteria
7:50 a.m.	Mrs. McKinney's announcements begin
7:50 - 2:45	Instructional day (Pre K ends at 2:30)
2:30 p.m.	Pre-K dismissed
2:50 p.m.	Bell Dismissal of 1st Load (send to the bus), followed by car riders and walker, and then finally 2nd load
3:20 - 3:30	Second load leaves campus

ALTERED SCHEDULES



HALF DAY DISMISSALS are at 11:30 A.M.

ONE HOUR DELAY- School begins at 8:50 a.m.

TWO HOUR DELAY- School begins at 9:50 a.m.

THREE HOUR DELAY- School begins at 10:50 a.m.

SCHOOL OPERATING PROCEDURES

ADDRESS AND PHONE NUMBER CHANGES

Hillcrest Elementary School partners with parents to create a comprehensive education for its students. The school must be notified about address changes. An accurate mailing address is necessary for information that is to be mailed home. If there are any changes to contacts or numbers throughout the year, please notify the office immediately. All students should know their addresses and phone numbers, so please practice this at home.

Students not living in the Hillcrest School district must request permission from the superintendent to attend/remain at Hillcrest Elementary. Parents must provide three proofs of residency upon enrolling in the school.

EMERGENCY TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Hillcrest must have updated telephone number(s) where parents or designated relatives may be contacted in the event of an emergency during the school day.

PLEASE KEEP THE OFFICE INFORMED IF THERE ARE CHANGES IN PHONE NUMBERS.

ATTENDANCE

Regular attendance is very important and vital for learning. Children will gain the most from the school's instructional program by having regular attendance. School attendance is not only expected but is required of our kindergarten through fifth-grade students by Burke County School Board Policy and the Compulsory Attendance Law (GS115C-378).

All students are required to present a written excuse signed by the parent/guardian to his/her teacher on the **FIRST** day that the student returns to school. A valid excuse must list the **child's name**, the **date(s) of absence**, the **reason** for the absence, and the **signature** of the parent/guardian.

Absences are ONLY excused for the following reasons:

- Illness of the student,
- Religious holidays approved by the school system,
- Death in the immediate family,
- Quarantine,
- Participation in court proceedings



Only eight handwritten notes per year are permitted. Students must submit Doctor's notes after eight handwritten notes to be considered excused.

Hillcrest Elementary is committed to improving attendance. By law, parents are to be notified in writing when their child has accumulated three, six, and ten unexcused absences.

- ***After the third unexcused absence:*** The parent will be notified and a conference may be required.
- ***By the sixth unexcused absence:*** The parent will be notified and a conference will be required. Legal action may be taken.
- ***After eight unexcused absences:*** A doctor's note is required for it to be excused

- ***After ten unexcused absences:*** The parent and attendance counselor will be notified. Legal action **WILL** be taken.

Students who have missed school may request assignments by contacting the school office. **PARENTS MAY PICK UP HOMEWORK THAT A STUDENT MISSES BECAUSE OF AN ABSENCE BETWEEN 3:00-4:00 P.M. IN THE FRONT OFFICE.**

If the parent is unable to pick up the assignment or the child is too sick to complete work, the student should request the work when he/she returns to school.

TARDINESS

Hillcrest will start each school day promptly at 7:50 a.m. A student is tardy after the 7:50 bell and must report to the attendance secretary. The parent should accompany their child into the school building to sign in if arrival is after 7:50. The attendance secretary will give the child a tardy slip that will admit him/her to class.

The **ONLY** excused tardy is one with a medical note. Constant tardiness affects the education of both the tardy child and the other students as the teacher's classroom instruction is disrupted with the entrance of the tardy student. Parents of students with excessive tardies will be expected to meet with the principal and school counselor to devise a plan to ensure students arrive on time and make up missing work. **Students who attend Hillcrest Elementary as out-of-district transfers with frequent tardies will have their transfers revoked.**

EARLY DISMISSAL

If a student must leave campus during the school day, a parent/guardian should provide identification and must check them out at the office. For your child's safety, the teacher will not release a child until the secretary notifies the teacher. Children will not be released to anyone except the parent or legal guardian unless prior arrangements have been made with the office and the adult signing the child(ren) out has prior approval paperwork submitted to the office.

A student will be considered absent if she/he is in school for less than one-half of the school day (**11:30 a.m.**).

Once a student has arrived on school property during the school day, whether or not the instructional time has begun, that student becomes the responsibility of the school. Any student who comes to the campus must have special permission from an administrator before leaving.

Any student who is checking out early should present a written note to the homeroom teacher on the morning of the early checkout.

Parents are encouraged to make appointments after school hours as often as possible. Valid reasons for dismissal include medical or dental appointments, mental health appointments, juvenile court, religious reasons, or emergencies (sudden illness, accident, or death of family members, etc).

NOTE: Absences due to early dismissals will be coded lawful or unlawful (refer to attendance policy)

Due to safety and security reasons, All early students sign outs should occur before 2:15 so as not disrupt the instructional days for the remaining students.

MONEY

Money can easily be lost during an active day at school. Money for lunch, school pictures, books, and yearbooks should be kept in a safe place. Please place all money in a sealed envelope labeled with both your child's name and his teacher's name. Children are not allowed to buy, swap, or sell personal items at school.

PARTIES

Board Policy permits each class to have no more than two parties per year. Teachers have the choice of deciding when to have these parties. Snacks can be furnished for a class in recognition of a student's birthday or as a special treat from a parent to the class. This snack will be shared during lunch only. The parent should make prior arrangements with the teacher. **All foods provided for shared snacks or party refreshments should be commercially prepared and packaged. No homemade goods may be brought into the classroom.**

STUDENT TELEPHONE AND ELECTRONIC USE

Students may use the telephone only in cases of emergency. To protect instructional time, children will not be called out of their classroom to answer a phone call or to receive a message. Students are not permitted to use their cell phones during the school day. Students who need to call home for emergencies will need to use the office phone.

