

Potowmack

Elementary School

STUDENT-PARENT HANDBOOK



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Attendance

Absences
Early Dismissal
Emergency Closings/Delayed Openings
School Hours
Tardy

Keeping Healthy

Bee Stings and Severe Allergies
Emergency Cards
Medication at School
Illness or Injury
Insurance
Physical Education

Your School Day

Changing After-School
Arrangements
Communicating with Parents
Field Trips
Conferences
Homework
Fire Drills
Party Invitations
School Lunch
School Library
Report Cards
Selling
School Supplies
School Telephone
Teacher Gifts
Visitors
Volunteers in Education
Student Recognition
Textbooks

Standards of Behavior

Articles Brought to School
Cafeteria Behavior
Gum
Discipline
Student Dress
To Ensure a Successful School Year
Student Rights and Responsibilities Handbook
School Rules

Transportation

Bus Transportation
Walking
Bike Riding
Traffic Regulations

ATTENDANCE

THE IMPORTANCE OF GOOD ATTENDANCE

Attendance at school on a regular basis is vital. We ask that you have your child attend school each day that he/she is healthy. It is disruptive to your child's educational program when you remove him or her from school for trips or family outings. Although written assignments can be made up, the classroom activities and interactions with others in the school setting cannot be replaced.

ABSENCES

Whenever a student is absent from school, documentation is required to verify the reason for the absence. Parents/Guardians are required to notify the school as to the reason for the absence. This may be done through the school's Absentee Phone-in line. Any absence not confirmed by the parent/guardian will be considered unexcused. If the parent/guardian has not called the school to verify the absence, the school will make a reasonable effort to call the parent/guardian to verify the day's absence. Upon the student's return to school, a written explanation from a parent or guardian is required for each absence. The note should include: date(s) of the absence, the reason for the absence, and signature of the parent/guardian.

Students are excused for personal illness, a death in the family, medical or dental appointments, court appearances, religious holidays, illness in the immediate family, or emergencies that require the student to be absent.

If a student is absent, whether excused or unexcused, for more than 10 days or 10% of the total number of days' membership, whichever is determined appropriate by the principal, the school will send a letter to the parents/guardians requiring a physician's note for all further absences. At the principal's discretion, contact may be made sooner or waived due to extenuating circumstances. A copy of the attendance letter sent to the parents/guardians will be placed in the student's cumulative folder.

At the point at which a student accumulates five unexcused absences, a referral will be made to the Attendance Officer.

Occasional tardiness for valid reasons is not a serious offense; however, repeated or habitual tardiness encourages the formation of undesirable personal habits and disrupts the orderly instructional process of the school. When a student arrives tardy, parents must escort their child to the office and assist him/her in obtaining a tardy pass to class. This is required to ensure the safety and well-being of the student. Also, the school may require the parent or guardian to provide justification to determine the reason for the student's tardiness. If this does not occur and documentation is not provided by the parent, as to the reason for the tardy, the tardy may be considered unexcused. If a student is tardy more than ten times, a letter will be sent to the parent as notification of the school's concern for the student's non-attendance, and a physician's note may be required. If the pattern of tardiness does not improve, a referral will be made to the Attendance Officer.

EARLY DISMISSAL

The parent must come directly to the office to sign the child out. A member of the office staff will call the child to the office. Parents are asked not to go directly to the classroom to get the child.

EMERGENCY SCHOOL CLOSINGS/DELAYS

When schools are to close because of a special condition (severe weather), announcements to this effect are made over local radio and TV stations beginning at 6:00 A.M. You can also access this information through the Loudoun County Webpage. The information on the LCPS Web Page is regularly updated, and there is a notification service that you can sign up for if you choose. It is important that each child has a prearranged plan to follow if the school does close early, and an adult is not home. A form will be sent home in the fall and winter of each school year asking the parent to describe the plan. Unfortunately, the school cannot commit to calling home for each of our students. Phone lines must be kept open for communication with our central office and emergency personnel.

In case of a delay in the opening of school by either one or two hours, announcements will be made over local radio stations. In the case of two hours delayed opening, each half day kindergarten session will meet for two hours; A.M. session 9:50 - 11:50 and P.M. session 12:35 -2:35 P.M.

SCHOOL HOURS

School hours are from 7:50 A.M. until 2:35 P.M. daily. Students who walk to school and those transported by parents should not arrive at school before 7:30 A.M. Our building will be open each day between 7:00 A.M. and 4:00 P.M. For the safety of our staff, no one will be admitted after 5:00 P.M. (Unless we have a scheduled evening event.)