Violation of this policy will have the following consequences:

1. **1st offense**—The teacher takes the phone and returns it at the end of the day.
2. **2nd offense**—The teacher takes the phone, turns it into the office and the student may pick up the phone at the end of the day.
3. **3rd offense**—The teacher takes the phone, turns it into the office, and the parent must pick up the phone.
4. **4th offense**—The student will receive ISS for insubordination and the parent must pick up the phone for the 5th offense and beyond

Since the above items are prohibited at school, neither school officials nor the School Resource Officer will try to recover the lost or missing item. A student's device may be searched by a school administrator if the school official has reason to believe the search will provide evidence that the student is or has violated the law, school board policy, the student code of conduct, or a school rule. Searches will be carried out in a manner consistent with school board policy.

MESSAGES AND DELIVERIES FOR STUDENTS

School staff will only take messages for students that can be delivered at the end of the day and will not be responsible for the failure of students to get said messages. No student will be pulled from class and no class will be interrupted to deliver a message without administrative approval. Parents may bring school-related items (school work, books, projects, athletic equipment, clothing, etc.) to school for their children in rare situations but this will not be allowed to become a common occurrence.

Students and teachers will not be pulled from academic/instructional classes to accept phone calls except in extreme cases of emergency.

TOBACCO-FREE CAMPUS

Hillcrest Elementary is a "Smoke-free" campus per BCPS Board Policy. This includes any type of electronic cigarettes or tobacco products on the market. BCPS Tobacco-Free Policy pertains to field trips for students, chaperones, and school personnel. Smoking and/or the use of electronic cigarettes are prohibited in vehicles on campus. The same pertains to other substance use.

TRANSFERS AND WITHDRAWALS

Please notify the Hillcrest Elementary Data Manager if your child(ren) is transferring to another school. We must make sure all school debt and assets are returned to Hillcrest Elementary in good working order. The receiving school will contact Hillcrest to request records. Any fees due to Hillcrest Elementary School must be paid before the transfer, or these fees will be transferred to the receiving school.

COMMUNICATION

BURKE COUNTY SCHOOL COMMUNICATION

The school system has a telephone system for providing information for families in the event of inclement weather or other situations. To reach this information line, dial (828) 433-8047. Follow the instructions to receive news for Burke County Schools. The school system also maintains a website containing information about the school calendar, lunch menus, and announcements. www.burke.k12.nc.us.

CLASS DOJO

Teachers, school leaders, and families can partner on ClassDojo and create an incredible school community. This online communication platform is designed to provide you with immediate feedback regarding your child(s) behavior and progress throughout the day. Students can earn Dojo points for good behavior that can be used for classroom incentives. Class Dojo also allows you to message the teacher directly. You will receive information on how to sign up for Class Dojo at our Back to School Open House to be held on August 20 from 4:30 - 6:30.

HILLCREST ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TELEPHONE COMMUNICATION

Hillcrest Elementary School sends weekly announcements (Friday evening) via telephone and email, from the principal. These reminders provide important information about school events for the upcoming week. Please make sure we have an updated phone number and email address so you are receiving these messages.

SCHOOL CANCELLATION

In the event that school is closed early, delayed, or canceled entirely, announcements will be sent through the Hillcrest Blackboard System to alert parents. Additionally, this information will be broadcast over local radio stations or television, Class Dojo, and on the Burke County Public Schools Facebook page. You can also listen to local radio for this information.

The superintendent tries to make cancellation announcements by 6:00 P.M. the day before or by 6:00 A.M. the morning of the inclement weather. You should also be called by the automated calling system if you have a working number in the student information system. Parents are asked to plan ahead and discuss with their child the plan he/she should take if school closes during the day. **ON DAYS WHEN THE FORECAST INDICATES A POSSIBILITY OF BAD WEATHER, PLEASE WRITE A NOTE TO THE TEACHER IF YOU HAVE A CHANGE IN CHILD PICK-UP PLANS.**

TAKE HOME TUESDAY FOLDERS are sent home weekly on Tuesdays. Important information will go home in these folders. Monthly teacher newsletters are sent out by grade level that provide upcoming classroom information for parents.

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

AUTOMATED EXTERNAL DEFIBRILLATOR (AED)

In the event of a cardiac emergency, there is an AED unit on campus. The locations are placed strategically throughout the building or with predetermined individuals: the school nurse and the Crisis Team.

HEALTH AND MEDICAL ISSUES

Parents will be contacted to come for their children in case of illness during school hours. Parents should not send their children to school if children are ill, have a contagious disease/condition, or have a temperature in the morning before school. Students **MUST** be fever-free for 24 hours before returning to school.

The following protocols will be used to determine student sickness and parent notification: A child having an elevated fever, a suspicious rash that could be contagious, or that is vomiting at school will result in parent notification. The parent will need to make arrangements at that time to take the child home. Other situations will be assessed to the best of our ability.

HEAD LICE

BCPS adheres to the following policy (4230) pertaining to head lice. **Any evidence of lice or nits in a child's hair will result in the following:**

1. The child will be removed from the classroom. The principal or designee will screen the child in the absence of the school nurse.
2. The principal, designee, and/or school nurse will examine the child and determine if the student has lice or nits.
3. The principal or designee will notify parents/guardians if the student has lice or nits.
4. Parents/guardians will be required by the principal or designee to make arrangements to have the child picked up at school if the student has lice.
5. The parent/guardian should be informed that all nits must be removed from the child's hair before the child may return to school.
6. The principal/designee or school nurse will be responsible for inspecting the student's hair prior to the return to the classroom. Students will not be returned to class with nits.
7. Principals will have final discretion on the removal of the child from school.

ACCIDENTS

If a child is injured at school, parents will be notified. Make sure we have a current phone number where you can be reached at all times.

MEDICATION

The Burke County School Board requires proper authorization from parents and a doctor before any medication can be administered to a child. No medicine, including Tylenol, can be given to a child at school without the proper forms granting permission. **MEDICINE MUST BE BROUGHT TO SCHOOL IN ITS ORIGINAL CONTAINER with a pharmacy label on the container and the appropriate forms completed before any medication can be administered.** If a prescription or over-the-counter medication different from the manufacturer's guideline is to be administered, a physician's signature is required along with a parent/guardian signature before administering. Forms are available from the nurse or in the school office. Children are **NOT** to keep medicine in their clothing, book bags, or their lunch boxes unless it is an inhaler or Epi-pen and the healthcare provider has deemed them competent to carry and self-administer and has signed an order which is returned to the school. Otherwise, if a child must take medication during the school day, the parent/guardian is expected to give that medicine along with the forms to the school nurse or the office staff on the day the medication is brought to school.

SOCIAL WORKER PROGRAM

Counseling services are processes for helping all students in their efforts to discover, develop, and reach their full potential. We realize that these processes are continuous and cooperative and that all members of the school staff and faculty are fully involved and responsible for the assistance provided to students. Every student is a unique and worthwhile individual and counseling services must provide the best chance for each to become educationally prepared, competent, and personally and socially adjusted for happy and successful living.

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

Technology is integrated into all subjects. Science, health, social studies, art, physical education, and music provide the student with a well-balanced program.

The instructional program at Hillcrest Elementary School follows the North Carolina Standard Course of Study in Pre-K through fifth grade as required by the State Board of Education and Burke County Public Schools. All children are instructed on a level where they can be most successful. We strive to help all children reach their optimum potential. They are encouraged to always do their best.

Hillcrest Elementary School uses **Accelerated Reader (AR)**, a computer-based reading comprehension program. Students read books on their reading level and answer questions about the books through AR software. Students should be bringing books

and other printed materials home each night to read. Our teachers will require minimal written homework but there is an expectation that each child is reading independently or with another person for 15 - 30 minutes each night as appropriate for your child's grade level.

Parents are the first and most important teachers. Active support and reinforcement are needed daily from each parent for each child to be successful. Parents are urged to contact the teacher if any questions or concerns arise regarding the instructional program.

EXAMS AND BENCHMARKS

All students in grades K-5 are involved in the annual testing program mandated by the State. Students in grades 3 through 5 are administered reading & math End-of-Grade tests in May. These tests measure the progress made on the state curriculum at each grade level by individual students. **Please be sure to schedule appointments and vacations around these dates.** Parents will receive the results of the End-of-Grade Tests before the end of the school year and are invited to review these with the teacher. These results become part of an individual student's permanent file. Other benchmarks for K-5 occur periodically throughout the beginning, middle, and end of the year, including STAR tests in math and reading, Lexia reading benchmarks, as well as mClass reading.

1. End-of-Grade (EOG) exams are held once annually for grades 3-5 in math and reading. Fifth grade will also participate in a science EOG. EOG tests will be between May 15th and May 28th. Students may not take exams earlier than the scheduled exam period.
2. An EOG schedule will be made available to students at the earliest possible date.
3. Regular teacher tests will be administered at the end of each unit.



FIELD TRIPS

All field trips will be correlated for specific educational purposes. All students are required to ride the bus when traveling to all field trip destinations. **Students will be required to return permission forms to the teacher before each**



trip. If parents do not allow participation in a field trip, the students will be expected to attend school on that day and complete the instructional plan set forth by their teachers.

Siblings (younger or older) are not allowed on field trips. Also, all parents wanting to accompany their child on the field trip and act as a chaperone without staff supervision need to have a completed volunteer application on file in the office at least 15 days

before the field trip. Parents are not allowed to ride the bus and lunch will not be provided for parents on field trips. Furthermore, students will only be allowed to ride home from a field trip with their parent(s) or legal guardian(s). Any student riding home with a parent must wait until all students are accounted for before being signed out with the homeroom teacher. Parent chaperones should not bring younger siblings on field trips.

Report cards are issued at nine-week intervals. During each nine-week grading period, interim reports indicating a child's progress are sent to the parent. Parents are expected to sign interim and report cards. Students are required to return reports promptly to their teacher.

PROGRESS REPORTS

Interim progress reports must be sent by all teachers to parents after 4 ½ weeks of each 9-week grading period and will reflect the student's cumulative status at that time. Students and parents are encouraged to discuss grades received especially if the student is not making satisfactory progress.

BURKE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS SCHEDULE FOR REPORTING STUDENT PROGRESS 2026-2027

September 22	Interim Reports Sent Home
October 16	End of 1 st Nine Weeks (39 days)
November 3	1st Nine Week Report Cards Sent Home or Distribute at Conference Day on November 3
November 24	Interim Reports Sent Home
December 18	End of 2 nd Nine Weeks (38 days)
January 12	2nd Nine Week Report Cards Sent Home
February 16	Interim Reports Sent Home
March 12	End of 3 rd Nine Weeks (47 days)
March 23	3rd Nine Week Report Cards Sent Home
April 27	Interim Reports Sent Home
June 4	End of 4 th Nine Weeks – Report Cards Sent Home (49 days)

GRADING SCALE

GRADING

The following grading policy is being issued as a guide in determining grades for students grades 3-5. Its purpose is to provide, not only more uniformity in grading among the faculty but also, a better interpretation of grades for students and parents. Letters are used in marking all report cards and cumulative folders for grades 3-5. The following standards are to be used in grades 3-5:

A – Superior (90 – 100 numerical value)

1. Who consistently shows superior knowledge of the subject matter
2. Who is consistently thorough in their preparation
3. Whose work is always done promptly, and independently
4. Who takes a constructive part in-class discussion

B – Above Average (80 – 90 numerical value)

1. Who indicates that they have a good knowledge of the subject matter
2. Who usually are thorough in their preparation
3. Who are prompt, and to some extent independent in their work
4. Who enter actively into class discussions making fairly accurate and complete recitations

C – Average (70 – 80 numerical value)

1. Who indicates that they have a good knowledge of the subject matter
2. Who does an average amount of preparation
3. Who are reasonably prompt in their work
4. Who are usually able to and do enter the class discussion

D – Below Average (60 – 70 numerical value)

1. Who indicates that they have a fair to poor knowledge of the subject matter
2. Who are careless in the preparation of the assignments
3. Who turns in work late and irregular
4. Who does not take an active part in-class discussion

F – Unsatisfactory (below 60)

The grade “F”, unsatisfactory, is given to students who cannot, or will not do their work and who consistently fail to meet the above requirements.

Teachers should contact the parent if his/her student is in danger of receiving a grade of a “D” or an “F” for a grading period.