TARDIES

Parents and children should make every effort to arrive at school each day on time. Children should be in their classrooms at 7:50 A.M. to be considered on time! If a child comes into school after that time, he/she must report directly to the office for a late pass. (Please do not walk your child directly to his/her classroom.) A child will not be admitted to class without the late pass. If a child comes into school tardy an excessive number of times, the child, along with his/her parent or guardian will be notified by letter and may be asked to conference with the assistant principal or principal. The purpose of the conference will be to discuss ways to avoid continued tardies.

KEEPING HEALTHY

BEE STINGS AND SEVERE ALLERGIES

If your child has severe reactions to bee or insect stings, foods, or other allergies, please notify the classroom teacher and clinic aide so that we may place the information in a special file. A food allergy action plan will need to be filled out.

EMERGENCY FORMS

At the beginning of the school year, a form is sent home with each student to list phone numbers or persons to contact in case of an emergency. This card is very important. Emergency forms should be kept up-to-date. If you move or change your phone number/s during the year, we ask that you inform us immediately. It is important to your child's safety that we have current contact information at all times.

MEDICATION AT SCHOOL

School personnel cannot administer any over-the-counter medication unless requested to do so in writing by the parent. The medication must have the child's name, grade, and the time medication is to be administered on the original container. Please do not send in all of the medication, only enough to be given during school hours. All medicine, prescription or over-the-counter, will be kept in the nurse's office during school hours. This includes aspirin, cough drops, etc. Any child who is receiving medication on a regular, daily basis that is

prescribed by a doctor must have a completed Medical Release Form prior to the administration of the medicine. Parents must transport all medication.

ILLNESS or INJURY

In case of illness or injury, a student will be cared for temporarily by our clinic aide. School personnel will render first aid treatment only. If emergency medical treatment is necessary, the parents will be contacted, and if needed 911 will be called. An emergency telephone number where parents can be reached, and the name and telephone number of the student's family doctor must be on file at the school. It is also extremely important to give the school the name of a friend or relative that could be contacted in the event we cannot reach the parent.

INSURANCE

Student accident insurance is available. Application forms are distributed to all students at the beginning of the school year. Each student has a choice of 24-hour coverage or basic school time coverage.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The staff at Potowmack believes that physical education is an important part of the educational experience. The development and maintenance of a healthy body are essential for physical well-being and good mental health. We also believe that attitude development is an important part of education. We attempt to create an atmosphere for the development of leadership, sportsmanship, and congeniality through our physical education program. P.E. classes with the Physical Education teacher are provided three times a week for all students in grades 1-5. Children must wear tennis shoes with solid, rubber soles for all physical education classes.

YOUR SCHOOL DAY

CHANGING AFTER-SCHOOL ARRANGEMENTS

All children are expected to go home or to their child care provider each afternoon following the school day. Any deviation from the original dismissal plan must be given to the teacher in writing. If you email a change in dismissal plans, know that staff may not get a chance to check their email before the end of the day. It would be best to call the main office or send a written note. If they are visiting friends after school, please send a written message giving your permission. The message should include the name of the child whose home he/she will be visiting. If we do not receive written directions from the parent, the child will follow their original dismissal plan. **No changes in dismissal will be made after 2:00 PM.**

COMMUNICATING WITH PARENTS

Every effort is made to keep parents informed of what is happening at school. Each teacher sends home a monthly newsletter, as well as other communications. A school newsletter that contains general school news is sent home each month along with Connect Ed. messages. It is essential that parents take the time each evening to go through your children's backpack and check email. Most schoolwork will be sent home in the Friday Folders. Keeping informed will aid both the parent and child in keeping organized and knowledgeable about what is happening in the classroom and the school.

FIELD TRIPS

Potowmack Elementary students are afforded the opportunity to visit various places of educational interest in the Washington area to enrich their classroom experiences. The trips are usually taken in a school bus under the supervision of the classroom teacher with at least one other adult present. Parents who chaperone a field trip may not bring other children on the trip. Parental permission is required before any student is taken on a field trip. All field trips are correlated with the grade level curriculum.

CONFERENCES

The Potowmack staff encourages frequent parent communications. All parents will be scheduled for a conference during the first grading period. The parents or teacher may request additional conferences as the need arises. Parents should call the school office to request a conference with the teacher or principal.