The instructional level is also noted on the report card using the numerical indications listed on the report card.

S- Satisfactory/ U- Unsatisfactory -These grades are used in grading P.E., writing & music.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

To maintain the integrity of the teaching and learning process, as well as to validate all grades received by students, Hillcrest Elementary School requires that students abide by the following academic guidelines:

1. Students may not work together on any projects unless specifically approved by the teacher.
2. Students may not copy another student's work and submit it as their own.
3. Students may not use any aid on a test or exam without the specific approval of the teacher.
4. Students are not to **give** other students aid or assistance - for example, a student who has taken a test earlier or on a previous day is NOT to give information about that test to a student who has yet to take the test.
5. When students use information from a source other than their textbook or teacher's lecture notes to complete a project or a paper, the source(s) must be cited in accordance with acceptable format as specified by the teacher as developmentally appropriate.
6. Parents are not to complete projects assigned to students. A teacher may allow parents to assist students in some particular fashion, but the project is designed to help the teacher determine what the **student** knows or can do.

Students who fail to abide by these guidelines will receive a failing grade for the work in question and may face disciplinary action as well. This applies to students who provide or receive unauthorized assistance.

HOMEWORK

Homework is a positive and desirable part of a student's academic growth. Homework will be an outgrowth of the classroom experience. Homework may reinforce skills, utilize creative activities, or support research projects.

Parental support and involvement are essential to students' learning experience. It is the parents' responsibility to develop an interest in children's studies and to encourage them to set aside adequate time and a quiet place for their homework.

Nightly homework includes reading each night. Students are expected to continue to read over the weekend and during breaks.

Students are expected to complete all homework assignments each day. When needed, staff will hold parent conferences for those students who are not completing homework assignments.

Parents can access student grades through the parent portal of Powerschool. Please see Mrs. Kanipe to learn how you can access Powerschool.

STUDENT ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN

The Burke County Board of Education believes that all students can learn and that children learn at different rates and in varied ways.

Before being moved to the next grade, students must show their mastery of knowledge for their particular grade level. Promotion decisions will be based on classroom performance, grades, and performance on tests including EOG test, attendance, and teacher observation.

The ultimate responsibility for meeting promotion requirements lies with the student.

Each classroom teacher will inform parents of progress and performance being made by their children throughout the school year. Parents of those students who are "in danger of retention" due to below grade-level performance, will be informed by mid-year at a parent-teacher conference. If below grade-level progress begins after mid-year, parents will be informed as soon as possible. Students who fail to meet grade-level expectations may be required to participate in remediation for Hillcrest Elementary School.

Testing in Grades K-2

Students must demonstrate their ability to do grade-level work in reading, writing, and math. Any student not demonstrating mastery will be required to complete a prescribed program of remediation to be considered for promotion. Testing in K-2 consists of a state reading assessment as well as a county math assessment given twice a year.

Testing for Grades 3-5

Students must demonstrate their ability to do grade-level work. This performance will be demonstrated by scoring at Level III or higher on the end-of-grade tests and by earning passing grades. Students in grades 3-5 who score below Level III on any end-of-grade test, or have not earned passing grades on their course work, will be required to complete a prescribed program of remediation.

- Testing for third grade consists of mClass (a state reading assessment), benchmark tests every 9 weeks, and a Math and Reading EOG at the end of the year.
- Testing for fourth grade consists of a benchmark every 9 weeks and a Math and Reading EOG test at the end of the year
- Testing for fifth grade consists of a benchmark every 9 weeks and a Math, Science, and Reading EOG test at the end of the year.

Parents and students will be notified by the middle of the school year if a student is not performing on grade level. A remediation plan will be developed for each student.

Intervention/remediation strategies may include but are not limited to before and after school sessions, additional home assignments, summer programs, or tutoring during the school day.

PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCES

Parent-teacher conferences may be scheduled at any time during the school year. Mandatory conferences for the families of all students will be scheduled during the first grading period. Throughout the year additional conferences will be scheduled for parents of any student having difficulty.

It is very important for your child's success for parents to remain in constant contact with your child's teacher. Our full-time Parent Educator/translator will arrange for and provide translation for families in need. Parents staying in constant contact with teachers is very important for your child's success. Please update the office anytime you have a change in address or phone number.

TEXTBOOKS

Some textbooks are loaned for the entire year, and some are loaned temporarily. All are to be returned giving evidence that they have had reasonable care. The State Law requires that students pay for lost or damaged textbooks.

TITLE I

Hillcrest Elementary School is a Title I school. For a copy of our school-wide plan, please contact the office or visit our school website.

WELLNESS POLICY

The goal of the physical education program is to promote lifelong physical activity and provide instruction in the skills and knowledge necessary for lifelong participation in physical activity. To address health issues such as obesity, cardiovascular disease, and Type II diabetes, students enrolled in kindergarten through eighth grades will participate in physical activity as part of the district's physical education curriculum. The physical

education course will foster support and guidance for being physically active, will help students know and understand the value of being physically fit, and will teach students the types of activities that contribute to total fitness. The course will be taught in an environment where students can learn, practice, and receive an assessment on age-appropriate skills as defined in the North Carolina Essential Standards.

Hillcrest Elementary School will strive to provide opportunities for age- and developmentally-appropriate physical activity during the day for all students, so that students can learn to exhibit a physically active lifestyle. A minimum of 30 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity will be provided daily by schools for kindergarten through eighth-grade students. Such activity may be achieved through a regular physical education class, recess, dance, classroom energizers, and/or other curriculum-based physical activity programs.

To ensure that students have ongoing opportunities for physical activity and to maintain a positive attitude towards physical activity, structured/unstructured recess and other physical activity shall not be taken away from students as a form of punishment. In addition, severe and inappropriate exercise may not be used as a form of punishment for students. As a school-wide initiative to promote healthy students, the use of candy and sugary items will be limited as an individual award.

To ensure Hillcrest Elementary adheres to these guidelines, parent requests to limit physical education activities or recess time is prohibited without official documentation from a doctor.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

VISITORS

Hillcrest Elementary operates with a closed campus policy. **All visitors must use the front entrance of the school and report to the receptionist's desk.** Infants and children not attending Hillcrest Elementary Schools should NOT be brought to school during school hours. **All parents and visitors are to sign in at the front desk and be issued a visitor's badge.**

Visitors are permitted on campus to eat lunch with a student, assist in classrooms under the supervision of a school system employee, accompany classes on field trips and stay with the class/BCPS employee, and attend classroom parties and field/water days. These rules are subject to change for safety reasons at any time.

Lunch visitors are permitted to eat lunch with their child(ren) one time per week. Visitors should let the teacher know in advance through Class Dojo of their intentions to arrive on campus. Each visitor must check into the front office upon arrival and wear a visitor sticker. Parents should not check students out following lunch.

VOLUNTEERS

Burke County Public School policy requires volunteers to submit an application, criminal background check, and NC Sex Offenders & Public Protection Registry check to the county office. Forms are available in the school office and on the Burke County Public School website.

Parents and community members are encouraged to become active volunteers at Hillcrest Elementary School. There are many activities where you can be of help to the children, the classroom teachers, and support staff throughout the year. Anyone wanting to volunteer without staff supervision must complete a volunteer application. Applications are available in the school office. All volunteers will adhere to the Burke County Board of Education Volunteer Policy.

Volunteers provide children with the extra attention that provides additional opportunities for success. Tutors who help children learn to read are giving their most valuable resource – their time. Hillcrest Elementary appreciates any time and assistance provided by volunteers.

STUDENT EXPECTATIONS AND CONDUCT

[BCPS Student Code of Conduct](#)

When your child enrolled at Hillcrest Elementary, he/she became part of our school family. Caring and respect are important in this family. We strive to help each child to become a self-disciplined person and a responsible citizen who has respect for self and others, and respect for private and public property.

We believe that acceptable behavior on the part of all students is necessary to provide an environment conducive to learning. For meaningful learning to occur, each class has rules for good behavior and safe living in the classroom. The teacher has the primary responsibility for the discipline of the students in his/her care.

POSITIVE BEHAVIOR INTERVENTIONS AND SUPPORT (PBIS)

We are a Positive Behavior Interventions and Support (PBIS) school. All students are expected to follow the guidelines to maintain a respectful learning environment. Students will be taught the expectations and it is expected that students will meet these behavior expectations.

We believe that acceptable behavior on the part of all students is necessary to achieve the desired goals of an optimal education. Our goal is to develop mutual respect and support between the home and the school. Our goal is to reward positive behavior. We hope all discipline measures used at Hillcrest Elementary School encourage a better attitude and improve behaviors.

Rewards used include extra recess time, goody boxes, homework passes, center time, stickers, PBIS rewards, praise, and a pat on the back!

All classrooms will have a behavior plan and use Class Dojo. Families are encouraged to gain access to the student's profile and get reminders and track student performance online using Class Dojo.

Teachers will use the R.O.A.R. school-wide behavior management matrix to guide consistent, appropriate behavior:

	School Wide	Classroom	Restroom	Hallway	Cafeteria	Bus	Playground	Assembly
R Respect	Listen to all adults	Follow directions first time given Use a quiet voice Listen to others when they speak	Use a quiet voice Respect the privacy of yourself and others Keep your hands, feet and other objects to yourself	Be silent in the hall Keep hands, feet and other objects to yourself Enjoy bulletin boards and wall art with eyes only	Use a quiet voice Show good manners Keep your lunch items in your area	Follow the directions from the bus driver Respect other people's property Use a quiet voice Keep hands, feet and other objects to yourself	Enter and exit the building in an orderly fashion Leave things outside where they belong Follow directions from adults	Give full attention to presenters Stay seated and in your area No talking during performance
O Organization	Have materials ready at school	Have materials you need for class Keep your work area clean	Wait quietly for your turn Line up in assigned area Dispose of trash properly	Walk with a steady pace Stay in a straight line and keep up with your class	Get everything you need when you go through the line Leave the table, seat and floor clean	Keep all items in your bookbag Watch for your stop	Pay attention and line up when signaled by teacher Wait your turn patiently	Stay with your class
A Attitude	Come in ready to learn	Help and encourage others Use positive words Share	Be considerate of others by not leaving a mess Wait patiently for others to finish Use a quiet voice	Smile and be courteous to people you meet in the hall Follow all directions in line	Wait patiently in line and while emptying your trash Be polite by saying "please" and "thank you" Talk quietly to neighbors at your table	Use polite and appropriate language Obey bus driver's instructions	Be nice to all students Play safely and include all students Practice good sportsmanship	Have an attitude of respect Clap hands to show support
R Responsibility	Be responsible for yourself not others	Keep up with materials you need for class Stay on task	Flush and then wash your hands Throw away any trash Report any problems to an adult Use only what you need	Keep hallways clean Be a good example for others	Have everything you need for lunch When you are finished with your lunch, leave it alone Stay seated until dismissed	Put trash in the trash can Be at your stop on time Remain seated, facing forward	Report any problems to the nearest adult Use equipment properly Stay in areas designated by your teacher	Stay in your assigned area Keep your area clean

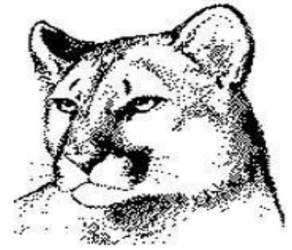
DISCIPLINE

While Hillcrest Elementary School provides opportunities to exercise positive behavior, sometimes it is necessary to implement discipline when behaviors become inappropriate to the school environment.

School-wide, the following are considered unacceptable behaviors and will not be tolerated:

- disrespect to any member of the faculty or staff
- use of profane language or gestures in any language
- abuse of school property
- disruptive behavior
- hitting, pushing, or fighting in any form
- bringing knives, other weapons, or any dangerous items to school
- leaving school grounds or a classroom without permission
- truancy
- possession of drugs, controlled substances, or tobacco
- possession of obscene literature
- stealing
- cheating

When a child is referred to the office for disciplinary purposes, the principal will administer discipline following the Burke County Student Code of Conduct based on the circumstance.