HOMEWORK

Homework is an extension of the learning that takes place in school. Homework can provide practice and drill that reinforces classroom learning and can provide opportunities for independent study, research, and creative thinking. Parents can help their children by arranging a quiet, comfortable place for the students to work and by seeing that assignments are completed. The LCPS guidelines for homework given each evening are as follows: children in grades one through three should be given no more than thirty minutes of homework each night; children in grades four and five should be given no more than sixty minutes of homework a night. Most teachers do not assign homework on Friday nights. Children in the primary grades are often asked to read nightly and study math facts for their homework assignment.

Often time's teachers in the upper grades will assign children long-term projects such as reports, research, or projects. The expectation is that the children will learn to "pace themselves" and not save all the work for one or two nights. If you have a question about the amount of homework your child is receiving (too much or too little), please discuss this with your child's teacher.

EMERGENCY DRILLS

Fire drills, held once a week during the first month of school and once a month after that, are mandatory by state law. During a fire drill, each class has an escape route to an outside area that is a safe distance from the building. Children are moved to these designated areas in less than 90 seconds in a safe, quiet and orderly manner. Other emergency drills such as a tornado, school lock down, and a school-wide evacuation drills are also practiced during the school year. A school response plan is reviewed several times over the course of the school year. Should you have specific questions about emergency response, please contact the assistant principal or principal.

PARTY INVITATIONS/BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

To avoid hurt feelings, children should not distribute party invitations at school unless every child in the class will receive an invitation. To keep all children safe and healthy, Loudoun County Public Schools has guidelines that do not allow any food to be brought in for a child's birthday. Additionally, non-food gifts of any kind, to include pencils, stickers, balloons, floral arrangements, etc. should not be brought to school for a child's birthday. Each child will continue to have his/her name announced on the Morning News Show and will get a birthday pencil from the office. We recognize that this is a significant change, but please realize that it is for the safety of all students. Your cooperation in following the new LCPS guideline is appreciated.

SCHOOL LUNCH

A nutritious lunch is served each day in the cafeteria. Milk is sold daily for those who choose to pack their lunch. Children should not bring glass containers to school. Ice cream and cookies are also sold.

If a student forgets his/her lunch, he/she will be provided a sandwich and carton of milk at no charge, children will not be permitted to call home for lunch. The best way to prevent any "lunch crisis" is to establish a lunch account for your child. You can establish a lunch account by sending a check to the school or by going on line to www.pay4lunch.com. This will enable your child to purchase lunch should they forget their packed lunch.

Pupils are entitled to free or reduced-price lunches or snack if the family qualifies. Forms are found on the LCPS web page. Forms may also be obtained from the office at any time of the year.

SCHOOL LIBRARY

The library is open on a regularly scheduled basis and is supervised by the librarian. Library classes are held for grades K-5 weekly. Classes are held for library instruction and to develop an enjoyment of the materials and books that available. Students can use the library during library hours with the permission of their classroom teacher. They may use the library to check out books or magazines, return books, do reference work, or work on special projects. There is no fine for overdue books; although students will not be allowed to check out additional books until overdue books are returned. If a book cannot be found the child will be assessed a fee to cover the cost of the book, should the book be found the money will be reimbursed.

The library collection is constantly updated and expanded. Books are chosen for either their educational or recreational value. A variety of audio-visual materials is available through the library for teacher use in the classroom.

REPORT CARDS

The purpose of the report card is to inform parents of their children's academic and social progress. Children in K-2 will use specific coding to help parents understand the progress their child is making in the primary skills as well as personal development. In grades 3, 4 and 5 grades are recorded in the major subject areas as well as social and work habits. Report cards are issued four times a year, about two weeks after the end of each nine-week grading period. Any student who shows a marked drop in achievement, or who is doing poorly in any subject, will receive an interim report midway through the grading period to inform the parents of any problems.

SELLING

It is Loudoun County School Board policy that elementary age school children are not allowed to sell anything before, during, or after school. To abide by this policy, we ask that Potowmack students not bring items from a non-school organization to sell to staff and students. Examples of this include older siblings fund raising items, sports fundraising items, Girl Scout cookies, Boy Scout popcorn, etc.

SCHOOL SUPPLIES

The school posts a copy of the supply list on our website. Teachers may send home a list of additional supplies at the beginning of the year. Some supplies are available through charitable organizations and can be requested through the guidance office or with our Parent Liaison.