Listed below are the consequences that will be used (but not limited to) as approved modes of discipline to be administered when a child is sent to the office:

- conference with student
- parent notification
- time-out
- after-school detention
- lunch detention
- required parent conference
- referral to school social worker
- In school suspension
- out-of-school suspension

PROHIBITED ITEMS

TOYS including but not limited to collector and game cards including Pokemon, radios, CD players, headphones, video games, etc. are NOT allowed on campus unless a teacher has given permission. Items such as these invite theft or disrupt the school-learning environment. ***Cell phones are prohibited.***

WEAPONS including knives, guns, fireworks, matches, lighters, sharp-pointed objects, or any object that could be used as a weapon are dangerous and are prohibited on school grounds. *Toys that resemble weapons are also prohibited.*



STUDENT DRESS

Students who are clean and dressed neatly and comfortably for school feel better about themselves.

The items below are some of the main points of the Dress Code and are not intended to represent the entire document. The entire Student Code of Conduct can be found on the BCPS web page. Policy 4300R (linked above).

- Appropriate and safe shoes must be worn at all times. Heels and flip-flops are NOT allowed.
- Halter-tops; bare shoulders and midriffs are prohibited. Tank tops must be a minimum of three fingers wide on the shoulders
- No tops may be worn that dovetail inward in the back and expose the girl's back, no fishnet or see-through garments over other inappropriate garments
- No short dresses or skirts that are mid thigh or shorter.
- No pajamas or pajama shoes unless authorized for a school activity
- No bandanas
- Short shorts; baggy, sagging, and/or dragging pants; jeans with holes above the knees
- No exposed cleavage, undergarments/undergarment straps.
- Any tattoo of a distracting nature
- clothing with tobacco, alcohol, or offensive logos is prohibited.

Please be aware that students must often sit on the floor. Clothing should be comfortable for sitting on the floor and should cover the body appropriately even in that position. It is important to a student's health that they dress appropriately for the weather.

IMPORTANT: PLEASE LABEL YOUR CHILD'S CLOTHING ESPECIALLY COATS AND HOODIES. This will assist school personnel in identification of the lost items. Check lost and found frequently.

SCHOOL SERVICES

CAFETERIA

Our school provides a daily nutritious breakfast and a well-balanced lunch. Breakfast and lunch are free for all students for the 2026-2027 school year and is served from 7:30-7:50 A.M.

Students may eat meals served from the school cafeteria or bring their lunch from home. They are not permitted to leave campus for lunch and are expected to eat only in the designated areas.

Students are expected to exercise good stewardship and care for our school building and practice good citizenship. Students are expected to place all trash in the proper receptacle when lunch is over. Additionally, students are expected to leave a clean

table as other students will eat after them. All students will remain in the cafeteria area during lunch. Students should employ courtesy in lunch lines.

LUNCHROOM EXPECTATIONS

1. Purchase extra items as you go through the line.
2. Use good manners.
3. Leave the tables, seats, and floor area neat and clean.
4. Running in the cafeteria is prohibited
5. Breaking line is not allowed

LUNCH NUMBER

A lunch number will be issued when your child is enrolled at Hillcrest Elementary School. This number will remain the same throughout your child's elementary career. Extra food items will be available and offered daily for students as an added purchase. All checks should be made payable to **Hillcrest Elementary Cafeteria**. **If a parent would like to purchase lunch, the cost is \$4.00.**

OPEN INVITATION TO LUNCH & VISITATION

Parents are encouraged to eat lunch with their child(ren). Please remember to sign in at the office upon your arrival. Refer to adult meal prices above. Visitors should let the teacher know in advance through Class Dojo of their intentions to arrive on campus. Each visitor must check into the front office upon arrival and wear a visitor sticker. For the safety of all students, only one visitor is allowed per visit and only eats lunch with his/her child in the designated visitor areas. Parents should not check students out following lunch.

We respectfully request that parents do not eat lunch with students the first week of school so that teachers can establish appropriate routines. Hillcrest cafeteria will also be closed to parents the week of EOGs as lunch times will be varied due to testing.

CHECKS

Checks written to the school for field trips, fundraising, Book Fairs, etc. must be made payable to Hillcrest Elementary School unless specified otherwise. A \$20 fee is charged for all returned checks. The child's name must be listed on the memo section of the check. Schoolbucks is also available to make online payments.

Students who make payments to the school greater than \$50.00 must make it in cash, check, or money order made out to Hillcrest Elementary School. Any payment affiliated with Hillcrest Elementary should always be made out to Hillcrest Elementary School and not to the teacher in charge of collecting the money unless

otherwise noted. Students will be given receipts for any money they pay to Hillcrest Elementary School.

COMPUTERS

Computers and computer resources are for educational use. All students must sign and have on file in their cumulative folder a Burke County Public Schools *Acceptable Use Policy*. Signed policies for returning students are still in effect. Newly enrolled students must be sure to obtain, sign, and turn in an *Acceptable Use Policy* to the media center. Students must be familiar with and follow the Burke County Public Schools *Acceptable Use Policy*. Students will be assigned a user name and a password. Students must use their assigned username and password to log on to the network. Passwords are to be kept private. Students should not share their passwords.

Unacceptable use of computer resources may result in the loss of the student computer. Examples of unacceptable uses are:

1. Accessing inappropriate websites.
2. Using computers and computer resources for non-educational activities. (i.e. non-educational chat rooms, email, printing, digital imaging).
3. Logging in as anyone other than yourself.
4. Participating in non-educational activities, activities that are not teacher assigned.

Consequences: Inappropriate or unethical use or failure to adhere to the guidelines may include but is not limited to cancellation of user privileges, possible disciplinary action, and/or appropriate legal action.

INTERNET USE

Hillcrest Elementary School computers are Internet-accessible. All students must adhere to the policies for good digital citizenship. Filters have been installed to prohibit connection to sites that may be unsuitable for children.

SCHOOL DEBT

Households need to make arrangements to pay for any school debts accrued. Otherwise, the debt will become part of the student's PowerSchool file and will follow the student through all grade levels and schools, until paid. If the debt is not paid this could affect the student's participation in non-mandatory extracurricular activities at Hillcrest or any other school they attend within the Burke County Public School system.

LOST AND FOUND

Lost and found articles are placed near the gym. We encourage parents and students to check this box for lost items. Marking a child's belongings with a permanent marker will assist in the identification of lost items. Twice annually, unclaimed items are sent to a charitable organization.

PARENT NIGHTS

Annual notification of parental rights can be found on the BCPS website under the parent tab. If you do not have access to a computer you may use one at school or the county office.

PICTURES

School pictures are made in the fall and the spring of the school year.

SAFETY DRILLS

Every precaution is taken to ensure the safety of your child during normal school hours. Periodic fire, tornado, and lockdown drills are performed to make certain students learn proper safety procedures.

YEARBOOKS

Memories of the school year will be available through a yearbook that will be sold and distributed in late May / early June. Students will have the opportunity to pre-order in early spring.

TRANSPORTATION

CAR RIDER ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE

The school day will begin at 7:50 A.M. and end at 2:40 P.M. Students are NOT allowed on campus before 7:30 A.M. We do not have supervision before 7:30 A.M. Students that are car riders in the morning should be at school before **7:50 A.M.** and be picked up by **3:00 P.M.**

TRAFFIC FLOW PATTERN

We usually have a staff member on duty to direct the traffic flow from the main road. We ask that you not turn left or come straight into the circle. Parents please enter from the Carolina Street entrance onto Tennessee Street and pull into the circle.

ARRIVAL: Children who ride in cars should exit their cars on the right side, nearest the sidewalk. Staff members will be on duty to supervise the unloading of cars from 7:30-7:50 daily in the drop-off loop. There should be no cars parking in the bus area or the handicap areas in the circle. All students should be dropped off at the front entrance of the circle. We encourage you to “kiss and go” in the car rider line to make for a smoother start to the mornings.

The teacher parking lot is not a student drop-off area for students in grades K-5. Pre-K is the ONLY grade level permitted to park in the staff parking lot as Pre-K

guidelines require parents to walk students to the side door in the cafeteria for drop-off and pick-up. Please make sure to park in a parking space.

**** Kindergarten parents may walk their children into school on the first day and Pre K parents must sign in students daily. All others should be dropped off at the front if they are walkers or car riders. Thank you for your help with this.***

AFTERNOON TRANSPORTATION

Please have all arrangements made in the morning as to how your child is to go home each afternoon. **Our school requires a signed note by a parent when a change is necessary.** That includes a change of bus assignment. Unless a child has a note, he/she will go home the usual way. This is particularly important on days when bad weather is forecasted. Don't leave home without a plan. **Please notify the school by 2:00 of any emergency transportation changes.**

AFTERNOON DEPARTURE:

- 1) Pre-K students will be dismissed at 2:30 PM from the cafeteria. Pre-K parents can park in the staff parking lot to pick up their children. Pre-K parents are responsible for walking to the cafeteria door to get their child. If the parent has more than one child attending Hillcrest, he/she may opt to park the car in the car rider line and then walk to the cafeteria to get his/her child. **All PreK children need to be picked up by 2:40.**
- 2) Students riding the first bus load will be dismissed at 2:50 PM.
- 3) The car riders will be dismissed out front at 2:53. Parents please enter from the Carolina Street entrance onto Tennessee Street and pull into the circle. Please do not park in the teacher parking lot and walk students to your car. This is very unsafe in the afternoons.
- 4) Walkers will be dismissed from the cafeteria as parents arrive and once it is safe for students to walk home. **Walkers must be accompanied by an adult and may not walk home alone.** Walkers are students that live in housing close to school. **Parents are not allowed to park in the faculty parking lot to pick up a walker.**

We ask that those who drop off students and pick up students follow the traffic flow pattern without breaking into the line. **Please do NOT drop students off on the road. Grades K-5 may NOT park in the staff parking lot when dropping off students.** Please enter the circle at the front of the building. Loading and unloading must be done only in the designated areas. Students are not permitted to exit the vehicles without staff supervision. The safety of our students is our foremost goal. Only if everyone cooperates can we work toward the goal of safety while providing a procedure that will be as efficient as possible.

BUS RIDERS

Bus riding is a privilege and may be taken away from those who cause disturbances or jeopardize the safety of others. The Burke County School Board has a policy to ensure the safety of all students that ride a bus.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF SCHOOL BUS PASSENGERS

1. Taking a seat. When a passenger enters the school bus, he should take a seat quickly and remain seated. He should refrain from moving around on the bus when it is in motion.
2. Keeping Limbs inside. A passenger must keep his head, arms, and feet inside the bus at all times.
3. Throwing Objects, Shouting, and Waving. Objects should never be thrown in the bus or out the windows. A passenger should not shout and wave to pedestrians or occupants of other vehicles from the bus windows.
4. Keeping the Aisle Clear. Passengers should never pile books, musical instruments, lunch boxes, or other objects in the bus aisle. If personal belongings are carried, they should be kept on the lap or put under the seat. Arms and legs must be kept out of the aisle when possible.
5. Indecent Language, tobacco use (vapes, Jules, e-cigarettes, etc). Passengers must never use profane and indecent language, tobacco, or alcoholic beverages while riding a bus.
6. Playing. Playing or scuffling on the school bus is not allowed.
7. Care of the Bus. A passenger must never mar or deface the bus in any way.
8. Emergency Door. Passengers must never tamper with the emergency door or any part of the bus. An open emergency door is very dangerous while the bus is in motion.
9. Extension of School Day. Time spent on a bus is an extension of the school day; therefore, students fall under all school rules while on a bus.
10. Students must have a note signed by an administrator to ride a bus other than their regular bus when applicable.
11. Riding the bus is a privilege, not a right. Please partner with us to ensure your child models appropriate riding behavior as consequences will often directly affect student participation.

The following rules govern student behavior on the bus:

1. Follow driver directions.
2. Remain seated at all times.
3. Do not bring food, drinks, electronic devices, large objects, or animals on the bus.
4. Keep hands, feet, arms, and personal objects to yourself.

5. Do not push or shove when loading or unloading the bus.
6. Stay in assigned seats.
7. Remain quiet; no loud noises.
8. Do not use profanity.
9. Help keep the bus clean.