SCHOOL TELEPHONE

Children may use the telephone in the office only in an emergency. Forgotten homework, lunches, notes, etc., are not considered emergencies. Please remind your child of this policy.

Teacher Gifts

Many of you like to thank our teachers and staff with end of the year gifts. It is very kind and generous of you to do so, but please know that there is no expectation that you will. A sincere, heartfelt note of thanks means a lot to teachers. If you do decide to give to a teacher or staff member, please remember that it is illegal to possess alcohol or drugs on a public-school campus in Virginia, so we respectfully ask that you not make such gifts.

VISITORS

Visitors to Potowmack Elementary are always welcome. However, to protect instructional time, interruptions to the classrooms are kept to a minimum. Office personnel will forward any items such as forgotten books, homework, lunches, etc., and any messages to the students.

All visitors entering the school must stop by the office to get a "Visitors Badge" before visiting a classroom!

We ask that you not drop by a teacher's classroom unexpectedly for a conference. Please call and arrange a time with the teacher!

PARENT VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

Our Parent Volunteer program is organized through the PTA. Parents are invited to share their talents and expertise in many ways throughout our school. The basic requirements for volunteer service are an interest and pleasure in working with children and a commitment to volunteering.

Parents can assist teachers in the following activities: classroom tutors, aides, storybook readers, art, computer aides, field trip chaperone or a community resource person. Parents can also provide clerical assistance to office staff, as well the classroom teachers. Additionally, we are always in need of parental assistance for the many PTA activities that take place during the year.

All volunteers working directly with children must show proof of a tuberculosis test. This documentation will be kept on record in the school office.

STUDENT RECOGNITION

Students are recognized on a regular basis at Potowmack. Each month students in each category of respect, responsibility, and effort are selected for the Citizenship Award from each classroom or recognize as a PBIS "Soaring Eagle". At the end of the year, classroom teachers recognize students for their accomplishments. Fifth-grade students are recognized at an end-of-the-year luncheon and DARE celebration.

TEXTBOOKS

Textbooks are provided to all students in Loudoun County. Students handle all books loaned to them and for any loss or damage. If a book is lost, misused, or damaged beyond reasonable repair, the student shall replace the book. Textbooks are not for sale to students. Parents should carefully check books at the beginning of the year and return the signed book loan form to the school.

STANDARDS OF BEHAVIOR

ARTICLES BROUGHT TO SCHOOL

The school encourages children to bring educationally related items with them for sharing. However, these items should be of interest and value to the entire class and should be connected with some phase of a study. Extremely valuable items and those creating a danger to others (knives, guns of any kind, slingshots, and matches) should not be brought to school. Parents should make themselves aware of the School Board Policy regarding weapons in the school. Students who bring such items to school will be severely reprimanded. Toys, including any trading cards and toy weapons, should not be brought to school for use during school hours. If your child is involved in CASA, they may bring items to use at CASA but must keep them in their bookbags during school hours. The school is NOT liable for items you elect to send into school for use at CASA. Live animals cannot be brought to school.

CAFETERIA BEHAVIOR

Students are expected to sit quietly in the cafeteria and enjoy their food and friends. Good table manners and conversation in a normal voice are stressed. Once seated at their assigned table, children are not allowed out of their seats unless they have permission from the adult on duty. Students are expected to eat their lunch and will not be allowed to trade food. Children who do not display appropriate cafeteria behavior may be asked to move to another cafeteria table or eat lunch in the office.

GUM

Children are NOT allowed to chew gum on the school bus, or any time during school hours.

DISCIPLINE

Teachers have the authority and responsibility to maintain discipline in the classroom. When a student is having a problem, the teacher may: conference with the student, conference with the parents, or use classroom disciplinary procedures. Children who continually disregard classroom or school rules may be sent to the assistant principal or principal's office.

The principal or assistant principal may:

1. Give the student a very stern warning.
2. Take privileges away from the student.
3. Separate the student from his classmates.
4. Assign work to be done around the school.
5. Notify the parents of continuing problems.
6. Assign the student to in-school suspension.
7. Suspend the student from school.

RESPONSIBILITIES HANDBOOK

At the beginning of each school year, every LCPS student receives a handbook setting forth system rules and expectations for student behavior. It is incumbent upon every parent to read this document carefully and help all students understand the rules and expectations our county has set forth.