If a student violates a rule, the following consequences will be enforced:

- 1st offense: Warning
- 2nd offense: up to 5-day suspension from bus
- 3rd offense: up to 10-day suspension from bus
- 4th offense: Suspension for the
REMAINDER OF SCHOOL YEAR

**THANK YOU FOR HELPING OUR STUDENTS BE THE BEST AT
THE CREST!!!!**



PARENT & FAMILY ENGAGEMENT PLAN FOR HILLCREST 2026-2027

Hillcrest Elementary School in Morganton, NC, is a Title 1 school. Under the Every Student Succeeds Act (Title 1, Part A), our school is required to have a plan to inform and give opportunities for parents to be involved in the educational process of their children.

Our Parent & Family Engagement Plan includes the following:

1. Information for Parents & Families is available through

- the Hillcrest Elementary website, which is available at <https://hces.burke.k12.nc.us/>
- More frequent Hillcrest event updates are made to the school's [FaceBook page](#).
- the publication of the [School and District Performance](#)— a description of the school's performance on N.C. Content Standards will be available online as soon as they are released.
- information shared on student assessments, interpretation of results, how progress is measured, and proficiency levels students are expected to meet.
- timely responses to parents' suggestions.
- Class DoJo is used to communicate between parents and teachers on a daily basis.
- opportunities for parent meetings to share in the educational process. Look for PTO meeting dates and fundraising opportunities
- letters sent regarding teacher qualifications if a teacher is out for extended leave.
- parental input on school-wide and district project plans.

2. Information regarding student progress, important dates, and activities

- are sent home weekly in Take Home Tuesday (THT) folders, weekly administrative callouts and emails, as well as information shared via Facebook and Class DoJo.
- Information is communicated in English and Spanish. Some information is also available auditorily for Spanish-speaking families.
- require parent signatures on progress reports.

3. The Hillcrest Elementary Student Handbook

- provides parents with valuable information regarding policy, procedure, and expectations. This handbook is provided electronically to all parents and students at the beginning of school on Class DoJo and the school website. There are copies written in both English and Spanish.
- provides the school supply list is available online and is sent home (in English and in Spanish) during the summer so that parents are prepared for the year.

4. Parents are provided opportunities to meet with academic personnel

- through nine-week parent conferences, annual IEP and 504 meetings, and parent-teacher conferences upon request. All meetings are conducted in English and translated into Spanish through our Parent Educator upon the request of the teacher and the parent.
- on Title One Family nights twice annually

5. Parent engagement activities at our school include but are not limited to

- **Parent services** are offered via the Hillcrest website, bilingual services, parent education programs, School Messenger phone messages, newsletters, Parent's Handbook of Rights (EC), BCPS Annual Report, parent conferences, and IEP and 504 meetings
- **School events** such as Family Nights/programs, school book fairs, and field trips will take place as well as a schoolwide spelling bee, Hillcrest Athletic Association (indoor soccer and basketball), Read Across America, mid and end of year student academic awards, parent-teacher conferences, parent surveys, duty-free lunch parent volunteers, field day/water day, Battle of the Books, MathCounts, BCPS Speech Contest, BCPS Science Fair, and BCPS Robotics
- **Student Recognition**—Class Dojo points, Cougar Pride awards, awards day ceremonies, quarterly AR, behavior and Lexia awards, and student of the month based on monthly character traits.

6. School Services provided by Hillcrest include but are not limited to

- **Technology**—Docucams and Apple TVs are in every classroom, Pre-K through 5th grade. Kindergarten through fifth grade has 1:1 Chromebooks for use with classroom instruction. All students have individual Chromebooks in classrooms for instruction, assessments, educational programs, technical skills, and research.
- **Media Center**—Our Media Center is like a public library. Students have circulation times when they can come and check out three books per visit for Grades 1-5 (both nonfiction and fiction are recommended). Kindergarten classes choose easy readers. Research projects are completed during weekly scheduled times.
- **Support Staff**—Please contact any of the following staff members if your family needs assistance or services:
 - **Principal** - Mrs. Leanna McKinney
 - **School Nurse**— Ms. Faith McLean serves Hillcrest and WA Young. Please call the school if you have medical questions or concerns about your children.
 - **School Social Worker**—Mrs. Niki Beach can meet with your child if they are upset, need advice about problems or issues with family and/or friends, and/or dealing with grief.
 - **Parent Educator**—Ms. Margarita Mendoza is our full-time translator and is here to support individual family needs. She

assists with advice on home schedules, discipline and reward ideas, social skills, local services, and guidance with all types of forms for various agencies. Please ask for assistance for your families and children.

- **Academically Gifted Program**—Mrs. Penny Wiseman serves as our Site-Based Coordinator for the Academically and Intellectually Gifted Program. Teachers are well trained in each grade level to challenge and differentiate lessons for gifted students..
- **English Language Learners (ELL)**—Ms. Hollifield and Ms. Rector are English Language Learner teachers who strengthen students' academic and social language skills using the REACH curriculum. Students' language skills are enhanced through reading, math, and writing. It integrates various grade levels' standard course of study, Common Core State Standards, and Language objectives to meet the needs of LEP students.
- **Exceptional Children**—Ms. Keaton assist exceptional children's students who may need extra help in reading, math, and writing. Concerns about a child's academic levels may be addressed through your child's teacher to see if additional support is needed for the child. All children are capable and all children are different. We must use various teaching strategies to help them learn and grow. Please let us know if you feel your child needs extra interventions to help master traditional foundational educational skills.
- **Speech and Language**—The speech teacher serves children who currently receive speech therapy and assists with referrals pertaining to speech concerns. Please talk with your child's teacher if you feel your child needs support in this area. Communication is the key to your child's self-esteem and future progress. Ms. Buckner serves as our speech/language pathologist.
- **Reading Specialist**—Mrs. Lynn Mull is the reading specialist who offers support in the area of reading for students who are falling behind academically with classroom interventions already in place. Her classroom provides small groups and individual strategies to help make children stronger readers with research-based intervention strategies. Please read for at least twenty minutes at home each night. Reading will close the achievement gap for all children. The more a student reads, the more they will learn.