STUDENT DRESS

The purpose of school is to learn. Any clothing that distracts from learning is prohibited. This includes any clothing that is very tight, short dresses, skirts, and shorts. Halter tops, spaghetti-strap tops or tops that expose the midriff, saggy pants, clothing with inappropriate language, symbols or pictures and cosmetics are all considered inappropriate for elementary school.

TRANSPORTATION

BUS TRANSPORTATION

Free bus transportation is provided to all students who live more than eight-tenths of a mile from the school. The Transportation Department will assure safe transit of all bus riders. Also, we try to instill in the pupils the need for maintaining reasonable orderliness while riding to and from school and to respect the bus driver. Children are expected to display appropriate behavior while waiting at the bus stop each morning. Parents handle their children's behavior at the bus stops and any child, who repeatedly has bus-stop problems, may be asked to go to another bus stop, or lose bus-riding privileges.

WALKING

If your child is walking to school, please take the time to go over safety rules such as always walking on the sidewalk, crossing streets carefully, and coming straight home after school. Children should always use sidewalks and walking paths on their way to and from school. We want to be good neighbors to our friends around the school and children should not walk through people's yards to get home! Parents, please emphasize this "rule" to your children!

BIKE RIDING

Since the instillation of the bike rack, we have had a growing number of students riding their bikes to school, and we need them to be safe. Please review safety procedures with your child if they are choosing to ride their bike to school. Students are always to wear a helmet. They are not to cross Cascades Parkway to Esterbrook Circle. They should use the tunnel. Students are not to cut across traffic in front of the school on Esterbrook Circle or in the school parking lot. They should use the crosswalk with the crossing guard.

Here are some must-know safety tips to teach kids:

Stop at all stop signs and obey traffic lights just as cars do. Yield to pedestrians, stop at red lights, and be especially careful at intersections.

Always ride in the same direction as cars do. Never ride against traffic.

Try to use bike lanes or designated bike routes whenever you can — not the sidewalk!

Never ride at dusk or in the dark.

Always stop and check for traffic in both directions when leaving a driveway, an alley, or a curb.

Watch the traffic closely for turning cars or cars leaving driveways.

Don't ride too close to parked cars — doors can open suddenly.

Always walk a bike across busy intersections using the crosswalk and following traffic signals.

When riding in a group, always ride single file on the street.

TRAFFIC REGULATIONS

Please follow all directional signs upon entering and exiting the school parking areas. Car traffic is prohibited in the bus loops directly on the side of the building in the morning between 7:25 and 8:00 A.M. and in the afternoon between 2:10 and 2:45 P.M.

To ensure student safety the following procedures will be followed:

1. As you enter the school property, all cars should drive to the second entrance of the school. A car line will be formed in the lane in front of the school. If you cannot pull into the car drop lane on school property and need to wait on Esterbrook Circle, a car line will form on Esterbrook turning right into the school. Please do not sit on Esterbrook Circle blocking the left turn lane into the school.

2. Children should be dropped off along the sidewalk in front of the school. Please pull forward to the end of the sidewalk to allow as many cars to stop as possible. All children should get out of their car the first time it stops on the front sidewalk.

Do not wait to pull up to a “preferred door.” This will back-up the traffic.

3. Students arriving prior to 7:40 A.M. will sit in the hall outside of their classroom. After 7:40 A.M. the child may go directly to his/her classroom. No child is permitted in the building prior to 7:30 a.m.

4. Parents are asked not to pass vehicles in the drop-off lane when children are being dropped off.

5. Children are not allowed to be dropped off in any of the parking areas. If a parent wishes to drop off or pick up a child from any of the parking areas, the parent must park his/her car and **MUST** accompany the child across the parking lot and onto the sidewalk.

6. Morning Kindergarten students who are car riders are picked up in the front of the building in the car drop lane.

7. The afternoon dismissal line for cars is in the front of the building. Cars should pull all the way up to allow as many cars to get into the line as possible. If you cannot get the car drop line the line will form on Esterbrook Circle making a right had turn into the parking lot. You cannot sit in the left turn lane and block traffic on Esterbrook Circle.

PARENTS PLEASE NOTE: All procedures are for the safety of students! I will remind the children of these procedures frequently during the year. Your help in establishing a safe traffic pattern is greatly appreciated.

I have read the Potowmack Student - Parent Handbook and understand that I will be held accountable for the information it contains.

Parent Signature

Date

Student Signature

Date

Classroom Teacher